

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY MEETING
15 JANUARY 2026

REDUCTION OF ROAD HARM REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to introduce the topic of road harm reduction and begin the examination of what role the Council can play in reducing the impact of the risks posed by road users on residents and visitors to Darlington. The examination of evidence and outcomes could form a task and finish style review.

Summary

2. Road harm covers a wide range of issues, including road collision casualties as well as environmental impacts such as air and noise pollution. An over reliance on private vehicles can also have health impacts from physical inactivity such as obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes. A lack of transport accessibility can also lead to social isolation, poor mental health and loss of economic activity.
3. The examination may suit a task and finish style review with an evidence led approach considered to deliver tangible outcomes.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that:
 - (a) This Scrutiny Committee is asked to decide whether to establish a Task and Finish Group to examine road harm, causes, consequences and mitigation.
 - (b) That, if Members agree to (a) above, representatives be nominated to participate in the work of the Task and Finish Group.

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Background Papers

None

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| Council Plan | This report contributes to the Council Plan through the involvement of Members in contributing to the development of operational policy. |
| Addressing inequalities | This report contributes to addressing inequalities as the social aspect of road harm will be examined as part of the review. |
| Tackling Climate Change | This report contributes to tackling climate change as it will consider the environmental impacts of road harm such as air pollution as part of the review. |
| Efficient and effective use of resources | The outcome of this report does not impact on the efficient and effective use of resources. |
| Health and Wellbeing | This report has implications on the health and wellbeing of residents of Darlington as the report considers the consequences of road harm and solutions to mitigate impact. |
| S17 Crime and Disorder | This report has no implications for crime and disorder. |
| Wards Affected | All |
| Groups Affected | The impact of this report on any individual group is considered minimal. |
| Budget and Policy Framework | This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework |
| Key Decision | No |
| Urgent Decision | No |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. In Darlington in 2024, there were 119 collisions resulting in 156 casualties. Of these casualties, two were fatal, 40 were serious and 77 had slight injuries. The most recent Department for Transport information on the cost of collisions is from 2024 that shows:
 - (a) The cost of a fatal injury casualty is £2,525,047
 - (b) The cost of a serious injury casualty is £283, 745
 - (c) The cost of a slight injury casualty is £21, 874
6. A primary focus for examining road harm is to consider injuries on Darlington's roads, in addition to considering environmental factors such as air and noise pollution as well as health implications from physical inactivity such as obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes. A lack of accessibility can also lead to social isolation, community breakdown, poor mental health, excessive cost of mobility and loss of economic activity. Road harm can affect all of society but there is evidence that some groups have a disproportionate risk of being affected. It is suggested that a task and finish style review is established to examine what role the Council can play in reducing the impact of road harm on residents

and visitors to Darlington including health and social impacts.

7. It is suggested that the review focuses on the following areas:

(a) Communication

- (i) What information does Darlington Borough Council hold, how is it used to communicate about travel and road harm to road users.
- (ii) How the Police, Ambulance Service, and Fire and Rescue Service, communicate about travel and road harm.
- (iii) How the local media communicates about travel and road harm.

(b) Data Analysis

- (i) How does the Council monitor and investigate collisions and injuries to identify trends and determine how future injury could be prevented.
- (ii) What information does the Council receive and review related to non-injury collisions.
- (iii) How can the Council collect data on 'near-miss' incidents or places on the highway network which cause concern or represent a barrier particularly to safe active travel.

(c) Public Highway interventions

- (i) How does the Council approach reducing road harm on public highway.
- (ii) How does the Council prioritise suitable active travel networks.

Potential Outcomes

- 8. To develop a Strategy identifying causes of harm and potential mitigation and link to Darlington Transport Plan, understanding the cost of road harm across all public services. The strategy should be data and evidence led.
- 9. Identify vulnerable user groups and those disproportionately disadvantaged and propose specific interventions to maintain their wellbeing as well as targeted interventions where the greatest impact can be achieved.
- 10. If specific interventions are identified they become a contender for future funding.
- 11. The review will be supported by officers from the Highways and Capital Projects team and Public Health. There is likely to be a need for input from external stakeholders that could include the emergency services and local media. Officers will co-ordinate this along with the required data collection and analysis needed to support the review.