

Case Study Twelve

Devon County Council

BACKGROUND

This case study reports on the services being offered by Devon Drivers' Centre (DDC), a specialist wing of Devon County Council's Road Safety Group. The Centre was established in 1991 to provide practical training and education for every sector of the road-using community.

DDC provides assistance to local employers and is committed to helping them reduce the risks to which their drivers are exposed in order to:

- Reduce the number of road traffic incidents involving fleet drivers
- Improve drivers skills and behaviour in support of broader health, safety and environmental strategies
- Reduce fleet transport costs, through lower insurance premiums, repair costs and 'down time'

In providing this support DDC has developed a portfolio of services, targeted at both safety management and the skills and knowledge of individual drivers.

NATURE OF SERVICES PROVIDED

The services provided include:

Company road safety profile

A risk assessment is conducted by reviewing existing policies and procedures, examining driving activities undertaken and an analysis of any accident history. This is undertaken in discussions with managers and drivers within the company. A report is produced for the company that outlines the risks and gives recommendations for improving the management of road safety within the organisation. Support is then provided in implementing the changes.

Assistance with policy development

Guidance can be provided on development of a policy and associated procedures. This may be done in conjunction with the health and safety or fleet manager or, in addition, through workshops with drivers in the company

Classroom based instruction and training

Understanding driver behaviour
Attention and distraction
Accident analysis and prevention
The effects of stress on driving
Hazard awareness and decision-making

Driver profiling

Individual drivers can be profiled across 3 aspects of driving - hazard awareness, safety knowledge and decision making skills. This allows specific training needs to be met and therefore more appropriate allocation of resources.

Interactive CD-based preparation

Specific needs identified in the individual profiles can be addressed through CD rom based interactive training modules. Modules include:

- Observation
- Space and speed
- Signalling
- Control skills
- Breakdown
- Accidents
- Night driving
- Driving in the rain
- Towns and cities
- Country lanes
- A roads
- Motorways
- Care safety
- Driver safety

Driver training and advancement

This involves hands-on, in-car instruction and assessment. The content depends on the objectively identified (profiling) as well as expressed needs of the driver. This usually concentrates on the types of vehicle and roads / environments that the individual usually operates in. Detailed records are held by DDC in order to ensure that the individual receives progressive rather than repetitive training

Standard training packages

The following training packages can be delivered as standard, either at the client's premises or at the DDC.

- Driver improvement package for those recently involved in an accident
- Skid anticipation and control
- First-on-scene training
- Towing skills
- Minibus driver training
- Motorway driving skills
- 4 x 4 off-road driver training

Specialist Support Service

- DCC Road User Support Scheme – Counselling and support for those involved in road accidents to strengthen confidence for driving
- Roadfit – an objective assessment of an individual's abilities following injury or illness

Accident investigation

Advice and guidance can be provided to establish an appropriate road traffic incident reporting procedure to allow trends to be identified and appropriate action taken to reduce the risks, as well as requirements to meet insurance needs

Social Marketing

Assistance can be provided in the development of long or short-term campaigns to ensure behavioural change within an organisation and maintain support for policies and procedures.

LESSONS LEARNED

- There is a role for local authorities (that feel suitably resourced) in the provision of at-work driver safety services for companies that require independent and objective advice and guidance.
- That role should clearly extend to the provision of management advice, risk assessment and internal social marketing free of charge wherever possible - since this will also meet the objective of local authorities to provide education, training and promotion to road users in their area.
- Consequently, managing driver safety does not necessarily require the provision of driver training - and it is one of the advantages of working with a local authority that driver training need not be an automatic outcome of any risk management programme.
- Policies that evolve from contributions made by drivers who understand the (sometimes) conflicting demands of work schedules and driver safety, have the best chance of being accepted by all personnel.

CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- The development and provision of diagnostic tools to identify driver types – most specifically those prone to violation behaviour. This will enable internal marketing initiatives and training programmes to be tailored to the needs of specific sub-groups within the organisation – those who have skills deficiencies may, for example, receive different interventions from those whose skill levels are high but who are prone to aberrant on-road behaviour.
- Seminars and workshops for local health and safety professionals who wish to share experiences of at-work driver safety – risk management issues, driver propaganda, marketing and training, internal enforcement of company regulations and policies etc. The seminars would be designed to equip those with a responsibility for company driver safety with the basic risk management tools they require to make progress independently of any commercial third party provider.
- Although the focus of Devon County Council's work has always been risk management centred, this type of approach will be strengthened in all future work with local companies.