

Road safety is a major concern for communities across Scotland

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ON average, there is a fatality on Scotland's roads every two days ("Crackdown on motorists behind rise in convictions", The Herald, December 17). In the same time frame 10 people receive serious or life-threatening injuries. Three times more people are killed in collisions than are murdered each year and yet the reality is the majority of these tragedies are avoidable.

Road safety and casualty reduction are still ranked as high as second in the list of priorities in communities across Scotland. We all want our children to be safe to walk to school, to be able to cycle to work, or for leisure, and for our road network to be free-flowing when we need to travel about the country. As a result, 86 per cent of our local policing plans, for which we are held to

account, reflect this priority and officers routinely deploy to areas highlighted as being of concern.

At the same time, the latest driver behavioural research, carried out on behalf of Road Safety Scotland in October, shows 68 per cent of us admit to engaging in risky behaviour on the roads in the last 12 months.

Nobody sets out on the road to cause death or injury to anyone, yet every day we all witness behaviour which we know puts people unnecessarily at risk, and sadly I know that today police officers will be knocking on doors to tell families and friends their loved ones have been hurt or killed.

Organisations such as Road Safety Scotland, Scotland's campaign against Irresponsible Drivers (Scid), Brake and Road Safety GB can all

provide copious amounts of evidence of the devastating effects of road crashes and all these organisations support activity that would help to reduce the annual toll of misery.

Police have a role to play in this process and our analysis of collisions and offences allows us to continue to actively target patrols in areas of concern, and to challenge those who willingly put themselves, and others, at risk on the roads. This research has also helped us focus activity in areas where the risks posed may not be immediately obvious, and to challenge road users who may be unaware their behaviour is inappropriate.

Such an approach requires that we use every means at our disposal to influence road users; real-time education, at the roadside, at the

point that the offence is detected, must be part of the process. Enforcement will always remain the primary means by which we seek to change behaviour. However, when it comes to risk-taking, there is no such thing as a low-level motoring offence, and the consequences of speeding, drink/drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt or using your mobile phone while driving can be catastrophic.

We all need to realise the numbers of deaths and injuries on our roads can be influenced and it is our attitude, and how we interact with each other on the tar we share, which will have the greatest impact on these horrendous statistics.

Chief Superintendent Iain Murray, Head of Road Policing, Police Scotland, Randolphfield, St Ninians Road, Stirling.