

Child development and road safety

Why are young children at risk around traffic?

Social/Emotional Development

Young children are

- Sociable and want to be 'Where the action is'
- All different, with diverse abilities, skills, understandings and needs, so what works with one child may not work with another

They also

- See themselves as big and grown-up
- Want to do things by themselves



Cognitive Development

Young children are

- Curious and keen to explore and learn about their surroundings
- Yet to understand 'danger' and what to do to keep safe
- Often easily distracted but can also be really focused on what is important to them
- Still developing their ability to judge the speed and distance of moving vehicles and what these mean
- Inexperienced as road users and can be confused by sudden changes in the traffic environment
- Still developing their understanding of sound and direction and what these mean
- Egocentric so don't yet understand the perspectives of other road users

They also

- Understand cause and effect differently to adults when in traffic
- Interpret what they may see in their peripheral vision differently to adults
- Can say safety words and slogans but are not yet able to apply them independently



Physical Development

Young children are

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

Adults are responsible for the safety of young children!

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 young children at risk in and around vehicles.

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