

## Vision Zero – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is Vision Zero?

A. The aspiration that we have zero road deaths and zero serious injuries on our roads.

Q. Why have you adopted it?

A. Because although people make mistakes and have lapses in judgement, nobody deserves to die in a road crash. (About 49 people per year die on Essex roads and 780 are seriously injured)

Q. Why now?

A. We have seen steady reductions in casualties over the last 50 years, but in recent years these improvements have stalled. We must look for new ways to continue these improvements if we do not want to accept death and injury on the roads. Death isn't an acceptable price for mobility. We know it can be achieved.

Q. If this is so important, why haven't you done it before?

A. We have always been focussed on finding the best ways to reduce death and serious injuries on the road. Traditional road safety has achieved a lot, but we now understand that we need to have a wider approach and strengthen all the layers of protection rather than relying on humans to be perfect all the time.

Q. What is different about this approach?

A. It involves everyone who uses the road and everyone who can influence how roads and vehicles are designed and used. It accepts that people make mistakes but still holds them accountable for their actions. Road safety is no longer something one department in the council does, it is something we all do because we all benefit from it.

Q. How will you achieve it?

A. By helping and encouraging people, businesses and public authorities to work together on preventing death and serious injury. We will use good quality data and research to ensure we promote effective ways of reducing death and serious injury, we will campaign and lobby. We will implement the safe system approach, work with our communities and others who want to see his vision achieved.

Q. Vision Zero is unrealistic and you're just setting yourselves up to fail. Please justify this.

A. Even if we don't achieve zero as soon as we'd like to, every crash prevented is a boost to the economy, a reduction in congestion and more money for public services. In Essex alone road crashes involving injury cost the public sector £130m per year, and cost businesses nearly £90m. The emotional cost to families far outweighs the financial too. We can't afford not to strive for this.

Q. Explain the safe systems approach

A. The safe system approach seeks to strengthen all the layers of protection around the road user so it looks at the road, the user, the vehicle, speed and the post-crash care. The road layer for instance, seeks to minimise opportunities for crashes that will result in death and serious injuries by reducing crash energies to those which the human body can withstand. This might be by separating different types of traffic or by reducing speed limits. It includes road safety education so that drivers know the law, their responsibilities and the

consequences of not complying but accepts that even well educated, aware and trained road users will still make mistakes. but increases collaboration with healthcare providers, fleet buyers and vehicle manufacturers to coordinate layers of protection that prevent and reduce death and serious injury.

- Q. How does a 50% reduction compare with the reduction achieved over the last 10 years?
- A. From 2009-2019 there was a 40% reduction in death and serious injury on the roads of Essex.
- Q. If Vision Zero is so important, why don't we aim to achieve it now rather than in 20 years?
- A. The Safe Systems approach which makes Vision Zero possible requires an investment of time and money. We won't ignore any quick wins but recognise that the major change we are after will take time to implement.
- Q. What part do I play? How can I help?
- A. The most important thing you can do is think about how you use the road and plan how to avoid those situations where you have not been 100% focussed on getting around safely. Begin to think about the roads as a system requiring everyone to cooperate and influence others by setting a good example. Take pride in setting the highest standards for others to follow. Road users need to comply with the law. Reducing speed will have the greatest effect on the number of deaths and serious injuries.
- Q. What do you want the people of Essex to do? Why should I care about this?
- A. There are many reasons this is important to everyone, avoiding death or serious injury of yourself or a loved one, making use of the roads a more pleasant experience with fewer traffic jams, improving the local economy and freeing up taxpayer's money for other public services.
- Q. What about the injuries and deaths caused by natural causes/ falling ill at the wheel?
- A. A death by natural causes while driving is not counted as a road death in official statistics. If a driver suffers a medical episode which results in a collision that causes injury to themselves or others, then this is counted in official statistics. Mobility is important for health and wellbeing which is why we need to work beyond traditional road safety to give everyone the freedom of personal mobility – including people whose health prevents them from driving safely.
- Q. I know a dangerous road in XX...do you intend to make our roads safer?
- A. We intend to make all roads safer, starting with those that pose the greatest risk. This takes time so will be at least a 20 year project in Essex.
- Q. I've contacted the council 6 times in the last year about pot holes but still nothing gets done – surely fixing our roads should be a priority?
- A. There are many important safety related tasks carried out by Essex Highways, including fixing potholes. Balancing these priorities with the need to deliver a cost-efficient service for the taxpayer means sometimes things take longer than we'd like. Reporting problems to <https://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us> will ensure they do feature on the Essex Highways to do list (or equivalent response for other authorities)
- Q. I haven't seen a police car in XX in ages, will you be lobbying for more roads policing officers?

- A. We have successfully lobbied for more roads policing officers and work really closely with them to ensure that they target locations and behaviours that lead to deaths and serious injuries. Our new strategy includes sending more officers to areas that may have historically seen relatively little visible policing. Police officers can be anywhere but they can't be everywhere. We also have our Extra Eyes initiative which seeks to identify poor or dangerous driving via dash cam submissions from the public. Find out more on our website.
- Q. My family friend died in a collision after being hit by a drunk driver, how are you planning to stop this from happening to others?
- A. This is what Vision Zero is all about. Through Essex Police we will hold more and more drivers to account if they choose to drive while impaired. We will use education and the media to underline how drink driving is socially unacceptable and help people plan ahead and avoid situations where they may end up drink driving. We need people to report impaired drivers through Crime stoppers or directly to the police and need passengers to speak up and not get in a car with a driver who they think is impaired. Everyone plays a part in making it a totally unacceptable behaviour.
- Q. Young people just don't care – how will you make them care enough to stop driving dangerously?
- A. We will continue to build on our successful involvement of young people in road safety through education and communication channels such as social media. We will work with them to help them understand how to identify and manage risk taking and encourage them to talk amongst themselves to make risky driving socially unacceptable among their peers.
- Q. Old people are a danger – how will you ensure everyone is fit to drive on our roads?
- A. Many older drivers are among the safest on the road, but there are a small number who are no longer physically capable of driving safely. We run free training courses for older drivers to help them continue to drive safely as they get older. We need the help of communities, families and older drivers themselves to help them change their road use from driving to other forms (bus, taxi, community travel, friends etc.)
- Q. I am fed up of getting 'close passed' when cycling. How does this fit into Vision Zero? When are you going to start protecting cyclists?
- A. If you have a camera on your handlebars, then you can send footage of any close passes to extra eyes. This will allow a Police Officer to view the incident and depending on what can be seen from the footage the driver may receive a warning letter, points and a fine or have to attend a retraining course. In the last month, nearly 40 drivers were prosecuted for close pass via our Extra Eyes initiative. We train over 6000 children each year on Bikeability and evidence shows that trained cyclists make better drivers.
- Q. Cycling isn't safe in Essex, there are so many unhappy cyclists on Twitter. Will your work on Vision Zero address this?
- A. Yes, through Essex Highways we will work to improve the available infrastructure for cyclists, making sure it is well designed, useful and safe. Through Essex Police we will hold more drivers to account if they drive carelessly or dangerously around cyclists, taking reports of offences through Extra Eyes and also proactive policing of the roads. We will educate motorists and promote mutual courtesy between all road users.
- Q. I've contacted you several times with concerns about speeding in my village, but nothing ever happens. Surely this should be a priority?

- A. Our new strategy involves more resource allocated to respond to community concerns. If you contact us via [saferessexroads@essexhighways.org](mailto:saferessexroads@essexhighways.org) with your concerns we can advise or direct your enquiry to the appropriate person.