

# Driving the Message Home

## A Review of Road Safety in the Wealden District Summary Report

Road safety is a real concern to many communities and individuals in Wealden. This is not surprising when the statistics are reviewed which show that the number of people killed or seriously injured on the district's roads, in recent years, remain stubbornly high. If the answers to curing this problem were easy then they would have been implemented.

However it is not all bad news, there have been huge advances in safer car design, road engineering, enforcement and emergency medical treatment which have seen falling numbers of people being killed or seriously injured over the longer-term.

Wealden District Council has recently undertaken a review of road safety and produced a report which provides detailed data, reviews some of the relevant literature about the subject and suggests a way forward; the full report can be downloaded from the Council's website [www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk) under the Community and Safety Section.

It is hoped that this review will renew and increase debate and interest in this important subject; a subject which is a national and local public health issue, but also transcends into a very personal one too, where all road users carry a degree of personal responsibility for their own wellbeing and that of others as well.

**Councillor Claire Dowling**  
Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Safety,  
Wealden District Council.

## Some key statistics and facts

The Wealden area is home to 151,029 people and is the largest district in the County of East Sussex. The district has 847 miles of road, approximately 7 miles of which are dual carriageway. This short length is significant, as motorways and dual carriageways are statistically the safest roads and single carriageway rural roads are the riskiest for fatalities.

The number of people killed on the roads across Great Britain in 2013 was 1,713 which was a decrease of 2% compared with the 2012 figures; this figure according to the Department for Transport was the lowest since 1926. In addition the number of people seriously injured on the roads of Great Britain in 2013 decreased by 6% to 21,657 compared to 2012. This contrasts with the East Sussex and Wealden figures which show a worsening position for both killed and seriously injured between 2012 and 2013. However it is too early to tell if this is a glitch in an otherwise downward long-term trend or the start of a more sustained increase.

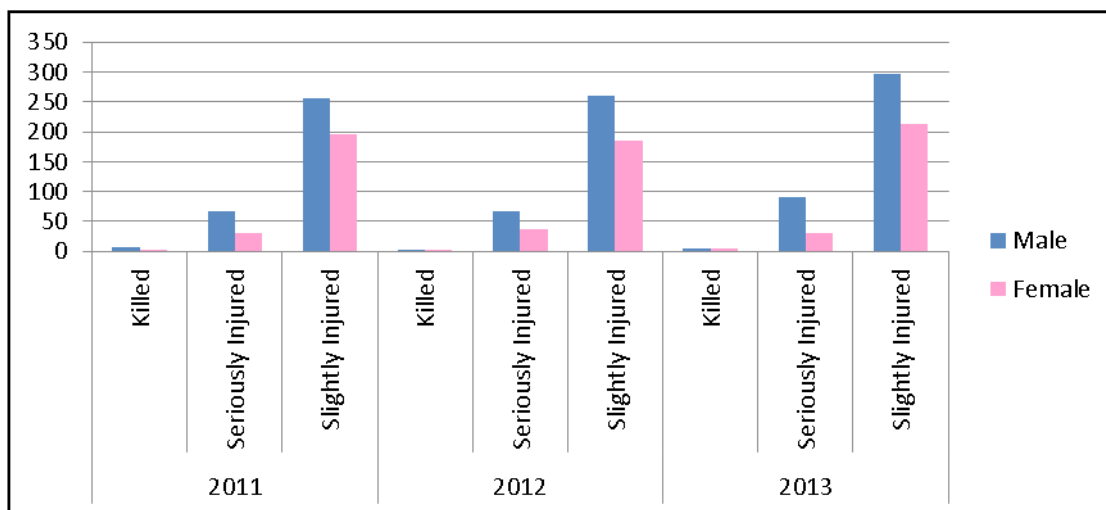
Injury Severity	Eastbourne	Hastings	Lewes	Rother	Wealden	East Sussex
Fatal	2	6	9	16	22	55
Serious	122	122	135	192	321	892
Slight	682	642	724	729	1,407	4,184
<b>Total</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>1750</b>	<b>5,131</b>

### Number of people killed, seriously and slightly injured in East Sussex 2011 to 2013

The following graph and table provides information on crash severity on Wealden's roads by year, gender and age. They show that males are more at risk of sustaining an injury in a crash than females and those generally younger drivers and riders are at the most risk in Wealden.

Age Range	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
0 – 16	79	52	131
17 – 29	349	226	575
30 – 39	155	97	252
40 – 49	181	104	285
50 – 59	129	80	209
60 – 69	83	68	151
70 – 79	41	40	81
80 +	33	33	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,050</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1,750</b>

### Number of people killed, seriously injured or slightly injured on Wealden's roads, broken down by age and gender 2011 to 2013



### Seriousness of injury broken down by gender 2011 to 2013

Most crashes in Wealden occur during the months of May, June, August and December and on Fridays and Saturdays, however these differences are marginal, with crashes occurring in high numbers each month and day of the week. The timings of crashes tend to be the most common during the daytime hours, between 7:00am and peaking at 3:00pm and then trailing off after that, picking up again the next day at 7:00am.

Cars, the larger motorcycles, pedal cycles and lighter goods vans are the most likely mode of transport to be involved in crashes respectively; however the vast majority, over 70%, involve cars.

Most serious crashes (over 60%) occur within ten miles of the driver's / rider's home and this figure increases to 77% when the distance is increased to 20 miles. This may partly be explained because most driving / riding time is within this distance zone. However it may also have something to do with familiarity, habit and lack of concentration.

The main contributory factors for crashes (all ages) are:

- Failing to look properly,
- failing to judge the other persons path or speed;
- careless / reckless / in a hurry;
- loss of control; and
- poor turn or manoeuvre.

“ Over 60% of serious crashes happen within 10 miles of the driver's/rider's home. ”

However the order changes when the factors for young male drivers are examined, with the top four being:

- Loss of control;
- careless / reckless/ in a hurry;
- travelling too fast for the conditions; and
- learner or inexperienced driver / rider.

This may start to explain why young male drivers are more at risk of having a serious crash as speed will always make the outcome of any crash more serious and if this is combined with inexperience the risks are increased considerably. Evidence produced by an independent research company – Road Safety Analysis – places the roads in Wealden as the fifth most dangerous district/borough in Britain (n = 379) for young drivers.

There is concern expressed in this review about mobile phone and other multi-media devices if used whilst driving, and this contributing to the probability of having a crash and as an under-reported causation factor. Research suggests that using such equipment can increase reaction time by over 40%.

The review also takes an in-depth look at driving behaviour, the effects of emotions and habits on driving and wider road use.

## The next steps

It is hoped that this review will give the road safety debate locally greater impetus and focus. It is widely accepted that there are three approaches to road safety: enforcement; engineering; and education. In reality success will come from a combination of all three and this review advocates that approach and recognises that changing behaviours and attitudes is a long-term goal.

The review makes 13 recommendations and points the way to partnership working, using existing partnership structures, as the most effective way to make improvements locally. It is recommended that a local action plan should be produced which is intelligence led and targeted.

Other recommendations are aimed at interventions nationally and Sussex-wide.

## Where can I find more details?

Copies of the full review of road safety in Wealden entitled: 'Driving the Message Home' can be downloaded from the Council's website [www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk) under the Community and Safety Section.

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, tape/CD or in another language please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or [info@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:info@wealden.gov.uk) Ref: D&P. 169568

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