



# Police Scotland New Driver Scheme

## Evaluation

BY RESEARCH SCOTLAND

KATY MACMILLAN

Research Scotland  
Spiersbridge House  
1 Spiersbridge Way  
Glasgow  
G46 8NG

[www.researchscotland.org](http://www.researchscotland.org)

August 2021

# CONTENTS

01

Background

02

Immediate impact

03

Longer term  
impact

04

Views on  
presentation

05

Conclusions

# 01 BACKGROUND

---

## About this report

This report sets out findings from an evaluation of Police Scotland's New Driver scheme. Police Scotland wanted to explore the impact of its New Driver scheme on the attitudes and behaviours of participants. This report provides findings from this evaluation, based on a targeted piece of research undertaken during 2020/21.

## About the New Driver scheme

Police Scotland's New Driver scheme was launched in February 2017. It is a presentation aimed at new and young drivers which aims to raise awareness of road safety issues and address the increased risk of road collisions involving young and new drivers. It is targeted at people learning to drive, people who have recently acquired a full licence and employers of new drivers.

The presentation is delivered through three video clips featuring real life footage of four young drivers racing on a rural road. Participants discuss speeding, characteristics of good and bad driving, hazards, warning signs and impact on victims and the wider community.

The presentation and discussions focus on individual responsibility and the potential impact of dangerous or careless driving. Through the presentation and discussions, the scheme aims to put hazard perception skills into a real world context and change how new and learner drivers think about road safety.

Until March 2020, the presentation was delivered on a face to face basis. It reached approximately 20,000 people. Some groups have included up to 300 young people, while others have been smaller groups of around 30 young people. It has also run as an annual event at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange, which delivered to over 3,000 participants over one week.

The scheme delivered presentations in community locations alongside a range of partners, in order to reach the target group. Partners include local authorities, schools, colleges and universities.



From March 2020, with the restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the presentation has been delivered online. This evaluation focuses on five online events, delivered over Microsoft Teams to groups of up to 100 young people.

## Method

The evaluation took place over two stages.

### STAGE 1 – IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

Researchers attended five online presentations. Immediately after the presentation we gathered feedback from the participants, in two different ways.

In four of the five cases, we held a short focus-group discussion. The discussions explored participant views on:

- the key messages from the presentation;
- their feelings about the presentation;
- learning from the presentation; and
- impact on their driving behaviour.

The groups involved between four and eight participants, who volunteered to provide feedback after the presentation. Through these groups, we spoke with 26 participants.

We also received feedback from 97 S6 pupils, who completed feedback postcards immediately after taking part in the presentation. These pupils were due to take part in a focus group discussion the following week, but were unable to do so as the school closed due to Covid-19.

In total, we received immediate feedback responses from 123 participants.

## STAGE 2 – LONGER TERM RECALL

We held follow-up discussions with 18 participants, who had taken part in the presentation. These discussions took place three to four months after the presentation.

These discussions explored participants' recall of the presentation and the longer term impact of the presentation on behaviours and attitudes.

We offered participants the opportunity to engage in this follow-up discussion individually, or in groups. All participants who engaged did so through an online group discussion.

We designed an interactive focus group session, which included a short online questionnaire, a video clip from the presentation and group discussions. The session was designed to understand the level of recall amongst the participants, and any longer term behaviour changes resulting from the presentation.

Each participant taking part in a follow-up discussion received a £20 voucher to demonstrate the value of their time and contribution to the evaluation.

Across both stages of the fieldwork, we were clear that participation was voluntary. We gathered informed consent from each participant, using a signed consent form and accompanying written and verbal information. Participants were informed that any personal information gathered would be held in secure files and deleted as soon as it was no longer needed.

## LIMITATIONS

Our original method planned to reach between 25-40 people through immediate feedback and 20-30 people through follow-up discussions. We gathered immediate feedback from 123 people, and follow up feedback from 18 people.

Unfortunately, due to a Covid-19 outbreak at a school, participants were unable to take part in any immediate or follow up discussions. The school was required to close, and when it re-opened, had to prioritise education and assessments, coming up to the exam period. The school had to withdraw from the research.

Young employees who took part in one session all declined to take part in the follow up discussions, despite considerable support from the employer. We offered additional telephone interview and online survey opportunities to all participants but received no uptake. These young employees were just beginning to undertake face to face work as pandemic restrictions eased, and there may have been a reluctance to take part in online discussions.

Some participants expressed fatigue or frustration at the ongoing necessity to engage in learning and activities digitally. And some young people were reticent to engage fully in the online discussion groups.

## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

We gathered information on the profile of participants through a short anonymous survey. This was conducted during the online follow up discussion, which 18 participants took part in. Sixteen participants completed this survey. Through the evaluation we spoke with a mix of people who were learning to drive (6), qualified drivers (4) and those who were not yet learning to drive (6).

Half of the participants we spoke with in follow up discussions were male and half were female. Participants' age ranged from 16 to 40. Most participants in the follow up discussions were young, and were students at school or college.

Postcodes were available for 15 participants. There was a mix of participants, with around half living in the 30% most deprived areas of Scotland.

# 02 IMMEDIATE IMPACT

---

## Introduction

This section explores the immediate impact of the presentation on the participants we engaged with.

We held short feedback sessions with 26 people, immediately after they had taken part in the New Driver presentation. We also received 97 postcards from participants who had taken part in the presentation.

## INITIAL FEELINGS

Participants said that they felt angry, sad, shocked, frustrated, disgusted and surprised at the way the people in the presentation had driven. They also felt upset or emotional, thinking about the impact of the collision on the family members of those who died.

## KEY MESSAGES

One of the key messages participants commented on was how quickly a situation can change, and how little time it took for a serious accident to occur.

For most participants, the key messages were around being aware of hazards, paying attention to the road and not being distracted by passengers.

---

**“To always make sure you are concentrating and looking at all the road signs and always remember that it’s not only your life you’re putting at risk.”**

---

Participants talked about key messages around:

- personal responsibility;
- road signs and hazards; and
- speeding.

## KEY MESSAGES - PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many participants spoke about the attitude with which people should drive, and the need to drive with integrity. They felt strongly that the driver of a vehicle was responsible for the lives of the passengers, and that they also had a responsibility towards other vehicle users on the road as well.

---

“When you are driving a car you're responsible for everyone's lives in the car as well as your own.”

“...you're responsible for more than one life.”

---

They indicated that it was important to drive with safety in mind, and not with the aim of performing for others or succumbing to peer pressure.

---

“Care and safety on the road is key.”

“Don't give in to peer pressure because it's your responsibility.”

“Driving shouldn't be taken for granted.”

“Don't be stupid when you are driving with friends, don't be cocky!”

---

## KEY MESSAGES – HAZARDS

Many participants said that they had learned about the meaning of certain road signs and that they were more aware of potential hazards. None of the participants we spoke with knew all of the road signs, although a few felt that they knew what most of them meant.

Most participants were familiar with the signs relating to speed limits and road markings. However, some participants were not familiar with road signs relating to farming. Generally, those who already drove or were learning to drive were more familiar with the road signs.

---

“It's certainly going to teach me what to look out for...I hadn't thought about mud on the road.”

---



Similarly, most participants felt that they were aware of most of the potential hazards. However, a few noted that they had not considered factors such as low light.

## KEY MESSAGES – SPEEDING

There were mixed views around speeding. Some participants who drove felt that their behaviour would not change, as they already kept within the speed limit. For these participants, the presentation helped to reinforce the views they already held.

---

“Speeding has consequences for everyone around you – not just you.”

---

One participant, who was an experienced driver did not feel that the presentation would make a difference to his driving habits around speeding. He noted that he had driven over the speed limit before, and would do so again, because the presentation did not do enough to address the severity of the consequences of this type of driving.

---

“I mean, naebody’s going to come away from that and never speed again.”

---

However, others felt that they would think differently about speeding and the impact of driving at high speeds.

---

“It’s definitely made me take it a lot more seriously.”

---

---

“It’s opened my eyes more to the dangers of speeding and how quickly things can change, in like, two minutes.”

---

Two participants who were experienced drivers felt that they would be more conscious of their speeding, as a result of the presentation.

---

“It makes you realise that going even slightly over the speed limit is dangerous.”

---

---

“Yes, I’m definitely guilty of it [speeding] and I’m more prone to do it when I’m driving on my own, but this has definitely changed my mind.”

---

One participant commented that the presentation made them more aware of the impact of how other people drive. For example, while they might not speed themselves, others on the road might be speeding and this was another reason to be aware of the environment.



## LEARNING

Generally, participants felt that they had learned something from the presentation. Overall, they felt more aware of the concept of road safety. Specifically, participants mentioned that they felt more aware of what to look out for on the road, as a driver and a passenger.

---

“Before you might not know the ins and outs of road safety, but now I feel like I know a lot more.”

---

---

“... I think I'm quite a sensible driver, but you realise how much you don't consider.”

---

Participants commented that it was important to take notice of the surrounding area and to look ahead, even on familiar routes. And a few commented on the importance of being aware of other drivers, as their actions could pose a risk.

---

“It made me think ‘don't be so confident in yourself, don't get too comfortable, even with familiar roads’.”

---

---

“How much attention you actually need to pay to hazards and stuff...it's a lot more than I thought.”

---

---

“Even if you are the safest driver, there is still a high risk due to other stupid drivers.”

---

## BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

A few participants commented that they would change their behaviour either as a driver or a passenger. These included new drivers, and a few participants who were more experienced drivers.

---

“There was a good shock factor. It made you re-evaluate your driving.”

---

One participant who was taking driving lessons said that they wanted to be more careful now. Another participant, who was not learning to drive said that they felt worried about driving and was less keen to learn how to drive after watching the presentation.

One participant felt that they would now avoid having friend in the car as they might be a bad influence while driving.

Some participants commented on how they might change their behaviour as a passenger, as a result of the presentation. Some said that they now felt more comfortable speaking up if they felt someone was driving dangerously.

---

“I’m younger so people might listen to me more if I’m in the car with them.”

---

And a few noted that they would be more mindful of giving the driver ‘space’ to drive as they wanted to.

---

“It made you realise the consequences of peer pressure, because you realise what could happen.”

---

Two participants felt that they did not want to drive, after seeing the presentation. However, For most participants we spoke with, the emotional response did not deter them from wanting to drive.

---

“For me it’s sad, but I’m young and I’m going to be driving soon, so it’s a good eyeopener for what can happen.”

---

## Introduction

This section explores the longer term impact of the presentation on the participants we engaged with.

We held online discussion groups with 18 people who had taken part in the New Driver presentation. These groups were interactive, involving a mix of discussions and questionnaires. We also showed participants a video clip from the presentation, to prompt them on their recall of road signs and hazards.

## LONGER TERM GENERAL RECALL

Of the 18 people who took part in a follow-up discussion, 16 completed an online recall survey which was conducted during the discussion. All 16 who completed the survey said that they could remember taking part in the New Driver presentation, and just over half said that they remembered it 'very well'.

In an unprompted, open discussion most participants said that the presentation made them more cautious, aware and careful about driving. Participants who were not yet driving said that it made them more aware of the consequences of speeding.

In unprompted discussion, participants said that the main messages they remembered were around:

- speeding;
- peer pressure;
- the importance of being aware when driving;
- the impact on insurance and employability;
- the sentencing of the drivers; and
- the role of the passengers.

Participants commented that because of these messages, it was important, as a driver, to be aware of their driving and to be accountable for it.

A few participants commented on the risk to their job if they drove dangerously. One participant felt that employers would not want to take on someone who had a driving conviction.

---

“Driving fast can affect your whole life.”

---

One participant said that she had witnessed a road traffic accident on the way home yesterday which made her think of the presentation and its messages. The main message she remembered was to be more careful whilst you were driving.

Participants also commented that they were still surprised by the leniency of the sentencing.

---

“The Justice system is even worse than I thought. “The jail sentence was shocking.”

---

Some participants said that they had spoken with friends and family about the presentation and the accident. They thought it was interesting to hear the reactions from their friends and relatives, especially as some remembered the incident taking place in the locality.

One participant, who didn't drive said that she had spoken to her boyfriend about the presentation. She was keen for him to understand the importance of safe driving habits.

## PROMPTED RECALL

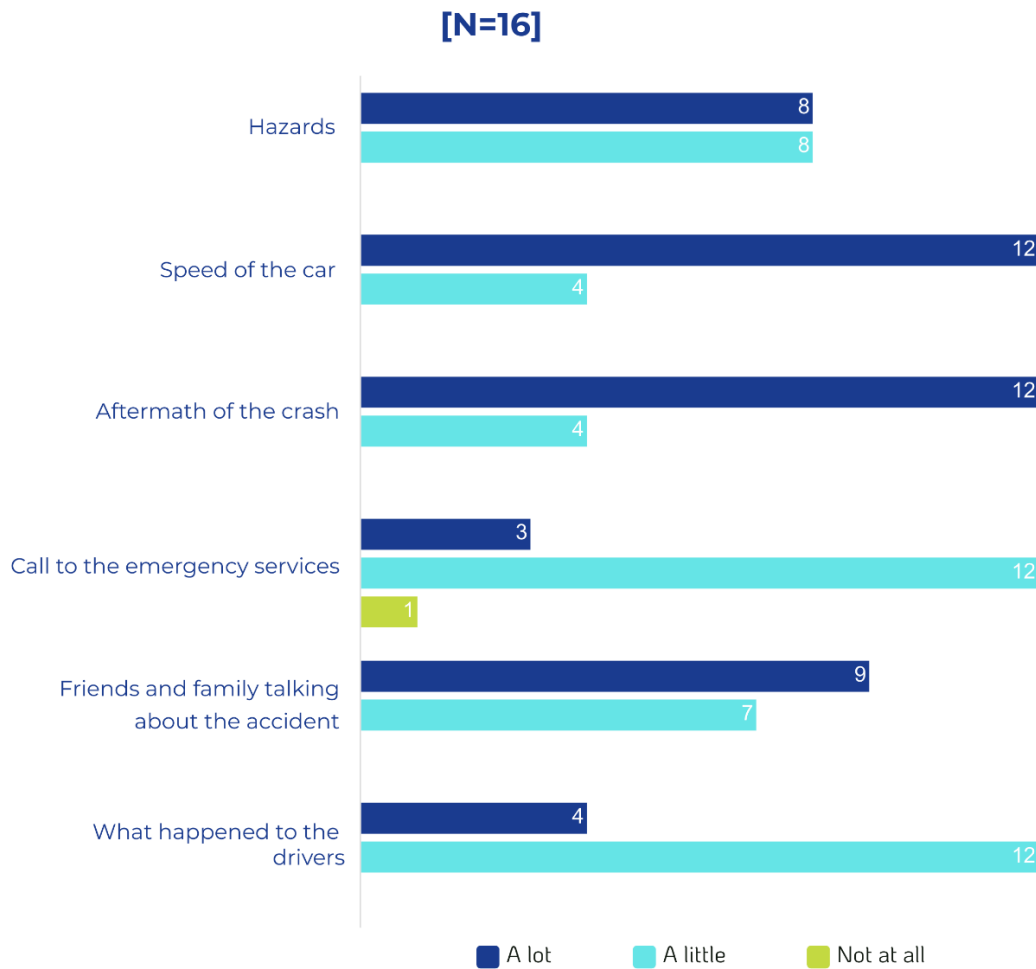
We asked participants if they could recall specific elements of the presentation. Almost all the participants remembered at least a little about:

- the hazards;
- the speed of the car;
- the aftermath of the crash;
- the call to emergency service;
- friends and family talking about the accident; and
- what happened to the drivers.

Most participants were able to remember a lot about the speed of the car, the aftermath of the crash and friends and family talking about the accident.

Around half of the participants were able to remember a lot about the hazards.

A smaller proportion remembered a lot around the call to emergency services and what happened to the drivers after the accident.



In discussion, participants remembered details about the speed of the car that caused the collision and the aftermath of the collision.

“They were pelting it round the corners.”

“It was going far too fast.”

Some participants commented on how many hazards there were on the stretch of road, and the fact that they were surprised by this.

One participant recalled that one car hadn’t been speeding at all, but took the full impact of the car that was speeding. They felt that this was shocking, and helped reinforce the idea that your driving behaviours and choices affect others.

Participants remembered some details about the sentencing for the driver who went to prison, and the young person who left his career in the Army and had to leave the town. They felt that these were memorable facts because they were “dramatic”.

“These were the standout things – that’s why you remember them.”

Only a few participants said that they remembered anything about the call to emergency services, and generally, this was not well recalled.

## HAZARD RECALL

We showed participants a clip from the presentation, of the car travelling down a rural road. We asked participants to note down the hazards that they spotted along the route. Participants identified the following hazards:

- Animals/tractors
- Overtaking next to a junction
- Going over the white lines on the road
- Hidden dips
- Sharp bends
- High hedges
- Low sun
- Cattle sign
- Wet patches on the road
- Cutting corners.

---

“It was very careless driving; they were driving very close to other drivers.”

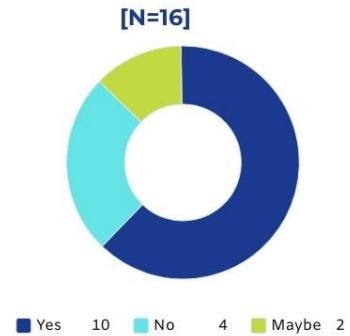
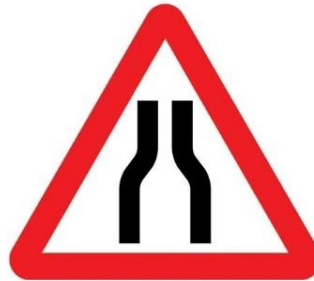
---

A few participants commented further, noting that the angle of the sunlight could have affected the driver when he was taking sharp bends. And another participant, who was familiar with the road, commented that the hidden dips were particularly dangerous.

## ROAD SIGN RECALL

We asked participants if they could remember the road signs shown throughout the presentation, and if they knew what each road sign indicated.

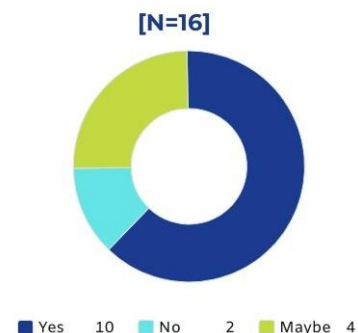
Most participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. And eight respondents correctly identified it as 'road narrows' or 'road narrows on both sides'.



Almost all participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. Most participants (11) correctly identified it as a sign indicating cattle or cows likely to be on the road ahead. Four participants suggested that the sign indicated animals or farm animals. And one participant suggested that the sign indicated a farm.

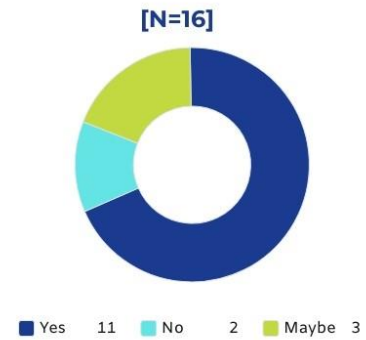


Most participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. And 14 participants correctly identified it as a sign indicating that the road ahead bends to left.





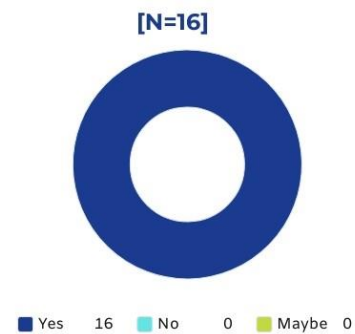
Most participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. Of those who answered the question, 9 identified it as a sign indicating that the road has multiple sharp bends, and one correctly identified it as a sign indicating 'double bend, first to the left'.



Half of the participants said that they remembered what this sign meant, with some feeling they might remember. And eight respondents correctly identified it as 'crossroads' or 'cross junction'. Three participants identified it as showing that there was a straight road ahead with junctions on either side, and two identified it as a T-junction. or 'road narrows on both sides'. One participant identified it as a sign indicating that there was a fence coming up.



All participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. And all 16 identified as a sign indicating road works or construction ahead.



All participants said that they remembered what this sign meant. And all 16 identified it was an indication to slow down.



[N=16]



■ Yes 16 ■ No 0 ■ Maybe 0

Most participants (12) said that the sign was yellow to bring more attention to it, to highlight it was a dangerous area or to indicate a hazard or warning.



[N=16]



■ Yes 7 ■ No 5 ■ Maybe 4

In discussion, some participants remembered this warning sign more strongly than others, as they felt it was new to them.

---

“I don’t think they teach you that when you’re learning.”

---

## IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR AS A DRIVER

Most participants felt that they were now more aware of the risks associated with driving, and particularly the risks associated with speeding. Generally, participants who were drivers said that they were trying to be more careful on the road.

Some participants who drove said that they would think twice about speeding, and the potential consequences.

---

“Driving like a looney is no for me. I want to get home to see my kids.”

“Concentration is key.”

“Driving fast can affect your whole life.”

---

Two participants said that because of the presentation they were speeding less, although they both admitted to speeding sometimes. And one participant said that since watching the presentation he never speeds now.

For some, the presentation made them think about the tangible and practical implications of driving dangerously, and what would happen if they were not able to drive anymore.

---

“If I didn’t have my driving licence, I’d lose my independence.... you could lose your family, your job...”

---

One participant was very familiar with the road because he drives on the same road every day for work. He said that he remembers the presentation while he is driving on that road, and it makes him more aware of his own driving. He acknowledged that he did still speed at times, but never to the extent of the driver in the presentation.

One participant felt the presentation had made him think about the consequences of an accident. Another participant reflected on the effect on other people if you crash into them – and felt that poor driving could impact on many people’s lives.

---

“You could have an accident and your life could be over.”

---

One participant who was learning to drive, felt that the messages from the presentation stuck with her because she was conscious of all the messages while learning.

Two participants said that the presentation made them feel as if they do not want to drive. One participant felt this strongly, as she felt the presentation put into perspective how serious poor driving can be, and the potential implication on her life. The other participant was undecided but was not keen to drive.

---

“Other people’s lives are in your hands when you’re driving – it’s not just your own.”

---

Some participants said that the presentation would not have any impact on their driving behaviours, as they felt they were already safe drivers.

---

“I was pretty safe before and I still feel the same.”

---

A few participants discussed the impact of dangerous driving on their lives more broadly, such as insurance levels and employability. They felt that the risk of higher premiums or losing their job was a good reason to drive carefully.

---

“Some jobs require you to drive, so if you lose your licence, you could lose your job.”

---

## IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR AS A PASSENGER

Most participants said that they now felt more confident as a passenger to tell a driver to slow down or drive more carefully. Whilst some were only a little more confident, a few said that having seen the presentation they would have no hesitation speaking up if they felt a driver was speeding or not concentrating. They felt that it was better to say something than to risk being involved in an accident. Others said they were now more conscious of their role as a passenger, and they would be more careful about how they behaved in order to allow the driver to focus.

---

*“It’s your safety as well as theirs!”*

---

# 04 VIEWS ON PRESENTATION

## What worked well

Overall, participants said that they liked the presentation, and on average rated it 4.6 out of 5.

Participants we spoke with liked that the presentation was based on a real incident from their local area, and that it used real footage. In general, they liked the use of video, rather than just audio or still images to convey the messages.

---

“I liked that it was videos, to show folk what happens.”

---

---

“It’s definitely the video that stuck with me.”

---

---

“Overall, very informative and helpful.”

---

A few participants noted that the presentation did a good job of emphasising the real world implications of dangerous driving. Those who were from the same town that the accident took place in appreciated that the footage was from their local area. They felt that the presentation would not have been as impactful if it was about an accident in another area, or if it was dramatised.

---

“It’s a real story...it opens up your eyes that you have to concentrate.”

---

Most participants also commented positively on the way the presentation was delivered. They liked that it was relaxed and interactive, with opportunities to ask questions as they went along. They also liked the pace of the presentation, and that it was not rushed.

---

“He wasn’t just speaking at us, he was getting us involved.”

---

---

“It felt so personal, him speaking about it, explaining it to us and talking to us.”

---

Most participants valued the fact that the presentation was delivered by a police officer who worked in road safety. They felt that this gave the messages credibility as he had direct experience of situations such as the one in the presentation.

---

“Well, they’re the folk that stop people if they’re speeding so they ken about it.”

---

## Areas for improvement

The presentation showed real footage from a dashcam leading up to a collision on a rural road. Some participants lived or studied in the same locality and were familiar with the road shown in the presentation. They felt that the familiarity with the road and the route worked well to engage them, and to enhance the messages around dangerous driving and personal responsibility. However, this presentation did not work as well for those who were unfamiliar with the area, or who were based in an urban, rather than rural area.

---

“Got across the main message well. Just would be good for more applicable scenarios, e.g. City.”

---

One participant said that it might be helpful to provide a warning before the presentation, to signpost the content. They noted that because the footage is from an accident involving teenagers from the local area, some people might know them or know the families, and the presentation might be upsetting for them.

A few participants wondered if the presentation was shocking enough, and whether the consequences outlined in the presentation would deter all people from driving dangerously.

---

“They were trying not to scare us, but they maybe need to put the point across more harshly.”

---

---

“I think they need to be a bit more forceful...more authoritative.”

---

One participant felt that the presentation would have more impact if it showed more explicit scenes from the collision and the aftermath.

One participant noted that there were some technical challenges throughout the presentation. They felt that this detracted from the effect of the presentation, and that overall, it would be more impactful in person than online. It is worth noting that the presentations are normally delivered in person but were piloted online as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

A few participants noted that it may have added to the experience if the presentation included commentary from others, such as a firefighter who responded to the call and the young people involved in the collision – particularly the young man who went to prison or the young man who had to leave the army and move to another town.

# 05 CONCLUSIONS

---

## Impact

All participants we spoke with understood the key messages from the presentation.

Most participants had good recall of the presentation, including the hazards, road signs and details of the implications of dangerous driving.

There is some evidence that presentation had an impact on participants choices or behaviors. Most participants who were drivers said that they were more aware of potential risks. Some said that they were trying to drive more carefully, and a few commented that they were more careful about maintaining a safe speed on the road.

A few participants who were learning to drive felt that the presentation made them more aware of the risks they might encounter when they were driving independently. Two participants felt that they did not want to drive, after seeing the presentation.

Most participants felt that they would now behave differently, either as a driver or as a passenger. Most felt that they would now be comfortable speaking up if they were a passenger and felt someone was driving dangerously.

## What worked well

Participants appreciated the relaxed style of the presentation, and that it was delivered by a police officer, who was a credible source. They also felt that presentation worked well when it was set in the local area.

## Areas for consideration

A few young people were put off learning to drive after taking part in the presentation.