



'Biker Aware' **March 2026**

1. Introduction

This document summarises content from an Older Drivers Forum Gloucestershire webinar, 'Driving safely in Spring. Biker Aware.'

Webinars on road safety topics take place at 10:00 on the last Saturday of the month, except August, and last one hour. If you would like to attend a webinar, go to www.olderdriversforum.com/gloucestershire-events/ for dates and registration details.

Please share this information with anyone you think it could be of benefit.

The content of this webinar includes, why spring brings increased risks for motorcyclists, why motorcycles can be difficult to see, the types of collisions they are involved in, and how those risks can be avoided. It also covers post-crash care, and what action to take if we come across a motorcyclist who has been involved in a crash.

Motorcyclists are one of the most vulnerable road user groups, with the highest ratio of killed or seriously injured – KSIs, in relation to miles driven.

For drivers and motorcyclists to understand each other's point of view is vitally important to make our roads safer, because whilst drivers and motorcyclists share the same road space, they face very different risks and challenges.

2. Motorcyclist vulnerability evidence

This comes from a Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnerships (GRSP) 'Needs Assessment' report published in January 2026. Whilst this is Gloucestershire data, it reflects national trends.

Over a five-year period, motorcyclists are over-represented in road casualties:

- They account for nearly 20% of all KSIs, despite motorcycles being estimated to be only 3% of vehicles registered on our roads, nationally
- The highest proportion of those casualties, 38%, are in the 41 to 69 age band with the vast majority, 92%, being male
- Whilst the Cotswolds is the district with the highest number of serious motorcycle collisions, there are also significant numbers across other districts, including the urban roads of Cheltenham and Gloucester
- There is an increase in casualties from April, with the spring and summer months accounting for nearly 59% of motorcycle casualties, with a peak on Sundays, between the hours of 12am and 9pm.

3. How to combat spring motorcyclists' risks

Most motorcyclists don't ride 365 days of the year, but only when the weather is warm and dry. We therefore must refresh our riding skills. This can take time.

Tips to refresh riding skills are:

- To get back into the groove of defensive riding, so riding in a way that anticipates potential hazards and assumes we may not be seen by other road users
- Consider do we effectively practice "reflecting", thinking back on a ride to review what happened?
- Going back over "systematic" riding and ensuring our observational skills are as good as they can be. Did we notice specific hazards, take the appropriate actions or were we "surprised" and then reacted to whatever happened instead of anticipating it, planning for it and resolving it prior to it becoming an issue?
- Do we consider practicing braking, until effective threshold braking is within our muscle memory?
- Both RoPSA and IAM offer motorcycle refresher courses which combine workshops and on-road coaching. These courses are a great way to refresh riding skills on how to ride safely, systematically, smoothly and at an appropriate speed

With the highest percentage of motorcyclist casualties being in 41 to 69 age group, there could be health issues that may have developed over the winter, may have gone unnoticed, and could impact fitness to ride.

- Eyesight is the primary sense we use when riding, but over the winter our eyesight could have deteriorated, and we could compensate without realising that decline
- So, check when you last had an eyesight test
- When you have a test make sure to ask for a check of peripheral vision
- Good peripheral vision is crucial for safe riding in spotting threats at junctions, monitoring nearby vehicles, particularly when riding in traffic
- We also need to check our physical flexibility. Riding a motorcycle requires constant body movement. Good flexibility helps balance and control and reaction time
- So, a good exercise regime is helpful to keep those abilities up to speed

4. How to increase visibility and awareness of motorcyclists

The risk of not seeing a motorcycle is often due it's profile, which is a lot smaller than other vehicles.

Research shows if we are not expecting to see other forms of vehicles which have a smaller profile, then our brain may not register them and they may become "invisible". This condition is also described as "look but do not see" or "sorry mate I did not see you". (SMIDSY)

Declining looming ability can also be an issue. Looming ability is the ability to judge whether an object is getting closer – and how quickly.

Mature drivers also need to be aware about declining visual acuity, which means it can be difficult to distinguish a dark shape against a dark background.

Motorcyclist can make themselves more visible by:

- Keeping dipped headlights on, but take care about having too many auxiliary lights that can dazzle other road users
- Wear hi viz but think carefully about choice of colour. High viz saturn yellow against a green background can become camouflage. Research shows bright fluorescent pink is highly noticeable. It is rare in nature or at traffic scenes so immediately 'pops out' of the background

Mature drivers can take steps to aid visibility:

- Sit in your car and consider your all-round visibility and whether there is anything restricting your vision
- If you use a plug in sat nav or smartphone, is it positioned not to cause visibility issues?
- Are there any window stickers that should be removed?
- Every couple of weeks clean the inside of your car's windows
- Check the wipers clear the screen without smears. If wipers need replacing invest in a premium brand such as Bosch Aerotwins, which are a Which? Best Buy
- If you have restricted peripheral vision, consider fitting a panoramic clip-on rearview mirror. This gives a super wide field of vision to eliminate blind spots
- There are also these blind spot mirrors that you can attach to your wing mirrors
- If you are considering buying a new car, take time to check all-round visibility. Some cars have larger A-pillars which can create a blind spot

5. Reducing collision risk

Further evidence from the GRSP 'Needs Assessment' report is:

- Whilst nearly 23% of motorcycle KSIs were classified as single vehicle incidents, the majority, 77%, involved one or more vehicles. The type and manoeuvre of these collisions were classified as follows
- 63% occurred at junctions, roundabouts or in conjunction with a turning manoeuvre
- Nearly 24% occurred during overtaking
- Nearly 23% resulted from a loss of control
- With the remaining 15% being either head-to-head or head-to-tail collisions

5.1 Junctions, roundabouts and turning manoeuvre

These traffic scenarios require quick judgments. This increases the risk of mistakes - especially for mature drivers with slower reactions.

Advice for bikers is:

- Control your speed on approach. This gives more reaction time *and* may make speed easier for others to judge
- When considering filtering past traffic ask yourself if it gains anything over the potential risks, which maybe a driver pulling out or u-turning. Always filter at an appropriate speed
- Avoid sitting in blind spots, move within your lane so you are more noticeable
- Always assume **you haven't been seen**, even if a driver looks at you
- Be ready to slow, cover brakes, and be ready to take evasive action

Advice for mature drivers is:

- Always take a second look for smaller vehicles, motorcycles. Especially when entering or changing lanes at roundabouts. Bikes can be hidden behind other vehicles
- Make sure to use your mirrors and check blind spots
- Be especially careful when turning right across oncoming traffic. This is one of the most common collisions scenarios for mature drivers
- Judge distance carefully. Motorcycles can arrive much faster than they appear
- Always double check before committing
- Avoid rushing decisions. Most errors happen when drivers feel pressured to 'go now'

Both riders and drivers should adopt the attitude, “*expect the other person to make a mistake - and be ready for it.*” This single mindset shift can dramatically reduce collisions.

5.2 Overtaking

This is one of the highest-risk manoeuvres for both motorcyclists and drivers, where speed, visibility, and judgement all interact.

Advice for bikers is:

- Again, defensive thinking and riding is the key
- Avoid sitting in blind spots, especially just behind or alongside vehicles and remember the two second following rule.
- Use road positioning across the carriageway to improve visibility ahead
- Watch for signs a vehicle might turn or pull out (wheel angle, slowing, indicators, driver looking in their mirrors)
- Be alert to road markings to guide road conditions for safe overtaking
- Do not overtake on the approach to junctions
- Only overtake when you have a clear, extended view, avoid overtaking on bends, brows of hills, or where vision is restricted.
- Plan your escape route, always have a “what if” option if something changes mid-overtake

Advice for mature drivers is:

- When a motorcyclist comes up behind and is looking to overtake, keeping a steady course and speed. Speeding up or driving erratically while they are trying to overtake is dangerous
- Remember motorcyclists might be riding in a group, so be alert another biker could soon be making to overtake as well
- If you come across a learner or vintage motorcycle being ridden slowly, apply the same rules as overtaking a cyclist, leave as much space as you would when overtaking a car
- With vintage bikes be aware many do not have indicators or visible lights, so, the rider uses hand signals. It might therefore not be immediately obvious what their intentions are
- If it is windy be aware they may suddenly move across the lane if caught by a gust of wind. They might also make a sudden change in direction to avoid a pothole, or if there is mud or gravel on the road

5.3 Loss of Control

Advice for bikers is:

- Ride at a speed that matches what you can see. Always be able to stop within the distance you can see to be clear on your own side of the road.
- Position to maximise your view into bends, without crossing centre lines. Keep a safety margin from road edges, especially where debris collects
- Adjust early for bends. Brake **before** the bend, not during it. Select the correct gear in advance to maintain stability. Avoid harsh braking or acceleration mid-corner
- Watch for poor road surfaces. Rural roads often have gravel or mud, potholes and uneven surfaces, wet leaves or standing water. Reduce speed and keep inputs (braking, throttle, steering) **smooth and gradual**
- Be prepared for the unexpected. Oncoming vehicles may be wide and/ or long (tractors, vans, articulated vehicles pedestrians and horses) Vehicles may cut corners on narrow lanes. Animals or pedestrians may appear suddenly
- Maintain smooth control. Avoid sudden changes in throttle, braking, or steering. Keep the bike balanced - smoothness is key to maintaining grip
- Look where you want to go. Focus on your intended path through bends - not any hazards. Good vision helps maintain stability and line.
- Ride within your limits. Rural roads are not predictable, so we should not treat them like racetracks.
- Adjust for weather, light conditions, and fatigue.

5.4 Head-to-head or head-to-tail

These collisions are among the most serious types of crashes, particularly on rural or higher-speed roads.

Advice for bikers is:

- Head-to-head collisions often occur on bends. So, bikers need to control their position and speed when entering a bend to avoid drifting across the centre line, especially on left-hand bends
- Expect others to make mistakes and be prepared for oncoming vehicles cutting corners
- To avoid head-to-tail collisions, always maintain a safe following distance. At least a two-second gap and more in poor conditions
- Brake progressively to give following vehicles time to react. If you are relying on engine braking, consider using the brake lamp as a signal you are slowing or will be slowing.
- At junctions stop slightly to one side of the lane so you have an escape route and keep your eye on your mirrors of approaching vehicles who may be distracted

Advice for mature drivers is similar:

- Keep well within your lane, reduce speeds on rural and unfamiliar roads, especially where lanes are narrow or visibility is restricted
- Always allow a safe following distance and maintain full concentration. Rear-end collisions are often due to loss of concentration.

6. Post-crash care of motorcyclists on rural roads

6.1 Vehicle preparedness

Essential equipment you should have are:

- Insurance and breakdown service documents in your glove compartment with the telephone numbers stored on your phone
- Warm blanket, water, energy bar, mobile phone charger, torch, warning triangle, first aid kit and high visibility bibs
- Whats3Words app on your mobile phone. This identifies your location within three metres by three words. These can be given to the emergency services which is helpful on rural roads with few obvious landmarks

6.2 Arrival on scene

- If you have witnessed or are first on the scene of a crash, it may be a big shock. Your priority must be to take care and not put yourself or your passengers at risk and potentially escalate the situation
- Stop in a safe place. This may be before or after the crash but not on a corner, brow of a hill or a narrowing section of road.
- Watch out for hidden ditches and soft verges
- Leave plenty of space for emergency vehicles. Ambulance and fire brigade services will want to get as close to the crash site as possible
- Turn on your hazard lights
- Be aware of other vehicles arriving on the scene. On roads with speed limits above 30mph it is difficult to gauge the closing speed of incoming vehicles

6.3 Alerting Emergency Services

- Identify where you are using the Whats3Word app, your sat nav or activating the SOS system in your car, if it is so equipped.
- Then call 999 or 112. 112 is an emergency phone number that can be used free of charge on mobile phones across Europe. (The SOS system automatically connects you to a control room that will then connect you with the emergency services)
- Once connected give as much information as you can about the crash scenario, location, crash setting, number and type of vehicles involved, and number of casualties

6.4 Intervention Roles

- Decide if you are fit enough to do more, if not get out of your car and stand in a safe position. If you have a disability stay in the vehicle with your seatbelt on
- If you can give more support and are a couple decide who is going to do what. The person with the most recent first aid training should be assigned to go to the crash site, whilst the other will place the warning triangle to warn oncoming traffic
- Gather essential equipment, warning triangle, first aid kit and blanket
- Take care when placing a warning triangle. Once the triangle is set make sure to walk back on the side of the road toward oncoming traffic

6.5 Approaching Crash Site

- Take care of risks such as spilt oil, broken glass, and damaged power supplies
- Watch out for casualties wandering about in a state of shock. Guide them to a place of safety and get them to sit down. If in shock they could pass out and injure themselves in a fall
- Do not be tempted to sit them in your car. If they have a seizure, then your car could be damaged as the casualty is extracted by the emergency services
- Make sure no one is smoking as there is a risk of fire from spilt fuel
- Check the motorcycle engine is turned off

6.5 Casualty Assessment

- How many casualties are there? What is the severity of their injuries? If available ask your partner or a bystander to ring 999 or 112 with an update
- Other vital activities of bystanders are to ask them to take as many pictures as possible of the crash scene and number plates of vehicles involved

6.6 First Aid

- Check the quiet casualties first. Those calling out in pain are conscious. The quiet casualties maybe more seriously injured
- Remove motorcyclists' crash helmets in case CPR is required.
- To get an initial reaction from a casualty – shout, check and open airways, if breathing has stopped deliver CPR. Stem heavy bleeding
- Do not move a casualty unless they are in immediate danger
- Keep them warm. Stay with them and reassure them help is on the way

6.6 Preserving the Evidence

- Do not move vehicles or debris unless necessary. The area may be declared a crime scene and the forensic investigation team need untampered evidence
- If you must move a motorcycle. Take pictures first and notify the police when they arrive

6.7 Arrival of Emergency Services

- Stay on the scene
- Give your contact information, mobile and dashcam images. Also give a statement of what you have seen

6.8 Self-Care

- Be aware after your experience you may be in shock, the impact of which will vary from person to person
- Drive home with great care
- If you experience long-term emotional impact, seek professional help

6.9 Key Advice

If you are first on the scene of a crash **do not feel you have to be a hero.** Providing prompt accurate information and staying out of harm's way will be very helpful for the emergency services.

This will enable them to respond quickly and effectively so that everyone involved receives the care they need as soon as possible

7. Useful Contacts

- Older Drivers Forum Gloucestershire events and social media www.olderdriversforum.com/gloucestershire www.facebook.com/olderdriversforum/
- St John's Ambulance First Aid Training www.sja.org.uk
- Biker Down! courses www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glosfire-events/biker-down-workshops/ alternatively email bikerdown.gloucestershire@gmail.com
- Motorcycle training courses www.ropsa.com/health-safety-courses/motorcycle-training-course www.iamroadsmart.com/courses-services/for-individuals/advanced-rider-iam0076/
- GEM Motoring Assist 'Blue Light Aware' videos https://youtu.be/Sq_qBijChWk
- To check for crash hotspots Crashmap www.crashmap.co.uk
- Bosh Aerotwins wipers www.autoexpress.co.uk/product-group-test/36172/best-wiper-blades
- Look but do not see video www.youtube.com/watch?v=x94PGgYKHQ0
- Whats3Words www.whats3words.com
- Highway Code www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code-safety

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Thank you.**