

Road Safety starts at home (and school)

How many of you feel that roads are too dangerous? (I'm cheating here as I know the answer: it's 66% according to the British Social Attitudes Survey – varying between 43% of 18-24 year old to 73% of over 65's. We get more worried the older we get it seems.)

And if you ask all the parents why they take their children to school by car, despite widely known benefits of more active travel (health, alertness, climate change), the dangers of the roads would be high amongst the responses.

So do we ever question why the 'roads are dangerous', and more importantly, how we could change either the fact or the perception?

As your local Road Safety Community Assistant I do a lot of work with your children and grandchildren in the local schools educating them about road safety – from crossing roads to cycling to looking at the consequences of our actions and taking responsibility for them – all aimed at helping them to become safer independent travelers when they get to that stage (often on starting High School).

However, your children are obviously not the major decision makers on how they travel in most cases. So I will be discussing the various issues we in Road Safety face in a series of articles I hope you will also find interesting.

In the jungle, the elders of the tribe will take the next generations out into their environment to pass on their knowledge and teach them about the world in which they are living – which berries are poisonous, which tracks to steer clear of. If you are driving your children short distances to school or their activity clubs all the time, they don't have the opportunity to actively learn about using the roads in other ways, preparing them for traveling by themselves as teenagers (statistically the highest rate accident group as pedestrians). And independent travel doesn't just give them more freedom – it gives us parents some too!

So could you walk or cycle to school one day a week, to give your children an experience they would not otherwise gain. Explain things that you come across on your journey, like best crossing places, looking all round wherever vehicles could come from not just right and left (always look RIGHT first and last before crossing) and priorities / giving way. They will enjoy it, and over time let them take a lead in judging and making safe decisions – it will make you more confident that at the right age they will be safer independent travelers.

We are keen to train more community **Road Safety Volunteers** to help educate children and work in the community. If you would like to find out more about doing this, please contact me as below:

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