



Hi, my name is Gill Starkie....

For many years I was the Road safety Officer for West Sussex County Council which is part of the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership. I worked as the Partnership Liaison Officer, working alongside my colleagues in the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service also supporting the valued work of the Community safety teams and various individuals who promote road safety in areas across Sussex and beyond.

My relationship with the **Drive IQ** team changed the way I view road safety delivery. I have spent many years delivering road safety in schools and colleges and I believe the information we passed on changed and saved lives, however, I am also aware that a one hours lesson, no matter how worthwhile, is frequently lost within weeks, days, even hours. (I am an ex teacher...so I know)

Drive IQ encourages self-learning, behavioural change and making choices. This will make a 'Long Term' difference.

Our aim within the Sussex Safer Roads Team has always been to bring down the horrific rates of death and injury on the road - to **Save Lives**.

Although I worked within communities for people of all ages, providing help and support and initiating projects for young and old, my great area of concern and an area that still ignites a great passion in me is with young drivers and newly qualified drivers.

The statistics (which I won't bore you with) are shocking, too many young people with the rest of their lives to look forward to, are tragically killed or receive life changing injuries which can be avoided, as a driver or as a passenger.

I saw too many tragedies, too many broken bodies and lives, I sat talking over numerous cups of tea with families affected by the loss of a loved one, hours of listening to members of our courageous emergency services who are affected every time they hold the hand of a young person....any person, as they drift away – too many precious lives lost and affected by death and serious injury on the roads.

As my son grew up and learnt to drive, like all young people he would go out with his friends and come home late. The rules were to text or call if he was going to be late! However, loss of signal, loss of memory (!!) meant this didn't always happen. I would frequently get up in the middle of the night to check that his shoes were by the front door, meaning he was safe and home...and in bed. I remember one occasion very well, I got up at 3am to check on the shoes....they weren't there. I

checked his room, he wasn't there....'Neurotic mother' I hear you say, maybe. However, take into account the business I was involved in day by day, and yes no wonder I was neurotic.

I couldn't get hold of him on his phone, so I just sat on the stairs planning my reaction when the Police arrived to tell me the worst..!

In that hour, I caught the 'tiniest' glimpse of how the parents of the victims must feel. The difference was that my son came home; he'd stayed at friends and said 'It was too late to call.'

It's never too later to call.



This is just one message that, through road safety education that can be passed on. Common messages – drink OR drive, don't text and drive, belt up, speed down...etc. etc., all common messages, but how about when you've got the key in your hand, a car full of mates, the music up high and you are FREE?

Throughout my time in Road Safety, I am happy to say that I recognise majority of young drivers are so keen to be safe drivers and are excited about their new found freedom. My commitment to them was to encourage them and pass on valuable information to assist them in being not just good drivers, but the very best, and to be proud to be the best.