

Advice and Tips

Road Safety for Children

Every year over 130 children die and more than 4,500 are seriously injured whilst walking or cycling on UK roads.

More than double those that die in car crashes.

Children need to learn to use the roads safely, to walk and cycle in safety, and also to use their common sense when crossing a road or getting into a car. Road safety is essential for children's freedom, development, and exercise and of course the roads need to be used with respect.

Road safety should be taught by example and guidance with a trusted adult, from an early age.

The Government have ambitious targets to reduce the number of children who die or are injured by 50% but parents and child carers have a duty to inform, educate and train our children and to maximise child safety on our roads.

The three key stages of road safety education:

- Babies and very young children – parents should take the given advice seriously ensuring they follow the government and authority guidelines on safety, whether for car safety or road safety. Parents and teachers need to teach children safe behaviour on the road from the moment children are able to understand.
- Primary age children – children should be taught pedestrian safety and attend cycle training courses to learn the risks of cycling on difficult road and in difficult traffic conditions.
- Older children – need to take seriously the road safety taught by parents and from schools as they travel longer journeys on their own.

Some facts on who is most at risk and where:

Pedestrian casualties peak at about the age of 12 with cyclist injuries at 14

Boys are more at risk than girls

20% of all injuries happen on the school journey and increases for secondary school age children

The risk of injury is greater for children using main roads, going out without an adult before they have had proper road safety training and if they are prone to taking risk

BABIES and YOUNG CHILDREN

Parents need to teach awareness of the roads from the moment a child can understand. Parents should talk through the motions of road safety as they walk with their children or cross a busy road, or indeed step into a car.

Child car seats are a must – they save lives. But make sure it is properly fitted; if you have any problems contact the manufacturer, retailer or a competent garage.

More tips:

- hold your child's hand when crossing the road
- get your child out of the car on the pavement side
- put your child in conspicuous clothing especially at night

PRIMARY AGE CHILDREN

Basic road safety is in the PSHE (personal, social and health education) curriculum and more is being done to increase the time spent on teaching road safety in schools. However the best training for children is practical pedestrian training at the roadside, which can be provided, by adults or Local Road Safety Officers. Your local library will have numerous books and videos on curbside safety.

OLDER CHILDREN

This group are at further risk because of the longer journeys to and from school with friends and often on their own. In school, children are taught to recognise and manage risk and make safer choices about healthy lifestyles, different environments and travel.

Cycling – children should go on properly run courses that last a number of weeks. The course should include practical on-road cycling under supervision so the real world is experienced. There is a specially written Highway Code for Young Road Users. RoSPA also issues a Code of Good Practice for Practical Cycle Training.

Cycle Helmets - children should be persuaded to wear a cycle helmet at all times. The Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust has some very convincing statistics on how many children have been saved by wearing one. There is no VAT to pay on children's cycle helmets

Horse Riding is another road concern – all children should wear a riding hat at all times when around horses and ponies especially when riding them. The British Horse Society has comprehensive guidelines on the safety aspects of children and horses and administers a road proficiency test, which sets a high standard for road riding. Riders should remember that drivers do not always see a rider and you should always wear visible clothing and be aware of traffic and the reaction that your horse might have to an oncoming car or larger vehicle.