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RCEM Position Statement on E-scooters in the UK

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Purpose

In the UK there is currently no legislation applying to the use of private e-scooters in terms of age, speed limits, requirement of safety equipment. There are estimated to be 1.2million privately owned e-scooters in use in the UK [i], posing significant risks to both riders, other road users and pedestrians. The majority of which are being used illegally. Emergency Departments are seeing increasing numbers of serious injuries and deaths related to e-scooters and we want to highlight these risks to those considering a change in legislation around e-scooters.

Background

E-scooters are promoted as a safe and environmentally friendly form of transport. In the UK they are classed as motor vehicles (Road Traffic Act 1988) [ii]. Currently, private e-scooters are illegal for adults and children unless used on private land with the landowner's permission. The public and healthcare professionals remain largely unaware of the law around e-scooters [iii].

In 2020 the UK government implemented e-scooter rental schemes in 25 areas in England [iv], which have been extended until 2028 [v]. Rental e-scooters require a driving licence to hire, are speed limited to 15.5mph, have lights and are geofenced, meaning they are safer than private e-scooters which have no requirements for essential safety features [vi]. Children and young people (CYP) under 16 years old are generally unable to access rental e-scooters. Although e-scooters are illegal to ride as stated above, they can be sold by retailers.

Riders often also engage in risky behaviours that increase the chance of injury such as having multiple people on one e-scooter ("doubling") and not wearing helmets; enforcement of the law is challenging[vii]. E-scooters are promoted by social media often with minimal focus on safety features or safe riding[viii].

Evidence of Harm

In Ireland E-scooters became legal on Irish roads in May 2024. A recent position statement from the faculty of paediatrics in Ireland in 2025 [ix] highlighted that e-scooter accidents are now the leading cause of traumatic brain injuries in children admitted to a tertiary neurosurgical centre in Dublin. From June 2023 to May 2024, one child was admitted to Dublin's neurosurgical centre with traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to an e-scooter accident. From May 2024 to Dec 2025, over 25 children have been admitted with TBI due to e-scooter falls. This is despite legislation prohibiting under 16s from riding e-scooters on public roads. We are concerned that the UK will follow a similar trajectory.

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Since 2019, 59 deaths involving e-scooters have been reported in the UK; 7 of these were under the age of 18 years old [x], resulting in several coroner 'prevention of future death' notices [xi]. E-scooters can be modified to travel at extreme speeds, e-scooters seized by the police had been modified to travel at up to 90mph [xii] . There have also been serious house fires because of substandard e-scooter battery charging [xiii] . Road traffic accidents remain a leading cause of mortality in CYP [xiv] and e-scooters are part of this data set. We also know that injuries from private e-scooters are hugely under-reported: under 10% of casualties from collisions involving e-scooters presenting to EDs were recorded by the police [xv] .

Worldwide, published literature is focused on adults and CYP are under-represented despite the popularity of e-scooters. Unpublished retrospective data from 500 children injured using an e-scooter across the North of England also showed that 74% of injured young people were from the two most deprived deciles, demonstrating further health and social inequity [xvi].

Children are more vulnerable to injury due to their size, weight distribution, and the inability to handle speed/risk [xvii]. An emerging pattern of serious injury is described [xviii,xix] - head, face, teeth, chest, and long bone injury [xx], with often more than one type of injury sustained.

The impact of injuries to both adults and CYP is significant. As well as tragic deaths involving e-scooters, life changing injuries are also reported e.g. traumatic brain injury [xxi].

Recommendations

Review of legislation to explore further measures to protect adults, children and young people from harm as a result of e-scooter use.

Establish data collection and support research into e-scooter injuries including collaboration between health, education and enforcement by the police.

Development of injury prevention campaigns targeting parents, schools and young riders including the promotion of safe riding behaviours.

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