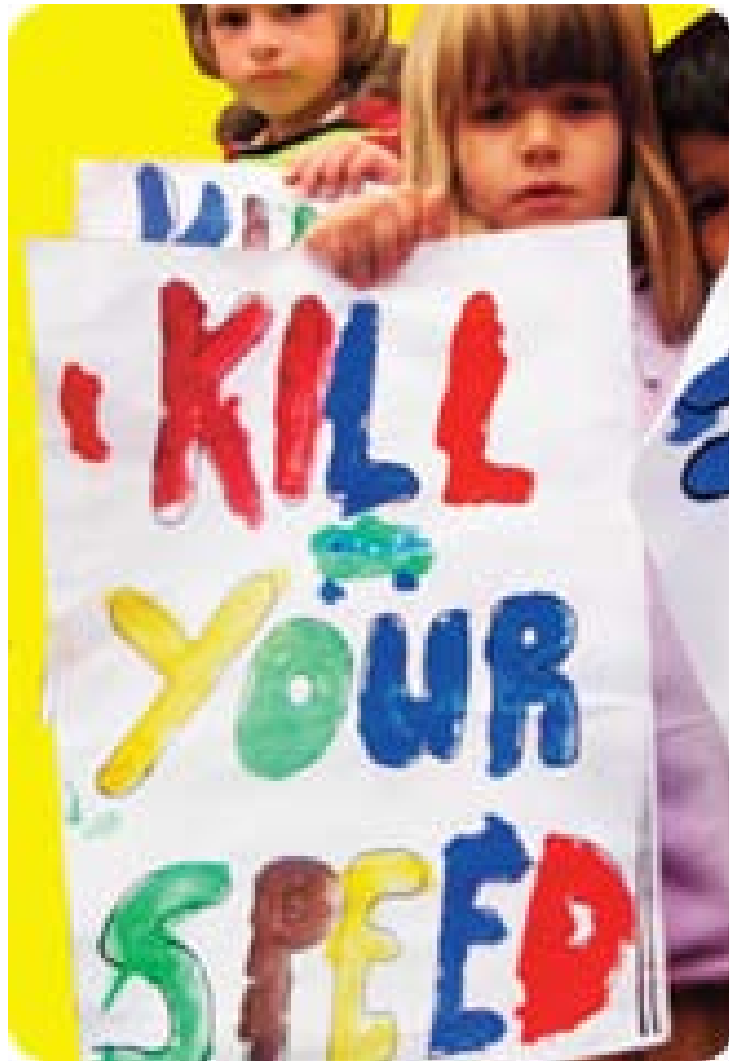


## Community campaigner guide



A guide to safer streets for your town

# Introduction

You want safer streets? This guide gives you the basic tools to get campaigning and make a real difference.

Brake has yet to hear about the road safety campaign that was successful following just one letter to a council official. Nothing will be possible without your commitment, time and energy. There's no doubt about it, campaigning is hard work. But it's worth it! Your efforts will save lives and injuries. This guide will help direct your efforts in the right direction, so you won't end up frustrated and unsuccessful. Read on!

## Setting up your road safety group

Acting on your own carries little authority. By setting up a road safety group, with a formal name, you can become a real force for action! Below are nine easy steps to forming your road safety group.

### Step one - Get together

Form a committee of local people who want to improve road safety. Appoint a "chair".

- Recruit people with relevant skills, resources and interests (eg. a tradesperson and teacher).
- Recruit people with some spare time.
- Keep your committee fairly small: any bigger than eight and you may have trouble coordinating meetings or making decisions.

### Step two - Give yourself a name

Create a name for your group (e.g. the name of your area or street followed by 'Road Safety Campaign'). Produce a logo and letterhead, with the name, address and telephone numbers of your main contact.

- A local artist or designer may be able to help produce a logo for free. Keep it simple.
- A black and white logo may be best as it can be photocopied.
- A local business may be able to photocopy your letterhead for free.
- If your chairperson does not have a computer or printer, ask a local business if they have a second-hand one they don't need.

### Step three - Involve relevant officials

It is important to involve officials who are already working for road safety in your area. Contact any:

- road safety officer responsible for educating local people about road safety (often employed by local government)
- safety engineer responsible for reviewing and implementing safety measures on roads, e.g. speed limits and crossings (often employed by local government)
- police force's traffic officer responsible for enforcing traffic laws
- local politician with responsibility for road safety, often the chair of your area's highways committee

It is important to know the facts. Ask your local officials for information about the extent of deaths and injuries in your community, including their causes and where they happened and when.

Carry out surveys with the help of these officials (e.g. volume and speed of traffic on your roads). You don't need a radar gun to monitor speeds of traffic. You can do it using two fixed points and a stop watch. Make sure you stand somewhere safe.

#### **Step four - Identify road safety concerns**

Identify the road safety concerns that your group's committee thinks are important to your community. Make a list of them.

Try to be open-minded. Your concerns may change as you talk to more people.

It's also important to keep your group focused on the issues that are most critical for safety. Don't get side-tracked by something that's not life-threatening.

#### **Step five - Let everyone have a say**

Write a questionnaire based on your concerns for distribution to everyone in your community. Send a draft version of your questionnaire to your local road safety officials for comments before carrying it out. They may suggest useful amendments or additional questions. Make sure you include space for people completing the questionnaire to really air their concerns. Also, give them a space for putting their name, phone number and email address if they want to get involved in the campaign.

Distribute this questionnaire to local people, either by dropping it through their door (with a request to return it to the chair's address by a deadline) or by asking the questions verbally through a door-to-door survey or at a local event such as a school fair.

Have a separate questionnaire written specially for children, asking them about their fear of traffic, their concerns, and their ideas for solutions. Ask them how they get about, how they would like to get about, and whether they have ever been scared or hit by traffic. The results of such surveys are often alarming. Ask your local schools to get this questionnaire filled in by kids. Pester power from children is a very effective tool for overcoming community resistance to safety measures.

#### **Step six - Think again**

Analyse the responses to your questionnaires and reconsider your community's road safety concerns based on these responses. Write a short report on the main concerns, which also suggests possible solutions. Show a draft of your report to your local officials and take their comments on board.

#### **Step seven - Organise a public meeting**

Organise a public meeting for local people and present your report to them. Invite your local officials to speak at this meeting, and leave plenty of time for discussion too.

Your chair should then summarise the main concerns and suggest revised solutions. These solutions may include educational initiatives to persuade local people to take more care on roads. Solutions may also include a request that officials implement a road safety measure, such as a lower speed limit or new

crossing. Everyone could then vote on whether they agree that these are the concerns and appropriate solutions.

Tips:

- Find a free venue for your meeting (eg. a school hall).
- Give enough notice (at least two weeks) and hold it at a reasonable time (eg. 7pm on a week day).
- Advertise the meeting through shop windows, leaflet drops or in a local magazine.
- Make sure the meeting is non-confrontational and no-one 'hogs' the debate. Be prepared to ask people who are being unreasonable or not speaking in the interests of community safety to leave the meeting – every community has motor heads who want to put motorists' rights above those of children and communities.

### **Step eight - Implement your initiatives**

It may be possible for your group to undertake some road safety initiatives straight-away, particularly initiatives which educate local people about how to take more care on roads (see the education section of this guide). Initiatives that must be implemented by the relevant officials (eg. by your safety engineer) will require their consideration and approval (see the engineering section of this guide).

### **Step nine - Review your efforts**

Review through further research, the success (or failure!) of road safety initiatives. For example, have speeds gone down following an education campaign or not? This information can help prove the value of your group's work and / or the need for further steps. Achieving safe roads can take time.

## **Saving lives through lower speed limits and engineering solutions**

If you think a road needs a lower speed limit or an engineering solution such as wider pavements, a cycle path, or a safer crossing place where the green man stays on for much longer, or any number of other measures to keep people on foot and bicycles safer and slow down traffic you will need to talk to the relevant official. Different roads are often the responsibility of different officials. Trunk networks are often looked after by a different department to roads in towns and villages. Call up your local council and ask which department has responsibility for engineering a particular road. You will usually want to talk to the department with responsibility for highway engineering.

### **Will they do what I want?**

The first thing to consider is: 'Do I know what I want?' Are you really clear what the problem is? Are there a range of possible solutions? And what is the best solution for your street? Like all challenges that need to be overcome, the most important thing to do is research and be inclusive of others. That means finding out what has worked best in other places, talking with officials at local and possibly national level, and studying research on your own, if necessary, to find out more. It also means consulting with neighbours and other stakeholders to find out their road safety problems and suggestions.

Some of the best road safety schemes have been prepared in partnership between officials and a community. It's better to do your research and work together than wade in with a demand that is not very valid, so arm yourself with information and collective support.

Some good examples of community street designs that promote pedestrian and cyclist access above cars and have low speed limits are Home Zones, Woonerfs, 20mph and 30kph community zones. Google these phrases to find out more and see images of these projects.

### **What if they say no?**

It's not uncommon for an official to say 'no' to community requests for action. But this is just the first round in what might be a long fight. You know you have a problem, and a solution must be found. Don't be afraid to question what you are told by local officials. For example, a local official might tell you that a road safety measure cannot be implemented because a road isn't wide enough or there isn't a certain amount of traffic useage on a road. Or they might say there is no budget.

If they say that a measure cannot be implemented because rules or guidelines prevent it being implemented, ask to see a copy of whatever rules or guidelines they are following. If necessary, check at a national government level that the rules or guidance is still up to date; it might have been superseded by better rules or guidance. For example, guidance on which roads can have lower speed limits may improve over time as politicians begin to understand the killing power of speed.

Budgets can often be found from somewhere for a measure that will save lives at some point. An official may be prepared to implement a road safety measure if your community and local businesses raise the funds to pay for all or part of its cost.

### **But no-one has died; yet!**

In Brake's experience, one of the most common reasons for telling communities that a measure cannot be implemented is that 'no-one has died here'. If an important road safety measure is turned down by an official on the basis that no-one has died, keep fighting! Tell officials that all good risk audits and prevention measures are conducted and implemented on the basis of current risk to life due to live and present hazards, not on the chance circumstance of whether someone has actually died as yet. Your community is, in effect, being told that a life or lives must be sacrificed before something will be done. This is not acceptable, humane, nor civilized. If traffic is going too fast, it is going to fast. It is only luck that no-one has died, and luck is no security at all.

### **Keep going, and keep talking**

Don't give up at the first hurdle. Many successful campaigns have been turned down repeatedly, but have used these disappointments to fuel their efforts further. Keep copies of all correspondence, and build on it, rather than forget it, let it die, and then have to start all over again in a year's time. Keep writing and keep talking. Set up an email or social networking group of supporters. That way, you will be able to formally exchange views and information and pass on findings to others in your group. Keep talking in a positive way to all concerned, including those who hold the purse strings. Mutual understanding and persistence based on facts and support is often the secret to success. Don't be afraid to get political - engage the support of a local politician or businesses for that final push to success.

### **Have I done 'my bit'?**

Often the drivers behaving dangerously in communities are the same people who are living in those communities. Have you done your bit to educate local drivers and try to encourage them to behave more safely? For example, sent letters home to parents if you are trying to make a road outside a school safer? If

you can demonstrate your community's involvement and efforts, you will have more justification for demanding an engineering solution.

## **Alternatives**

Sometimes communities get what they ask for. It's the right solution, and the money is available. Sometimes this doesn't happen. For example, your group may want a speed camera but an official may say 'no' and offer, instead, a sign asking drivers to 'slow down'. In a case like this it's important to consider whether you are being offered 'like for like'; for example, a speed camera is an effective enforcement measure, whereas a sign is educational and may be less effective. They may suggest an alternative such as this without being prompted. If not, and your original request has been turned down, ask what your highway engineer is able to do.

An alternative road safety measure may work just as well as your original suggestion, or, to be blunt, it may be a wholly inadequate but cheaper way of getting you out of an official's hair, particularly if that official has a limited budget, which is often the case. Sometimes alternative measures are implemented because they are cheaper and easier, not because they are going to be as effective.

Invite the safety engineer to speak to your group to explain the reasons why they think an alternative is a good idea, and answer your questions. How will its success be evaluated, and over what time period? Might people be likely to die during this period?

You may have to enter a new round of research and consultation to take your campaign to the next level if an implemented measure has clearly not been effective, or you don't think a proposed measure should be implemented. It is also worth reminding officials that traffic calming measures are likely to be most successful when they have the support of local people. So evidence-based solutions that can be clearly explained as appropriate are the only way forward.

## **Saving lives by educating local people**

Drivers have the killing power, so their education should be your priority, although it is also valuable to educate parents and children about keeping families safe and away from dangerous traffic. There are two main ways to educate:

- through leaflets and posters;
- through events.

### **Leaflets and posters**

Browse the Brake shop for our road safety leaflets. Your local council may be able to provide you with many more leaflets, on topics of particular importance to your community.

You can either carry out a door to door leaflet drop, or stick on a high visibility vest and distribute them in your local town centre to passing residents.

You can also display Brake or government road safety posters on community noticeboards and in schools, or design your own with the help of local school children.

## Events

Deliver Brake's 2young2die workshops to teenagers in local schools, or Brake's Pledge2DriveSafely workshop to fleet drivers in local companies. These workshops require you to work with small groups of people, to get them to question their behaviour as drivers and make better, safer choices. We provide you with the necessary training and resources. See the Brake website for more information.

Why not run a road safety stand in your local shopping centre, promoting different messages at different times of the year? For example, drink driving at Christmas, and drug driving during the summer festival season. Make sure your stand is engaging. Here are some tips.

- Have giveaways, such as balloons carrying a road safety message (kids love them)
- Have an activity – for example a road safety quiz about stopping distances with a prize.
- Have something to look at – such as a radar gun or “beer goggles” (you put them on and they show you how impaired you are if drunk). Ask your local police if they can help with provision of these things, or if they have any other ideas.
- Invite people to sign Brake's Pledge to Drive Safely or Stay Safe Family Promise (you can download these from the Brake site) or a petition for a lower speed limit.
- Have a colourful backdrop with a big banner – home-made is fine!
- Call people over to your stand – say hello and offer them something! Don't wait for them to come; people are often shy.
- Wear a high visibility vest so you stand out!
- Invite local concerned dignitaries to help out, such as fire or police officers.
- Have a collection tin for Brake and our work for families bereaved by road crashes.

Why not go the whole hog and run a family road safety ‘fun day’? If you live on a residential street, why not ask the police if you could close the street for it? It's a great way to demonstrate that streets are for people. As well as having a road safety exhibition stand, you could invite a local puppeteer to run a road safety puppet show, have musicians and street artists performing, such as jugglers, and have food stalls and places to sit and relax. Sell traffic light buns that are red, orange and green! Have a bouncy castle!

Invite your local fire officers to bring along a smashed car to explain the damage caused in crashes and how they try to rescue people. Invite the police, your local council's road safety team. Invite everyone you know! Run some fun games, such as a human wheelbarrow race (safer than a car!) and hold a ‘promises’ auction in aid of Brake.

Go to Brake's fundraising pages for loads more ideas of how to raise funds for Brake while also raising awareness of the cause in your community – from a pub quiz to a fun run!

## Saving lives through the media

Your local media will probably care deeply about road safety issues as they report on the deaths and injuries on your local road. So they should be happy to help you promote your campaign. Read on for basic tips on writing a press release and organising a photo call, and 'selling in' your story to local 'hacks'.

## **Writing a press release**

You need to write and email a press release to local media to tell them all the important information about your campaign. It's not as hard as it sounds. Follow our tips below for writing a press release and visit the Brake newsroom to see examples of press releases issued by Brake.

- Use your group's letterhead and write "press release" on the top and the date of issue.
- Give the press release a short, clear headline.
- Provide brief details of your news, using short sentences and paragraphs.
- All your key points should be summarised in your first paragraph.
- Remember to cover the five 'w's. Who, what, when, where and why.
- Make sure your news is newsworthy! It should be about something you have just done or are about to do.
- Include facts (eg. numbers of people who have 'pledged' to drive safely in your community).
- Ask your local councillor, or another well-know person, to provide a supportive quote for your press release.
- Include the name and telephone number of the person who can give further details.
- Include a section in small print called 'Notes to editors' at the bottom of the page, explaining the extent of deaths and injuries on local roads.
- Attach a good photo (eg. a picture of a road safety poster that has won a local competition). This can improve the chances of your story being featured in a paper.

## **How to run a photocall**

You can also organise a photocall. This is an opportunity for journalists to come along and take photographs and film for publication and broadcast, including doing interviews with you. A good photocall is where something active happens (such as a balloon release commemorating the number of people who have died in your area, or a tree being planed in memory of someone who has died) or there is a strong image (such as local children holding up a banner saying 'SLOW DOWN'). Make sure you get permission, if you need it, for whatever you are planning.

- Use your group's letterhead and write "photocall" on the top and the date of issue.
- Give your photocall the same headline as your press release.
- Include clear details about the time, date, and place of your event.
- Include the name and telephone number of the contact person.
- Write a short description of your event. You can base this on a summary of your press release. Remember that the first paragraph of your press release should summarise all the key points of your event.
- Hold a photocall at the beginning of your event, when everyone is available.
- You can include details of your photocall along with the press release, but it is a good idea to send your photocall information to journalists again a few days before your event, as a reminder.



## **'Sell-in' your press release or photo call release**

It is essential to call your local media after you've sent your press release and photocall off to them by email. If you don't, your event may well go to the bottom of the pile. Journalists can receive hundreds of press releases every day, so make sure that yours has reached a news reporter, and you have made that reporter your new best friend! Be persistent; don't expect a journalist to return your call. You may have to send your information again, so make sure you've saved a copy.

When your story is featured it can be a good idea to call the journalist and thank them. Building relationships with journalists increases the chance of them reporting on your activities again.

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