I congratulate Tony Lloyd on securing the debate. Hon. Members will be pleased to hear that I am not running for election as a police and crime commissioner. I support fully the passionate words on behalf of victims that we heard from my hon. Friend Priti Patel and many others.

As treasurer of the all-party parliamentary cycling group and a keen cyclist, I know many people who have been affected by this issue. Today, I would like to talk about vulnerable road users who are victims in our system. We need changes right the way through the system, from how cases are investigated, to charging standards and the involvement of victims and to sentencing.

I will start with a chilling statistic. We have now reached the 95th cyclist death on the roads in Britain. Some 82 of those were caused by collisions with vehicles, and many of those cases are still being investigated. The overwhelming majority of deaths to cyclists are caused by collisions with vehicles, and not because of carelessness.

Indeed, we saw in statistics from Transport for London for last year that only 6% of cyclist deaths were attributable to carelessness on their part. The majority were attributed to fault by the driver. That needs to be stressed.

In many cases, of course, there is not enough evidence either way, but the majority of deaths are caused by motorists, so we need to be very clear about where the balance of fault lies in these instances. If we look at deaths and serious injuries together, last year 3,192 people were killed or seriously injured on our roads. For far too long, justice has been weighted in favour of the motorist.

Terminology is also an issue. We all refer to road traffic accidents, but I put it like this: if a cyclist is killed by a speeding lorry driver on a mobile phone, that is not an accident but a crime, and we should refer to them as road traffic collisions rather than road traffic accidents. That would help to drive a change in culture. This debate is not about being anti-carâ€”I am a road user myself. In fact, most people who are campaigning on this issue both cycle and drive.

There are examples of unsafe cycling out there. I am sure that I owe my life to a traffic policeman who hauled me over the coals for cycling down what he called the “tunnel of death” between two lanes of slow-moving lorries and buses. Hon. Members will be pleased to hear that I did not shout; I just apologised very meekly. Sometimes, being informed about these things makes a difference.

Inconsistencies run right through our system. We need look at the boundaries between careless driving, death by careless and inconsiderate driving, and death by dangerous driving. There is evidence, because of the higher conviction rates, that offenders are being driven towards lesser charges. That has huge implications for sentencing. In many cases,
there is the decision that there is no one to blame at all. That cannot be right.

As with the Sentencing Council guidelines on the impact on victims of assault, let us have victim statements. Losing a child through a collision with a speeding motorist has no less impact than losing them as a result of an assault, so let us take that seriously. We should look again at strict liability in civil cases, and I would like the Minister to talk about that.

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