

Drivewise Borders – Practice Exemplar

Name and Timescales

Drivewise Borders is an ongoing initiative in the Scottish Borders launched in 2017.

Summary

Drivewise Borders is a road safety initiative aimed at improving the driving skills and driver awareness of three age groups: Pre Drivers (14-17 year olds), Young Drivers (17-25 year olds) and Older Drivers (over 65s). This is led on by the Scottish Borders Council and Police Scotland, with significant input from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Cleland Volvo (local car dealership that supplies vehicles for practical learning), the Scottish Ambulance Service and the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM). Following the success of Drivewise Borders, the initiative has also been picked up and delivered in Fife.

Need for Initiative

In 2015/16, local road traffic statistics revealed that those at fault for the majority of road traffic accidents in the Scottish Borders were in the 17-25 or over 65 age groups, therefore it was considered that an effective method of improving the driving skills and awareness of those within these age groups within the community was required given the challenges presented by the type of roads in the Borders, i.e. country roads with increased dangers and hazards.

Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim for the initiative is to have a positive impact in reducing the road traffic accident statistics for these age groups in the Borders. This can be broken down further and be defined and separated for each age group. For 14-17 year olds, the aim is to introduce young people to driving whilst educating and making them aware of the associated risks and dangers. It is hoped that this early intervention will lead to responsible driving behaviours being adopted in the future. The aim for 17-25 year olds is to allow this age group of newer drivers to complete an advanced driving course, improving their overall driving skills and awareness on the roads. The aim for over 65s is to improve their confidence and awareness on the roads to make them safer drivers and retain the independence that comes with driving for longer.

Delivery

The initiative has a different delivery method which is tailored to the specific needs and learning of each age group. The Pre Driver programme takes S4 and S5 pupils from all nine secondary schools within the region to Charterhall, a disused airfield, for a day of learning. They are taught the basics of driving cars, which are supplied by a local Volvo dealership. There are also a number of practical safety inputs throughout the day by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Prior to this practical session, classroom input is required where the theory learning of the scheme are covered.

The scheme for 17-25 year olds involves an upfront payment of £149 by the participant. On successful completion of an intensive IAM advance driving course with a final assessment drive, participants are given a cheque for £149 and a year's membership to the IAM.

The over 65s programme consists of a classroom session which is attended to give advice on safe driving, road signs and signals and observational skills. On completion of the classroom session attendees are given the opportunity to sign up for a free refresher drive in their own car with a local approved driving instructor. There is no formal pass fail and any further action is at the discretion of the participant themselves, on the recommendation of their instructor.

Successes and Challenges

The main area of success for the initiative is the over 65s age group, where the number of participants has doubled in the second year of the scheme. Another way of measuring success in

this age group is through the number of attendees who take up the offer of the free driver refresher session after the classroom learning. In 2018 the take up on the refresher drive was 84%.

It remains a continued challenge to get 17-25 year olds to commit to the advanced driver course, who as newer drivers on the road, this kind of safety awareness and learning is important. It is recognised that this is likely due to the days the course currently takes place on and the initial outlay of £149 which is required to take part.

Impact/Change

Feedback is sought from all participants to enable any areas for improvement or amendment to be identified. The most constructive and useful feedback tends to be received from the over 65s age group.

From the feedback received from the over 65s in the first year of the initiative, some changes were made to the classroom presentation part of the scheme and also to the advertising and promotion of the scheme to this age group. The use of social media by this age group had been underestimated. In the first year, the over 65s part was mainly advertised through posters in local shops, cafes, community centres etc. and the turn-out was poor. Following feedback, in the second year the scheme was promoted through local community group social media pages and the local older people network – which resulted in the number of attendees doubling in comparison to the previous year.

Reflections

The main thing that we have learned across all areas is that greater engagement is gained through having a practical element within the training. Without the practical element, particularly for pre drivers and over 65s, what is covered in the theory/classroom setting is reinforced by practical learning. It is therefore vital that in particular we maintain and where possible, continue to improve the standard of the practical elements across all age groups for the scheme.

Additional Information

Drivewise Borders website: <https://drivewiseborders.co.uk/>

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