

20mph Limits Help the Invisibly Disabled Gain Social Equality

A 20's Plenty for Us Briefing Feb 2019

http://www.20splenty.org/our_press_releases/invisible_disability

Not all disabilities are clearly visible. Drivers simply can't tell if someone at a roadside has mental health, sight or hearing issues, or limited physical abilities. 20mph limits are the safe speed wherever people mix with motor traffic. 20mph upholds duty of care and rights in the Equalities Act.

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At first sight it's impossible to tell if someone has a mental health problem - anxiety, dementia, post traumatic stress or sleep disorder. Yet sufferers are vulnerable and fearful. Also the partially sighted, hearing impaired, those with a prosthetic leg, cancer, the elderly or pregnant women have protected characteristics not obvious at a distance from a driver's seat behind a windscreen. These factors would affect judgements, reaction times and lead to crossing roads slowly. You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010¹ if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on normal daily activities.

Most of us are imperfect - either due to a health or sensory impairment or tiredness. We make mistakes. Children can be impulsive. They don't have the visual or physical mastery to cope with crossings where drivers go above 20mph until 12 years old. Vision scientists show mistakes in kids judging looming or approach speeds.

Yet, if drivers don't allow for mistakes, it leads to casualties. Many are un-clustered and cannot be prevented by site specific engineering. Crashes happen from poor road judgements. Such casualties aren't just bad luck because many are predictable and could be prevented if drivers went slower to give everyone time to react and avoid hazards. **Road users, traffic planners, vehicle designers and elected representatives making transport decisions must all assume that everyone is vulnerable.** If responsibility is shared, then the onus is on creating a safe system where errors aren't fatal or life changing. Health and Safety regulations apply this fail-safe concept widely. On roads it is known as Vision Zero or "safe systems", a policy adopted by Transport for London, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Brighton, Birmingham and Blackpool.

Wide 20mph limits where people are is the top feature of a forgiving road environment – one which fully upholds the Equalities Act 2010 and Local Authority's Duty of Care to public health. Civilised speeds especially reduce risk to the vulnerable, disabled or those with protected characteristics. Vulnerable road users are non-motorised road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists as well as motor-cyclists and persons with disabilities or reduced mobility and orientation.

DfT national guidance says (#32)²

"Fear of traffic affects...quality of life... needs of vulnerable road users must be fully taken into account in order to further encourage these modes of travel and improve their safety."

Rod King, Campaign Director of 20's Plenty for Us said

"The Equalities Act enshrines in law that we must not discriminate against the vulnerable. On roads it's best to assume that everyone is disabled as drivers can't work out who is and who isn't at distance. If elected representatives are taking duty of care seriously, then wide area 20mph limits are essential in built up areas. Fast traffic is scary. Speed becomes greed when it stops the vulnerable from being able to get around."

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/63975/circular-01-2013.pdf

20's Plenty for Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.

Web www.20splenty.org Twitter @20splentyforus

Rod King MBE
Founder & Campaign Director
rod.k@20splenty.org
07973 639781 @20splentyforus

Anna Semlyen
Campaign Manager
anna.s@20splenty.org
07572 120439 @AnnaSemlyen1

Jeremy Leach
London Campaign Co-ordinator
jeremy.l@20splenty.org
07415 243015