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## Risk control

### Taking Pride in Zebra Crossings



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# Taking Pride in Zebra Crossings

## Overview

The Metropolitan Police recorded a ten year high in relation to homophobic attacks with a record 399 in June 2021 alone. Among those attacks 52 of them targeted trans people, again the highest number on record.<sup>1</sup> Figures from the Metropolitan Police Force state that in 2021-22 there were 3,577 homophobic hate crimes committed an increase of 26.77% on the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

If we then consider Stonewall's estimation that four in five anti-LGBT+ hate crimes and incidents go unreported then the true reality for LGBT+ people is even more challenging than the official statistics may suggest.<sup>3</sup>

It may be correct that significant progress has been made within the UK over the past two decades in addressing anti-LGBT+ discrimination and bullying, however, the rather sobering statistics presented suggest that there is still a long way to go.

## Committing to the Cause

Organisations around the world have found many ways to demonstrate their commitment to inclusiveness and the LGBT+ cause, including:

- Taking part in local Pride parades and LGBT+ events throughout the year
- Giving LGBT+ employees a platform to share their stories with the broader workforce
- Highlighting the accomplishments of LGBT+ employees
- Including Pride colours in organisational branding
- Ensuring strong LGBT+ representation on management teams
- Displaying the Pride colours in social and public-facing areas

A method that some Local Authorities have chosen to adopt to visibly demonstrate their commitment to inclusiveness is through the repainting of zebra crossings in the rainbow colours of the Pride Flag or Progress Pride Flag. The Progress Pride Flag also includes black and brown stripes to represent the marginalised LGBT+ communities of colour, along with the colours pink, light blue and white, which are used on the Trans Pride Flag.

A quick internet search can identify a rising number of these initiatives being implemented globally, including across the UK. Some of these initiatives install temporary colour schemes to celebrate the annual Pride Month, whereas others are more permanent in nature

Promoting LGBT+ equality and inclusiveness is without doubt the responsibility of every person and every organisation. However, this guidance note seeks to present factors for consideration to any Local Authority currently contemplating the installation of zebra crossings in the rainbow colours of the Pride flag or one of the many variations.

## Regulation

One of the principal regulations to consider in respect of the installation of zebra crossings on the public highway is The Zebra, Pelican and Puffin Pedestrian Crossings Regulations and General Directions 1997 (the Regulations).<sup>4</sup>

In summary, the Regulations seek to prescribe standards for the construction and use of road crossings within the UK, specifying standards for traffic and warning signs, road markings, crossing dimensions, lighting and the behaviours of both motorists and pedestrians when approaching or using a crossing.

For example, Regulation 25 states: "Every pedestrian, if he is on the carriageway within the limits of a Zebra crossing, which is not for the time being controlled by a constable in uniform or traffic warden, before any part of a vehicle has entered those limits, shall have precedence within those limits over that vehicle and the driver of the vehicle shall accord such precedence to any such pedestrian."

This point is endorsed within the Highway Code which states that motorists "MUST give way when a pedestrian has moved onto a crossing".<sup>5</sup>

Of course, for a driver to give way in accordance with expectations, they must first be paying attention, recognise that they are approaching a designated crossing and also identify pedestrians who are either exhibiting an intention to use the crossing or who are indeed in the act of using it.

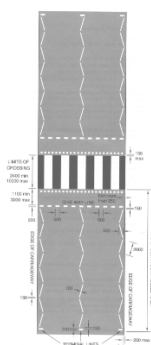
Sadly, there are still a high number of road traffic collisions involving pedestrians and vehicles on the UK's roads.

According to statistics published by the Department of Transport there were 14,750 reported casualties associated with pedestrians being struck by vehicles in the UK in 2020<sup>6</sup>. Of these incidents, there were 4,265 serious injuries and 346 fatalities.

Within the aforementioned Regulations, 'Schedule 1 Part 2 Road Markings 6 (a)' states: "within the limits of a Zebra crossing the carriageway shall be marked with a series of alternate black and white stripes...of the size and type, and generally in the manner, shown in the diagram at the end of this Part of this Schedule."

'Schedule 1 Part 2 Limits of the crossing 8 (1)' seemingly provides some limited variability in construction by stating: "If it provides a reasonable contrast with the white stripes, the colour of the surface of the carriageway may be used to indicate the stripes shown coloured black in the diagram."

Part 2 Diagram



No other variability in construction is permitted within the Regulations.

Other regulations relevant to the design and installation of road crossings include The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 which prescribe the designs and conditions of use for traffic signs, including road markings, traffic signals and pedestrian, cycle and equestrian crossings used on or near roads.<sup>7</sup>

'Local Transport Note 2/95 The Design of Pedestrian Crossings' recommends the practices to be followed when planning, designing and installing at-grade pedestrian crossings.<sup>8</sup>

## Behavioural Factors

As well compliance with the prescribed regulatory standards for zebra crossings highlighted above, there are other behavioural risk factors which Local Authorities should assess as part of their deliberations.

One of the key benefits of a regulated approach to highways infrastructure (including road markings and road signs) is the relative ease at which they can be identified and interpreted, with the intention of creating a consistency in the behaviours of both motorists and pedestrians and the maintenance of high standards of safety.

In respect of the installation of Pride zebra crossings, additional behavioural factors may include:

**Ambiguity** - could a colour scheme which does not meet the normal expectations of either pedestrians or motorists lead to confusion as to whether the installation is a legal road crossing?

**Recognition** - how will a Pride colour scheme affect the ability of colour-blind motorists and pedestrians to recognise and respond to the road crossing?

**Distraction** - could a Pride colour scheme provide distraction to either motorists or pedestrians?

**Health** - could a non-compliant colour scheme cause confusion or other difficulties for people with certain health conditions such as dementia?

Behavioural factors are an important consideration in the context of established standards designed to protect the safety of motorists and pedestrians, particularly if changes are implemented which may maintain the potential to increase the risk of a road traffic collision.

## Conclusion

Despite the progress that has been made over the past two decades, there is little doubt that more needs to be done to promote LGBT+ equality and inclusiveness.

Many Local Authorities are very much at the forefront of initiatives to address the challenges that people in the LGBT+ community face, and this paper in no way seeks to diminish the fantastic efforts that these organisations have made or their continuing commitment to a very worthy cause.

However, when considering the many initiatives that organisations have adopted to further the LGBT+ cause, the installation of zebra crossings in the colours of the Pride Flag or any of its variations does potentially introduce an enhanced risk to the organisation and to road users.

Local Authorities need to consider the legal, financial and reputational implications of installing road crossings which may directly contravene relevant highway regulations and which may also, in some eyes, be considered to increase the risks to pedestrian and motorist safety which is already significant at these crossings.

## References

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## Further information

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## Get in touch

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