

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Produced by the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team

Road Safety Initiatives Survey - May/June 2011



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Road Safety Initiatives Survey

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This report was completed by Christopher Lavender, a Work Based Learning Student from the University of Chester, who worked alongside the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team.

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Summary: 'Road Safety Initiatives in Schools Project'

Cheshire West and Chester's Road Safety Unit co-ordinates road safety initiatives in schools, offering practical and classroom based initiatives which are offered to 145 primary schools and 19 secondary schools throughout the borough.

A series of structured interviews were carried out with 7 secondary schools and 14 primary schools to explore views on current road safety initiatives on offer and the potential barriers to uptake.

Key Findings

Awareness of the Road Safety Unit

- All but one school was aware of the council's Road Safety Unit. These schools recalled speaking to and/or receiving information from the team during the last year
- Many of the schools were unaware that the Road Safety Unit works in conjunction with the emergency services to provide road safety training. The police were often perceived as an independent external trainer of road safety.

Main reasons for lack of uptake

- Some of the schools had not heard of the schemes as the information had become lost or not reached the correct person
- Lots of organisations approach schools with schemes and the schools are too busy to participate in all of them.

Communications

- The majority of schools would like to be contacted about road safety schemes in the summer term in order to implement them in the following academic year
- Most schools would prefer to be e-mailed about road safety initiatives with a follow up telephone call, which would be best at lunch times or the end of the day.

Conclusions

- The lack of uptake of road safety initiatives seems to be concerned with issues relating to communication, with road safety information often discarded or not getting to the correct person.
- Although the majority of schools recalled speaking to or receiving information from the Road Safety Team, they felt the biggest concern was a lack of communication.

Introduction: 'Road Safety Initiatives in Schools Project'

Background

'Two thirds of all fatal accidents involving children are a result of road collisions,' (Road Safety Unit, 2009). Therefore, road safety awareness for children and young people is vital to keep them safe, preparing them to become independent road users and instil responsibility as future pedestrians, passengers and drivers. The Road Safety Unit produce and carry out multiple initiatives to cater for all types of learning styles, age groups, and abilities to promote the importance of road safety. However, uptake of these schemes is inconsistent across schools.

The Project

The work based learning student contacted primary and secondary schools inviting them to take part in a short telephone interview. The interview aimed to gain an understanding of the reasons behind the lack of uptake of free road safety initiatives, as well as feedback on existing and future schemes offered by the Road Safety Unit, so that changes can be made to encourage more schools to take part.

The Sample

There are 19 secondary schools and 145 primary schools that the Road Safety Unit potentially caters for. All secondary schools were invited to take part in a telephone survey, of which 7 took part. In terms of primary schools, the sample was narrowed down to 53, as they were classified as low up-takers of road safety schemes as adopted one or less of the 3 main initiatives. In total, 14 primary schools took part.

Both primary and secondary schools were contacted via telephone at least 3 times to encourage participation.

Methodology

A work based learning student worked with the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team and the Road Safety Unit to develop a short survey that could be carried out using telephone interviews.

Two questionnaires were produced; one for primary schools and one for secondary schools, to reflect the different schemes on offer.

Both questionnaires explored:

- Knowledge of Cheshire West and Chester's Road Safety Unit
- Existing Road Safety Programmes being carried out in schools
- Potential reasons for the lack of uptake of initiatives by schools
- Thoughts on current initiatives on offer by the Road Safety Unit and ways of improving them.

Main Findings

Awareness of the Road Safety Unit

- All but one school was aware of the council's Road Safety Unit. These schools recalled speaking to or receiving information from the team over the last year
- In the last year, over half of the sample had taken part in a road safety initiative that was co-ordinated by the Road Safety Unit
- Many of the schools were unaware that the Road Safety Unit works in conjunction with the emergency services to provide road safety training. The police were often perceived as an independent, external trainer of road safety as opposed to working in partnership with the Road Safety Unit
- The Road Safety Unit is the predominant provider of road safety initiatives in schools. Any other external schemes had been largely put forth to schools by parents or members of the community who had approached the school themselves with concerns for road safety.

Thoughts on key road safety schemes offered

The Road Safety Unit has a number of core schemes for primary and secondary schools. Schools were asked their views on these schemes.

Primary Schools

Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme (JRSO's) is a scheme in which year 6 children (and usually 2 adults) are appointed as Road Safety Officers for their school. They then deliver road safety messages to their fellow pupils through monthly bulletins and competitions.

Thoughts about the Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme included:

- The JRSO's would like more face to face interaction with the Road Safety Unit and possibly other JRSO's from other local primary schools
- The JRSO's would like to participate in more activities with the Road Safety Unit
- More information is wanted by the JRSO's to feedback to their fellow pupils in hard copy format such as posters, booklets and stickers. More online information is also requested
- Schools would like more training for the JRSO's, either face to face or online
- The schools would like more visits from the Road Safety Unit and other key public services such as police and the fire service
- Schools also highlighted that teachers felt the programme was quite time consuming.

Let's Walk is a pedestrian training programme for children in years 3 and 4, which requires volunteers from schools to train as instructors who then deliver the scheme to the children.

Thoughts about the Let's Walk Scheme included:

- A covering letter from the Road Safety Unit to pupil's parents would be useful to explain and encourage participation in the scheme

- The schools would like more advertisements of the scheme for around the school for example via posters and banners
- Some felt that the scheme is quite large and can be difficult to organise and administer
- The Road Safety Unit might want to consider encouraging walking buses for rural schools (a walking bus is when a group of children walk to school together)
- Staff may have to complete the training for the course on a Saturday, which can result in low uptake. Please note: training does also take place throughout the week.

Let's Bike is a cycle training scheme for years 5 and 6, which requires volunteers to train as instructors, who then deliver the scheme to the children in two parts, one part theoretical and one part practical.

Thoughts about the Let's Bike Scheme included:

- Schools want to receive more information about this scheme from the Road Safety Unit
- A covering letter from the Road Safety Unit to pupil's parents would be useful to explain and encourage the scheme
- Schools would like to see more information available on the Internet
- The schools would like more advertisements of the schemes for around the school for example via posters and banners
- Schools would like a qualified person to check over the children's bikes
- The volunteers may have to complete the training on a Saturday, which can mean that it is difficult to get staff involved. Please note: training does also take place throughout the week.

Secondary Schools

Year 11 Road Show is a 60 minute presentation presented by the fire service exploring the circumstances and consequences of a road traffic collision with a 45 minute, class size workshop to follow.

Thoughts about the Year 11 Road Show included:

- The length of the show was too long when the 45 minute discussion proceeds the presentation
- Schools would like to see more information in a hard copy format such as brochures.

Year 12/13 Presentations consist of one hour long presentations (with 2 presentations for each year group) which cover driver and passenger safety, the consequences of road traffic collisions, road enforcement policies and road safety awareness all delivered by Cheshire Police.

Thoughts about the Year 12/13 Presentations included:

- They are great programmes full of important information which are presented really well
- It is difficult to timetable a programme for years 12 and 13 because they are only in school for timetabled lessons.

Communications

- The majority of schools would like to be contacted about road safety schemes in the summer term in order to implement them in the following academic year
- A few schools said they would need to be contacted in the term prior to the term in which they are hoping to carry out the programme
- Most schools would prefer to be contacted via e-mail about road safety initiatives with a follow up telephone call, which would be best at lunch times or the end of the day
- E-mails should be addressed FOA to ensure that the information reaches the correct person
- There was a reoccurring concern of the schools that there was no allocated person responsible for co-ordinating road safety
- The current curriculum for primary and secondary schools teaches a strand of safeguarding children under the heading of PSHE: Personal, Social, (and) Health, Education, under which a small taught element of road safety is covered
- The majority of schools discussed road safety concerns with their board of governors to improve road safety near the school and in the local area, often in relation to parking and speed limits outside the schools.

Differences between schools

- The schools situated in rural areas are less likely to adopt road safety initiatives, such as walk and bike to school, as they are considered dangerous and not practical, because many of the routes to school have roads with high speed limits and no pathways
- Schools that fall into the 20% most deprived areas are more likely to adopt the road safety schemes.

Reasons for lack of uptake

- Some schools had not heard of the schemes because the information may have been discarded or gone to the wrong person
- Lots of organisations approach schools with schemes and the schools are too busy to participate in all of them
- It is difficult to get volunteers for the programmes
- The location of the school can affect uptake, with rural schools being unwilling to adopt the scheme for fear and safety of the children
- Year 11, 12 and 13 students are on a strict timetable, in preparation for exams and assessments

Suggestions for improving schools uptake

- **Curriculum:** Aim to interact with primary and secondary school children through their PSHE lesson to ensure road safety fits more easily into the school timetable. Since the PSHE curriculum only loosely discusses road safety the Road Safety Unit could work in conjunction with the schools to provide relevant material, possibly geographically specific to their school.
- **Communication:** Although nearly all schools were aware of the Road Safety Unit they were not aware of free road safety initiatives. In addition, despite volunteer training being offered on a weekday, schools appeared to think it took place on a Saturday only.
- **Relationship with schools:** A relationship needs to be setup with a designated person or position to help get more schemes into schools. A designated person would ensure information got to the right person and e-mails or letters would not be discarded.
- **Contact method:** Schools would prefer information by e-mail and to a designated person or position to help get more schemes into schools. To fit into the academic years planning information is preferred in the summer.
- **Working with Governors:** Identifying the governor responsible for student welfare could help with road safety concerns as part of a safeguarding initiative. Many of the schools also work with their parish council regarding road safety, this could also be a useful pathway to pursue.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteers are central to a number of schemes on offer. Advertising road safety schemes at school functions, such as parents evening, to get them involved might increase the number of volunteers, in particular targeting functions held for first year groups in both primary and secondary schools.
- **Interaction:** Much more interaction is wanted by schools with the team, in particular with figures of authority to help reinforce the road safety message. This was a popular opinion of both primary and secondary schools, as they claimed teachers emphasising the importance of road safety is not enough.
- **Promoting the Road Safety Message:** Road safety banners for outside of the school seem very popular; maybe getting the schools and children to produce one would be a beneficial activity, all as one or as part of a competition.
- **Presentations:** Short and fast presentations within assembly time around 20/30 minutes long could address a whole year group, which could be followed up with discussions or activities by the individual tutor/form group in class with the Road Safety Team coming back at a later date to review the activity.
- **Incentives:** For primary school children some sort of reward would help to further promote the road safety message such as stickers; "I know about Road Safety". A mascot or figure head for the team may also help to promote or encourage road safety initiatives at least for those schools who have taken up the scheme.
- **Internet:** More use of the internet could help to promote road safety messages through interactive gaming and play, as well as provide the Road Safety Unit with a means of contact with lots of schools, and a chance for schools to speak to other schools about road safety.

- **Timetable:** Year groups 7, 8, 9 and 10 in secondary schools have allocated periods for external programmes to come into school. It may be useful to create more programmes for this audience, as years 11, 12 and 13 are on strict timetables in preparation for exams.

How the findings are being used by the Road Safety Unit

- The Road Safety Unit have raised their profile at the school Governors Forum meeting and the Cheshire West Association of Primary Heads (CWAPH) and is due to speak at the Cheshire West Association of Secondary School Heads in September. The Children and Young People's portfolio holder has also promoted the services of the road safety unit in newsletters to the schools and Governors.
- The Road Safety Unit are now part of a new team 'Safe and Sustainable' working to encourage more sustainable travel to schools. Road safety projects and resources will be reviewed and improved to fit into the curriculum and tailored to local areas.
- The 'Safe and Sustainable' team will carry out a new project called SMILES (Sustainable Mobility in Learning Experiences). The Smiles project will work more closely with schools to overcome barriers such as rural areas, areas of deprivation and a lack of volunteers.
- The web pages have been updated and the Road Safety Unit are now looking at ways of receiving funding to produce a booklet to explain the road safety programme to schools and the production of banners for outside schools. They will also look into providing stickers as a reward for primary school children.
- The Road Safety Unit will explore ways of engaging parents at parents evening to encourage volunteering for road safety schemes. Again, this will be dependent upon available funding for booklets and banners.
- The school database intends to be updated with the correct contacts to enable the relevant person to be emailed directly. The Road Safety programme is currently offered to secondary schools in June, this is intended to be done with primary schools too.
- It will be made clear to schools how road safety presentations can be adapted to fit into lessons or specific time periods to encourage uptake.
- The Road Safety Unit is working with Cheshire Police to improve the Junior Road Safety Scheme. This will include a launch, staff visits to schools and a wider focus on personal and community safety as well as road safety.