THE ROAD SAFETY TRUST

Making Roads Safer

Dr Catherine Purcell's Virtual Road World

Road Safety Trust Funding Showcase

The Road Safety Trust is dedicated to making the UK's roads the safest in the world. As an independent grant-giving charity, the Road Safety Trust funds vital research and practical interventions committed to reducing the number of people killed or injured on our roads.

In 2016, the Road Safety Trust awarded Dr Catherine Purcell a grant to work with school children to design and develop an evidence-based educational computer game to teach children how to cross the road safely.

Thirty-seven children on average are seriously injured and one fatally injured on UK roads every week, according to the Department for Transport. Worldwide, preventable road traffic accidents represent the second largest cause of death or disability for children aged 5-14 years old.

Children under the age of 16 are among the most vulnerable road users, with child pedestrians accounting for the majority of child casualties across all road user types. Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) of the child pedestrians involved in accidents failed to look properly, so it is essential that children are properly educated about how to stay safe on the roads.

Road safety is not currently part of the primary education core curriculum in the UK. Many schools choose to address the issue of road safety using illustrated books and some kerbside practice, but research indicates that children's understanding of these techniques doesn't always translate into how they behave in the real world.

Dr Catherine Purcell and her teams at the University of South Wales and Cardiff University worked with university students from the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Science to consult 100 primary school aged children on what they would like from a road safety game. Dr Purcell then worked with more than 200 children in Newport to test the prototype and collect in-game data.

The outcome was 'Virtual Road World' which is aimed at 7-9 year olds and immerses users in a virtual environment in which they need to complete a series of quests requiring them to cross roads as they find their way around a virtual city.

By playing the game, children learn how to safely navigate roads, traffic and crossing points. The more children play it, the more opportunity they have to understand the risks and make safer decisions about where and when to cross the road.

Virtual Road World was launched in September 2019 and is now available to download for free from the Apple App Store.

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