

you should read this!



# Their life in their hands

## A guide for parents:

- Meeting milestones – are you prepared?
- Personal safety out and about
- Going green
- Mixed messages
- Drugs and alcohol
- Death and injury



# Travel and contact details

**Use this page and keep it handy** – it's really useful to have some idea where you can contact your teenager in addition to their mobile number.

	Telephone 1	Telephone 2	E-mail
Friend			
Parent			
Friend			
Parent			
Friend			
Parent			
School			
Favourite places			
Taxi cabs			
<b>Travel information</b>			
Traveline	0870 6082608		
Village Link	01245 437188		
National Cabline A free 'phone link to a local National Cabline member	0800 666666		
Essex Passenger Transport	01245 492211		
National Rail Enquireis	08457 48 49 50		
London Underground	020 7222 1234		
<b>Click info</b>			
Trains			<a href="http://www.railtrack.co.uk">www.railtrack.co.uk</a>
Trains			<a href="http://www.thetrainline.com">www.thetrainline.com</a>
Essex travel			<a href="http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/esd/travel/travelinformation">www.essexcc.gov.uk/esd/travel/travelinformation</a>

# Contents



---

Why their life is in their hands

---

Meeting milestones – are you prepared?

---

Getting the message across

---

Checkout - Personal safety out and about

---

Checkout - Drugs and alcohol

---

Checkout - Going green

---

Checkout - Death and injury

---

# Why **their life is in their hands**

**All the jokes and stories about teenagers can ring very true – the arguments, the music, the demands, the fads and fashions and the worry.**

But usually, there is also pride, fun and laughter. There are times when it doesn't even seem that long ago when you were a teenager yourself – especially when the fashions come round again.

Parents and their teenagers are forming a new relationship between one another; often it may seem like getting to know a different person altogether. The good news is that teenagers seem to quite like their parents – most of the time – despite the obvious embarrassment that they can represent. In a recent survey of Essex teenagers, talking to parents was seen as being very helpful for getting advice on safe travel.

The teenagers who took part in the survey obviously thought they knew everything there is to know about crossing the road. But they were keen to get advice on keeping safe when out and about. Road safety is something they did at primary school – but safe travel means making decisions, anticipating hazards and reacting to situations.

In the survey, teenagers were asked about the independent journeys they made. As you would expect, few teenagers came to school with an adult. For other journeys, buses and trains were quite widely used where available. Boys rode their bikes quite a lot – girls weren't so keen.

**The top four safety concerns of parents for their children were:**

- Traffic going too fast
- Being approached by strangers
- Cycling safely
- Too much traffic on the roads

As one expert put it, the job of parenting teens is a paradox between "holding them tight" and "letting them go". You always want your children to feel your love and concern, but you've got to balance that by letting them test their wings, even when you're not quite sure they're ready."

As they get older, they will increasingly be making independent decisions.

**This magazine is about helping them along the way. Keep it for future reference.**



# Meeting milestones

No-one is suggesting that your child will want to do everything as soon as they are legally allowed to do so. But they might, so it's worth being prepared for what's ahead, just in case.

As teenagers reach the milestones they will be increasingly independent and (hopefully) more responsible.

You might wonder what some of the milestones have got to do with being a safer road user, but often it means that teenagers are likely to be making independent journeys, possibly over longer distances and using different forms of transport.



## Age

## Legally allowed to:

### 13

- Get a part-time job, eg paper round
- Get a part-time job, but subject to strict rules on hours worked and conditions of service

### 14

- Can go into a pub but cannot buy or drink alcohol there
- Responsible for wearing a seat belt when this is required by law

### 16

- Ride a moped
- Drive a small tractor
- Drive a mowing machine
- Age of consent for both gay and heterosexual sex
- Get married with parents' consent (without parental consent in Scotland)
- Buy alcohol in a pub or off-licence
- Get a full-time job
- Fly a glider
- Can buy or drink wine, beer, cider or perry (but not spirits) with a meal in a hotel or restaurant or part of a pub set apart for eating meals. Can also buy liqueur chocolates
- May leave school on the last Friday in June of the school year

### 17

- Ride a small motorcycle
- Drive a car
- Drive a medium-sized lorry
- Vote

### 18

- Get married without parents' consent in England and Wales
- Get a tattoo
- Play fruit machines with a cash payout of £10 or more

Learning to drive is very much one of the legal milestones that most teenagers want to reach.

Although, they can't do that until they are 17 – there are ways and means of preparing them before they get behind the wheel.



# Getting the message across

## Being a safe driver of the future means starting with the basics a few years earlier.

One of the main concerns of parents is that the traffic goes too fast. So, of course, someone should make it slow down. Local authorities and the police are doing their bit by highlighting the dangers of inappropriate speed. Safety cameras are in place to deter drivers from speeding.

Teenagers pick up all the signals, so even before they have thought of becoming drivers themselves they are bombarded with messages, typically, the 'thrill of speed' and the 'sensible of safety'. The appeal of either message to your teenager will depend on their attitudes towards the issues as well as the messages they get at home and grow up with.

Some years ago, a newly qualified driver was bought a racy motor by his father. Unfortunately, the young driver was more influenced by the image of speed than the reality of dangerous driving. He ended up killing two pedestrians because he could not control the car. But who should be blamed? The young driver or the father who had bought into the thrill and speed image.

The young teenager may not be able to drive but drivers around them – including their parents and carers influence them. Research has shown that 70% of drivers exceed the 30 mph limit on urban roads – where most pedestrians and cyclists are injured. In Essex, increasing numbers of children under the age of 16 are killed or injured as car passengers.

## Mixed messages

**So teenagers are receiving very mixed messages. On the one hand they are being told to be careful and look out for themselves; on the other hand they see many drivers paying little attention either to their own safety or the safety of others. At the extreme, there is the speedophile who doesn't have any regard for anyone.**

Teenagers have long since grown out of being told to follow the Green X Code. But they can be encouraged to develop skills of hazard perception and observation – not only helping them now, but also as the potential drivers of the future.

**As a car or bus passenger teenagers can begin to look at the road from the driver's point of view. They could –**

- Look out for traffic signs, road markings (do they know what they all mean?)
- Spot vulnerable road users such as children, cyclists, motorcyclists, and horse riders and anticipate what they might do
- Think about dangers and hazards and how they could avoid them
- Check if the driver is too close to the vehicle in front or going too fast
- Play the 'What if?' game (what could happen)

Cyclists and pedestrians could also do the same.

**Encouraging teenagers to be safer road users is about getting them to think.**

# The message quiz



**When you drive your teenagers somewhere, what messages do you send out to them about your driving?**

Try this quiz and see how you score.

**1 Approaching a junction, another car pulls out suddenly in front of you causing you to brake sharply. Do you –**

- A  Flash your lights or sound your horn at the other driver
- B  Make a comment aloud about the intelligence of the driver
- C  Shrug your shoulders and say nothing

**2 Your mobile rings whilst you're driving. Do you –**

- A  Ignore it
- B  Pick it up and switch it off
- C  Answer the call

**3 Driving out for a family meal at the pub, do you –**

- A  Drink soft drinks only
- B  Have quite a few drinks as it's with a meal
- C  Drink to just below the limit

**4 How often do you check the tyre pressures on the car?**

- A  Every week
- B  Every month
- C  It's done when the car's serviced

**5 On a quick trip down to the local shops, do you –**

- A  Always wear your seat belt
- B  Wear it if you remember
- C  Wait till your partner tells you to put it on

**6 How often do you wash the car?**

- A  I never wash it
- B  When I can persuade or pay someone else to do it
- C  Every week

**7 As you are turning a corner two pedestrians are half way across the road, do you –**

- A  Continue driving and swerve round them
- B  Stop and allow them to continue
- C  Stop but indicate to them that they should not have crossed

**8 If your teenager and a friend sits in the back and the friend does not put on their seatbelt, do you –**

- A  Make an exaggerated action of checking your own seat belt
- B  Just ignore it, as you don't want to embarrass your own teenager
- C  Ask them to put their belt on



**What do the scores mean?**

Q1 A=3 B=2 C=1 Q2 A=1 B=2 C=3  
Q3 A=1 B=3 C=2 Q4 A=1 B=2 C=3  
Q5 A=1 B=2 C=3 Q6 A=3 B=2 C=1  
Q7 A=3 B=1 C=2 Q8 A=2 B=3 C=1

Score 22 – 24 You're a disastrous role model  
Score 17 – 21 Is it a long time since you passed your test?  
Score 12 – 16 Not bad, but there's room for improvement  
Score 8 – 12 Top of the range role-model – but keep thinking

# Checkout – Personal safety out and about

**As children get older, the demands for a parent to act as a taxi driver become more frequent and often more inconvenient – late at night or at weekends.**

Of course, running them everywhere in the car is reassuring. You know where they are and that they're safe. But there will come a time when you can't take them or they want to go with their friends.

The worst almost certainly won't ever happen to your teenager - but it's as well to have a plan just in case. They may be nervous about being out on their own at night – though they may not admit it. Try and discuss the issues with them and let them come up with a plan. Issuing a list of Don'ts may have less effect.

Mobile phones are useful in emergencies and for keeping in touch. Personal attack alarms are also available from good DIY stores and other shops.

## Going by taxi

Getting a taxi is often the best way of getting home late at night. If your teenager has never used one before, talk about some of these issues with them –

- Whenever possible, use a taxi firm you know. Keep their telephone number with you.
- Give your name when you order the taxi.
- When the taxi arrives, check that it's the one you ordered. Don't get in if it isn't. Look for the name of the firm on the vehicle and ask the driver for the name

of the person who booked it.

- Always sit in the back, rather than the front of the taxi. Wear the seat belt.
- When you get home, ask the driver to wait until you are inside.
- If you're uneasy, ask to be let out in a well-lit busy place.

## On buses

- Avoid isolated bus stops, particularly late at night. If you know the time of the bus, stay somewhere safer until it's due.
- On buses with few passengers, sit close to the driver. Avoid the top deck.

## On trains

Try and sit in carriages where there are other people.

## Jogging

Jogging is good exercise and helps teenagers to stay fit.

To stay safe, they should –

- Try to vary their route and time and keep to well-lit roads with pavements.
- Jog with a friend – make sure they can be easily seen.
- Use public parks or commons, stick to the main paths and open spaces – avoid wooded areas.,
- Avoid using a personal stereo, they won't be able to hear traffic or someone coming up behind them

## Out and about

- Whether there's a footpath or not, they should walk facing the traffic so that a car cannot pull up behind them unnoticed.
- Wear something light-coloured or reflective at night.
- Keep house keys in a pocket. If they're carrying a bag and someone grabs it, they should let go. Their safety is more important than their property.
- Any expensive items such as watches, jewellery or mobiles should be hidden from view.

## If threatened

If threatened by someone, they should make a lot of noise to attract attention – shout, scream and set off their personal attack alarm.

They have the right under law to use reasonable force to defend themselves. The law does allow them to use personal items like keys, combs, and hairsprays against the attacker. The law does not allow them to carry anything that could be described as an offensive weapon.

## For more information

Your Practical Guide to Crime Prevention which includes information on personal safety may be obtained from the Crime Prevention Officer at your local police station or by writing to **Crime Prevention Publicity, Home Office, Room 155, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT, fax 020 7273 2568.**

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the national charity for personal safety. The Trust regularly produces personal safety advice, covering issues that are topical in the media and causing people concern.

**Telephone them on 020 8876 0305 or visit their website ([www.suzylamplugh.org/advice/index.htm](http://www.suzylamplugh.org/advice/index.htm)).**

Essex Police have a page on their website entitled **You and Your Safety ([www.essex.police.uk/](http://www.essex.police.uk/))**.

# Checkout – Drugs and alcohol

**For most teenagers drugs are not a normal part of life, despite some of the stories that might appear in the press and on television. People take drugs to feel a particular effect, but it's impossible to say exactly how any user will react.**

**The four groups of drugs are:**

**Stimulants drugs** that act upon the central nervous system and increase brain activity. The desired effect for the user is to keep awake.

**Depressants drugs** that have the opposite effect by slowing down brain activity

**Hallucinogens drugs** that distort the way in which the user hears and feels things

**Analgesics drugs** that have a painkilling effect

There is a whole industry for our most popular and legal drug – alcohol. It is illegal for alcohol to be sold to teenagers under 18 unless they are having a meal in a restaurant and are over 16.

Most teenagers will experiment with alcohol at some stage. Telling them not to or nagging is unlikely to make them stop thinking that alcohol can be fun. The physical and social dangers need to be explained including how it affects their safety on the roads.

Alcohol is an accepted social activity – but not for drivers. Your teenager will need to be aware of the dangers of alcohol and driving, not because they're driving but because there will be people who are offering them a lift who may have been drinking. It's useful if teenagers can be encouraged to be assertive about refusing a lift if necessary, and knowing what the alternative options are.

There are many different types of drugs and they all have differing effects. They can affect a person's ability to concentrate and react to situations. It's not a good idea for anyone to accept a lift from a driver who is high.

## Effects

Alcohol is a depressant drug and users may feel more relaxed and uninhibited. As a result, people might put themselves in situations they later regret. Alcohol generally affects women more than men.

**Cannabis** impairs driving skills by affecting co-ordination.

**Alcohol** isn't only a problem for drivers – pedestrians who have been drinking have a higher risk of a road crash.

Neither do alcohol and cycling go together very well – it is actually illegal for cyclists to ride when under the influence of drink or drugs.

Any drug, including prescribed medicines, can have a detrimental effect on road users and their capability to make decisions.

## How to help

Have a plan for avoiding getting a lift with someone who's been drinking or using drugs. Talk to your teenager about the facts surrounding alcohol and drugs and the pressures from others to drink or use drugs.

Always check the advice on prescribed medicines before driving.

## For more information

**Alateen -**

**Alateen is a group for teenagers affected by a problem drinker.**

**Telephone: 0171 403 0888.**

**Al-Anon -**

**Al-Anon Family Groups provides help and advice for families and friends of alcoholics. 24-hour confidential helpline: 0171 403**

**0888.**

**Drinkline -**

**Drinkline is a national alcoholic helpline providing advice, information and support for anyone with a drink problem or worried about a loved one's problem.**

**Telephone: Freephone 0800 917 8282. Alternatively you can call 0345 320202 or 0171 332 0202, 6pm-11pm.**

**Drug Advisory and Treatment Service**

**Telephone: 01702 541516.**

**Essex Police Drugline Link**

**Telephone: 01245 252252.**

# Checkout – Going Green

**Transport and travel has quite a big impact on our lives. According to Friends of the Earth, around 6 per cent of our waking hours are spent travelling.**

With increased traffic, parents are concerned about congestion and the speed of traffic on the roads. Unfortunately, this results in many parents driving their children around even more frequently. This, of course, adds to the congestion problem.

Many people would argue that it is difficult to totally abandon car use – it's part of today's lifestyle. For families in rural areas, private car use is often essential. But there are disadvantages that affect our teenagers.

## **Physical health –**

The everyday opportunity for exercise provided by walking and cycling is disappearing. Not all exercise has to be a planned visit to the gym, but increasingly as teenagers grow up exercise is only seen as a planned workout.

The health experts have suggested that, for anyone aged 16 or under, all they need to do is one hour of activity every day to stay healthy. Even then, it doesn't have to be all at once. Walking is an activity that's easily taken for granted, but it's also a good way of staying fit.

## **Mental health –**

Being taken everywhere by car means that teenagers aren't thinking for themselves (something they seem to do in every other part of their life). Everyone needs some practice at making safer decisions.

## **The environment –**

any reduction in car use is no bad thing. It cuts congestion and improves air quality

## **How to help**

- **Set the pace** – try walking yourself as well as advising your teenager.
- **Plan routes** – encourage teenagers to think about their journeys and how they might get there and back.
- **Have information** about public transport in the house – or know where to find it.
- **Car share** – as parents are the cheapest taxi service around, teenagers are pretty good at arranging with their friends which parent is on the going-out run and who is collecting, a back up arrangement is also advisable. It may be useful to check some of the safety issues with your teenager, for example, seat belt wearing.



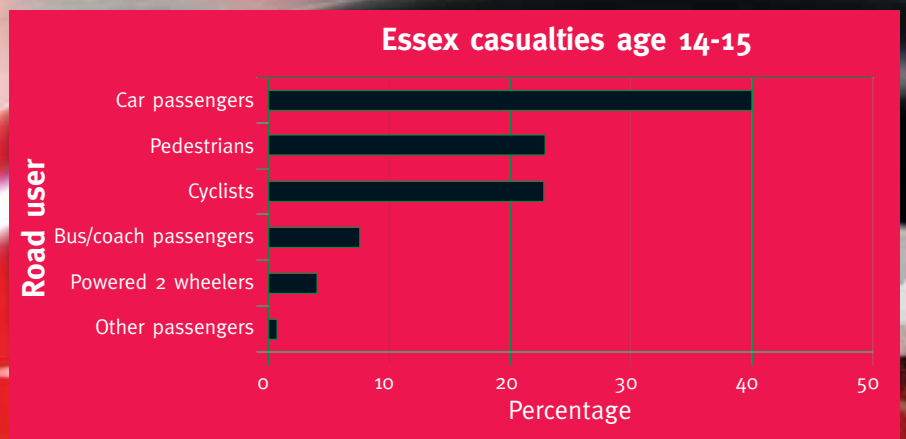
# Checkout – Death and injury

Road crashes are the biggest cause of accidental death for children between the ages of 12 – 16.

There are other issues that may worry teenagers more than using the roads safely, but it is this everyday activity that can result in injury or death. One of the difficulties is that a road crash may not be the result of a teenager behaving in a dangerous way, but because other road users are not behaving appropriately – in particular, drivers who don't stick to speed limits.

## How to help

- Encourage your teenager to be aware of the Highway Code. At primary school or at a cyclist training course your teenager may have been given a copy of A Highway Code for Young Road Users. It's now time for them to move on. The Highway Code is available at many bookshops and some newsagents.
- Cyclists need to be taught and encouraged to maintain their bikes in good working order.
- It's probably best not to ask teenagers if they know their Green X Code. Instead encourage them to think about what other road users might do. What could happen next? Research has shown that even students at secondary school have difficulty understanding all the directions in which traffic might travel.
- Spot the hazards – a game that can be played anywhere and anytime. When walking, in the car or on the bus. What and why?
- Take road safety seriously yourself – you are their most important role model and teacher.



**This document is issued by Essex County Council  
Development, Highways and Transportation.**

**You can contact us in a number of ways:**

**By telephoning our Helpline:**

0845 603 7631

**By post:**

Essex County Council  
Development, Highways and Transportation  
Road Safety  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex  
CM1 1QH

**By email:**

[roadsafety@essex.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafety@essex.gov.uk)

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

Published October 2008