

BACKGROUND

The aim of the Mature Drivers programme in Annandale and Eskdale is to assist people, over the age of 65 years, to maintain their independence and confidence in their driving abilities.

By adopting this approach with the Mature Drivers scheme, people living in our remote and rural areas can remain independent for longer by having the use of a vehicle to get them out and around the area as and when they choose to do so. It is also important to ensure that people who continue to drive remain fit, confident and able to do so, keeping our roads safe and enabling people to maintain their independence for longer.

The main reason for selecting those aged 65 and over is that available information would suggest that 47% of slight injury crashes in our region involve older people over the age of 65 years. Whilst the level of slight injury crashes is high, what is also highlighted is the costs associated with a single fatality on our roads, being in the region of £1,000,000 for each fatality. Given this high cost it seems logical to adopt a more pro-active and preventative approach. As well as the financial benefits it also makes sense to make sure we all remain fit, well and able to drive and can respond to the changing road traffic conditions and that our cognition remains at full capacity to be able to respond at all times.

However, whilst road safety and costs are two reasons to be concerned, the ongoing wider health benefits of being able to drive, included in a recent online article for the BBC (1) it is suggested that there are also huge health benefits from remaining able to drive, "there is some evidence that suddenly stopping driving and a lack of mobility leads to depression, so we want to keep people independent for as long as possible".

Following a recent successful programme of the Mature Driver scheme ran across in the Stranraer area through the Wellbeing partnership, the programme format has been modified and adapted for use in Annandale and Eskdale and other regions of Dumfries and Galloway. Partnership working was crucial to the success of this project, therefore, the programme in Annandale and Eskdale was co-ordinated through the SHAP (Safe and Healthy Action Partnership), where funding for the programme was secured. Data sharing was highlighted early on as a vital component in the scheme if information was to be shared with partners, mainly the Police in the event that someone's driving was so poor that they really were not safe to be on the road any longer, to provide an advisory conversation. Paperwork was adapted with the consent of our colleagues in Stranraer and adopted for local use with minor modifications including a data sharing statement which required an individual's signature and a declaration form which required to be signed by the individuals as well before they could participate in the scheme.

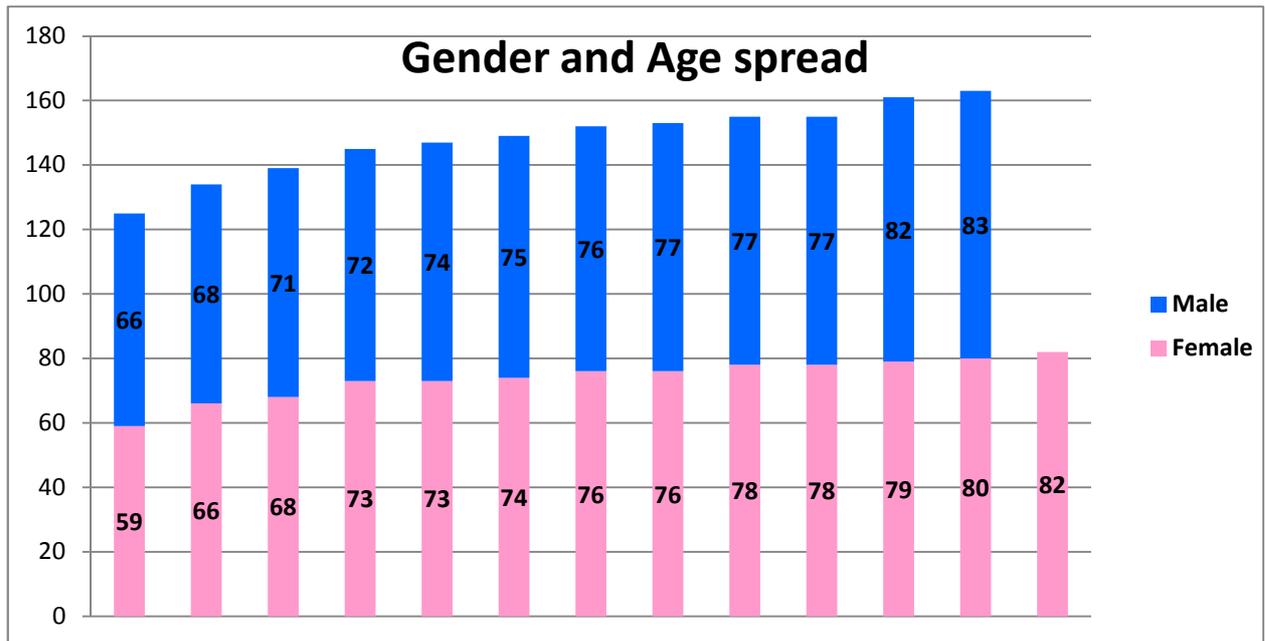
Partners included Police Scotland, the Road Traffic Department, Health Improvement, the local Driving Instructors Association and local Consultants and GP's/ Consultants.

An advert went out through the local newspaper group which covers the whole of Annandale and Eskdale and this was the way in which participants were recruited to the scheme. This aspect of self referral was contentious in that it was felt that the public would maybe view this as way to get a free driving lesson, which was not what was intended, although acknowledged that this could happen.

The response to the scheme was phenomenal and within a short space of time people had started to apply for the scheme. 56 packs were sent out and 43 people registered and returned their packs for the scheme. 12 people felt that the scheme was not for them and did not wish to proceed further.

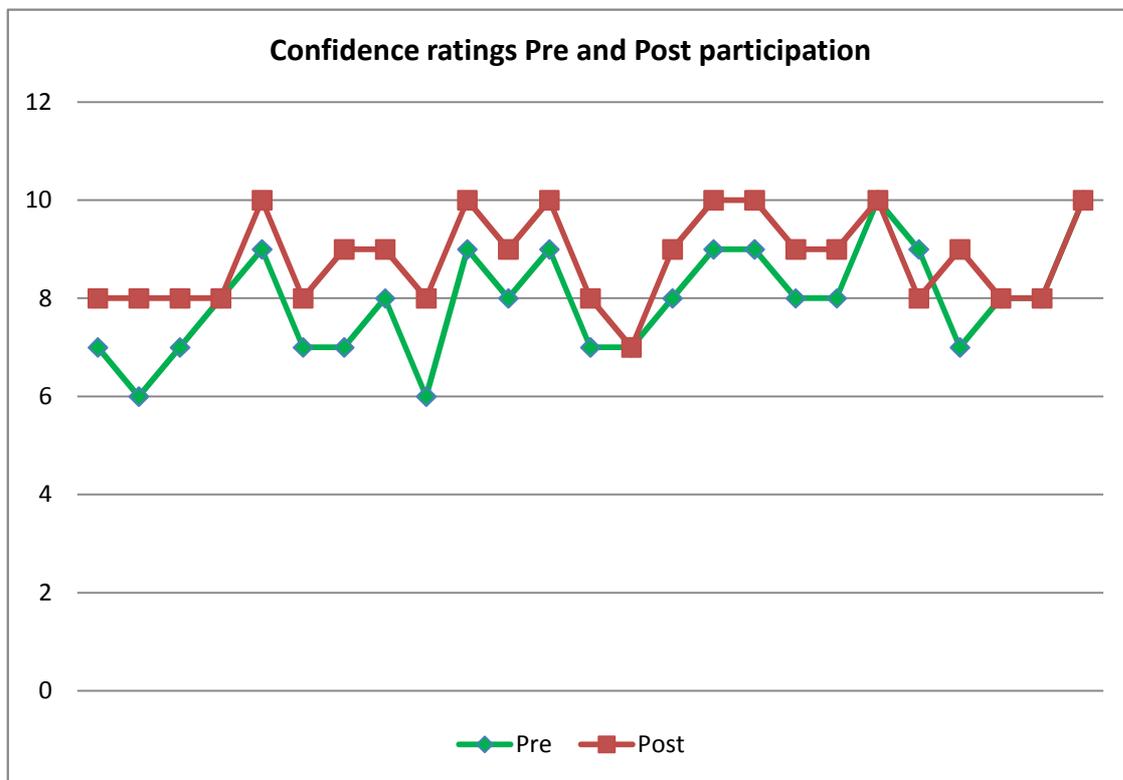
Feedback results.

The following graph shows the gender and age spread across male and female participants in Annandale and Eskdale



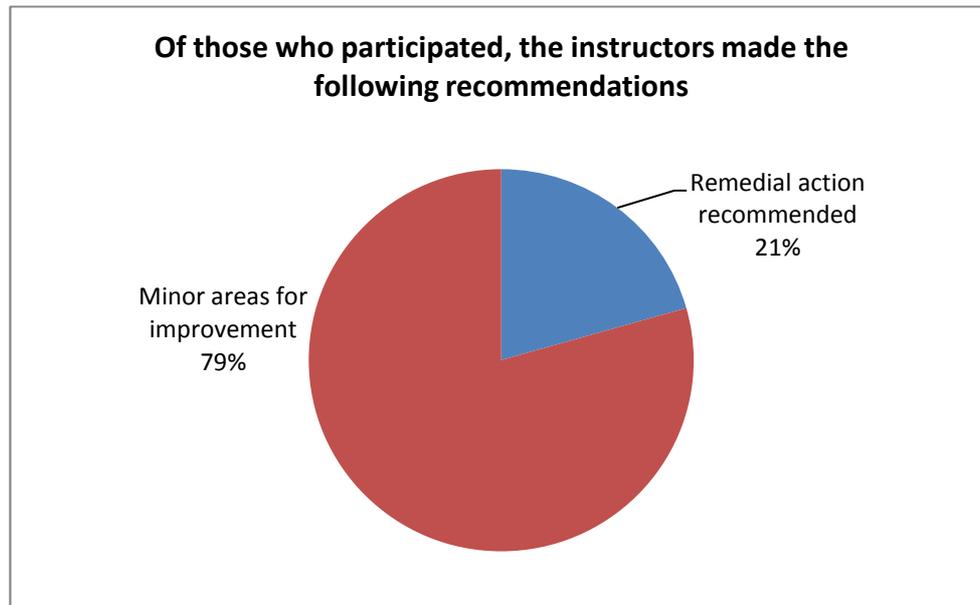
Data input provided by Elizabeth Forsyth, Community Health Development Worker.

A pre course confidence questionnaire was issued to all participants about where they felt that their confidence and ability was now and then re-done after the driving lesson. The results are shown below.



In response to the issue of people taking up the offer of free driving lessons it would be fair to say that even if that was the case 79% of those who took part were advised by the Driving Instructors of 'Minor areas which required improvement'. Therefore, everyone who took part had developed bad habits which could hinder good, safe driving but could with some effort be put right. Such examples might be not using wing mirrors appropriately or not recognising blind spots on your vehicle.

Of the feedback from others who participated 21% were advised to take remedial action. See graph below.



A culmination event was arranged, whereby everyone who had taken part was invited to attend. They would have presentations from The Road Traffic Police and also a medical person, GP/Consultant both of whom would explain when and where it was appropriate to surrender your driving licence and under what circumstances this was applicable.

At this event an evaluation form was completed by all in attendance, and some who were unable to attend, had asked for this to be posted out to them for completion.

Some of the feedback from participants is as follows:

1) Do you find any of the following easier since completing the Mature Drivers scheme?

- Observation Skills -All who completed the form said that this area had improved for them.
- Particular manoeuvres-All who completed the form said that this area had improved their confidence.
- Driving in heavy traffic-10 returns expressed increased confidence in this area for them.
- Particular road layouts e.g. Roundabouts crossroads-18 returns expressed an increased confidence in this area and many had avoided this aspect of driving previously if at all possible.
- Bad Weather-only 1 response indicated that bad weather was an issue for them when driving.

2) What did you find most useful about the Mature Drivers Scheme?

- Information on how to parallel park. Some bad habits had crept in like keeping my hand on the gear stick which is not necessary.
Giving me more confidence in my driving ability.
Got a couple of habit forming things sorted out and had good advice on large roundabouts.
Having an assessment by a professional and unbiased driver.
Giving me my confidence back.
Providing confidence and feeling that I am a safer driver by doing this course.
The assurance that not too many bad habits had crept in over the years.
Caused me to read the Highway Code (twice!)
It gave me confidence that my driving was still safe.
Queries answered, Constructive appraisal and not at all intimidating.
All elements of the course for me were equally useful.
Excellent Police talk.
I feel very re-assured.
Being made aware of my lack of use of the blind spots on the car.
Getting an independent assessment of my driving.
Being made aware of the signs of potential hazards and planning ahead.
When I had my lesson my driving was not as bad as I thought and this gave me a great confidence boost.
'CONFIDENCE'.
Confidence boost and has made me much more aware.

All the returns confirmed that those who had taken part felt that the scheme had improved their driving skills.

All the returns agreed that having taken part in the scheme this would enable them to remain independent in their communities for longer.

All the returns indicate that people taking part in the scheme would recommend the scheme to others.

❖ People were asked if they would like to make any other comments about the scheme and these are as follows:

- Enjoyed the whole programme and all very informative. Thank you for the coffee and cake.
I think it is a very good scheme and thank you for the opportunity.
I would appreciate a copy of the Driving Instructors report after yesterday's talk- Thank you.
Sorry I was unable to stay for the whole time on the 1/3/16. I feel sure that it was a very interesting and informative day. I would be pleased to hear of any feedback from the scheme.
This is an excellent scheme and should be continued.
Given me the confidence I needed after the death of my husband who usually did the driving.
Very positive experience. Would highly recommend to others.
I wish that the funding would have allowed for longer sessions to include an opportunity for motorway driving and dual carriageway driving.

Only that some older friends whilst interested in hearing about the scheme were reluctant to apply for fear of being criticised. While I thought that the publicity did make it clear that the objective was to keep people on the road safely, others were not sufficiently confident to come forward and participate. I thought that the meeting at Lockerbie with all the talks was very worthwhile- Thanks to all.

Summary Findings and recommendations.

- ❖ Overall the scheme here in Annandale and Eskdale has been extremely successful for those involved in setting it up and most importantly for those who have taken part. Confidence and loneliness are huge issues for older people, particularly as we age and in a rural area where there is a high proportion of older people living and working, losing confidence is detrimental to health and independence. This can be particularly challenging in relation to driving after the death of a spouse who had maybe undertaken all the driving. (2) In that respect this scheme has met the main aim of increasing confidence and raising awareness of safety on our roads and in the face of an ever increasing older generation the ability to live well for longer and be safe on our roads.
- ❖ SHAP has provided the funding for this scheme but it does raise wider issues about whether this should be funded through mainstream funding as it has the potential to impact on a variety of different services. In comparison to £1,000,000 for each road fatality, by investing a small amount of funding, £1100 in total we have been able to offer a more pro-active approach to Road Safety and been successful in increasing confidence, ability and awareness on our regions roads. If there is a weakness in the scheme as a whole, it is that it is not regionally being rolled out, which makes for inconsistencies across our region and inequalities for Mature Drivers.
- ❖ Finally, thanks must go to all who took part and also our partners who helped to make this scheme possible, Namely: SHAP, Police Scotland particularly Steven Wilson and Neil Hewitson, Dr Fraser Gibb(Consultant Psychiatrist) The Driving Instructors Association particularly Colin Hobbins (Chair) and Paul Sharkey. And last but not least, Liz Forsyth for her data input which has been an invaluable asset to this report.

(1) <http://bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24204489>

(2) http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/forprofessionals/evidence_reviewloneliness_and_isolation.pdf?dtrk=true

£1100 can be broken down as follows: £25 per person for 1 hour driving lesson, £100 postage and printing, £20 hire of venue and coffee, tea and cake for culmination event. Clearly the more people who take up the scheme, the higher the cost will be.