

The Right Way or No Way: safety improvements for child pedestrians

The Highways Agency is implementing a new educational resource aimed at young pedestrians playing on our road network. From information gained through a report written by the National Intelligence Unit (NIU) within the HA, it was established that over 3000 children a year have been on our network when they shouldn't be. The Agency is convinced there are many more unreported cases too, any one of which could lead to a serious injury or fatality.

The first approach the Agency took was to discuss the issues with various focus groups. These comprised youngsters representing a variety of youth environment establishments (Youth Offending Teams; schools; karate clubs etc.) to better understand their motivations. Close attention was paid to the language that the youngsters were using so that when it came to the actual creation of a tool, the script would be reflective of those it was intending to represent.

The Agency then set about producing the package. A package of solutions was decided upon so that going forward youth leaders and teachers will be able to use whichever tool is suitable for their group of youngsters.

A 20-minute DVD was produced using child actors doing the dangerous activities youngsters are often involved in (playing chicken, crossing where they shouldn't, damaging fences) as revealed by the NIU report. Prior to production, the script for the piece was tested by road safety officers and school teachers for suitability, to make sure that the DVD would be able to be used effectively. A child's voiceover talks viewers through the scenarios with T4-style presenters cutting in to discuss the issues. A central theme within the different chapters of the DVD is the importance of awareness: the need for children to pay close attention to the dangers surrounding them on the roads, as well as the



Cover of the DVD

risks involved in taking ill-advised chances.

The film is cutting edge and very snappy in its approach. The Agency broadened the content of the film to include messages that affect everyone. Therefore, rather than focus solely on motorway safety, the Agency incorporated scenarios that were relevant to other areas as well, for example a scenario concerning the need to use appropriate crossings is applicable

to both motorways and local roads. The film has been designed for use in classrooms or with youth groups, as youngsters learn more in this environment.

The Highways Agency are also providing guidance notes for teachers and youth leaders, with ideas of how to further use the theme and we are offering a drama script to help with development of the ideas through schools. There is also a parents' factsheet to encourage them to discuss the issues at home.

The Agency has tested the package at various schools with excellent results and feedback so far. All materials are now available on www.highways.gov.uk/youngpedestrians.



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