



Executive Summary: Scoot Aware

The effect of e-scooters on people with sight loss

May 2022

Guide Dogs has produced a report demonstrating that **the rapid increase in e-scooter use over the last two years is having a significant and detrimental impact on people with sight loss**. We have collected a wide range of evidence from in-depth surveys, polling, discussion groups and crash testing to inform a detailed submission in response to the UK government's ongoing rental e-scooter trials.

The trial is due to end in November 2022, with an evaluation from the DfT expected to be published imminently. **But the reality is, most of the e-scooters we see are being used illegally**. Now the Government has signalled that wider legalisation is likely, urgent action needs to be taken to introduce rigorous standards for all e-scooters, crack down on illegal use, and ensure they are only ever driven on the road

The issues:

According to research carried out on behalf of Guide Dogs by the research consultancy Insight Angels in January and February 2022, 78% of people with sight loss had encountered an e-scooter, **nearly three quarters of whom had already had a negative experience with an e-scooter**.

Over half of people with sight loss reported changing their behaviour due to e-scooters, including not going to some parts of their town (16%), changing their regular routes (14%) and shortening trips outside to reduce their risk of encountering e-scooters (10%).

Alarmingly, 12% of respondents reported their mobility aid or cane had been hit by an e-scooter, 10% had been hit but not injured by an e-scooter and 2% had already been hit and injured by an e-scooter.

People with sight loss told us their main concerns with e-scooters and why they have changed their behaviour:

- **Pavement ridership and street clutter**. People with sight loss rely on clear and well-maintained pavements in order to travel safely and independently. Illegal e-scooter riding on pavements and abandoned

rental e-scooters contribute to random and unpredictable street clutter and obstacles, which can force people with sight loss into the road, potentially into oncoming traffic which they cannot see.

- **The almost silent nature of e-scooters**, means that people with sight loss do not know where e-scooters are or their direction of travel. 74% of people with sight loss are concerned at how silent e-scooters are. The level of concern increases to 81% for those with a severe visual impairment.
- **The weight, power and speed of e-scooters**, particularly as the speed limit for private e-scooters far exceeds the capped limit for trial e-scooters, with speeds of up to 68mph. 74% of people with sight loss are concerned at the speed of e-scooters and 50% reported concern about the weight and power of e-scooters.

Recommendations to Government:

The increase in e-scooter use and the lack of awareness, adherence and enforcement of the laws around e-scooters is creating a huge challenge for people with vision impairment. That is why Guide Dogs has been engaging with government ministers, civil servants, local authorities, e-scooter trial operators and the police about e-scooters.

On rental e-scooters, we advise:

1. The Government should commit to reviewing the technical standards of e-scooters, in particular the power, weight and speed at which rental e-scooters are permitted.
2. If rental e-scooter schemes are to be continued, they should all be docked and not obstruct the pavement.
3. The Government should produce rigorous standards for engagement that e-scooter operators and local authorities must meet, including carrying out and publishing detailed Equality Impact Assessments on any proposals.
4. The Government needs to clarify where any changes to the law will apply in Great Britain. The trials have only taken place in England, however as vehicle standard legislation is reserved to Westminster, we understand any change in the law on e-scooters would also apply in Scotland and Wales. Vehicle standard legislation in Northern Ireland is devolved. The patchwork of laws further adds to the confusion about the legality of their use.

On e-scooters more broadly:

5. We have asked the Government to make a clear pledge that they will not proceed with the legalisation of privately owned e-scooters based on the evidence of the rental trials alone. However, in light of the announcement following the Queen's Speech indicating that legal use will be expanded, they should meet at least the same rigorous standards set for rental e-scooters, and with a clear strategy on enforcement when they are used illegally.
6. The Government should prohibit the sale of unregulated and untested e-scooters.
7. The Government should take a leading approach with police forces and local authorities to ensure there is a joined up and consistent approach to enforcement.
8. Regardless of the outcome of the trials, the Government should take a leading role in ensuring the public understand the law on e-scooter use, and in particular the negative impact anti-social use has on pedestrians, and including people with sight loss in particular.

For more information and a copy of the fully referenced report please see Guide Dogs' website or email publicaffairs@guidedogs.org.uk

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