New app teaches kids road safety

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

Furthermore, road safety is not currently part of the core curriculum in primary education. To help combat this, Dr Catherine Purcell from Cardiff University has released a virtual reality game to teach the next generation about road safety.

The first of its kind free game called ‘Virtual Road World’ aims to educate children aged seven to nine in road safety. The app immerses users in a virtual environment where 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. Whilst at University of South Wales Dr Purcell worked with students from the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Science to consult with 100 primary school aged children about the look and feel of the game, and collected in-game data from over 200 children aged between seven and nine from schools in Newport.

Dr Catherine Purcell said:

“The app has been developed not to replace but to support and enhance existing road safety educational practices. Through our research we know that educating children through the use of illustrated books or kerb side practices can be highly time and resource intensive. We have utilised technology to upskill children in their understanding of road safety.

“The more children get into the game, the more opportunity they have to understand the risks and make safer decisions about where and when to cross the road. I hope that the app will now prove a fun and successful way of supporting road safety education for children of this age.”

Dr Purcell was awarded a grant of £67,468 from the Road Safety Trust to research and produce the app.

Sally Lines, CEO of Road Safety Trust said:

“Virtual Road World goes beyond 3D video and games for entertainment, offering a fun and accessible way to help children choose safe road crossing sites in the real world. We believe it can make a difference to keeping children safer on the roads.”

To access the app, simply search for ‘Virtual Road World’ on the Apple Store.

For more details about the Road Safety Trust, please visit **www.roadsafetytrust.org.uk**

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Road Safety Trust

T. 07731462451
E. sarah.colombini@campaigncollective.org
W. https://www.roadsafetytrust.org.uk/

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