

All road users need to learn about sharing the space

A student who was left badly injured after being struck by a car while out cycling has issued a warning about a lack of education on how to use shared space on Scottish roads.

Niamh Clarke, 19, is pursuing a personal injury claim through Watermans Solicitors against the driver who knocked her from her bike in June this year.

Physics student Niamh, from Marchmont in the city, is concerned that cyclists and pedestrians are being put in danger over a lack of education on how to safely share space on Scottish roads.

Speaking during Road Safety Awareness Week, Niamh said: "I'd been cycling in the New Town on the main road through a crossroads and a car was coming up in the opposite direction against me.

"He didn't see me and he went to turn right but drove into me when he was turning.

"I was taken to the Infirmary by ambulance and there they did lots of checks. I'd suffered a lot of bad whiplash to my chest and neck and had quite bad bruising all over my legs, shoulder damage and a fractured bone in my hand in my wrist.

"I play Gaelic football so I couldn't do that for a while and my shoulder still gives me a bit of trouble.

"It really shook me up and I was quite afraid on the roads for

a while afterwards.”

Following the incident, Niamh sought help from a counsellor to try and give her the confidence to get back on her bike.

“I did talk to someone because I was unable to cope with getting back on the bike,” she added.

“Everyone just needs to be aware that other people are using the road and everyone is entitled to the same safety on the road.”

Watermans Solicitors has been highlighting this issue after a recent admission from The Scottish Government that there is no agreed definition on what constitutes ‘shared space’ on the country’s roads and as a result, no single body in Scotland has responsibility for public education in this area. The admission came in response to a Scottish Parliamentary Written Question.

The personal injury firm has also launched their ‘Winter Is Coming’ campaign, in a bid to promote road safety for cyclists, drivers and pedestrians.

Heather Tierney, Senior Solicitor at Watermans Solicitors, said: “Cycling offers many environmental and health benefits but cyclists and pedestrians sharing space can pose risks to both.

“Greater understanding of how to stay safe in shared spaces are essential to preventing injuries. We see the consequences of a lack of awareness around safety in this area through representing both cyclists and pedestrians who have been injured in shared spaces.

“In order for cyclists and pedestrians to co-exist successfully on our roads, both require to be educated appropriately on road safety. With the Scottish Government confirming that no single body is responsible for educating

users on sharing space, there is a real risk that we see accidents and injuries that could have been prevented. Who will be responsible for enforcing safety in such shared spaces?

“With increasing numbers of cyclists on the roads, this is an issue that is only likely to get worse. Action is needed to protect potentially vulnerable road users of all types.”

Watermans commissioned research into public views on cycling safety. The research (see note 3), which questioned a representative panel of people across Scotland, found:

- Over half of Scots respondents disagreeing with the statement “cycling is a safe method of travel”
- Similarly, there was a split in opinion on whether ‘cyclists shouldn’t be allowed to use major roads’
- 96 per cent of respondents in Scotland agreed with the statement that ‘All road users must be held accountable to the law’

The firm is now calling for action to increase understanding of how cyclists, pedestrians and other road users can safely share space on our increasingly busy roads.



Niamh Clark