



Reckless Driving Wrecks Lives Ayrshire

Executive Summary

Running since early 2005, Reckless Driving Wrecks Lives (RDWL) is a pan-Ayrshire educational programme which aims to raise awareness and increase knowledge of road safety issues in those young people who are about to embark on learning to drive, and their potential passengers.

The initiative began in response to an increase in road fatalities, particularly involving young people, on the A77. Fatalities involving young people had more than doubled, rising from 5 in 2000 to 11 in 2003 on the A77 alone. A partnership involving local authority road safety departments, NHS and emergency services from East, North and South Ayrshire agreed that there was a need for a road safety educational input to be given to young drivers and those about to learn to drive to reduce the number of young people being involved in road collisions.

The programme is an annual road safety presentation consisting of a DVD of a collision (the lead up, collision and aftermath) and talks from each of the partner agencies about the collision, as well as inputs from two young people living with the direct consequences of reckless driving. The programme inputs are revised each year in accordance with feedback from the attendees and emerging issues in road safety, for example use of mobile phones whilst driving. It takes place annually, with pupils from S5 and S6, local further education institutions and access to employment schemes in attendance; as well as some from local youth groups and pupils from local driving schools and instructors.

The programme has increased the knowledge of safe driving practices in young drivers and passengers, and contributed to a decrease in road fatalities in this age group over the last seven years.

This project won the 'Early Intervention' category for the Safer Communities Awards 2013.

Background and Aims

There were 14 fatalities involving young people from the 16 to 25 year age group on Ayrshire roads in the years 2003/2004. Concern from a number of road safety organisations and emergency services led to the creation of a multi-agency group which developed RDWL – a road safety educational programme aimed at potential and new drivers with the aim of reducing the number of fatalities involving young people on Ayrshire's roads and creating safer drivers.

RDWL highlights the dangers and possible consequences of careless or reckless driving; particularly around seatbelt wearing, texting whilst driving, speeding, substance misuse and peer pressure. It also covers consequences such as living with an injury or disability following a crash and receiving a custodial sentence as a consequence of dangerous driving.

The programme aims to create safer drivers by increasing their knowledge of road safety issues, and also reduce the number young people involved in road traffic collisions on Ayrshire's roads.

Activities

Young people are invited to attend an event which shows them in detail what happens during and after a serious road crash. The event demonstrates the impact of the crash on friends, family and other agencies who are involved in dealing with serious road crashes.

The event is staged at the Odeon cinema in Ayr, run over three days with seven presentations. Participants are shown a video depicting the lead up to and aftermath of a crash which has taken place on local roads. The video is broken into sections and supported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, telling young people about their real life experiences of attending road crashes and dealing with casualties, fatalities and family members in the aftermath of a road traffic accident. The presentation includes video footage of a young man suffering the consequences of causing death by dangerous driving, serving a 10 year prison sentence. The 2013 event also had an input from another young person who is trying to build their life after crashing their car whilst not wearing a seatbelt. Each session lasts one and a half hours and is attended by an average of 313 young people (based on 2190 young people in total attending in 2013).

Impact

Young people report an increase in their awareness of road safety issues, and the dangers and consequences of reckless driving. This is true for most pupils immediately after the event – 98% said they were more aware of road safety issues following the event, and the weeks and months following their attendance at RDWL.

Immediately after the event, young people reported that they would be less likely to get into a car where the driver was under the influence of substances – 6% would before the event and 1% would after - and that they would be more likely to challenge a driver's behaviour – before the event 69% would challenge behaviour and after the event 74%.

A week before and three weeks after the event, groups that explored the issues in more depth reported increased awareness of both general road safety issues and specifically issues around distractions whilst driving and being more aware of their surroundings. The same groups also demonstrated increased awareness of a wider group of people who would be impacted by a road collision – insurance companies, the Government and other road users were added to the group. The groups also felt more empowered to challenge a friend/driver about their behaviour, particularly around speeding.

Consultation with Driving Instructors, who also attend the presentation, has shown that the information imparted and examples of consequences demonstrated at RDWL have remained with young people who go on to take up driving lessons. The presentation also serves as a platform for discussion during driving lessons, with road safety issues being discussed.

Feedback from adults who attend the event has also been very positive. In a recent consultation aimed at teachers, partner agencies and VIPs, some of the comment given was as follows:-

“It’s really hard hitting and powerful”

“I come every year and it still has the same impact each time”

“It really opens your eyes to the consequences of reckless driving”

In addition to the increasing knowledge and changes in attitude, the number of young people killed on Ayrshire’s roads has decreased – from 27 in 2005 to 2008 to 17 from 2009 to 2012; a 37% reduction.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Young people in the front two rows were asked the same questions immediately before and after the event – whether they currently drove, whether they would get into a vehicle where the driver was under the influence and whether they would challenge driver behaviour. After the event they were also asked if they were more aware of road safety issues as a result of the presentation.

Focus groups one week before and three weeks after the event were carried out with a small group (around 30 pupils) from each of the local authority areas to explore some issues in more depth. These discussions covered general views on road safety, risk taking and driving, reflection on the RDWL event, detailed views on the specific topics covered in RDWL and the future of RDWL content.

Partner agencies are surveyed and interviewed for thoughts on input into the event and comment on content. Other adults in attendance at the event, for example teachers, may also be included within this evaluation.

Regular meetings were held between the partner agencies during development to agree the processes, content and event management; and this continues each year when re-designing the content of the presentations.

Following the contract for DVD production being awarded, close links with the production company were made to ensure all content was agreed.

The RDWL group also keeps in close contact with the local schools to manage the logistics of attendance at the event.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

This project has been running since 2005, and partners remain committed to maintaining the funding for RDWL. Costs have reduced by £5000 over the last few years which has helped to keep partners involved, but RDWL is always looking at ways to reduce costs without impacting upon the event. There are no concerns regarding withdrawal of funding – all partners can see the money saved by investing in this preventative approach: £20,000 costs per year for RDWL compared to £1.8M per road traffic fatality.

New messages about emerging road safety trends are incorporated, in addition to feedback from attendees which keeps the event current.

Resources

Funding: The project costs a total of £20,000 per annum. East, North and South Ayrshire Councils, Strathclyde Police (as was) and Strathclyde Fire and Rescue (as was) all contribute equal funding to the initiative.

The police, fire and rescue service, NHS, Scottish Ambulance Service and a third sector partner all contribute personnel (in kind) for the presentation. One school from each of the Ayrshires also assist with evaluation of the initiative by taking part in the focus group work prior to and following the event.

Partners: East, North and South Ayrshire Councils, Police, Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Scottish Ambulance Service, Headway Ayrshire.

Outcomes

National 4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
6. We live longer, healthier lives.
9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Local South Ayrshire's Road Safety Plan: "A steady reduction in the numbers of those killed and those seriously injured, with the ultimate vision of a future where no-one is killed on Scotland's roads, and the injury rate is much reduced."

The local priorities set out are:-

- Working together for safer roads
- Being responsible on the roads
- Driving for life
- Reducing risk on the road
- Designing for human error on the road

Practice Note Information

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