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| **Written evidence provided by:** | Headway – the brain injury association  |
| **Date of submission:** | 02/06/2020 |
| **Submission to:** | Department for Transport |
| **Call for evidence on:** | Legalising rental e-scooter trials: defining e-scooters and rules for their use |

**Background**

Headway is a UK-wide charity working to improve life after brain injury.

Around one million people a year are admitted to hospital in the UK following a head injury. While the majority of these people will experience no lasting effects, around 155,000 people will be left with a traumatic brain injury (TBI)[[1]](#footnote-1). TBI can be caused in a number of ways including by accident, fall or assault. Of those who survive, many will require some form of support or rehabilitation; for some, this will be a life-long need.

Headway provides services, support and information at every stage of the care pathway. **Headway has a network of over 120 locally-run groups and branches across the UK and Channel Islands.**

**Groups and branches offer a wide range of services, including brain injury rehabilitation programmes, carer support, social re-integration, community outreach and respite care.** Frontline UK-wide services include a comprehensive website, nurse-led helpline, an Emergency Fund to assist people in coping with the financial impact of sudden catastrophic brain injury; and a range of free to access award-winning publications.

Headway also works to prevent brain injury occurring. This includes campaigning for and promoting measures such as the wearing of helmets whilst cycling, which reduces the effects of impacts to the head in many falls and collisions. We also support measures to reduce the number of falls and collisions experienced by cyclists.

Headway welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on this call for evidence.

**Rules for legal e-scooter use during trials**

We would like to see e-scooter usage during this trial be conducted as safely as possible. We believe the Government ought to demonstrate consistency by informing users that they should wear a helmet as indicated in rule 59 of the Highway Code, which relates to cyclists.

There is already a wealth of research to demonstrate that wearing a helmet whilst riding on the roads can save lives and prevent lifelong disability.

A study published in 2016 entitled Bicycle injuries and helmet use: a systematic review and meta-analysis*[[2]](#footnote-2)* found compelling evidence that **wearing a cycle helmet reduces risk of serious head injury by almost 70% and fatal head injury by 65%**.

The study, led by the University of New South Wales, collected data from over 64,000 cyclists around the world and is the largest review on cycling and helmets to date. The study also found that the risk of sustaining a general head injury is reduced by 51% and facial injury by 33%, when a helmet is used.

It is concerning to note that there is already global evidence which suggests that e-scooter users are more at risk of suffering a head injury than cyclists.

There are reports from the USA which suggest that from 2014 to 2018 more than 39,000 people in the US were injured whilst riding e-scooters and around 3,300 of those were admitted to hospital as a result. More than 14,500 of these injuries and 1,400 hospital admissions occurred in 2018 alone.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The research reported that around a third of injuries recorded in 2018 affected the head which makes the rate of injuries, relevant to all injuries amongst scooter riders, more than double that seen amongst cyclists.

At a Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in February this year, as reported by the European Transport Safety Council, the Danish Transport Minister said that the rate of e-scooter rider head injuries was eight times higher than for cyclists.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Therefore, there is compelling evidence for the Government to instruct e-scooter users to wear a helmet, in line with the Highway Code, to reduce the likelihood of suffering a brain injury.

**Maximum speed and power limits during trials**

It is widely accepted that a number of factors influence road safety. These include road and weather conditions, road users’ behaviours and speed.

We believe that e-scooters should be speed-limited which would make them safer to use on our roads. Following the legalisation of micromobility vehicles in Germany the Federal Government has introduced regulations including limiting the speed of these vehicles to 20 kilometres per hour (kpm).[[5]](#footnote-5)

Electric vehicles are silent when moving and this poses a potential risk to pedestrians. It is noteworthy that all electric and hybrid cars in Europe must now be manufactured with noise emitters to warn pedestrians of their presence.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Headway believes introducing a 20 kpm speed limit is reasonable to reduce the likelihood of driver or pedestrian injury.

**Recommendations**

* When e-scooters are trialled in the UK the safety of riders and other road users should be paramount.
* To ensure the safety of e-scooter users, riders should be encouraged to wear a helmet.
* To ensure the safety of pedestrians and other road users the speed of e-scooters should be restricted by a speed-limiting device.
* Tampering with speed-limiting devices should be a criminal offence.
* Noise emitters (acoustic sound systems) should be used to warn pedestrians of the presence of e-scooters.

1. <https://www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/further-information/statistics/statistics-resources/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.headway.org.uk/media/5191/bicycle-injuries-and-helmet-use-a-systematic-review-and-meta-analysis.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://time.com/5760563/e-scooter-injuries/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://etsc.eu/itf-report-recommends-action-on-safety-of-e-scooters/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.bmvi.de/SharedDocs/EN/Articles/StV/light-electric-vehicles-faq.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/electric-and-hybrid-cars-new-rules-noise-emitting-protect-vulnerable-road-users_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)