

Safe at 17

Philosophy

Novice drivers (typically aged 17-24) are at greater risk of a road traffic collision than any other group. These collisions often resulting in one or more individuals being killed or seriously injured – a serious injury is one which is life-changing. The House of Commons Select Transport Committee reporting on 18th July 2012 states that:

“Road accidents are the main cause of death for young people aged 15-24. In 2010 there were 283 fatalities amongst car occupants aged 16-25. 158 young drivers were killed. Young male drivers are particularly at risk of being killed or seriously injured in car accidents. 27% of 17-19 year old males are involved in a road collision within the first year of passing their test.”

House of Commons Select Transport Committee,
Second Report on Road Safety, July 2012

We believe that the most effective way to enable this vulnerable group to respond to the challenge is by:

- substantially increasing their awareness of the risks;
- supporting them in developing risk aware driving attitudes;
- increasing their level of technical competence as drivers.

A survey of ex-members of the Under 17 Car Club undertaken in 2006 showed a significantly lower accident rate than their peer group across the 17-24 age range as well as lower motoring offence conviction rates and much greater participation in post DSA test training including Pass Plus, IAM and RoSPA. A further survey is to be published in October 2012.

We recognise that good road design, enforcement of appropriate speed limits and effective management of roads all contribute to road user safety while firmly believing that being ‘Safe at 17’ rests primarily in the overall competence of the individual and in them accepting responsibility for their own safety and that of others.

Since 1976 The Under 17 Car Club (the forerunner to the Trust) has been developing and refining a structured practical tuition methodology which draws its technical content from Roadcraft, the Police Driving Manual. This is supported by a range of activities focused on understanding safe driver behaviour and managing road user risk, all intended to complement the

technical skills with knowledge and appreciation of risk factors, and how they can be mitigated by individual drivers. Members typically start with the Club at the age of 11 and progress through the Club grading system is conditional upon them demonstrating both the required technical skills and behaviours both in and out of the car. Our ambition for all of our Members is that they should reach a standard of driver competence and behaviour at which we are confident to allow them to drive at Club events unsupervised – in any vehicle that happens to be present. A Member achieving this standard is likely to have been a member of the Club for about three years, to have more than 400 hours and several thousand miles of driving experience at Club events in a wide range of vehicles. These vehicles range from whatever their parents provide to supercars, sports cars, buses and articulated lorries.

Our experience, supported by the survey evidence, shows that our approach produces novice drivers who, in going on the public road at 17, are

significantly less likely to be involved in a road traffic collision;
significantly less likely to be convicted of a motoring offence;
significantly more likely to be successful in their first DSA test than their peers.

They are also substantially more likely to pursue additional driving tuition via the IAM or RoSPA Advanced Driver schemes.

The Trust and its two trading subsidiaries are exclusively operated by volunteers, all of whom became involved with the Club as parents of Members. Many parents continue to be involved in the work of the Trust long after their own children have grown up and all of our Marshals are ex-Members who achieved Grade One – the independent driving standard – whilst with the Club. The volunteers are frequently supplemented by serving police officers attending in police vehicles with the support of their senior officers and assisting with instruction. The Pathfinder project is supported by the Army through the Defence College of Logistics and Personnel Administration.

Parental engagement and support in the driving education of their children is a cornerstone of our philosophy. In essence, each parent teaches their child to drive in accordance with our approach and both are supported by Instructors who have been trained in our philosophy and approach – but most importantly have taken their own children through the process. This process enables the development of understanding and

trust between parent and child. We believe that the development of this understanding and trust is not only effective within the Club but influences the driving behaviour of both Members and their parents long after they have left.

This close involvement of parents (or other appropriate adults) in the driver education and other work of the Trust, Club and Pathfinder is a key factor in differentiating our work from that of other organisations. We believe that when the parents take responsibility in this way it sets the expectation for the Members – and they respond in kind.

Objectives

The overall objects of The Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust are:

THE OBJECTS OF THE CHARITY ARE RESTRICTED TO THE PROMOTION OF ROAD SAFETY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC AND IN PARTICULAR YOUNG PEOPLE. THESE OBJECTS ARE PURSUED THROUGH FUNDED RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND A RANGE OF PRACTICAL SKILL AND ATTITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE ROAD SAFETY IN THE MINDS OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE.

In practice what we aim to achieve through our work and our engagement with others is a sustainable reduction in the 'KSI' rate amongst novice drivers. We seek to achieve this through:

The Under 17 Car Club Limited – a wholly owned trading subsidiary of the Trust which continues the work of the Car Club founders and is open to all. Membership since 1976 extends to over 3,500 young drivers; current membership is around 300 and the Club runs around 35 events each year at a variety of venues.

Under 17 Drivers Pathfinder Limited – a wholly owned trading subsidiary which works with representatives of local government and other road safety organisations to package the Car Club methodology into an intensive experience for rising 17's – those about to venture onto the road in this high risk category. This enables us to extend the work of the Club to students who would not normally be able to attend and is allowing us to examine whether the substantial benefits of the Club approach can be delivered in a significantly more time-constrained manner. Our current projects are being delivered in partnership with Gloucestershire Police Authority and the support of Gloucestershire Police Service, the Defence College of Logistics and Personnel Administration, and Cheltenham Racecourse.

Since the Pathfinder project commenced in 2009 around 150 students from Warwickshire and Gloucestershire have taken part. We are continuing to seek new partners to extend the reach of the Pathfinder approach to a wider audience.

In seeking to ensure the continuation of the work of the Trust and to support the sustainable reduction in KSIs in our target group, we now aim to achieve three things:

Further quantified evidence that our approach delivers significant benefits;

A permanent home for the activities;

Engagement with a wider range of partners who can support the achievement of the first two objectives.