



The Big Blue Box Ltd

### ...I Might Not Need Any Advice!

#### The Background

Outside 'work' I also coach experienced motorcyclists toward achieving Advanced Motorcycle Riding qualifications. I volunteer as part of the Surrey Police BikeSafe team where my coaching skills support my love of motorcycling, passing on skills to others.

K attended a Surrey Police Bikesafe session, creating an impression of an experienced biker with a bit of an 'attitude', not un-typical of the solo, sports bike rider that BikeSafe targets to reduce accident statistics. Aggressive, risk taking, confident, somewhat arrogant, ignoring the law (speed limits), he is a highly intelligent City worker.

After the formal Bikesafe presentation K was allocated to me for a 'one to one' 'on the road' observed riding session. Although I had spoken to K at some length before the presentation begun, we now met for a formal briefing.

#### The Process

The initial briefing conversation defines the set up and objectives for the first part of the ride. It uses an informal but structured conversational style to **take** information from the rider, to **use** that information to structure the ride and then to **give** information to the rider about how the ride is managed.

K has been riding for around 15 years and has just upgraded his bike to a popular powerful sports bike. He rides daily, commuting to work across London, he knows his route to work very well. Despite riding such a tough journey every day he doesn't use his bike for any social or recreational purposes and has not ridden on country roads except to visit his family. He has had 4 'offs' which, being at low speed in town, he feels very little contributory error on his part (an unseen pedestrian walking into his filtering bike, he was rear-ended, he ran into the rear of a braking vehicle, and he was 'T-boned' by a vehicle which crossed a red light). He has had 4 bikes stolen in London.

*'I've got no particular expectations of today.... I'm fairly self-aware.... possibly speed is an issue...it's boring at the speed limit.'*

*'I'm so safe I might not need any advice!'*

I concluded my briefing and we set off, with K in front whilst I gave directions from behind. Within a few miles several issues were apparent that impacted upon K's safety and legality but also indicated potential areas for improvement. His years of commuting were clearly visible in his riding style. We pulled in for a roadside chat.

It is not unusual for the ride to the 'first stop' to be stressful for the observed rider, under scrutiny from a stranger possibly representing (Police) authority. Experience as an 'Observer' raises awareness of the typical rider's reaction when facing potentially critical feedback. Care must be taken in handling this moment to retain engagement and a preparedness to learn.

K was clearly uncomfortable at speed on the open road! His lack of knowledge of the meaning of road signs (and the highway code) caused uncertainty and poor decision making.

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I encouraged K to write down his own 'take-aways' from this discussion so that he would remember the points he had made.

We set off again with K leading, to practice some of the points we had listed. After a few miles, I arranged to take the lead and to give K a demonstration ride – 'reading the road' to take in information, to improve safety, to use position to improve vision and visibility, planning, to make changes smoothly and use speed legally to make safe progress.

We stopped for lunch and a further chat. After lunch, I again asked K to lead whilst I gave directions. K had set himself the challenge of actually pointing to the significant road signs, to practice and demonstrate his reading of the road.

### The Outcomes

His ride was transformed! From the morning session, his ride was now safer, smoother and his speed consistent, his road position varied appropriately across the width of the carriageway ('P1 to P3'), improving his vision, planning and visibility, he was 'reading the road'. He executed a lovely 2-vehicle overtake. He rode within the lower speed limits and responded up to the higher posted limit when conditions allowed, with good restraint when required.

After about 20 miles we stopped again. K was clearly grinning broadly behind his visor!

Restraining myself from immediately congratulating him on a stunning improvement, I asked him to explore and explain his decisions and planning.

This reflection allowed him to build the evidence for his achievement in his own words. K's thinking and justifications had changed, his attitude had changed, this experience had been very positive, he had achieved something unexpected yet 'within the rules'. He had enjoyed the conscious effort, the practice of new skills and the rewards it brought.

I congratulated him on a 'stunning improvement' and recounted the details as I again replayed the ride to him, this served to reinforce and support his own conclusions. He had ridden safely, smoothly, consistently and legally on unfamiliar roads. He had enjoyed the achievement.

To embed the learning I asked K to lead for the next few miles before I again took the lead for a 'demo ride' down narrow country lanes – showing there is yet more to explore!

In our final debrief we noted the wide-ranging, significant improvements that K had achieved and discussed his potential 'next steps'.

*'I'll definitely do the advanced training'.*

He had changed more than his riding skills:

*'I think I might even stick to the speed limit on my way home!'*