

Roadworkers' Safety Focus Groups

A Report to the Highways Agency by MVA

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Summary

Purpose of the Study

This research is to inform the overall strategy towards roadworkers' safety and identify drivers' perceptions of roadworks and roadworkers, particularly in emergency works. Roadworkers include the AA, RAC, grass cutters, Traffic Officers and those maintaining the roads.

Road users were consulted via six focus groups, three held in Manchester and three near Bristol. Three types of road users were identified for participation: limited/secondary users; intensive business / work related users; and young inexperienced male drivers.

Awareness of and Attitudes towards Roadworkers

Most respondents described roadworkers by describing their duties, rather than knowing job titles. The majority understood roadworkers to include those maintaining the roads.

With regards to maintenance and repairs workers:

- all users were aware of these workers' role and felt it important;
- many feel frustrated with roadworkers / the Highways Agency when they see roadworks / roadworkers;
- many complained about roads being closed/coned off without seeing work taking place; and
- all types of user felt negatively towards roadworkers when their journey is held up, especially at busy times.

With regard to vehicle recovery:

- respondents were aware of vehicle recovery personnel and felt they fulfil an important role; and
- in the main, vehicle recovery personnel were accepted on the road.

With regard to grass cutters and landscapers:

- all users were aware of grass cutters and landscapers and of their role; and
- many, but not all respondents, felt that these workers play an important role.

With regard to traffic officers:

- A large number of respondents were unsure of Traffic Officers' role; and
 - once the role was described, all groups felt they were important.
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Roadworker Safety

There was a difference in opinion regarding roadworker safety:

- most limited and intensive users were concerned about roadworker safety, because they felt that cones provide little protection;
- young inexperienced males appeared dismissive of workers' safety. They felt that cones give enough protection; roadworkers should take responsibility for themselves; roadworkers choose this occupation; and adequate training should be supplied to ensure their safety;
- most respondents stated they change their behaviour when driving through roadworks for either their own or roadworkers safety; and
- young inexperienced males reported lane changing and increasing speed at roadworkers to avoid delay.

Driver Safety

- all users reported knowing how to drive safely at roadworks; and
- young inexperienced male drivers' comments suggest that this knowledge does not always result in safe driving behaviour.

Highways Agency Guidelines for Driving Safely at Road Works

- respondents were not aware of the Highways Agency guidelines but when they read them they thought they were common sense; and
- respondents felt that over confidence, complacency, desire to reach their destination and the impact of driving slowly on fuel costs all impede safe driving.

Improving Roadworker Safety

With regard to providing more information:

- respondents were supportive of receiving more information;
- many believed information currently provided is often inaccurate / out of date;
- most were supportive of VMS to inform drivers about roadworks, but some felt they cause congestion as drivers are slow to read/digest them;
- there was mixed reaction to advisory/temporary speed limit signs; and
- users were less supportive of displaying vehicles' speed entering roadworks.

In relation to enforcement of safe driving:

- respondents felt enforcement would be effective; and
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- the police, safety camera partnerships and Traffic Officers were all mentioned as possible enforcers.

With regard to publicity and education:

- many users, particularly young inexperienced males, felt publicity measures would be useful. They suggested publicising facts and figures about accidents on television, at the roadside or on the radio;
 - many users were supportive of educational measures although young inexperienced male drivers were less supportive;
 - respondents felt that current training and testing is not adequate for motorway driving; and
 - many supported adding a motorway test into the current one, taking motorway driving lessons or introducing a motorway driving test.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In a news release issued by the Highways Agency in August 2005, drivers were urged to take care to protect roadworkers at risk. The news release stated that “so far this year, four workers have died and five have been seriously injured in incidents on Highways Agency routes in England. This compares to one death and 17 serious injuries in 2004 and two deaths and 10 serious injuries in 2003.” David Virden of Mouchel Parkman stated that “increasingly our workforces are experiencing dangerous actions by drivers.”

1.1.2 In a survey of roadworkers conducted in 2004, of the 400 workers who responded:

- almost 20% said they had suffered some injury caused by passing vehicles in the course of their careers while working on the road network;
- 3% sustained major injuries;
- 13% sustained slight injuries;
- 77% said they had suffered verbal abuse from drivers;
- 40% reported having objects thrown at them by motorists; and
- 54% had experienced a near miss with a vehicle.

1.1.3 Roadworkers thought that driving too fast was the most common cause of accidents in roadworks areas (89%), followed by lack of concentration (76%) and drivers not observing road signs (73%).

1.1.4 These statistics have raised concerns about the safety of roadworkers. A Breakfast Meeting was held at the Tower of London on 20th October 2005 to discuss improving roadworker safety, demonstrating commitment to the issue.

1.1.5 The Highways Agency commissioned MVA to conduct focus groups with road users in order to develop a knowledge base regarding attitudes to roadworkers and their safety.

1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The aim of this research is to inform the overall strategy towards roadworkers' safety and to identify drivers' perceptions of roadworks and roadworkers, particularly in emergency works. Roadworkers include the AA, RAC, grass cutters, Traffic Officers and those working on the roads. The Highways Agency is interested in knowing why drivers speed at roadworks, whether they find them a distraction, and whether they

understand why they should go slower. In addition, they are interested in drivers' perceptions of Highways Agency Traffic Officers.

- 1.2.2 Road users were consulted through six focus groups in order to consider the issues in depth and provide qualitative insights. The discussion guide can be found in Appendix A.
- 1.2.3 A range of road user types were included in the research. Two types of road users were identified from earlier segmentation analysis: intensive business / work related users and limited / secondary users. In addition, due to the nature of the research, a third group was added: *young inexperienced male drivers*.

Intensive Business Work Related Users

Intensive users are very regular users and are often extensive users of the Highways Agency road. This group largely comprises commuters and those who drive on the roads as part of their job.

Limited / Secondary Users

Limited users are those who use the Highways Agency roads less frequently. They tend to use the roads for leisure and other non-work purposes. This group also includes secondary travellers; who travel on the Highways Agency roads as passengers. The limited / secondary users group tend to be older citizens.

Young inexperienced male drivers

Young inexperienced male drivers includes male drivers under the age of 26 who are users of Highways Agency Roads. The over-representation of new and young drivers in road traffic accidents is well documented. A study by Stirling University on behalf of the Scottish Executive indicated that new male drivers were less likely than females to abide by the legal and social conventions of driving with regard to speeding behaviour.

- 1.2.4 Focus groups with each of the three identified types of road users were conducted in two locations, Manchester and Bristol, in order to identify any differences in attitudes based on location.
- 1.2.5 At the beginning of each group, respondents were provided with information regarding the Highways Agency responsibilities, and Agency roads in the surrounding area where highlighted.
- 1.2.6 Findings from the focus groups with each of the road user types are reported separately. In addition, any differences based on location are highlighted.

1.3 Structure of Report

- 1.3.1 The remainder of the report is organised as follows:
 - Chapters Two reports on the limited / secondary users focus groups;

- Chapter Three reports on the intensive business / work related users focus groups; and
- Chapter Four reports on the young inexperienced male drivers focus groups.

1.3.2 Full transcriptions from the groups can be found in Appendix B.

2 Focus Group Findings – Limited / Secondary Users

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter reports the findings from the focus groups held with limited / secondary users in Manchester and Bristol.

2.2 Profile of respondents

Table 2.1 Profile of Respondents

	Frequency
Gender	
Male	8
Female	10
Method of Travel	
Driver of a car / van (HGV/PSV)	11
Passenger in a car / van	7
Working Status	
Working full time	3
Not working full time	7
Retired	8
Age Group	
35-44	2
45-54	7
55-64	7
65+	2
Length of time held Driving License	
No license	5
11-15 years	2
16-20 years	1
More than 20 years	10

2.3 Awareness of and attitudes towards roadworkers

2.3.1 Respondents were asked who they understood roadworkers on Highways Agency roads to be. The majority of limited / secondary users perceive roadworkers to be those involved in maintenance and repair work, road lighting, drainage systems workers and utility companies. This included those carrying out the work and those cordoning off the work area.

“Maintenance people on the road, working on the road.”

“Maintenance and repairs people.”

“The yellow jacket man...they’re maintenance.”

“Road sweeper, they’re roadworkers.”

“Road markers.”

“Guys that are going round cleaning the drains and stuff like that.”

“The utilities companies as well, utilities, water works and stuff. They occasionally turn up and dig a hole in the road as well.”

“Lights as well.”

“People that put up the cones.”

2.3.2 The limited / secondary users also noted that the police and other emergency services, including the fire brigade, work on the Highways Agency roads.

2.3.3 Respondents were told that there are four key groups of individuals working on the roads including; maintenance and repair workers, vehicle recovery, Traffic Officers and grass cutters. They were then taken through each group in turn and asked about their understanding of the roadworkers’ responsibilities and their attitudes towards them.

Maintenance and Repair Workers

2.3.4 The limited / secondary users believe that the maintenance and repairs roadworkers’ role involves resurfacing the roads, filling in holes, working on the central reservation and undertaking repairs to other wear and tear damage. They pointed out that maintenance and repair work needs to be undertaken because of the high volume of traffic on the roads and to meet health and safety requirements.

“Resurfacing, a lot of resurfacing.”

“Filling in holes.”

“Doing whatever repairs come up from wear and tear on the roads and ensuring that the roads stay safe.”

“Doing the central reservation.”

“Because of the volume of traffic.” [Means maintenance work needs to be carried out]

“You’ve got to do checks all the time now.” [For health and safety reasons]

2.3.5 All limited / secondary users felt that the repair and maintenance role is an important one and were accepting of the inconvenience associated with essential works.

“It’s an important role though.”

“You sort of accept people like that because they’re doing it to make it better in the long run otherwise it just gets worse and worse and worse.”

“If it has to be done then you accept it I think.”

- 2.3.6 All of the limited / secondary users reported some interaction with these roadworkers in terms of having seen both large-scale and smaller emergency roadworks on Highways Agency roads.

“Seen large ones mainly.”

“I’ve seen both kinds.” [Large and smaller scale emergency roadworks]

- 2.3.7 Although the limited / secondary users recognised that repair and maintenance of the roads is an important role, they noted that they became frustrated or annoyed when they saw sections of the road cordoned off and nobody working there. Some perceived this to be due to a lack of coordination between departments within the Highways Agency.

“The M32 has had a long run of them, but there’s nobody there and it’s been like that for well over a month as far as I know and you drive past and think what’s happening, what’s going on?”

“I understand the reason for the roadworks and it is important because if you just drive around small roads and there’s bumps it knocks your car about but if you’re going 70 miles an hour and the surface is damaged it’s probably going to kill you. So they are important but if you see week after week with no one doing anything well that’s a different story.”

“When you see nothing happening it is annoying.”

“Probably only a certain department can put up for health and safety reasons.”

“It sounds to me that one hand doesn’t know what the other hand is doing because someone should be working on it if it’s cordoned off.”

- 2.3.8 Some other limited / secondary users stated that they have negative feelings towards roadworkers when the work they are undertaking holds up their journey, particularly at busy times of the day.

“It slows the traffic down an awful lot during the busy times and people must get really fed up.”

“I do [feel negative towards them].”

- 2.3.9 The limited / secondary users were asked if they had seen vans with flashing arrows behind them. All had seen them and many of the respondents from Bristol found them intimidating or reported that they made them feel nervous.

“They make me feel quite nervous.”

“They do attract your attention.”

“They’re quite intimidating.”

2.3.10 The limited / secondary users from Manchester reported being frustrated by these vehicles because they believed they were putting out cones and felt that they were doing this before it was necessary.

“I feel frustrated because you can guarantee they’ll be dropping cones off and nobody’s going to be working there. They put them there about three days before anyone starts work.”

“I appreciate they’re got to put the cones out in good time but not two days [before anyone starts work].”

2.3.11 Most of the limited / secondary users reported that they slow down when they see these vehicles; in some cases because they cause traffic jams and drivers therefore have no choice. Some Manchester limited / secondary users reported that they overtake the vehicles. In general the limited / secondary users from Manchester found the vehicles more annoying than those from Bristol.

“There’s usually traffic backed up so you have to slow down.”

“People slow down, pull out.”

“Overtake it.”

Vehicle recovery

2.3.12 The limited / secondary users believe that the role of vehicle recovery workers is to clear cars and lorries off the roads to avoid accidents. They added that it also involves assisting individuals who are having difficulties with their vehicle.

“They get you off the active part of the roads quickly.”

“Clearing the roads to avoid any accidents.”

“Trying to shift it [obstructing vehicles] as soon as possible to stop other accidents happening I suppose.”

“Recovering vehicles.”

“Helping with breakdowns.”

2.3.13 All of the limited / secondary user respondents felt that vehicle recovery is a very important role and that without these roadworkers the roads would become chaotic.

“Yes, it’s very important.”

“Very, to get the road clear.”

“It’s essential, it’s not good, it’s needed.”

“The AA and the RAC are privately owned companies aren’t they, so it’s the general public that pay for them to be there. Without AA recovery or RAC

recovery nobody would be doing the job, you'd just have abandoned cars everywhere."

"It'd be chaos on the roads." [If no vehicle recovery]

2.3.14 Most of the limited / secondary user respondents had had some interaction with vehicle recovery personnel. All had seen them and five had received their assistance on Highways Agency roads. All of those who had benefited from their assistance were satisfied with the help they had received.

"Someone's always breaking down and they come out."

"There was an accident not long ago and they were pretty quick in coming out and clearing the glass and everything up from the vehicle, they were there within 15 minutes...Plus they moved the vehicle from the middle of the road pretty quickly as well."

"I broke down and they came to get me. They were brilliant. It was about six o'clock on a Sunday evening on the M5. They were brilliant, got me home. I couldn't fault them at all."

"I had to use them once and it was very, very good, it was on the M6. I pulled into the side, phoned up the AA and they were out in half an hour. They didn't sort it out because it was the alternator itself that packed up so they took me along to a garage."

"I'd gone down the M5 and it was horrendous rain it took my wipers right completely off and I phoned them up and they were there within half an hour."

"A few years ago my car packed up on the motorway and I had to get out at nearly seven o'clock on a January night and try and push my car to the hard shoulder...phoned the RAC [and they said] don't sit in your car and I was sat down on the iron bit and this police came and the RAC was very, very quick. The police and the RAC were very, very good."

2.3.15 The limited / secondary user respondents stated that they felt relieved when they saw vehicle recovery personnel when it was for their own vehicle. Most stated that they felt positive or did not mind when they saw vehicle recovery personnel assisting other road users. This was true regardless of whether it was a car or haulage recovery.

"You sigh with relief when they turn up for you."

"No not at all, you don't mind seeing them."

"You've just got to accept it and get on with it."

2.3.16 However two limited / secondary users stated that they feel negative in some situations. For one, this was when recovery personnel are blocking their way. The other reported negative feelings when they see personnel parked up having a break.

"If they're not blocking the way, well no."

“Except when you see them parked up eating their sandwiches on the side of the road.”

Grass cutters and landscapers

2.3.17 The limited / secondary user respondents were asked about their understanding of the grass cutters’ and landscapers’ role. They noted that it is to cut the grass and hedges.

2.3.18 They noted that this is an important role and that it ensures that there is good visibility for drivers.

“It’s important for visibility.”

“They’ve got to maintain it.”

2.3.19 Most limited / secondary users had seen grass cutters and landscapers on the Highways Agency roads. Some reported positive interactions and low inconvenience and consequently were satisfied.

“If grass starts to grow again you see them out and I think they’re generally quite good. Looks as if they’re quite switched on in terms of putting the cones up to make sure and tree cutting and all this lot.”

“I’ve seen them as I’ve driven by and they don’t really get in my way.”

“They haven’t slowed me down.”

“I’m quite happy to be honest.”

2.3.20 Some limited / secondary users in Bristol, however, felt that although the work was important, it could be better arranged. In general they felt that grass cutters and landscapers cone-off more of the road than is necessary, which can lead to delays and thus annoyance.

“I did see some the other day and the cones they had around them was absolutely ridiculous. They were cutting something over there and they had coned-off a whole lane and a half...there was cones everywhere and there was nothing happening but grass cutting right over there and they had coned off a lane and a half...I was furious...I’m not saying all they were doing because it is important.”

“It is important but it could sometimes be handled better. I’ve seen where they’re using a lane to park equipment on but that lane could be up and running. It’s only the odd time though. I’ve encountered it twice in a year.”

Traffic Officers

2.3.21 Most limited / secondary users were unsure about the role of Traffic Officers. One person thought they were employed to give motorists speeding tickets. Another noted that they give directions. Only two people mentioned that they aim to keep the roads clear and the traffic moving.

“They’re there to try and give you a ticket.”

“The man that stands in the road to give you directions and tell you where to go.”

“To get you going.”

“To keep the roads clear.”

2.3.22 Once it was explained what the role of the Traffic Officer is, all were of the opinion that it is an important one, particularly if they help to keep the traffic running smoothly. However, they noted that it would only have valuable effects if enough Traffic Officers were employed and if the job was being done correctly. One limited / secondary user felt that this note was not currently being undertaken satisfactorily.

“It’s a role which could be improved I think because I have never come across any Traffic Officers but what I have noticed is an accident happens in the morning and you’re still feeling the effects of it that evening...it just seems to me they’re taking an inordinate amount of time to clear them.”

“It certainly sounds like a good idea doesn’t it, since if there is someone who is dedicated to keeping the roads running, because the police, that’s only their secondary interest isn’t it?”

“I certainly would [say Traffic Officers are fulfilling a valuable role] because the more delays there are the more accidents.” [If the role is fulfilled appropriate]

“If there is anything that would cut down the amount of time affects that an accident had on motorway travel, certainly is something I would support.”

“It’s an important role if there’s enough of them.”

“Important if it’s done right and well.”

2.3.23 Some limited / secondary user respondents in Manchester felt that the Traffic Officers working near the Trafford Centre are not currently doing a good enough job in keeping the traffic flowing.

“Some of them don’t do a good enough job, when you come off from the Trafford centre it’s a huge queue, why they’ve put traffic lights there I don’t know?” [Keeping the traffic flowing]

2.3.24 Another was concerned that Traffic Officers do not have legal authority in the same way that the police do. They felt that certain individuals may therefore ignore their instructions.

“I’m just a bit nervous that they don’t have any immediate [legal] authority [e.g. to arrest] because there’s those that’ll say you can’t tell me to do anything and they won’t have any power at that moment. Okay it can be done later on but they have to be caught.”

2.3.25 None of the Bristol limited / secondary users had seen Traffic Officers before but a few of the Manchester respondents had seen them. Some of these were not satisfied with traffic diversions that Traffic Officers had put in place. They felt that the diversions did not direct them the way they wanted to go. For this reason their attitudes towards Traffic Officers was not always positive, particularly at the time of the diversion.

“The only thing that does annoy me about Traffic Officers is when they’re diverting traffic and they come from a totally different area to where they are and they’re diverting traffic and they send you in a completely opposite direction to where you want to go.”

“Sometimes when you see diversion ends, it doesn’t because it doesn’t take you where you want to be.”

“You’re just thinking great because you’ve got three kids in the back of the car going ‘are we nearly home? Are we nearly home?’ And you just don’t know where you are...Once they’ve diverted you, there wasn’t even any signs redirecting you.”

“They don’t follow it through, you see diversion this way so you go that way expecting to be told next left, next right and it should bring you back on...but it just disappears most of the time.”

2.3.26 Most other limited / secondary user respondents who had seen Traffic Officers stated that, in general, they were pleased to see them on the roads. Those who had not seen them before felt that they would be pleased to see them, if they could make the traffic flow more smoothly.

“Pleased if they can help to move it along.”

“Pleased, yes I would be if they really can make things run more smoothly.”

2.4 Roadworker safety

2.4.1 The limited / secondary user respondents were asked if they are ever concerned about the safety of roadworkers on Highways Agency roads. The majority of respondents from Bristol were concerned because they see maintenance and repair workers working in the dark and noted that the cones do not provide much protection from drivers.

“Yes I do.”

“It’s not a job I’d do.”

“It only needs one crazy driver to drive through those cones.”

“They work in the dark as well.”

2.4.2 A small number from Bristol and most limited / secondary users from Manchester were less concerned. One felt that roadworkers choose to do the job and that safety is therefore their own concern. Other limited / secondary users felt that cones give the roadworkers enough space to protect them from

the traffic and that the impetus should be on the workers to ensure their own safety while the drivers focus on their driving. They also mentioned that roadworkers should be trained and that drivers are given a great deal of warning about roadworks.

“It’s their job, they choose to do it.”

“The cones that they put up are so far back even a crazy driver I think would have come off by then.” [By the time they had reached where the roadworkers were positioned]

“When they actually cordon off what they’re doing now it’s so big, it’s not like in the old days where they put a little thing out saying men at work.”

“No because they should look out for themselves. I mean they know where they are so surely it’s up to them. We’re in our vehicles we’ve got to look after what where doing.”

“I think if they look after what they’re doing and you look after what you’re doing it should be alright.”

“They should have been trained.”

- 2.4.3 The limited / secondary user respondents were asked if they alter their driving behaviour when they see roadworkers. Most from the Bristol group stated that they do not; rather, if possible they continue driving steadily and, in some cases, try to take extra care. One respondent mentioned that they move to a lane further away from the workers, if it is safe to do so.

“No.”

“I always try to move out [into a further lane] if it’s safe.”

“Just go steady.”

“If you’ve got your lanes you can just keep going down then I just keep going.”

“I do take extra care.”

“I try to be careful.”

- 2.4.4 Most limited / secondary users from the Manchester group however reported that they do change how they drive. Most stated that they slow down. Only one person stated he did not alter his driving behaviour, rather he stuck to the speed limit and continued driving.

“I slow down.”

“No I don’t alter my behaviour at all; I just stick to the speed limit and then just drive along as I’d normally drive.”

- 2.4.5 The limited / secondary users stated that they would adopt the same driving behaviour whether they were faced with large-scale roadworks or smaller

emergency works. However when prompted with a specific example of a van in an outside lane a number stated that they would be more cautious.

"I'd be very cautious that the person behind you would think they're going slow and overtake you."

"Be more cautious."

- 2.4.6 Respondents were then asked if they alter their driving behaviour when faced with signs for roadworks. Most stated that they keep cautious of what is on the road or are slow down. However a number noted that signs are often not up-to-date or inaccurate, and felt that this can anger drivers and cause them to ignore signed warnings.

"I just keep an eye out what's ahead."

"Just keep cautious."

"If it's a speed restriction I always obey a speed restriction."

"Slow down really."

"Sometime these signs are up for no apparent reason. I've been driving along the motorway and see signs that say you know slow down fifty miles an hour and you see nothing at all."

"They're not up to date. You go through and there's a sign for an accident but there isn't anything and the sign's not been taken down. It's not coordinating with what's happening. Sometimes it's hours out of date." [Road signs]

"People don't pay attention to signs because many are not up to date."

"It annoys people."

2.5 Driver safety

- 2.5.1 The limited / secondary user respondents were asked if they were aware how they should drive to ensure safety at roadworks. All indicated that they were. When asked to give examples, they mentioned being cautious, reducing their speed, sticking to the speed limit, driving as normal or following any instructions given. One limited / secondary user noted that each situation is different, the implication being that drivers need to remain aware and adjust their driving accordingly.

"Cautiously."

"Be aware."

"Slow down."

"Sticking to the speed limit."

"Each situation's different isn't it?"

“If it doesn’t tell you then just carry on as normal but if it says way before this lane is closing get into the middle lane or reduce speed down to twenty then you’ve got to do it.”

“If it doesn’t tell you then it’s probably not going to be a big thing and you can just nip past.”

- 2.5.2 The limited / secondary users did not mention getting into the correct lane in good time, concentrating on the road ahead, being alert for works traffic, keeping a safe distance and observing all signs. However, when presented with the Highways Agency’s guidelines, they noted that there was not anything that they did not know.

“It’s obvious.”

“Well it’s common sense really.”

- 2.5.3 The limited / secondary user respondents were asked if they thought that drivers follow these guidelines at roadworks. In general they believed that drivers do not. They noted that drivers do what they want rather than what is necessarily safe. This included lane hopping, driving fast or driving down closed lanes to get to the front of the traffic.

“There’s all this lane hopping.”

“Some people just do what they want.”

“They know it’s there they just want to get on before you.”

“People drive down the closed off lane and then try to get in, in front of you.”

“You see people speeding past just so they can get in front.”

- 2.5.4 The limited / secondary users thought that drivers do know how they are supposed to drive to ensure safety, but stated that they choose not to because they do not want to be held up or because, in the case of certain vans, they are not driving their own vehicle and so are less concerned about it.

“Oh yes they know them.”

“Normally because the traffic in front of them is going at the right speed and they don’t want to go at the right speed so they come out onto the next lane.”

“Time, they don’t want to wait.”

“White vans, they scare you. It’s because it’s not their own vehicle.”

2.6 Improving roadworker safety

- 2.6.1 Respondents were asked what they thought could be done to ensure driver safety at roadworks.

- 2.6.2 Limited / secondary users from Manchester noted that roadworkers need to be given appropriate safety wear including crash helmets and high visibility jackets.

“Kit them out with helmets and those jackets.”

“They should be made to wear proper crash helmets because hard hats don’t do anything.”

- 2.6.3 They also felt that all roadworkers should be car drivers to ensure a good understanding of the roads and how to be courteous to drivers.

“I think that all roadworkers should be car drivers so they’ve got a good understanding of the road.”

“I think they should be courteous towards to the car driver...the guys that actually work on the road can be quite rude.”

More information

- 2.6.4 Limited / secondary users were supportive of giving drivers more information to aid safe driving. They thought that variable messaging could be effective as long as the information provided is accurate and up-to-date. One respondent highlighted the need to ensure that messages were in ‘real time’.

“As long as they’re accurate and up to date. If what you’re reading is actually what’s happening.”

“But they have to be accurate.”

“They need to be real time because a lot of them are out of sync. If they were tied to real time they would be [useful].”

- 2.6.5 Limited / secondary users suggested that the radio is a good way of delivering information. There was however mixed opinion regarding whether or not it is the best method of information delivery, due to the time taken from information supply to broadcast and because drivers have to be tuned in to the radio to hear the information. In general limited / secondary users in Manchester were more supportive of disseminating information in this way.

“The radio is very useful.”

“If it’s accurate when it’s broadcast then the radio would be useful.”

“You get people ringing up saying there is a big smash at junction 23 but when you get there, there is nothing.”

“Usually by the time it’s broadcast it’s over.”

“It’s less likely to be accurate I’d say because by the time it’s got through the various channels and on air it would be over.”

“You can switch it off, that’s the problem so you need the signs in front of you, but both of them together [would be useful].”

- 2.6.6 Limited / secondary users were supportive of Variable Message Signing (VMS) as a way of informing drivers of roadworks.

“I find them useful.”

“You can see those.”

“They’re very good; someone just types it on a computer.”

“It’s a good idea.”

- 2.6.7 Limited / secondary users were also supportive of advisory or temporary speed limit displays when entering roadworks.

“Yes, that’s a good idea.”

“It does make you watch it and slow down.”

“They’re very good.”

“They do make you slow down when you seen one.”

- 2.6.8 However a number of limited / secondary users felt that these measures on their own were not enough to ensure safety and that they needed to be backed up by speed cameras.

“But unless you’ve got a camera behind it people just look at it and carry on, you’ve got to have something to back it up.”

“It’s not enough on it’s own.”

- 2.6.9 Most limited / secondary users from Bristol thought that any information delivered should present the facts in a straightforward method. They were not supportive of more emotive techniques. Those from Manchester were a bit more supportive of emotive messaging but did not believe it would ensure all drivers would drive safely.

“Straightforward messaging.”

“Factual messages.”

“They need to be well lit and give clear information that everyone can understand.”

“It would make you think a bit.” [Emotive messages]

“My daddy is working on this road is not going to affect that driver going fast.”

Enforcement

2.6.10 Limited / secondary users thought that enforcement should be the primary method of ensuring safety. They felt that speed cameras, backed up by fines, were a good way of enforcing safe driving.

“Camera because people just carry on. But if they are going to charge you £50 you slow down don’t you?”

“If people don’t see a reason [enforcement] to slow down they’ll just carry on.”

“More cameras.”

“Unless it’s a portable speed camera there and it says 30 miles and hour for the next half an hour.”

2.6.11 The limited / secondary users from Bristol were very supportive of police and/or traffic officer presence at roadworks and thought this would be a good way of ensuring safe driving. The limited / secondary users from Manchester were sceptical about the logistics of having police at the roadworks.

“Can’t the Traffic Officers do it?”

“Yes because people get to know where all the camera are and as soon as they see a camera they just slow down.”

“A police presence is always very, very good.”

“Just a police car sitting there does they trick?”

“You can’t have police at every road work.”

Publicity and education

2.6.12 Limited / secondary users were asked if they thought educating and raising drivers’ awareness through publicity or other methods would be an effective way of increasing safety. One noted that there had not been much publicity around safe driving at roadworks. Another suggested that there are key times of the year, such as school holidays, when publicity campaigns would be most useful.

“I don’t think there has been much.”

“You could do it over peak period of the year like with children’s summer holidays when people are on the roads.”

2.6.13 Some limited / secondary users felt that publicity could be beneficial but many, particularly those from Bristol, were sceptical about how much publicity and advertising campaigns could achieve. They noted that there have been large scale campaigns about drink driving and felt that these have not been successful. Others however felt that publicity could be of some use. Overall, they maintained that enforcement and adopting a ‘zero tolerance’ approach would be the most effective means of ensuring driver safety at roadworks.

“It couldn’t hurt.”

“We’ve had all this with the drink driving and it doesn’t do much. This people we’ve had thousands and thousands of pounds spent educating people about not drinking and driving and they’re still doing it.”

“There is still a place for publicity you know saying you’re going on holiday, they’re working, watch your speed.”

“I think there’s room for it but I don’t think it is the major way of stopping it. A deterrent is better than publicity. It shouldn’t be but statistics say it is.”

“The only way you’re going to do it is penalising people, I’m sorry to say.”

“You’ve just got to adopt zero tolerance.”

- 2.6.14 Even those who were more supportive of a publicity approach felt that Top Gear would not be the correct place to promote driver safety because it is only watched by a specific segment of drivers and because the programme features fast driving. One limited / secondary user felt television adverts would be a better method.

“Not everyone will be watching it.”

“I’m not interested in that.” [Top Gear]

“It’s governed by those that watch it; it’s not something you have to do, whereas if it’s part of the test everyone has to do it.”

“Top Gear’s not the right place because they drive very fast.”

“I think adverts would be far better.”

- 2.6.15 The limited / secondary users were very supportive of a motorway driving test but thought that six months was too long to wait until the test could be taken. Some thought it could be taken as part of the original driving test or much sooner after the test.

“I think motorway should be included in the driving test because you can’t go anywhere nowadays without going on a motorway.”

“It should be at the same time. You shouldn’t be able to go on the motorway without passing one.”

“It should be included as part of the test.”

“It’s a long time because you can’t go anywhere without travelling on the motorways.”

“Once you get on there it’s the easiest driving that you’ll do so I think six months is too long and I don’t think people would adhere to it.”

“Maybe they pass their test and then within the same day you go on and learn and get tested.”

“To me it would be far better to pass a driving test and then have the motorway one as soon as you’re ready. The driving instructor knows best when they person is ready.”

“Here when they pass they want to go on the motorway because they’re straight over to Bristol.” [Therefore six months is too long to wait for the motorway test]

2.6.16 The limited / secondary users thought that drivers should at least have to take motorway lessons.

“I think it’s ludicrous that they allow you go on the motorway without even having any experience.”

“I think it’s crazy that someone can pass their driving test and go straight onto the motorway.”

2.6.17 One felt that practice centres could be used to help educate learners and allow them to practice motorway driving.

“Centres or something where they have those skid pad type things and they’ve go it all set up.”

3 Focus Group Findings – Intensive Business/Work Related Users

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This chapter reports the findings from the focus groups held with intensive business / work related users in Manchester and Bristol.

3.2 Profile of respondents

- 3.2.1 Table 3.1 shows the profile of respondents.

Table 3.1 Profile of Respondents

	Frequency
Gender	
Male	10
Female	9
Method of Travel	
Driver of a car / van (HGV/PSV)	19
Working Status	
Working full time	19
Age Group	
22-25	1
26-34	8
35-44	6
45-54	3
55-64	1
Length of time held Driving Licence	
6-10 years	4
11-15 years	5
16-20 years	5
More than 20 years	5

3.3 Awareness of and attitudes towards roadworkers

- 3.3.1 Respondents were asked who they understood roadworkers, on the Highways Agency roads to be. Those from the Bristol and Manchester groups mentioned that they had seen both maintenance workers and Traffic Officers.

Intensive business / work related users of Manchester also mentioned that they had seen landscapers and contractors such as electricians, caterers and cleaners. They described people on the roads by describing their duties, rather than roadworker categories.

“The guys in the yellow coats on the side of the road.”

“The ones digging the roads.”

“Those putting out the cones.”

“The ones patrolling.” [Traffic Officers]

“Digger drivers, Wagon drivers.”

“Electricians.”

“Pen pushers, assessing accidents and crash barriers.”

“The other people who have cropped up recently, they are not called the Highways Agency, these pretend police cars that make you slow down. It is not a bad thing, every time I see a broken down car I see them there and that’s long overdue because the police won’t stop for you. It’s the people that look like police; it might be the Highways Agency actually.”

“They [Traffic Officers] will stop at an accident and help, or help clear the debris off the road, they’re a good idea because they free up the police to do other things.”

“Caterers, cleaners support workers [private contractors].”

“People clearing the trees.”

“I see people at the start and the end of the process, putting out and removing cones, it’s a dangerous job isn’t it?”

- 3.3.2 Respondents were told that there are four key groups of individuals working on the roads including maintenance and repair workers, vehicle recovery, Traffic Officers and grass cutters. They were taken through each group in turn and asked about their understanding of the roadworkers’ responsibilities and their attitudes to them.

Maintenance and repairs workers

- 3.3.3 Intensive business / work related user respondents stated that maintenance and repair workers’ responsibilities involve fixing the roads, included filling in pot holes, painting road markings and resurfacing.

“Fixing the roads.”

“Filling in pot holes.”

“New lines.”

“Marking lines.”

“Surfaces.”

- 3.3.4 Intensive business / work related user respondents all felt that maintenance and repair workers undertake an important role, but did not feel that it was currently being satisfactorily fulfilled. They noted that they had seen roadworkers being unproductive and that it had frustrated them when they had seen lanes shut off without seeing workers. The intensive business / work related users were unsure whether they had seen emergency works because they felt they were not informed about the type of work being undertaken.

“One’s working and four are watching.”

“One bloke having a cup of tea, another bloke dawdling about and one bloke watching another bloke digging a hole.”

“For everyone working there’s just three or four stood around.”

“I’ve seen cones and nobody there.”

“You see cones and no explanation of why.”

“Thirty miles of cones and no one there.”

“On the M62, those cones were out for three weeks going on and it’s such an impact on the traffic.”

“You accept it, I mean we have all been on poorly surfaced roads and it’s a nightmare.”

- 3.3.5 The intensive business / work related users also complained that road workers cone-off more space on the road than is necessary and that they appear not to finish jobs before starting new ones leading to large sections of road being shut.

“They cone off more than they need.”

“They don’t finish one bit and then they start on another bit and you think why don’t you just finish one bit.”

- 3.3.6 The intensive business / work related users were also frustrated that they had seen roadworks starting at inconvenient times, for example, when there is a high traffic flow.

“Why do they start on August bank holiday weekend?”

“It’s the time they do it. Not the time of day the time of year, like bank holidays.”

- 3.3.7 For these reasons many of the intensive business / work related users felt a great deal of irritation towards the Highways Agency when they perceived

road work planning to be poor and towards roadworkers when they appear not to be working.

“Thirty miles of cones and frustration.”

“It’s incredibly irritating.”

“Irritated with the Highways Agency I suppose.”

- 3.3.8 The intensive business / work related users from Manchester were well aware of major works being completed on the M60 motorway and used this to exemplify some of their points. They felt that when travelling through roadworks frustration is heightened by a lack of information, which subsequently leads a person to be unable to plan their journey.

“There is major roadwork’s at Stretford and for the first three or four weeks I felt very frustrated because there wasn’t any notification of it. It just happened and then notification went up saying it was going to be sometime in February, but when in February? It has frustrated me.”

“They change the set up regularly, one day I can get into the office at twenty past seven, but then they change the layout and it is quarter to nine I get to work.”

- 3.3.9 All of the intensive business / work related users reported some interaction with maintenance and repair workers. Although they recognised that repair and maintenance of the roads is an important role, they re-iterated that they become frustrated or annoyed when they see sections of the road coned off and nobody working there. Some intensive business / work related users perceived this to be due to a lack of coordination between departments.

- 3.3.10 Some of the intensive business / work related users highlighted that sometimes jobs are done at inappropriate times of the day. However one respondent mentioned that she had seen roadworks being completed out of peak time.

“A road sweep goes round the roundabout and gridlocks the motorway, I mean I know it has to be done, but does it need to be done between eight and nine o’clock in the morning.”

“If they do it at 10 o’clock at night, it’s ideal.”

- 3.3.11 The intensive business / work related users were asked what they thought when they saw a van with arrows behind it on a motorway. Some stated that they thought there had been an accident but most believed that cones were being put out, and did not tend to think about the reason.

“Think there’s been an accident.”

“More cones!”

- 3.3.12 They noted that in this situation they would tend to carry on driving where possible and drive steadily.

“Just keep going if you can.”

“Go steady I suppose.”

Vehicle recovery

3.3.13 The intensive business / work related users stated that the vehicle recovery worker’s job is to recover vehicles and to help drivers who have broken down, particularly those having difficulty on the motorway. This job was seen as essential and respondents felt that these roadworkers play an important role on the road network.

“Their priority I think will be recovery and people who have broken down. Their main priority is the motorway which is why I think I had to wait so long.” [When assistance was needed on a minor road]

“Very important.”

“They help you out.”

“It’s not just valuable, it’s essential.”

“I think that it’s quite positive that you know that they’re there.”

“They’re there to try and sort out things as quickly as possible so you’re fine with it.”

“Basically they’re there because someone’s in trouble.”

3.3.14 All of the intensive business / work related users had seen both car and haulage recovery but only a small number of respondents had actually had face-to-face interaction with recovery personnel on the motorway. All the intensive business / work related users were very accepting and positive about seeing both car and haulage recovery personnel on the Highways Agency roads, because they felt sympathy towards the person they were assisting.

“I usually see them, they park on the bridges by junctions and things I suppose so they can get on quickly but I’ve not actually broken down on the motorway.”

“I have. I think it was AA and they were good, they came but the thing is I didn’t know whereabouts I was on the motorway but they were really good and came really quickly.”

“Yeah, they helped me out, they were there within 30 minutes and the lad seemed pretty well trained, bit grumpy but it was first thing in the morning, he was good at what he did.”

Grass cutters and landscapers

3.3.15 The intensive business / work related users were aware that grass cutters and landscapers have responsibility for cutting grass and keeping hedges tidy on the Highways Agency roads. Whilst some felt that the role is important and

noted that it ensures driver visibility, others were less convinced of the importance of the role.

“It is important.”

“I suppose it needs doing.”

“It helps the visibility.”

3.3.16 Most, but not all, of the intensive business / work related users had seen grass cutters and landscapers on the Highways Agency roads.

“On the A roads I’ve seen them.”

3.3.17 When asked, a small number of the intensive business / work related users stated that they were irritated that grass cutters and landscapers worked during busy times on the roads. Most, however, felt indifferent to them.

“It’s always about eight or after four and you think why don’t you just wait [until after rush hour]. It’s irritating.”

“They always do it in the daytime and it’s annoying.”

“I have been in traffic because they have closed lanes on the M6 (northbound) toward Altringham. It was shut down to two lanes because they were cleaning the central reservation.”

“Most of us spend a lot of time on the roads, so most of us come to expect and accept it.”

“Not bothered.”

Traffic Officers

3.3.18 Most of the intensive business / work related users were aware of the duties that Traffic Officers undertake. They noted that they carry out tasks which take pressure off the police, including clearing obstructions and closing lanes when there is an obstruction. It was felt that they play an important role, because they ‘free-up’ the police to do other tasks, as well as keeping the traffic moving when there is an accident or incident.

“Take pressure of the police.”

“Clearing things off the roads and things.”

“They seem to turn up before the AA or RAC and put a few cones round things and they seem to respond quicker than the police, I don’t know why.”

“I’ve seen where there’s been things that have fallen off cars or whatever and dropped on a lane on the motorway, I’ve seen them come and slow down the traffic so they can move it out of the way.”

“There is a lot of them about; it’s about time you had somebody patrolling the motorways, even dragging people off the road when someone is stuck in the middle of the road. The police would just drive past.”

“They won’t tow you off; they will just stop and help you, maybe help you call the AA. The AA can’t go in the outside lane to tow you off, but they can. They can do the police job and put the hazard lights on.”

“They can stop a motorway, but can’t arrest people. They are there purely to help people, but how long that will last I don’t know, until they start having cameras on their vehicles, that will be next.”

3.3.19 The intensive business / work related users were then given more information about the Traffic Officer role and responsibilities. Again, they noted the value of the role for taking pressure off the police, speeding up journey time, and ensuring safety. One noted that it would be difficult for them to stop dangerous driving and that this should be left to the police.

“I suppose it is a valuable role, you can see how that would aid the police.”

“If it speeds up your journey as well then it’s got to be good thing.”

“And if it improves your safety.”

“If someone’s broken down and they put a row of cones and flashing lights as opposed to just someone’s hazard lights, that’s good.” [For safety reasons]

“I think just by their presence [they help to ensure safety] because I’ve slowed down because I thought they were to do with the police not the Highways Agency.”

“They are helping getting the roads going aren’t they, which is long overdue.”

“If someone’s driving dangerously they can’t actually do anything.”

3.3.20 The intensive business / work related users had not had any face-to-face interaction with Traffic Officers but had seen them whilst travelling, either patrolling or undertaking their duties, such as removing obstructions and coning off obstructed lanes.

“Like I said I’ve driven past them and slowed down.”

“You see them on bridges at night.”

“I’ve seen them deal with an accident. They pushed the car in because it (the traffic) was solid.”

“Seen them blocking off a lane when there was an obstruction.”

3.3.21 Most of the intensive business / work related users stated that they felt positive about Traffic Officers when they saw them, particularly if they knew why they had shut lanes. Some also stated that were comforted and reassured by their presence.

"I was in a queue for about four miles because they had shut a lane which was a pain but when I went past I saw it was because they were moving some accident debris."

"When you know what the hold up is and if they can clear it then I like them."

"It's comforting I think because you don't really seen many police patrol cars so if anything did happen you think someone would get to you quite quickly."

"I genuinely think that that it is good 'cos there is loads about."

"It is reassuring."

3.4 Roadworker safety

- 3.4.1 Respondents were asked if they were ever concerned about roadworker safety on Highways Agency roads. Most, but not all of the intensive business / work related users, stated that they do feel concerned. Some reported that they were more concerned following a personal experience, or hearing of a fatal accident, which educated them or shocked them into taking precautions.

"I'm not."

"I am now." [After attending a driver education course]

"It wasn't until I witnessed a horrific accident, involving a roadworker, then I realised."

"Yes, I heard about the men on the M6 that got killed, really early in the morning. Before then I hadn't really thought about it, and now I know what could happen."

- 3.4.2 Those who were concerned noted that the cones in themselves do not provide a great deal of protection and that the traffic runs relatively close to where the roadworkers are working.

"Because the cones aren't really much protection."

"Someone could easily drive through the cones."

"You are quite close to them."

- 3.4.3 Not all of the intensive business / work related users who were concerned about roadworker safety reported altering their driving behaviour at road works. Those who did stated that they pull out into a further lane or reduce their speed. Others stated that they just increase their concentration and look for where workers might be, or do nothing at all.

"Pull out into a further lane if I can."

"I go through it so many times and there is no one there, but if there are people there I tend to come out and go into another lane."

“Slow down to seventy.”

“Just keep aware of where they are.”

“I’m not saying I’m not concerned but I just drive on.”

- 3.4.4 The intensive business / work related users who did not feel concerned about roadworker safety stated that this was because they think that there is a reasonable distance between drivers and roadworkers. Others stated that it was because the roadworkers are not visible therefore it does not remind them to take extra care and drive safely.

“If you don’t see them you are not really thinking about them.”

“They do cone- off a lot of space on the road.”

“Only because I don’t feel that they’re that close to the lane I’m in.”

- 3.4.5 Some stated that they did slow down, not out of concern for roadworkers, but for personal safety reasons.

“I slow down, but only because I don’t want points on my licence.”

- 3.4.6 The intensive business / work related users were asked if they alter their driving behaviour when they see signs for roadworks. All of the intensive business / work related users stated that they did not, but mentioned they keep conscious that obstructions may be approaching.

“Just keep conscious of it.”

“It’s like when you seen a sign for a school or whatever.” [I.e. keep aware]

- 3.4.7 Although some of the intensive business / work related users do not alter their behaviour it was acknowledged that other drivers do. It was reported that drivers attempt to change lanes to pre-empt the lane that they are in closing.

“It becomes dog-eat-dog.”

“You know which lanes to go in to get through the roadworks quickly.”

- 3.4.8 The intensive business / work related users also noted that the signs for roadworks and accidents are often out of date or inaccurate. They felt that this experience can deter drivers from paying attention to signs.

“A sign for a road work crops up so often and you can get there and nothing’s there.”

“Especially the electronic ones over the motorway, it says roadworks three miles ahead or whatever and there’s been an accident on the road before and they just haven’t switched it off.”

“So often it’ll say down to one lane or two lanes of 50 [miles per hour] and you drive along and nothings happened.”

- 3.4.9 One of the intensive business / work related users noted that signs, as well as being accurate, need to give drivers more information about exactly how far ahead the obstruction is.

“You don’t know how far ahead, it doesn’t say.”

- 3.4.10 The intensive business / work related users in the Manchester focus group felt that drivers become annoyed when they alter their driving behaviour in response to road signs and then do not see any work being carried out. They felt that warnings regarding oncoming roadworks, when no work is being carried out, causes frustration.

“The worst thing is when they give you a warning and then there isn’t any obstruction in the lane.”

3.5 Driver safety

- 3.5.1 The intensive business / work related users were asked if they know how they are supposed to drive to ensure safety at roadworks. All stated that they did. Examples they gave included; keeping to the speed limit, keeping a safe distance from the car in front, being alert to the situation and staying in lane and not overtaking.

“You have to concentrate on everything.”

“Keep to the speed limit.”

“Keep a safe distance from the car in front.”

“Stay in lane.”

“Not overtake.”

“I slow down because I need to concentrate because there is a change in road layout; I am not necessarily thinking about the safety of roadworkers.”

“But people do change lanes when in roadworks.”

- 3.5.2 Although the intensive business / work related users did not mention getting into the correct lane in good time, concentrating on the road ahead, and observing all signs, when presented with the Highways Agency’s guidelines, they noted that they were aware of all recommended actions.

- 3.5.3 All of the intensive business / work related users stated that they do not think that drivers adhere to the guidelines. They stated that this is due to a range of reasons including; driver impatient to reach their destination, difference in attitudes between young and old drivers, fuel costs and drivers not being used to driving on motorways.

“They’re in a rush.”

“Everyone is on a time limit.”

“Bad education.”

“I think it is an age thing. Now the age I am if I have an accident it hurts, and this understanding comes with age.”

“Lack of experience.”

“People, cut you up when there are lane closures; you drive faster to make sure people don’t get in front of you.”

“I keep to the speed limit in roadworks but you always get someone up your bum doing 70mph.”

“Speed limit signs are that poorly lit at night time you just don’t see them.”

“If you are used to driving on the road, you become a bit complacent. You don’t realise how fast you are driving.” [Including when driving through road works]

“Costs you more money in fuel to slow down in roadworks.”

3.6 Improving roadworker safety

- 3.6.1 The intensive business / work related users were asked what could be done to ensure safety at roadworks. They considered that for some drivers, there is very little that can be done.

“Nothing because I want to be where I’m going to faster.”

“There’s not a lot you can do once you come out of your driving test it’s all bad habits, no matter what they stick on the telly.”

- 3.6.2 One person suggested that drivers should be given more warning before they have to get in lane. Another did not feel that additional warning would make a difference to the way some people drive.

“How long they give you to get in lanes, more warning because people always leave it to the last minute.”

“No matter how long you give people, there’s always people like me who drive down to the end and cut into the end.”

- 3.6.3 Another intensive business / work related user felt that lanes are closed off earlier than they need to be and that rectifying this situation would improve safety at roadworks.

“Don’t move people into lanes too soon because there’s often two lanes spare and no one using them.”

More information

- 3.6.4 The intensive business / work related users were supportive of being given more information whilst they are driving and noted that it can be frustrating

when they are unsure of what is causing delays and obstructions. They stated, however, that the Highways Agency needs to ensure that information given is up-to-date and accurate.

“Yes because you’re less frustrated because you know what’s going on.”

“Make sure the information given on the signs is accurate.”

- 3.6.5 The intensive business / work related users in Manchester felt that being given inaccurate information or none at all increases the likelihood of people becoming frustrated and confused and could therefore cause accidents. In addition they highlighted the impact that regular changes to coned diversions can have. They felt that information should be given if large scale works change the road layout, as it was considered dangerous to get used to one diversion and then have to adapt to another.

“A lack of precise information is increasing my journey time, which impacts the children I am transporting and that in turn impacts on those children’s families.”

“Yeah it’s hard to plan, One day they have cones [taking you in one direction]; the other day they have them in the other direction [Stretford M60 roadwork’s] that could cause an accident because you are not sure of where you are going. Again there is no notification and it changed so quickly, about three times in a few weeks.”

- 3.6.6 There was a mixed reaction to Variable Message Signage (VMS). Some felt that these were a good idea; whilst others felt that they cause congestion because people slow down to read them. Some intensive business / work related users felt that the Highways Agency needs to ensure the accuracy of the signs.

“If it’s not it just causes congestion and emergency situations.”

“Needs to be accurate though.”

- 3.6.7 Some intensive business / work related users felt that having advisory or temporary speed limits entering roadworks would remind people to travel at a safe speed and would solve the issue of being unable to see roadside speed limits in the dark. They were considered by most to be quite effective. However some of the intensive business / work related users thought they were ineffective.

“Quite like those.”

“They do make people slow down.”

“Some people still won’t pay attention.”

- 3.6.8 The intensive business / work related users felt that the Highways Agency should implement a mixture of methods to provide information, as people respond to differently to different approaches.

“All of them.”

“Different things are good for different people.”

Enforcement

- 3.6.9 It was felt that enforcing safe driving through roadworks as well as on the Highways Agency network more generally would be effective in encouraging safer driving. Again, the groups felt that this should be administered in various different ways: via Traffic Officers, the police and safety cameras. One respondent felt that it should be an arrestable offence to drive too fast and swap lanes through the roadworks.

“There should be fines for people who drive unsafely through roadworks; people are given plenty of warning.”

*“How would you enforce, it because they are not doing anything illegal?”
[Drivers staying in and driving fast in lanes that are about to close]*

“Yeah that could be classed as dangerous driving.”

“Traffic Officers should enforce the rules. Even if they do not have the powers that a police officer has, surely they will have photographic evidence that will aid the police.”

- 3.6.10 There was much discussion regarding the use of speed cameras. Some of the intensive business / work related users felt that they are effective; others however felt that they are not a deterrent.

“They make you slow down.”

“A lot of people that go that fast have probably got speed camera detectors.”

“It’s not a deterrent because you know where cameras are.”

“If they’re there to ensure safety and the speed limit then that’s fine but if they’re there for other reasons (it is not), if they’re there for the right reasons its fine.”

- 3.6.11 Police patrolling the Highways Agency roads were considered an effective way of enforcing safe driving on the roads by some of the intensive business / work related users. However, others felt that this would be too expensive.

“I think those police speed check areas rather than cameras. Police enforcement officer there for speed checks.”

“It’s quite dangerous though because if you’re driving along and someone spots a copper you brake quick harshly because I’ve done it myself.”

“I’d like to see them just patrolling anyways because people get to know where speed cameras are.”

“If you have cameras right at the start of the roadworks people slow down a bit more and throughout the roadworks if it’s long as well.”

“I just think from a cost point of view.”

“I don’t think police.”

3.7 Publicity and education

3.7.1 There was discussion in both focus groups regarding awareness of the Highway Code and how to drive safely. It was felt that many ‘older’ people would not be able to pass their test should they take it today.

3.7.2 Further discussion in the Manchester group, led by an intensive business / work related user who had attended a driver’s education course, focused on examples of changed behaviour when respondents ‘humanised’ their actions. It was reported that once individuals are aware of how their actions can impact on someone else, their behaviour can change. Half of the intensive business / work related users reported an incident that changed the way they drove and one respondent highlighted an education course he had been on that changed his driving behaviour.

“Something peculiar has happened over the last six months, I don’t speed now. Instead of getting three points I had a course. It changed my attitude to roadworks and speeding and all sorts...it just made me aware and gave me explanations. Yeah it was really good, it changed my attitude.”

“Everyone kind of knows the rules, but the majority of people here would not pass their test again.”

“It’s the best thing that ever happened to me, I mean it humanises everything doesn’t it. You think the 50 mph thing is there for you and you think that you won’t die, but it actually humanises things and you realise that is not there for you, it is there for the workmen...you know you speed and you don’t realise that bum bum bum and you could have wiped out someone’s Dad or son.”

3.7.3 All of the intensive business / work related users felt that a refresher test and a two-stage test that incorporated motorway and safer driving techniques would be effective ways of encouraging safer driving. A high profile celebrity publicity campaign was expected to be less effective.

“Refresher test.”

“The test just isn’t comprehensive enough.”

“When you learn to drive you have no information on how to drive on motorways or through roadworks.”

“I did that anyway, a passed plus and it was brilliant, best thing I ever did.”

“I just think in the theory test, a couple of questions.”

“Not everybody watches it.” [High profile celebrity campaign]

3.7.4 The intensive business / work related users discussed the role that publicity campaigns can have. They reiterated the fact that they did not think to alter

their driving behaviour in roadworks because workers were often not visible. Therefore respondents highlighted the need to ensure adequate communication / publicity regarding what work was taking place. In general, members of the intensive user groups felt that 'good' advertising campaigns were effective. Suggestions made included roadside statistic signs, posters and campaigns in the national newspapers, and having picture signs of road workers with their children by the roadside.

"Perhaps you should have pictures up of them, with their children 'this is my daddy' you know this humanises it and makes you realise."

"Shock tactics like with these drink driving adverts because everybody knows, well most people know, how to act at roadworks but most people choose not to, they think there's not going to be anyone working here or I'm in a hurry I better get off. It's all about saying well maybe you should do what you know how to do, rather than telling them how to do it."

"Have you seen the motorbike ones at the moment; they're pretty awful so do that with the roadworkers."

"I think it's just raising awareness, so bill boards at the end of a motorway."

"Posters."

"You could do it in national newspaper because anyone could be driving so it has to be a place where anyone could see."

"I think more people are concerned about arriving late and not thinking about other people's safety but things like the motorbike signs up on certain roads about so many killed, for cars to watch out for them. So whether they could put some sort of sign to say about the safety of the workers."

4 Focus Group Findings – Young Inexperienced Male Drivers

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This chapter reports the findings from the focus groups held with intensive business / work related users in Manchester and Bristol.

4.2 Profile of respondents

Table 4.1 Profile of Respondents

	Frequency
Gender	
Male	19
Method of Travel	
Driver of a car / van (HGV/PSV)	19
Working Status	
Working full time	14
Not working full time	5
Age Group	
17-21	12
22-25	7
Length of time held Driving Licence	
Up to 2 years	12
2-5 years	6
6-10 years	1

4.3 Awareness of and attitudes towards roadworkers

4.3.1 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked who they understood roadworkers on the Highways Agency roads to be. The majority stated that roadworkers are those involved in maintenance and repair work on the roads including resurfacing and digging for various reasons. This included those carrying out the work and coning off the work area.

“Somebody that wears a yellow jacket.”

“Maintenance people.”

“People doing resurfacing.”

“Tarmacers.”

“People digging.”

“People putting cones down and stuff.”

- 4.3.2 The young inexperienced male drivers also noted that they had seen Traffic Officers patrolling the roads and had seen the police at accidents and maintaining safety.

“The Highways Agency patrol guys that walk up and down.”

“You see the police sometimes at an accident.”

“You see the police working on the roads, watching the traffic and maintaining safety.”

- 4.3.3 The young inexperienced male drivers also noted that they had seen other companies working on the roads including electric, telecommunications and water companies, and engineering firms (Balfour Beatty).

“Electric companies and water supply.”

“People putting the communications wires in.”

“Line companies.”

“Balfour Beatty.”

- 4.3.4 Respondents were told that there are four key groups of individuals working on the roads including maintenance and repair workers, vehicle recovery, Traffic Officers and grass cutters. They were then taken through each group in turn and asked about their understanding of the roadworkers’ responsibilities and their attitudes towards them.

Maintenance and repairs workers

- 4.3.5 The young inexperienced male drivers believe that the maintenance and repair roadworker’s job involves resurfacing and strengthening the roads, building bridges and putting up signs and speed cameras.

“Resurfacing the roads.”

“Strengthening.” [The roads]

“Bridge building.”

“Putting speed cameras up.”

“Putting signs up.”

- 4.3.6 All of the young inexperienced male drivers felt that the repair and maintenance role is an important one, particularly in the long term. However a number noted that in the short term these workers can cause great inconvenience to drivers.

“Yes [it is important], if they can do it quicker though.”

“In the long term they help, but in the short term, they’re disrupting things.”

“The M32, there’s people working at night but I live in the centre of town and it’s just a nightmare getting home.”

- 4.3.7 This may be because the young inexperienced male drivers had seen mainly large-scale rather than smaller emergency works.

“Mainly large scale.”

“I haven’t really seen emergency [works].”

- 4.3.8 All of the young inexperienced male drivers reported having seen either roadworkers or, in most cases cones, signalling that sections of the roads were out of use due to roadworks. They reported negative feelings when they see roadworkers and / or roadworks for a number of reasons. The most frequently reported reason was they often see lanes out of use but no roadworkers carrying out repairs or maintenance. They found this particularly irritating during the busiest times of the day.

“If they’re actually doing stuff then fine but when you see miles of cones and a lane shut down and no one there, it’s frustrating.”

“You just see to see loads of roadworks and no one about.” [Found this frustrating]

“The M4 is just pathetic all the way to Reading.” [Cones and no roadworkers]

“I don’t know but it pisses me off.” [Seeing cones and no workers]

“On the M30 you’d be lucky to see one person working.”

“It’s frustrating.”

“More annoyed when it’s busy and there’s no one working there.”

- 4.3.9 The young inexperienced male drivers in Manchester also criticised the fact that they are diverted due to roadworks and they are then unsure how to get to their destination.

“I just get really pissed off. I think where am I going now?” [When there are diversions].”

“It stresses you out.”

“You’re just veered off and you think where they hell am now?”

- 4.3.10 The young inexperienced male drivers also stated that they feel negative when they see roadworks or roadworkers at busy times of the year. A few also complained about lane disruption at any time and the extent of the delays they face for smaller jobs.

"It's quite frustrating when it's the busiest time of year, like in January and everybody's going back to work, and they put up all these new roadworks and stuff."

"Annoyed, especially when it's disrupting the lanes."

"I feel like just giving them a load of shit because you're sat there for ages and one little pot hole."

- 4.3.11 One respondent also commented that they feel unsafe due to the fact that drivers are sometimes expected to use narrow lanes through roadworks.

"When they have one lane and they have cones right down the side of it, that's really off putting I think and you're driving and you have one lane only and you're really close to each other."

- 4.3.12 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked if they had seen vans with flashing arrows behind them. All had, but some stated that they did not know what the vans were doing. Others suggested a number of different activities including picking up cones, testing the thickness of the roads, general and line painting on the roads.

"They're picking up cones aren't they?"

"They test for thickness [of roads]."

"Line painting."

"I thought they were painting the roads or something."

- 4.3.13 Most young inexperienced male drivers stated that when they see these vehicles they ensure they are not trapped behind them by going around the vehicle, changing lanes or overtaking it. Only one person stated that they increase their vigilance.

"You make sure you're not behind it."

"Usually go round it but don't really know what to do."

"Overtake them."

"Get in the fast lane and go round them."

"A bit more vigilant in case someone's going to walk out from behind it."

Vehicle recovery

- 4.3.14 The young inexperienced male drivers stated that a vehicle recovery worker's job is to help drivers who are having difficulty with their vehicle and to undertake vehicle repair.

"Helping people who have broke down."

“Fixing cars.”

4.3.15 All of the young inexperienced male drivers felt that vehicle recovery is a very important and helpful role.

“If you’ve broken down, yes [it’s an important role].”

4.3.16 All young inexperienced male drivers reported having had some interaction with vehicle recovery personnel. Most had seen both car and haulage recovery, two had called out the AA on Highways Agency roads and one had assisted with vehicle recovery.

“I’ve had a few come out to me.”

“The electrics went on my van and nothing worked, the power steering went, the brakes went so they took me back to Bristol.”

“I had a blow out in the middle of the night, my tyres went so I pulled over onto the hard shoulder and I didn’t really fancy sitting on the road side changing my tyres so I called them out because they’re got a big yellow van with flashing lights rather than me with just my hazards.”

“I was stuck on an A Road and they came out to help me. We pushed it off the road and he [AA recovery worker] sorted it out.”

4.3.17 The young inexperienced male drivers stated that they felt relieved when they saw vehicle recovery personnel, when it was for their own vehicle. Most stated that they were accepting or indifferent when they saw vehicle recovery personnel helping other motorists. They stated that this was true regardless of whether it was a car or haulage recovery.

“Relieved really.”

“I’m quite accepting because I’ve been in the situation where I’ve needed them.”

“Just ignore them.”

“At the end of the day anyone might be in a situation where they need them.”

Grass cutters and landscapers

4.3.18 Respondents were asked about their understanding of the role of grass cutters and landscapers. The young inexperienced male drivers noted that it is to cut the grass and hedges.

4.3.19 The Bristol young inexperienced male drivers felt that this role can be an important one and that it needs to be done to ensure that foliage does not fall onto the roads.

“You don’t want debris and big trees and things falling onto the carriageway.”

“I suppose somebody’s got to do it.”

4.3.20 The Manchester young inexperienced male drivers felt that the role is less valuable. One respondent suggested that greenery was removed in favour of tarmac to reduce the need of maintenance.

“It’s not that valuable.”

“I’d just say tarmac it.”

4.3.21 Most of the young inexperienced male drivers had seen grass cutters and landscapers on the Highways Agency roads. Many reported being delayed by them.

“I’ve followed them for a few miles, been stuck behind them.”

“I’ve been stuck behind them.”

4.3.22 These young inexperienced male drivers commented that they felt negatively or stressed because grass cutters cause ‘hassle’ and delay their journey. They felt this was particularly problematic during busy times of the day. One person suggested that it would help somewhat if when driving their vehicles, these roadworkers would let motorist pass them.

“Generally get annoyed.”

“They cause lots of hassle.”

“They’re going too slow.” [In their vehicles]

“There’s time you can do it and there’s no need to do it at five o’clock on a Friday afternoon.”

“Especially through rush hour they cause lots of traffic because if one lane’s blocked out there’s obviously going to be more traffic going through less lanes and it builds up and takes you longer to get home.”

“I was thinking a few times they could have pulled over [when stuck behind a slow moving grass cutter vehicle]. They’re doing a good job, but get off the road if they’re holding up the traffic.”

Traffic Officers

4.3.23 A number of young inexperienced male drivers were unsure about the role of Traffic Officers. Others however had a better idea. They noted that officers monitor the roads, can help those who have broken down, and put cones around obstructions.

“I saw some people taking pictures, standing with note books, I don’t know if that was them.”

“They just monitor people who’re on the roads, see who’s broken down, see what they’re up to and if they’re having problems.”

“They put up cones on the road to clear it all up.”

“If there’s an accident, they put cones out.”

4.3.24 Once it was explained what the role of a Traffic Officer is, all of the young inexperienced male drivers stated that it is an important role. They thought that without management of traffic around accidents there would be major problems and noted that Traffic Officers would assist the police. They stated however that they would not like them to be treated as a cheap alternative to the police.

“It’s an important role.”

“They’re kind of like community support officers but on the road, giving the police a helping hand.”

“It’s not a bad idea; it gives the police time to do other things.”

“It’s fine, as long as all they do is a helping hand rather than being cheap policemen.”

“If there’s been an accident there’s going to be mayhem if they don’t.” [Manage the traffic around it]

4.3.25 Some of the Manchester and all of the Bristol young inexperienced male drivers had seen Traffic Officers. Only one reported having had face-to-face interaction. He mentioned that a Traffic Officer has stopped to help when he had run out of petrol.

“Seen them around Birmingham and lately they’ve introduced them around Bristol.”

“A couple times I’ve seen them with breakdowns and putting cones out and sweeping debris and that kind of thing...sort of four o’clock, three or four o’clock.”

“One stopped for me the other week, I’d run out of petrol.”

4.3.26 The Bristol young inexperienced male drivers reported that they felt indifferent when they see Traffic Officers. The Manchester young inexperienced male drivers were however more supportive.

“Fine, didn’t really think much at the time.”

“Yeah, indifferent.”

“Fair play to them if they’re doing that [dealing with accidents].”

4.4 Roadworker safety

4.4.1 Respondents were asked if they are ever concerned about the safety of roadworkers on Highways Agency roads. Most were not concerned.

“Not really.”

“My boss’s mate fell off the bridge so now I am.”

“Never thought about it once.”

- 4.4.2 They stated that this was because they rarely see people working at roadworks, and that they think the danger is not too great due to the precautions taken. In addition, they are confident in the workers’ common sense. Some have not considered the issue or, in one case, they feel they have *‘better things to worry about’*.

“I don’t know if it’s just me but I’ve never really seen many men stood about.”

“They’re putting the cones where they need to be so they don’t get hurt so you don’t have to worry about them getting hurt do you?”

“There must be health and safety that oversee this.”

“There are lots of signs up; watch the roadworkers, go 30 miles an hour. You are quite aware of the situation and alerted to it.”

“Everyone slows down to 40 or 50 [miles and hour] anyway so it’s just like a normal road.”

“It’s not really in my mind.”

“There’s better things to worry about than the guy who’s running around the motorway.”

- 4.4.3 The smaller number who were concerned stated that their concern arose out of unsafe behaviour that they had observed on the part of roadworkers, because the cones do not provide adequate protection or because some drivers are unsafe.

“Sometimes when you see them putting the cones out and they’re just casually strolling around [the respondent is concerned].”

“There’s only those cones, and someone could swerve through them or do something and they’re goners.”

“They have made a lot of precautions with safety but there’s that one bit on the M60 where it goes down to one lane and it’s this kind of S shape. If someone’s tired and they’re driving at the time that they’re working and they’re not concentrating or they’re drunk or whatever they’ll just go straight through the cones.”

“Sometimes yeah, you get idiots don’t you, even though it says go 40 miles, still going 80 or whatever.”

- 4.4.4 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked if they alter their driving behaviour when they see roadworkers. Most stated that they did. These respondents reported that they slow down (in some case because they have no choice) and show heightened alertness.

“You slow down if he's at the edge of the road or taking a gentle stroll up the M5 like they seem to be doing.”

“You have to slow down because everyone else does.”

“You're best off slowing down.”

“Be more alert.”

“Pay more attention to where you're going.”

“Concentrate more. If you need to change lanes people get irritated and it's more dangerous.”

- 4.4.5 Those who reported that they do not alter their driving behaviour stated that they change lanes or increase their speed, so they can get to their destination as quickly as possible.

“If it's me I'm just flying through them.”

“Change lanes to get where you want to go quicker.”

- 4.4.6 The young inexperienced male driver respondents stated that they would adopt the same driving behaviour whether it was large-scale roadworks or smaller emergency works that they were faced with. However when prompted with a specific example of a van in an outside lane, no one said that they would increase their speed.

“Be cautious.”

- 4.4.7 Respondents were then asked if they alter their driving behaviour when faced with signs for roadworks. A few young inexperienced male drivers stated that they would not take any action until they came to the roadworks themselves.

“Not much until I get there.”

“Wait until they come up.”

- 4.4.8 Others reported even less safe driving, with one stating that he was not interested and implying that he did not pay attention, while others reported increasing their speed to make up time they felt they would lose once they reached the roadworks.

“You just think it's going to take ages to get home so you try and get into the fast lane first.”

“If it's on the M4 I try and get into the fast lane to make up as much time as I can.”

“Go as fast as you can until you get there.”

“No, I'm just not interested.”

4.5 Driver safety

- 4.5.1 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked if they were aware how they should drive to ensure safety at roadworks. All indicated that they were. When asked to give examples they mentioned moving into the correct lane, giving workers and vehicles enough space, and following signed instructions.

“There is nothing apart from give them a wide berth and slow down. There is nothing in the Highway Code.”

“It's the same thing as if you're passing a horse or something. You slow down and go at a reasonable speed and carry on your way.”

“Get in the right lane.”

“Keep away from cones and people.”

“Follow instructions and road signs basically.”

“Slow down, look at the signs.”

- 4.5.2 Although the young inexperienced male drivers did not mention concentrating on the road ahead, and being alert for works traffic, when presented with the Highways Agency's guideline, they noted that there was not anything that they did not know and that the guidelines were common sense.

“They're mostly common sense.”

“It's common sense.”

- 4.5.3 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked if they thought that drivers follow these guidelines at roadworks. In general they believed that drivers do not. They felt that people chose not to follow the guidelines because of confidence in their own driving, complacency, a desire to reach their destination paired with knowledge of the location of speed cameras, and because people are inclined to brake rules.

“Not at all.”

“Confidence, people don't think they need to.”

“If you're driving through them every day you get complacent.”

“People think it'll never happen to me.”

“They don't care, they want to get to work on time or home as fast as you can.”

“Because they know where the speed cameras are so they slow down for the speed cameras then bomb it to the next one, because that's what I do.”

“I suppose there's that thing that rules are always there to be broken, like the speed limit, how many people actually keep to the speed limit, through road works?”

- 4.5.4 A number of young inexperienced male drivers pointed out that the guidelines regarding focusing on the road ahead is particularly difficult to follow because of a temptation to look at the roadworks, especially when queuing.

“People stare at them [roadworks].”

“When you're stopped in a queue you might look at the roadworks but when you're going you concentrate on you're driving.”

4.6 Improving roadworkers' safety

- 4.6.1 The young inexperienced male driver respondents suggested that to improve safety the Highways Agency should do all that is possible to avoid inconveniencing drivers. This included avoiding congestion and not closing lanes unnecessarily.

“Do everything you can to stop building the traffic up and that way people won't be annoyed.”

“People are swerving in and out because they just can't be arsed with the traffic.”

“If you don't need to block off a lane then don't because you do see it when there's no one working there and no one's worked there for ages.”

- 4.6.2 However a number felt that it would be difficult to improve safety in all cases.

“I don't think you'll cut down the statistics that much to be honest.”

“For some people, there's nothing that you can do.”

“Everybody's got a deadline to work to and sometime you have to speed. Like my dad to do the calls he has to do in a day, he couldn't do it without speeding. You have to; it's a fact of life.”

More information

- 4.6.3 Respondents were asked if they thought that giving drivers more information would help to improve safety. The majority of young inexperienced male drivers were supportive of this. They felt that drivers would like to know in advance if there was going to be a delay so they could make other plans and it would warn them that other drivers were going to start slowing down. One person noted however that too much information could be confusing.

“They do it abroad on the great big matrix signs that they've now got on the M4 and it gives you plenty of time.”

“Yes because you would be aware you are there for a long wait.”

“You'd be aware that people are going to start braking in front of you in a minute.”

“You're aware of what you could be coming into and you can plan another route and start getting off if you want.”

“Too much information is like whoa [confusing] when you're trying to watch you're driving and concentrate.”

- 4.6.4 The young inexperienced male drivers differed with regard to what they thought messages should contain. Some favoured shorter factual messages, while others thought that more emotive messaging would be successful.

“If it says something like, ‘my dad works here’, you'd probably take notice.”

“Something that really hits home, but short ones.”

“Short messages, like slow down.”

“If you see a sign saying 40 miles an hour, you look at it and consider it but you see a sign saying go 40 miles an hour because there could be a man stood in the middle of the road further up, you look at it and pay attention.”

- 4.6.5 The young inexperienced male drivers suggested that travel updates could be delivered through radio broadcasts, particularly if there was a national station delivering information.

“If they had some sort of central main system as opposed to just relying on local radio stations, because half the time they're just repeating what people have said on these radio stations and they haven't got a clue if the accident's there.”

- 4.6.6 When asked, the young inexperienced male drivers indicated that they were reasonably supportive of Variable Message Signs as a way of delivering information to drivers.

“Yes you can put it up there.”

“That's what they do abroad.”

“I think they're alright to be honest.”

- 4.6.7 The young inexperienced male drivers were less supportive of advisory or temporary speed limits. The Manchester respondents were particularly negative about this and the Bristol respondents suggested that they would have an impact on some drivers but not others. One respondent added that, if used, drops in the speed limit should be gradual.

“Some people will and some people won't.” [Follow the variable speed limits]

“They're rubbish.”

“I don't think it should be a radical drop.”

- 4.6.8 The young inexperienced male drivers were not supportive of displaying the speed of vehicles entering roadworks. They stated that it is difficult for drivers

to tell whose speed is being displayed. They thought that this would be even more of an issue on motorways due to the number of lanes and the increased speed with which drivers are travelling.

“They’re normally flashing continuously because the person in front of you is speeding so you’re not sure if it’s you.”

“Everybody is getting flashed so you think I’m one and he’s behind me getting flashed.”

“I don’t think you can do it on the motorway.”

- 4.6.9 The young inexperienced male drivers also questioned how drivers would know that the speed display was accurate and suggested that checking their own speedometer might therefore be better.

“How do you know it’s accurate?”

“Just check you’re speedometer.”

- 4.6.10 For these reasons they felt that Highways Agency money could be better spent elsewhere, such as on more protective bollards for roadworkers.

“I can think of better ways for money to be spent.”

“I’d rather see the money spent elsewhere like different types of bollards to protect the roadworkers.”

Enforcement

- 4.6.11 The majority of the young inexperienced male drivers, particularly those in the Manchester group, felt that enforcement would be the most effective way of convincing motorists to drive safely at roadworks.

“It’s not enforced enough.”

“I suppose it would.” [Make people drive safely]

- 4.6.12 The Manchester young inexperienced male drivers were, however, concerned that it may be difficult to put an adequate system in place for dealing with drivers who were caught. They were also concerned that drivers receive a penalty that is appropriate but also deters them.

“But what could you do, I think it would be difficult to figure out the right way of doing it.” [Relative penalty]

“You could get prosecuted for endangering someone’s life or something.”

“Have a red card system; if you get caught once you’re in trouble if you get caught again you lose your licence. Once you’ve got that yellow card you wouldn’t do it again.”

4.6.13 With regard to enforcement personnel, all of the young inexperienced male drivers felt that having a police presence, or perceived presence by parking empty police cars at roadworks, would ensure safe driving. One respondent did not however think it would be popular with the general public.

“A police presence, I definitely think you would slow down for.”

“Nobody really wants to be enforced to do anything and nobody wants to have more police on the roads, but if it does help, which it will because no body really wants to get points on their licence, then it's probably the best way.”

“Apart from having police cars line up all the way through them [roadworks] I really can't see how you could [ensure safe driving].”

“Police speed check area.”

“If the police are actually there you'll watch your driving.”

“You could just have fake police cars with no one in them.”

4.6.14 Another of the young inexperienced male drivers was concerned that seeing police officers may cause drivers to brake suddenly, risking an accident.

“But it could cause an accident I suppose with people slamming on the brakes, but it would slow the traffic.”

4.6.15 A number of the Bristol young inexperienced male drivers showed a preference for Traffic Officers over the police but this was only because they thought drivers would receive less severe penalties this way.

“I'd prefer to see a Traffic Officer there rather than a police officer, because if a police officer catches you and fines you and you're going for a job and do it regularly you're going to lose your license and your job.”

“On the one hand you've got the lives of these people who might die from your driving, but on the other hand you've got people who might lose their livelihood and their licenses, so I think Traffic Officers might be better.”

4.6.16 Other young inexperienced male drivers felt that Traffic Officers would be useful as enforcers, but only because drivers would mistake them for police officers.

“I suppose if you had one of these Highway Agency vehicles stop by one of these roadworks it would fool people into thinking it's a policeman.”

“I've slowed down when I saw them because I thought they were the police.”

4.6.17 The Manchester young inexperienced male drivers suggested that speed cameras or CCTV, backed up by a fine and warning signs would help to ensure safe driving.

“Those cameras that monitor your speed along a whole distance; they’ve got them on the M62 up to Leeds. There’s like five or six of them in a row on a two mile stretch of it.”

“Fifty miles an hour all the way and if you go over it you get a £60 fine.”

“Signs that say this road’s being monitored, watch your driving.”

“You could get CCTV.”

4.6.18 The Bristol young inexperienced male drivers felt however that cameras would be less effective than other methods of enforcement and would prefer to see money spent elsewhere.

“People get wise to where cameras are. I suppose if it’s a mobile police unit you can’t do anything.”

“The speed camera thing you find where they are.”

“Spend the money on improving the roads and safety for these guys who are risking their lives rather than on speed cameras.”

Publicity and education

4.6.19 The young inexperienced male drivers were asked if they felt education and publicity would help to ensure driver safety. Most felt that people knew what they should do but chose not to follow guidelines. For this reason they were more supportive of publicity than education.

“It’s just common sense.”

“Everyone know what they should do, it’s just hammering it home.”

4.6.20 Despite this, most of the young inexperienced male drivers in the Bristol group and a small number in the Manchester group were supportive of some form of testing regarding motorway driving. However they felt that six months would be longer than some drivers would need or want to wait to drive on motorways. They therefore suggested the test is included either in the theory or practical section of the original driving test.

“If you consider it’s just a seventeen year old jumps straight in his car after passing his test and goes straight on a motorway, it looks quite easy, it is if you stay in the same lane but for a seventeen year old, joining the motorway at speed, having to worry about what other cars are doing. It’s quite a dangerous thing really.”

“When you go on the motorway that first time, you don’t really know what you’re doing.”

“I think the day after I passed my test I was sent to Swindon on the motorway.”

“You could introduce something on a driving test, either the practical or the theory.”

“Maybe they just need to question you on it at the end of a test.”

“Six months is a long time. You pass the test and you think wahay let’s go.”

“Why not bring it as part of your actual test? You could get some training as it is part of your normal test because if you need to get on the motorway after three weeks there’s no point in waiting six months.”

4.6.21 The Manchester young inexperienced male drivers were less supportive of motorway testing for a number of reasons, including the fact that the roads in Manchester are busy enough and therefore a motorway test is unnecessary; because of the cost; because drivers cannot be taught how to drive at roadworks; and because drivers ignore what they have been taught in their lessons once they have passed their test.

“If you learn to drive in Manchester you know how to drive on busy roads, fair enough if you’re from a little village or something. You don’t need a pass plus if you live in Manchester because it’s always busy here.”

“It would cost me nearly £300 to do a pass plus.”

“Nothing really teaches you how to go through roadworks.”

“What difference would that really make, who drives like they’re taught to drive? Nobody! If you made that part of a test I think people would drive through roadworks exactly as they do now. Everyone knows how they should drive through roadworks, it’s whether they do it or not.”

4.6.22 All young inexperienced male driver respondents thought that publicity around the issues would be helpful. They suggested that television, roadside and radio advertising as possible methods.

“Raise awareness.”

“On T.V.”

“I think the adverts are better on TV. Have you seen the advert that says if you hit a child at 40 miles an hour? Adverts like that make you think.”

“I listen to the radio everyday in the car and if you’ve got adverts on the radio.”

“Just on the side of the road.”

4.6.23 They differed in opinion regarding the message content. One suggested using facts and figures, while others thought dramatic adverts would be useful. One suggested doing it from a child’s point of view but another disagreed.

“Even just putting those facts and figures might help.” [Highways Agency 2004 survey of roadworkers]

“If you saw a roadworker being hit, a dramatic one.”

“Bringing a child into it, who’s innocent that would be good for me.”

“I don’t think that’d work.” [Featuring a child]

4.6.24 The young inexperienced male drivers did not feel that Top Gear was the right place to raise awareness regarding roadworker safety.

“I can’t see him doing that on top gear.”

“It’s against everything he [Jeremy Clarkson] stands for.”

