

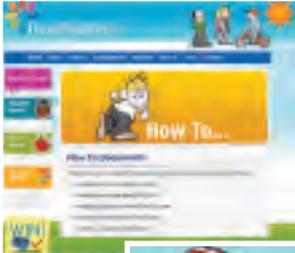
SAFETY

Education



Teenage Highway Code

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Routes - The Teenage

Routes – the Teenage Highway Code is an interactive and engaging update on road safety for the 21st century.

It has been created by Jeremy Beard, of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Steve Wright, engagement specialist and puppeteer of The Puppet Broadcasting Company. The project has been funded and developed by the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.

Jeremy is the youth team manager at West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and manages the schools education programme and youth initiatives in the fire service.

Steve has 15 years experi-

The Sussex Safer Roads Partnership, who commissioned the national and international award-winning seatbelt campaign ‘Embrace Life’ have launched another innovative road safety initiative, this time aimed at the 11-16 age group.

Barbara Hopkins reports

ence in delivering educational materials live to schools and youth venues across the UK, using streetwise puppets as a unique means of engagement.

Jeremy first encountered Steve’s work using puppets as a media tool at a Chief

Police Officers’ conference in 2007. They began working together on a small project for the Sussex Fire Service on the dangers of starting fires and hoax calls and soon realised that their approach could have positive benefits on road safety education.

Their work identified a clear gap in road safety information for the 11-16 age group. After completing the Green Cross Code safety education and cycling proficiency training as young children, there is no road safety awareness training available for youngsters until they learn to drive. Young people become particularly vulnerable as they acquire independence – and are subject to distractions by their peers.

Ian Jones was appointed Routes project manager in August 2009 and identified the need for the project on a pan-Sussex scale. The entire Sussex Safer Roads Part-



Steve Wright and young helpers at a Routes workshop

Age Highway Code



Routes puppet and friend

nership which includes East and West Sussex county councils, Brighton and Hove city council, Sussex police, East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services, the Highways Agency and the Courts Service, has been involved in the development of Routes. Jeremy Beard emphasises that the strength of the partnership has enabled the project's growth.

The aim, says Jeremy, was to provide a "tangible asset for education" which would be available to all young people, blending humanity with an educational message.

"By using puppets we aimed to remove hard hitting

imagery while connecting with real life stories in the third person", he explains. The puppets protect the identity of an individual, while giving the views and real life stories of young people. By using

this medium the young audience is not creating perceptions about the person whose views are being articulated.

A key role in the development of Routes was provided by Jonathan Millington, as-

sistant head of Worthing High School. Jonathan wrote the lesson plans and worked on the development of the project to fit into schools' Personal Social and Vocational Education and Personal

‘Using the puppets makes it easier to find common ground - for example, attitudes to risky driving’

Health and Social Education programmes. It can also be used in a cross-curricular approach, for example in drama, art, design and technology.

For Steve Wright, one of the project's early challenges was

to make the subject of road safety accessible and interesting. Routes' objectives are to reduce the number of those killed and injured on the roads, as well as increasing safety, knowledge and skills in the 11-16 age group. These youngsters are involved in accidents as pedestrians, vehicle passengers, cyclists and later on as new drivers.

"Using the puppets makes it easier to find common ground - for example, attitudes to risky driving" he says. "Without using gory imagery, youngsters are absorbing the message that road safety affects everybody".

Workshops for those delivering these lessons - called

Teenage Highway Code

'Routes In Action' - are being held to roll out the Routes package to schools in Sussex and Steve uses a mixture of exercises including film, debate, a quiz and role play. "I want Routes to be a tool for teachers which is credible and gives safety professionals the respect they deserve", he explains.

Work began on Routes in 2008 and it was officially launched in October 2010. Pilot schools across Sussex have evaluated the pack and it's expected that every school in Sussex received their Routes lesson pack and accompanying DVD by the end of November.

Teacher feedback reports that it's a robust resource giving them confidence to deliver this important topic, while students are actively engaging in the debate.

Aimed at secondary school pupils in years 7-11 (Key Stages 3 and 4), there are 15 individual lesson plans and associated tools, giving teachers flexibility to integrate any of the modules into the PSVE/PHSE programme,

an assembly, activity day or other lessons as appropriate.

Road safety education is often deemed to be a difficult subject. With teens already recognised as a vulnerable age group, Routes many objectives include the empowerment of young people to make safe decisions, but also to take responsibility for their own safety.

Each module focuses on a different method of transport and the main menu includes a specific learning outcome; a section on laws and statistics; and an interview with a member of the emergency services or other professional, sharing their views or experiences from their workplace.

The final item on the main menu is 'Routesville' - the model town constructed for

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the project. The puppet characters look at individual road safety issues and are voiced by young people.



Puppet Slasha, shown in the model town of Routesville

Designed in conjunction with the DVD, the lessons enable all three learning styles -

a progressive plan; this means that they can be used to target location-specific problems.

The department for transport annual statistical report for 2009 shows that more than 13,000 children were involved in road accidents. Of these, 70 were killed and more than 2,000 were left with life-changing injuries.

It's hoped that top level sponsors will support Routes so that it can be distributed to schools country-wide free, as in Sussex. Michelin are already offering support in Staffordshire.

The next development for Routes is to build a national road safety community and the website www.routesroadsafety.com goes live in January 2011. This will give region-specific information and bespoke modules for road safety training. A further advantage is that road safety officers around the country will be able to access information on developments in counties other than their own.

For more information on Routes go to www.sussexsaferoads.gov.uk

Steve Wright's Puppet Broadcasting Company: www.getyourheadroundit.co.uk



Screenshot for the national regions website RoutesRoadSafety.com