Developing children’s road safety skills

Road Safety Guidelines for Childminders
Children and roads

A child learns more in the first five years of life than at any other time, so it is important that we, as adults, do all that we can to encourage that learning process by introducing learning through play activities, exploration and also in helping them develop their cultural and social skills.

As a child minder, you will be taking steps to help to protect and educate the children in your care when they are near roads. This booklet is designed to help you develop children’s awareness of the environment in which they live. Roads and traffic are such a part of our lives that we need to instill in young children the knowledge and skills needed to help them keep safe when out and about.

The involvement of parents is essential in all aspects of road safety, especially when setting clear rules for behaviour as set out in the ‘National Standards for the Regulation of Daycare and Child minding in England’. Therefore it would be useful to discuss the guidelines in this booklet with parents, which will help in reinforcing the work you do.

The following information and activities cover children from birth to eleven years and include:

- Child development and how it applies to children’s abilities to use the road.
- Information on how to protect and educate children of different ages.
- Activities to develop children’s road safety skills.

**Child Casualities by Age**

- 147 0-4 yrs (9%)
- 315 5-7 yrs (20%)
- 404 8-11 yrs (26%)
- 715 12-15 yrs (45%)

**Child Casualties by Road User Group**

- 421 pedestrians (29%)
- 622 car occupant (44%)
- 291 pedal cycle (20%)
- 100 others (7%)

Essex Annual Average
Children and the road

Children’s levels of development affect how well they cope with the environment in which they live. Below are areas of child development and an explanation of the way they can limit a child’s ability to learn about the road, traffic and how to behave as a road user.

**Eyesight**
Children’s vision is not fully developed until they are sixteen years old. They have poor peripheral vision and their focus is slow, although this does get better by eight years old.

**Hearing**
In young children, hearing is not fully developed, so they are not able to accurately locate the direction of sounds and do not hear the full range of sounds.

**Stature**
Children are smaller than adults so are not easily seen by drivers. They are easily masked by parked cars, post boxes, etc. and because their eye level is lower than an adult’s they cannot see as much.

**Language**
Adult terms may be difficult for young children to understand such as kerb, vehicle, traffic.

**Using Information**
A child’s short term memory is poor. The view from one side is quickly forgotten after moving the head to look in another direction. Children cannot judge speed, size, time or distance, until about nine years old.

**Maturity**
Young children are impulsive. They don’t stop and think and are easily distracted. Concentration is easily broken by interesting objects such as an ice cream van, a dog or a friend.

**Personality**
Children are unpredictable and often do the unexpected. They also have little awareness of danger.

**Co-ordination**
Young children are often clumsy and fall over because co-ordination is not fully developed. It is difficult for them to do more than one thing at a time.

**Peer Group Pressure**
Children copy their friends, sometimes behaving in a way which is unsafe, such as pushing, shoving, etc. As they get older this behaviour can lead to risk-taking.
Suggested guidelines for protecting children

New child seat regulations

New regulations governing the use of child seats came into force on 18th September 2006. The old rules allowed children under 3 years to be carried unrestrained in the rear of cars if a baby seat or child car seat was not available, from September 2006, in vehicles where seat belts are fitted, all children under 135cm (4' 5") and under 12 years of age must use the correct restraint. Most cars have rear seat belts now and many older cars can easily be fitted with them because anchorages have been built-in since 1982. It is now time to make sure that children are always carried in the right seat.

Summary of new regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front seat</th>
<th>Rear seat</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a taxi may travel unrestrained.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child under 3 years of age</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted. Must use adult seat belt if... ...In a taxi and the correct child restraint is not available or... On a short and occasional trip and the correct child restraint is not available. Two occupied child restraints prevent fitment of a third.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child aged 3 to 11 and under 135cm (approx 4ft 5ins) in height</td>
<td>Correct restraint must be used where seat belts fitted</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used where seat belt fitted. Must use adult seat belt if... ...In a taxi and the correct child restraint is not available or... On a short and occasional trip and the correct child restraint is not available. Two occupied child restraints prevent fitment of a third.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child aged 12 or over 135cm (approx 4ft 5ins) in height</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult passengers</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
<td></td>
<td>Passenger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guide to the correct child restraint

**Group 0+**  *(Birth – 13kgms)*

Rearward facing. Babies should stay rearward facing until they reach the 13kgms in weight or their head reaches the top of the seat before moving to a Group 1 seat.

**Group 0+/1**  *(Birth – 18kgms)*

Use rearward facing until 13kgs and then forward facing until 18kgms. Economical but can be difficult to fit particularly if used in more than one car.

**Group 1**  *(9kgms – 18kgms)*

Generally forward facing with a five point harness, however some seats can be used rearward facing until child is 25kgms offering a safer travel option. Use forward facing until child weighs 18kgs or until child's eye level is above the back of the seat.

**Group 2/3**  *(15kgms – 36kgms)*

Booster seats can be used from 15kgms and booster cushions from 22kgms. The seat and child are held in with a lap and diagonal belt. Children must remain in boosters until they are 135cms or 12 years of age.
Pedestrians
We know that children are not easy to control when out and about. Introducing and using reins from the time they start to walk ensures better control over their actions. The full harness type is best. By using a safety harness in prams, pushchairs and shopping trolleys the child will get used to wearing a seat belt and reins.

Prams and pushchairs are longer than we realise and reach the kerb before us. Make sure there is no traffic coming before pushing prams into the road.

As children get older (approximately 4 years old) and are no longer on reins, holding hands is the best option to stop them running into the road. The child should walk on the inside of the path away from the traffic.

Children up to approximately 7 years old should be accompanied to school and on other trips as they are still too young to understand, or to be trusted to apply, the concepts of crossing the road safely.

As children get older (7 to 11) they want, and need, to be independent but cannot cope with all road situations. They do not have the ability to judge speed and distance properly until about the age of 9 or 10. They need adult help to develop and use these skills correctly and will need to be escorted on all journeys until they demonstrate that they can use local roads sensibly and safely.

When out and about wear white or light coloured clothing. Fluorescent in daylight and reflective at night will make you and the children more easily seen by drivers.
Playing
Most accidents involving children happen in the hours after school and particularly during the summer months when children are out at play. The majority of these accidents happen on quiet residential roads close to home. Children should always play in safe places such as the park or garden. They should not play in unsafe areas such as the pavement, verge or road, even in a cul-de-sac. Make sure they are supervised and that the play area is checked before and during each play session as detailed in ‘National Standards for the Regulation of Day Care and Child Minding in England’.

Cycling
A child’s first cycle is a toy and could remain so until about the age of 10 or 11 when they begin to use it as a form of transport (such as when they go to secondary school).

Before the age of 10 they should be escorted and supervised by an adult and should continue to be supervised until their parent feels happy that they have the skills required to cycle safely.

At around 10 years of age children usually have the opportunity to take cyclist training through their school. About 60% of cyclists’ injuries are to the head so it is important for children of all ages riding bikes or trikes, even in the garden, to wear a cycle helmet which is correctly fitted.
Suggested guidelines for educating children

For all ages
As with all forms of education children learn by example, so it is important for you to set good examples when using the road. Use safe places to cross roads and always wear a seat belt when travelling in a car. At the back of this booklet is a section of activities that you can use to help you teach and develop children’s road skills, particularly holding hands, stopping, looking and listening. They were designed to be used with pre-school children but the ideas can be adapted to use with older children.

Age 0 – 4
Talk to the child about the road and the things you see when you are out. Talk about the pavement and the road – what are they and who uses them? Talk about traffic – what is it? Look at cars, lorries, buses, bicycles, etc. Is the vehicle moving or stopping?

Explain that vehicles are hard and can hurt people. Let them feel the inside and outside of a car so they compare the surfaces. (Think about rough/smooth, hard/soft).

Explain what STOP means. Where and when do we stop and why?

Explain LOOKING. Where are we looking? What are we looking for?

Explain LISTENING. What are we listening for? What are the different sounds the traffic makes – loud, quiet?

Age 4 – 7
Check that the child understands the difference between the road and the pavement.

Identify the kerb and recognise it as a boundary. Be aware of the dangers where no boundary exists such as on rural roads and where cars cross or mount the pavement.

Look at traffic. What is it doing on the road? Talk about near and far, fast and slow, big and small.

Do large vehicles go faster or slower than smaller vehicles?

Listen to and identify the sounds traffic makes. Can the child tell which direction the sound is coming from and how far away it is?

Talk about people who help us in the street – Police, School Crossing Patrol, Parents and Carers.
Discuss with the child who it is safe to go with when they go to the park, local shops or school.

Discuss what to do when they want to cross the road – Stop, Look, Listen. Practice crossing the road with them.

Identity the possible dangers involved in travelling in cars and buses. Consider ways of overcoming them and encourage safer behaviour when using these forms of transport.

Identify safe places to play. Consider why the street is a dangerous place to play.

**7 – 11** The Green Cross Code sets out the basis for crossing roads safely. Although children may recite the code, they do not always understand what it means. Without your support they cannot always follow it and make the correct decisions.

Talk to the children about the crossing places where they live and how to use them safely. They should recognise hazardous places such as where there are parked cars, bends or junctions. Explain and ensure they understand the concepts of the Green Cross Code and are able to apply safe crossing practices.

Look at their environment – discuss the problems they encounter on the different journeys they make.

Talk about the use of cycle tracks and where they are in the child’s local area.

When they reach about the age of 10 and begin to use their cycle as a form of transport they need to identify and learn how to avoid hazards as a cyclist. Help them to understand the Highway Code and how it applies to cyclists. Encourage them to use a helmet when cycling. Find out if their school offers Cyclist Training.

Talk about how and why accidents happen and how to get help.

The following pages give ideas and information on how five key road safety messages can be incorporated within day to day activities. They show how these can contribute to a child’s road safety knowledge, as well as to their general skills development.
## Crossing the road: Holding hands

### Road Safety Objectives
To encourage children to stay close to an adult and hold hands when walking on the pavement and crossing the road.

Note – children must have an adult with them at all times when exploring their environment.

### Skills Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art/Craft</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Drawing around hands, identifying fingers/nails, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Make a wall frieze using hand prints in traffic colours, Red/Yellow/Green.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Table/Floor Games** |
| 1. Road safety jigsaws. |
| 2. Play mat with toy vehicles. |
| 3. Road safety ‘lotto’ or ‘dominoes’. |

### Large Muscle Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ring a Ring o’Roses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Farmer in his Den.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Oranges &amp; Lemons.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Holding hands in pairs, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Language/Social Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Co-ordination</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do we use our hands for? Closing gate, opening doors/boxes, holding hands, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When is it difficult to hold hands? What do we do when the adult has a lot of shopping to hold/is pushing a pram/pushchair?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What could happen if they see someone/something that catches their attention across the road?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Crossing the road: Stop

Road Safety Objectives
To enable the children to understand the word STOP and stimulate the children to think about the control of their hands and feet.
Note – children must have an adult with them at all times when exploring their environment.

Skills Development               Activities

Body Awareness                     Art/Craft
Hand/Eye Co-ordination             1. Draw around feet/cut out shape. Make an individual picture or frieze or mobile.
Large Muscle Control               2. Make footprints/handprints using traffic colours: Red/Yellow/Green.
Colour Recognition

Observation/ Memory                Table/Floor Games
Social/Verbal Communication

Body Awareness                     1. Road safety jigsaws.
Following Orders

Hand/Eye Co-ordination             2. Road safety ‘lotto’ (emphasis to be placed on any section relevant to the word ‘STOP’).

Large Muscle Control               Physical movement games

Colour Recognition

Physical Co-ordination              1. Musical Statues (calling out ‘STOP’).
Physical Communication             2. Draw a line where children must ‘STOP’. Use red and green card.

Body Awareness                     3. Children go on green, stop on red.
Following Orders

Physical Co-ordination             4. As above but children hold hands in twos.
Physical Communication

Explore the Environment
Sharing Experiences
Concepts of Fast/Slow
Listening, Observing

Outings
Take a walk to the nearest road. Practice holding hands/stopping. Draw the children’s attention to traffic going by: how fast/slow, etc.

Verbal Communication
Social/Sharing Experiences
Listening

Discussion
Ask open ended questions:
1. When we want to cross the road, what must we do?
   Hold hands – stop near the kerb (if pavement available).
   Talk about living in the country where there may be no footpaths/pavements.
2. Why do the children need to hold hands with an adult?
3. Why must we always stop before crossing the road?
# Crossing the road: Look

**Road Safety Objectives**
To encourage children in the development of their visual skills when out and about. With special emphasis on looking for traffic when about to cross the road.

Note – children must have an adult with them at all times when exploring their environment.

## Skills Development

### Arts/Craft

#### Sorting/Matching Skills

1. Using old magazines cut out eyes from pictures (human, animal). Make individual collages or one large one.

#### Imaginative/Creative Skills


3. Make binoculars from small cardboard tubes stuck together, thread string through so that children can carry them around – (Let’s Pretend).

4. Make masks for the eyes.

### Body Awareness


### Table/Floor Games

#### Hand/Eye Co-ordination

1. Road safety jigsaw.

#### Social Skills

2. Construction toys.

#### Memory/Concentration Skills

3. Road safety ‘lotto’.

4. Memory game (Kim’s game).

### Physical Movement/Circle Games

1. Blind Man’s Buff.

2. In pairs, one child leads, the other closes his/her eyes (learning to trust).


## Discussion

### Verbal Communication

1. What did you see on the way to the park/shops?

2. What do we look for before crossing the road? Why?
Crossing the road: Listen

Road Safety Objectives
To encourage children to use their listening skills and distinguish between sounds and concepts of busy/quiet, near/far.
Note – children must have an adult with them at all times when exploring their environment.

Skills Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arts/Craft</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Make sound instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cut out pictures of things that make sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Children can sort cut outs into groups i.e. hard/soft loud/quiet, cars, humans, animals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listening Skills
Social/Verbal Communications
Physical/Body Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Skills/Games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listen to sounds (taped).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Make music with their sound instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Listen to the sounds with a blindfold/eyes closed and encourage children to say which direction the sound comes from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clapping nursery rhymes (children guess the title).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Games where children have to listen to directions. ‘Simon Says’, ‘What’s the time, Mr Wolf?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Listen to a story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take a walk, listen to traffic sounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions: How far away is the sound?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which way is the sound coming from?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Crossing the road: Keeping safe

Road Safety Objectives
To encourage the children to think about their journeys to the shops/childminders and to think about their safety whilst travelling, either as a pedestrian or a passenger. Also to understand the meaning of the words 'safe' and 'journey'.
Note – children must have an adult with them at all times when exploring their environment.

Skills Development
Activities
Art/Craft
1. Children to make frieze – ‘Going on a journey’.
   Children to cut out people/vehicles/animals and place pictures on frieze one at a time and talk about the kind of journey they are going on, and will it be safe?

Table Games
1. Road safety ‘Odd One Out’.
2. Road safety jigsaw.

Games
1. Place chairs in rows for a bus or car.
2. Talk about sitting safely, seat belts, etc.
3. Talk about getting in and out of vehicles on the kerb side (if getting off a bus, keep away from the wheels).

Discussion
Ask open ended questions:
1. What do we mean when we say ‘keep safe’?
2. If we walk to the shops how do we keep safe?
3. If we travel in a vehicle how do we keep safe?
4. What do we mean when we say ‘I am going on a journey’ or ‘I must keep myself safe’?
Other helpful contacts

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA Head Office)
Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham N5 8ST
tel: 0121 2482000
department for Transport
email: help@rospa.co.uk
web: www.rospa.co.uk

Department for Transport
web: www.dft.gov.uk
www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)
Canterbury Court, 1 - 3 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DE
tel: 020 7608 3828
department for Transport
email: safe@capt.org.uk
web: www.capt.org.uk

Notes
This document is issued by
Essex County Council, Environment, Sustainability and Highways.
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By telephoning our Helpline:
0845 603 7631

By post:
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roadsafety@essex.gov.uk

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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