

Child development and road safety

Why are young children at risk around traffic?

SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL

- Sociable and want to be 'where the action is'.
- See themselves as 'big boys' or 'big girls' and want to do things by themselves.
- Are all different, so what works with one may not work with another.

PHYSICAL

- Fast and can quickly move from safety into danger.
- Small and difficult for drivers to see, especially behind a reversing vehicle.
- Reflexes and reactions still developing so stopping can take longer.
- Fragile so injuries are likely to be severe.

COGNITIVE

- Curious and keen to explore and learn about their surroundings.
- Limited understanding of 'danger' and of what to do to keep safe.
- Tend to focus only on what is important to them yet can be easily distracted.
- Understand cause and effect when in traffic differently to adults.
- Understanding of sound and direction and what these mean still developing.
- Ability to judge speed and distance of moving vehicles still developing.
- Interpret what they see in their peripheral vision differently to adults.
- Can say safety words and slogans but not yet able to apply them independently.
- Inexperienced as road users and confused by sudden changes in the traffic environment.



Children's behaviour can't be explained in terms of just one developmental area. It is the interaction of the cognitive, social/emotional and physical aspects of their development that puts children at risk around traffic.

Young children depend on adults to keep them safe!