

Built and Natural Environment: EIT Review

National Study on Re-offending by speeding motorists

It is clear that there is a relationship between speed and the consequences of road traffic collisions. It is logical therefore that public safety would benefit from measures that reduce speed. The effectiveness of a speed limit in reducing casualties relies on compliance. It is clear that compliance is far from perfect and therefore a level of enforcement is essential.

Punishment alone has been proven to make little difference to future offending/collision rates. People are involved in collisions because of errors in their driving manner or information processing, rather than a deliberate act. The introduction of speed awareness courses as an alternative to awarding points was designed to improve compliance by replacing punishment with education and persuasion through rehabilitating/retraining offenders.

The majority of speed awareness courses are offered to drivers who have exceeded the speed limit by a small margin. Drivers have a fairly positive view of their driving skills and may make them resistant to any message that might contradict this picture. The speed awareness workshop is designed to persuade drivers that a small difference in speed over the limit can make a difference to the outcome of a collision.

A study by Professor Steve Stradling of Napier University concluded that to change attitudes and intentions the workshop should involve both theory and practical elements. The following five stage process is required:

- 1) Make the offender aware that there is an issue that needs to be addressed
- 2) Make the offender aware why it needs to be addressed
- 3) Explain to the offender how it can be addressed
- 4) Practically demonstrate to the offender a better method of driving, which will have positive benefits to the driver personally
- 5) Coach the offender to prove to himself that he can make a difference, and see the gains/benefits

A study by McKenna (2007) concluded that at the end of the speed awareness workshop attitudes and intentions had changed:

- Four times less likely to intentionally break the speed limit.
- Five times more likely to intentionally keep to the 30 mph speed limit.

The speed awareness workshops have shown to produce small to medium differences in driver's attitudes to speeding, their perceived social pressure against speeding and their perceptions that they could control their speeding in the future.