ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION 40 YEARS

40 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES ON UK ROADS

40 Years of Saving Lives Through Evidence, Innovation and Influence

October 1986 – October 2026



40 years of Saving Lives on UK Roads

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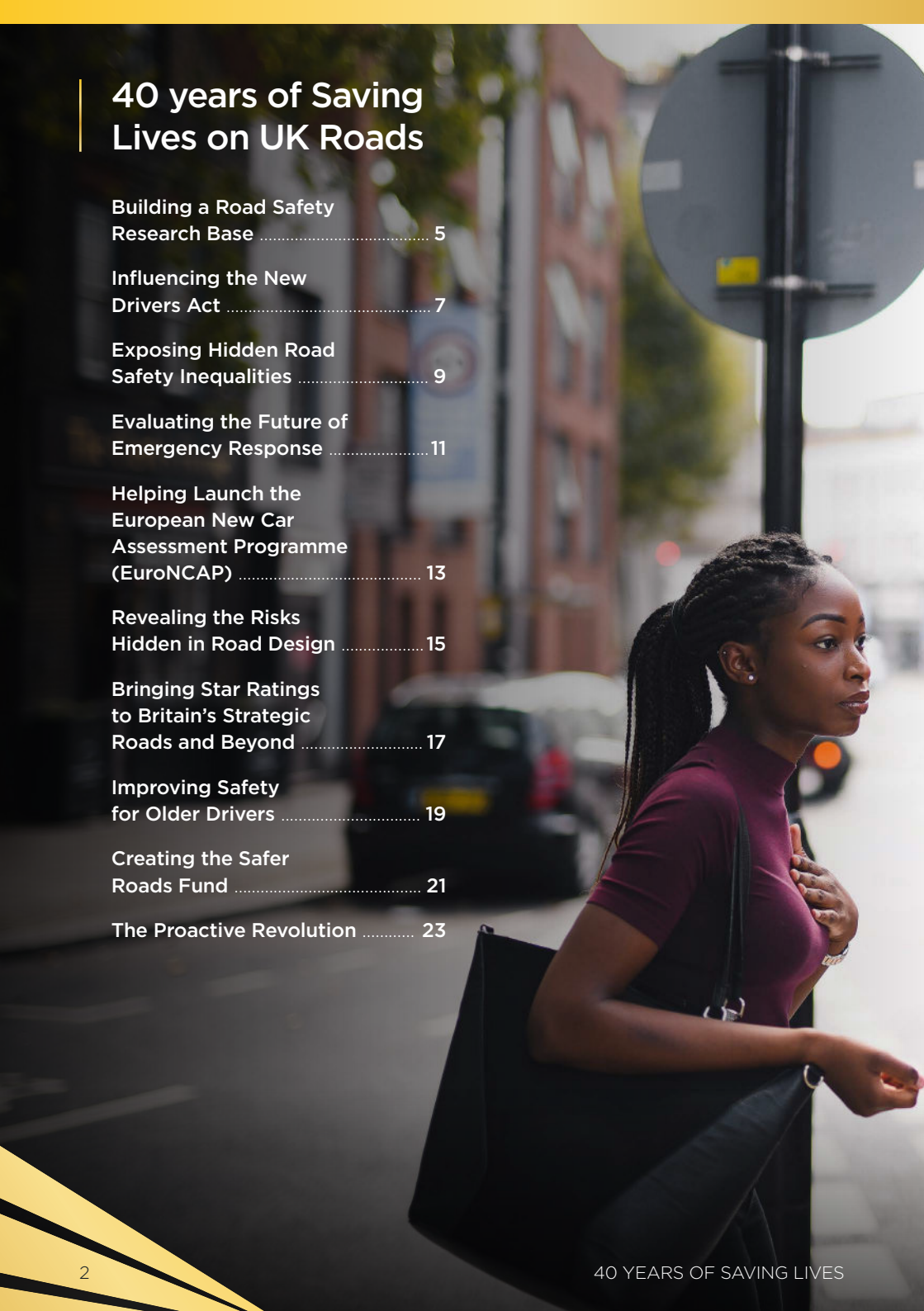
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Foreword

For 40 years, the Road Safety Foundation has been helping to save lives and prevent serious injuries on Britain's roads through evidence, innovation and influence.

This publication highlights just a small selection of the Foundation's achievements over four decades. From pioneering research and shaping legislation to improving vehicle safety, transforming the way we assess roads, and championing investment in safer infrastructure, the Foundation has consistently sought practical ways to make journeys safer for everyone.

What stands out is the diversity of this work and the lasting impact it has had, not only in the UK but increasingly around the world. As we celebrate this milestone, we can be proud of the role the Foundation has played in advancing road safety.

Yet the journey continues. Too many people are still killed or seriously injured on our roads, and significant challenges remain. At the same time, there are tremendous opportunities to achieve further reductions through safe roads, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe road use and improved post-crash response. Building on 40 years of impact, we look forward to bringing the same commitment to evidence, innovation and influence as we work towards a future with fewer deaths and serious injuries on our roads.



Dr Suzy Charman OBE

Executive Director, Road Safety Foundation


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1

Building a Road Safety Research Base

Inspired by the AAA Foundation in the United States, the Foundation was established in 1986 and helped create a trusted evidence base for road safety, connecting government, researchers and practitioners to turn data into action. With twenty influential reports launched before the millennium, topics ranging from pedestrian safety, red light running, young drivers, older drivers and the school run were tackled, many of which remain relevant today.



2

Influencing the New Drivers Act

The Foundation's research found that young drivers generally had the skills to drive safely but often chose not to use them, largely because risky driving was seen as impressive by their peers. To address this, the Foundation proposed that new drivers should have to "earn" the standard 12-point penalty threshold, similar to earning a no-claims discount in insurance. It was proposed that newly qualified drivers would face licence revocation at six penalty points during their first two years, creating a stronger deterrent to unsafe behaviour. The idea was taken forward through a Private Member's Bill introduced by Dr Michael Clark in 1994, becoming the Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995. It received Royal Assent on 28 June 1995 and came into force on 1 June 1997.


ADVANCE
WARNING
SUNDAY 25 MAY
ROAD
CLOSED
08:30 - 13:30

3

Exposing Hidden Road Safety Inequalities

In 1990, the Foundation published pioneering research on young pedestrian collisions, highlighting socio-economic and ethnic inequalities in road risk. Far ahead of its time, the report reflected many of the principles that now underpin the Safe System, recognising that pedestrian injury risk arises from the interaction between the road environment, traffic exposure and human behaviour, rather than individual fault alone. It called for data-led interventions including traffic calming and safer street design, alongside targeted measures to reduce the disproportionate risks faced by vulnerable communities.



4

Evaluating the Future of Emergency Response

At a time when helicopter ambulances were still a relatively new concept in the UK, the Foundation undertook one of the earliest detailed evaluations of the Kent Helicopter Ambulance Service in 1991. The study examined response times, patient outcomes, operational performance and value for money, helping to build the evidence base for advanced pre-hospital trauma care. More than three decades later, air ambulances are an integral part of the emergency response system, demonstrating the Foundation's long history of identifying and evaluating innovations that save lives.



5

Helping Launch the European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP)

In the late 90s, automobile clubs and others like the Foundation provided funding (in our case, modest) for crash tests and legitimacy to bring forward EuroNCAP despite significant resistance from motor manufacturers. The Foundation promoted the results through the AA magazine.

EuroNCAP transformed vehicle safety and has influenced safer car design worldwide, and now reaches across the globe through Global NCAP.



6

Revealing the Risks Hidden in Road Design

In the late 90s and early 2000s, the Foundation translated assessing new cars into assessing roads for their safety, and the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) was born through a collaboration between UK, Sweden and the Netherlands. Through annual Crash Risk Mapping, the Foundation helped show that roads themselves can be designed to prevent death and serious injury.



7

Bringing Star Ratings to Britain's Strategic Roads and Beyond

2010 saw the first pilot Star Rating survey of England's Strategic Road Network leading to Star Ratings being used as a performance target for Road Investment Strategy 1 (2015-2020). This changed how infrastructure safety is measured, monitored and reported upon. As the grandparent of iRAP (RSF established EuroRAP, which in turn established iRAP), we are proud to have played a role in this important global programme. iRAP Star Ratings have now been used on 2.4 million km of roads worldwide, across 140 countries and have influenced over $120 billion of road safety infrastructure investment. So far, iRAP is estimated to have prevented over 900,000 deaths and serious injuries across the globe.



8

Improving Safety for Older Drivers

Our first piece of work on Motoring and the Older Driver was in 1988, and several other papers followed. In 2014, the Older Drivers Task Force brought industry, government and experts together to support safe mobility for an ageing population and influence future strategy. Two reports later, some of the recommendations such as mandatory eyesight testing at licence renewal are being consulted upon as part of the Government's new Road Safety Strategy.



9

Creating the Safer Roads Fund

In 2016, the Road Safety Foundation's Crash Risk Mapping identified some of England's highest-risk and most investable roads, providing the evidence base for the creation of the Safer Roads Fund, one of the UK's largest targeted road safety investment programmes. The Department for Transport has since invested £200 million in safety improvements on more than 100 high-risk routes identified through RSF's analysis.

These schemes are expected to prevent over 2,700 deaths and serious injuries over 20 years, generating an estimated £1.25 billion in prevention benefits. With a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 5.3, the programme stands as a powerful demonstration of how data-led investment in safer road infrastructure can deliver substantial and lasting public benefit.



10

The Proactive Revolution

The Foundation has helped lead a revolution in road safety, championing proactive risk management long before it became standard practice. Through the development and promotion of iRAP route reviews, RSF has enabled road authorities to identify and address risks before crashes occur. Today, with hundreds of trained practitioners and funding mechanisms increasingly accepting iRAP-based evidence, this once pioneering concept is now firmly embedded in road safety practice.


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