



**SWAP THE SCHOOL RUN
FOR A SCHOOL WALK**

**OUR SOLUTION FOR ACTIVE
CHILDREN, HEALTHY AIR
AND SAFE STREETS**

A LIVING STREETS REPORT



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FOREWORD

FOR OVER 20 YEARS, LIVING STREETS HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING TO ENABLE MORE CHILDREN TO WALK TO AND FROM SCHOOL. THROUGH OUR WORK WE HAVE WITNESSED FIRST HAND THE WONDERFUL BENEFITS THIS SIMPLE ACT CAN BRING. THE WALK TO AND FROM SCHOOL IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, CONNECT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY AND DEVELOP THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND ROAD SAFETY SKILLS. WHEN MORE FAMILIES WALK THIS EVERYDAY JOURNEY, THERE ARE FEWER CARS ON THE ROAD, HELPING TACKLE CONGESTION, AIR POLLUTION AND TRAFFIC DANGER OUTSIDE SCHOOL GATES.

And yet, rates of walking to school have been in decline for decades, contributing to an environment where 1 in 4 cars on the road during the morning peak are on the school run and over 2,000 schools and nurseries in England and Wales are within 150 metres of a road with illegal levels of air pollution. Over two-fifths of UK children in urban areas are concerned about air pollution near their school, according to polling conducted by YouGov (Sustrans & YouGov, 2018). High air pollution is becoming one of our biggest public health challenges, and it particularly negatively impacts children, as pollution can stunt the growth of their lungs.

We know that change can happen, to make the walk to and from school safe, healthy and easy for every child. This report sets out our vision for how government, local authorities and schools in England should work together to enable more children to walk. Dedicated action towards this goal has the potential to transform the walk to and from school, and we hope that this report will be a step forwards.

JOE IRVIN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LIVING STREETS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LIVING STREETS HAS A VISION FOR A SOCIETY WHERE EVERY CHILD WHO CAN, WALKS TO AND FROM SCHOOL ON SAFE, UNPOLLUTED AND ENJOYABLE STREETS. FROM BETTER HEALTH TO LEARNING INDEPENDENCE, SWITCHING THE SCHOOL RUN TO A SCHOOL WALK HAS A MYRIAD OF BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS AND CARERS.



Moreover, the walk to school is good for everyone, reducing the number of cars making short journeys on our streets, helping to improve air quality and reduce congestion. But we want to go further: as well as getting more children walking to school, we want the walk to school to be a healthy and enjoyable part of the day for everyone who takes part. We know that this change is possible, and this report sets out how key stakeholders can make it happen.

The UK government has an unprecedented opportunity to transform the walk to school for every child. The government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, published in 2017, contains a new target for 55% of primary school children in England walking to school by 2025.

KEY FINDINGS

- Rates of walking to school have been in a steady decline for decades, with negative consequences for mental and physical wellbeing, children's independence and road safety skills, traffic speed and volume, parking near schools, congestion and air pollution;
- Distance, time and safety are the most significant barriers to children walking to school, as many parents do not feel confident allowing their children to walk alone but also report not having time to walk with them;
- Overcoming these barriers to walking will require national government, local authorities and schools to work together to support and enable more children to walk, and to make the walking environment more welcoming;

Following years of decline, we want this goal to galvanise action by key stakeholders across all levels of government and society. In England, current rates of walking to school are at 53% (National Travel Survey, 2018), so exceeding this target is well within reach. Schools, local and national government must work together to transform the walk to school for every child. This report presents evidence and analysis on the barriers to children walking to school, and makes a series of recommendations for how these key stakeholders can support and enable families to swap the school run for a school walk.

- There are a range of specific steps that can and should be taken by all these stakeholders to transform the walk to school for every child in England.

Each school setting has its own challenges and arrangements for supporting children to travel actively. This package of measures provides a range of interventions to ensure that children across England can fully benefit from walking to school. We want to see national government provide the leadership and coordination necessary for other stakeholders to galvanise action towards this goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Schools should actively develop and fully implement a School Travel Plan, which includes an assessment of the surrounding area, community consultation and promotes behaviour change through active travel initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Schools should use their PE and Sport Premium to support more children to walk to school.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Schools should take advantage of available accreditation and behaviour change schemes to support more children to walk and recognise and share.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Schools should proactively partner with local authorities and parents and carers, working together to support more children to walk to school.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Schools should mainstream walking into the school day by identifying opportunities for children to experience their local area on foot, to normalise walking for short trips and learn road safety skills interactively within the school day, for example as part of geography lessons.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Schools should enable and support their staff to walk all or part of the way to work.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Local authorities should adopt a 'children first' approach to planning and street design, prioritising safe and enjoyable streets for children in all existing and new developments.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Local authorities should make 20mph the default speed limit for all streets where people live, work, shop and play, and consider other road safety enhancements to provide the maximum safety benefit for children.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Local authorities should use their powers to create Controlled Parking Zones around schools, to prohibit parking on streets near schools.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Local authorities should support calls for street closures through pilot projects and roll-out schemes on a permanent basis where these are proved to be effective.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Local authorities should work with schools to deliver evidence based and effective behaviour change initiatives and accreditation schemes, as well as coordinate strategic planning for active school travel.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Local authorities should collect and monitor robust data on rates of walking to school in their area.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

The Department for Transport should bring forward a long term revenue and capital funding pipeline, to support physical infrastructure improvements and behaviour change initiatives that will support and enable more children to walk to school.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Ofsted and the Department for Education should publish the healthy schools rating for schools in England and the review into obesity, healthy eating, and physical activity in schools as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

The Department for Education should require schools to develop a School Travel Plan that prioritises active travel, and provide the resources and expertise to enable them to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

The Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government should ensure that the revised National Planning Policy Framework continues to require schools and other key services to be located within walkable distance of communities, and to be accessible by safe and high quality walking, cycling and public transport facilities.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

The Department for Education should review the school Admissions Code and the School Transport Guidance to investigate the inclusion of active travel in catchment area and transportation decision making and consider giving families the right to send their children to the same school.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

In the next review of signage, the Department for Transport should bring forward proposals to create new signage and clarify enforcement measures for local authorities to implement school street closures.

RECOMMENDATION 19:

The Department for Transport should bring forward legislation to make 20mph the default speed limit in areas where people live, work, shop, and play.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

The Department for Transport should take a lead on cross departmental awareness raising schemes, supporting families and schools to understand the myriad benefits of walking to school.

RECOMMENDATION 21:

The Department for Education should improve awareness, oversight and support to enable more schools to spend a proportion of their PE and Sport Premium on active travel.

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1.0

INTRODUCTION

FOR OLDER GENERATIONS, MEMORIES OF THE WALK TO SCHOOL ARE FILLED WITH PLAYING WITH FRIENDS, SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY AND CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY. A GENERATION AGO 70% OF US WALKED TO SCHOOL; BUT JUST HALF OF TODAY'S CHILDREN DO.

Our evidence based recommendations show how local authorities and national government can work together, with schools and families, to bring forward the full range of measures available to support and enable more children to walk to school. But, we want to go further than numbers. Living Streets has a vision for a society where every child who can, walks to and from school on safe, unpolluted and enjoyable streets.

The focus of this report is on primary school children. The reason for this is that building healthy habits starts at a young age (Chief Medical Officers, 2011): if we can enable and support primary school children to walk to school, by providing a safe, pleasant, and unpolluted route, they are more likely to continue walking beyond primary school. The transition to secondary school and beyond can also be made smoother as children's independence and confidence grows by walking regularly from a young age.

Furthermore, more primary school aged children are driven to school than secondary school aged (38% and 24% respectively, according to National Travel Survey data), meaning swapping the school run for a school walk for this age group has the potential for the most significant benefit. In addition, the focus of the report is only on England. Transport in the UK is governed at a devolved level, meaning that the challenges faced for pupils walking to school, as well as the solutions, will sometimes differ for the devolved nations.

For the purposes of this report, the 'walk to school' is shorthand for the walk to – and from – school. Furthermore, we know that children travel to school with a variety of different guardians, including parents, grandparents, childminders and friends. For this report, we will use the term 'parents and carers' to refer to any adult accompanying a child to school.

1.1

BENEFITS OF THE WALK TO AND FROM SCHOOL

1.1.1 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Schools can support the mental health of their pupils, and achieve their objectives around physical and mental wellbeing, by encouraging and enabling children to walk to school. There is good evidence to show that the walk to school has a positive and independent impact on children's physical activity, health, and fitness (see for example Mackett, Lucas, Paskins, & Turbin, 2005; Voss & Sandercock, 2010; Southward, Page, Wheeler, & Cooper, 2012). Walking has been shown to reduce the likelihood of developing conditions including high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart and lung problems (Atkins, 2018).

This is important because the Chief Medical Officers of the UK recommend that children should do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every day (Chief Medical Officers, 2011). However, only 1 in 5 boys (21%) and 1 in 6 girls (16%) aged 5-15 in England are meeting recommended levels of physical activity (British Heart Foundation, 2015). This has contributed to a childhood obesity crisis where almost 30% of children in England are overweight or obese (ONS, 2018).

Even a short walk to school contributes towards physical activity targets for both children and adults. Furthermore, supporting children to be more physically active from a young age increases the likelihood that they will continue to be physically active as adolescents and adults (Chief Medical Officers, 2011).

In addition to physical health, children's (and parent's) mental wellbeing can be supported by regularly walking to school. The mental health benefits of regular walking are widely accepted in the scientific community, by mental health practitioners and beyond (see for example Barton & Pretty, 2010; Roe & Aspinall, 2011; Cohen-Cline, Heesch, Burton, & Brown, 2011; and Turkheimer, & Duncan, 2015). This finding is supported in surveys conducted on behalf of Living Streets. Over half of parents interviewed in 2016 said that their child's mood always or sometimes improves after walking to school and almost 40% said that helping parents feel happier is one of the key benefits of walking (OnePoll, 2016).

In contrast, in an earlier survey an equal number of parents (32%) found driving the school run as stressful as their job (YouGov, 2014). Given the worrying statistic that 15% of children aged 10-15 demonstrate symptoms of mental ill-health (ONS, 2018), the potential mental health benefits of encouraging more children to walk to school from a young age are significant. Young people's mental health is currently a high priority for schools in the UK (Living Streets, forthcoming).

> CHILDREN'S HEALTH TODAY

80% BOYS
72% GIRLS
ARE PHYSICALLY
INACTIVE

30%
CHILDREN ARE
OVERWEIGHT
OR OBESE

15%
OF CHILDREN
DEMONSTRATE
SYMPTOMS OF
MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

1.1.2 ARRIVE TO SCHOOL, READY TO LEARN

Children's behaviour and concentration can improve as a result of regular walking, supporting schools to achieve the best learning outcomes. According to Public Health England, higher attaining schools have greater levels of participation in physical activity and sports programmes than lower performing schools (Brooks, 2014). Almost half of parents surveyed for Living Streets said that they see an improvement in their child's behaviour after they have been physically active (OnePoll, 2016). The behavioural effects of physical exercise seem to be particularly pronounced for children with additional needs – one study found that a 20 minute walk improved concentration for children with ADHD (Faber Taylor & Kuo, 2009).

1.1.3 ROAD SAFETY SKILLS AND IMPROVED SOCIAL SKILLS

The walk to school with parents and carers also provides an opportunity for children to learn road safety skills in an interactive and safe environment. Evidence shows that children who walk to school have greater spatial awareness and understanding of the risks posed by traffic than children who are driven (Mackett, et al., 2007). In addition without walking to primary school, some children find the transition to secondary school challenging and intimidating (Living Streets, 2008), when they are more likely to walk to catch the bus alone or with friends,

rather than travel with their parents and carers. Children who have walked to school from a young age are likely to feel less intimidated and more prepared with the skills required to transition to greater independent travel.

Children who regularly walk to school also feel more connected to their communities: Living Streets has previously reported that children who walk to school have a wider social network and a better understanding of their local area (Living Streets, 2008), a finding which is reinforced by studies showing children who walk to school have a greater level of social development (Tolley, 2003; Naef, 2017).

1.1.4 SAFER STREETS FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Supporting more families to walk and fewer to take the car helps reduce congestion and reduce road danger for everyone using the surrounding streets. Safety and parking chaos outside the school gates is one of the biggest concerns for families when walking to school. What's more, research underway suggests that many UK schools struggle to maintain good relationships with their neighbours and communities, who feel frustrated by the school traffic on their doorstep (Living Streets, forthcoming).

> WALKING TO SCHOOL



1.1.5 IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

Reducing traffic immediately outside the school gates will have a positive effect on a school's air quality, but encouraging people to walk to school will improve air quality for a much wider area. Over 2,000 schools and nurseries in England and Wales are within 150 metres of a road breaching the legal levels of NO₂ pollution (Dowler & Howard, 2017). According to the government's own evidence, road transport is responsible for some 80% of NO_x concentrations at roadside, with diesel vehicles the largest source in these local areas of greatest concern (DEFRA, 2017). But even electric cars, while producing no emissions at tailpipe, still produce fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), due to the wear and tear of brakes and tyres. Pollution is harmful to all of our health, and contributes to 40,000 early deaths in the UK every year. It is particularly dangerous for children, older people, and those with existing medical conditions. Relative to their size, children breathe more air than adults, and consequently inhale more harmful pollutants. Furthermore, being in the car as opposed to walking by the road offers no protection from dangerous air pollution, but denies children the opportunity for physical activity. Among children, air pollution has been associated with premature births, stunted lung development, and increased risks for long term conditions such as asthma (British Lung Foundation, 2016).

1.6 REDUCED PEAK TIME CONGESTION

Reducing the numbers of cars on the school run (at a time of peak congestion) can help everybody get to their destination faster, and make streets safer, less polluted, and more enjoyable. In England, as many as 1 in 4 cars on the road at morning peak time are taking children to school (perscom, National Travel Survey, 2018) adding significantly to traffic and congestion. In the UK, the direct and indirect costs of congestion for all drivers amounted to more than £37.7 billion in 2017, an average of £1,168 per driver (INRIX, 2017). This includes the direct costs to drivers of congestion, namely extra fuel and wasted time, as well as indirect costs to individuals, primarily higher business costs passed on as higher prices. This figure does not include broader indirect costs, such as additional costs to the NHS as a result of pollution, so the total cost of congestion in the UK will be even higher.

1.2

POLICY BACKGROUND

In 2017, the UK government published the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). The CWIS sets a target to increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 who usually walk to school to 55%. This would represent approximately 75,000 additional children regularly walking to school, based on current walk to school rates and primary school enrollment figures (Department for Education, 2017). The CWIS, and the momentum it has generated through the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, provides an opportunity for central government and local authorities to put active travel back on the map.

In England, statutory guidance set by the Department for Education requires local authorities to provide transport to school for children under age 8 who live more than 2 miles from school and for children over age 8 who live more than 3 miles from school. However, the majority of primary school children travel less than 2 miles to school (NTS0614, National Travel Survey, DfT, 2018) and are therefore not eligible for transport provided by the local authority. The guidance also requires local authorities to conduct an audit of sustainable travel options, to work with schools to promote sustainable travel to school, and to publish a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

The principle that key facilities such as schools should be within walking distance is well established in current national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recommends that: ‘...Where practical, particularly within large-scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.’ Unlike the Department for Education, the NPPF does not specify what is considered a ‘walking distance’ and makes no provision for the quality or safety of the walking route. Nevertheless, it is worrying that at the time of writing (Spring 2018) the government has proposed to remove this recommendation from the NPPF.

Childhood obesity has, in recent years, come into strong focus in public perception and government policy. In 2016, the government’s Childhood Obesity Plan set out plans to ‘significantly reduce’ England’s childhood obesity within the next decade. This included actions for schools and Ofsted to promote and increase physical activity, including active travel. The plan also set out plans to create a Soft Drinks Sugar Levy (dubbed ‘Sugar Tax’), which amounts to £10 per child, the proceeds of which are reserved for schools to spend on physical activity and active travel. This represents an opportunity for schools to make a significant difference to their pupils’ journeys to school and levels of physical activity.

2.0

TRENDS IN ENGLAND

IN THE UK, RATES OF WALKING TO SCHOOL HAVE BEEN IN A STEADY DECLINE FOR DECADES. IN ENGLAND, 53% OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN USUALLY WALKED TO SCHOOL IN 2016 (NTS0615, NATIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY, 2018), A SLIGHT UPTICK COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS, BUT AN ANOMALY IN THE OTHERWISE LONG-TERM DOWNWARD TREND.

While rates of walking to school have gone down, rates of travelling to school by car and van have risen while other modes of travel, such as cycling or taking public transport have remained constant. This suggests that journeys that previously would have been walked have instead been replaced by driving, rather than other active and/or sustainable modes of travel.

Very few English regions or cities collect data on the walk to school in their area, making it difficult to draw any sub-national comparisons. This also makes it challenging to monitor areas' progress against the CWIS target, and to identify regions and cities leading the way on walking to school. The National Travel Survey releases data at sub-national level, but the only city that has separate published data is London. The other regions with published data are more broad, covering both rural and urban areas. That said, according to the most recently available data (2013/14), children in London make fewer walking trips to school than anywhere else in England (NTS9908, National Travel Survey, 2018). The area with the highest percentage of walking trips to school is the North East, at 50%. Here it is worth noting the difference between walking trips and walking stages: a walking trip is one where walking represents the main mode of travel, whereas a walking stage is where somebody walks as part of a longer journey, for example to the bus stop. This could explain the comparatively low rates of walking to school in London, where public transport is free for children.

National Travel Survey data shows a clear discrepancy between rates of walking to school for children in urban and rural areas. 47% of all children aged 5-16 in urban cities and towns walk to school, compared to just 13% in rural villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings (NTS9908, National Travel Survey, 2018). This effect may be partly attributable to distance: the average distance to school for primary school children in urban cities and towns is 1.6 miles, compared to 3.4 miles for those in rural villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. In addition, schools in rural areas may be less likely to be interfaced with safe walking routes; or vice versa, the density provided in urban settings may mean that local walking networks are safer than rural areas, encouraging more children to walk to school.

In England, 78% of primary school children who live less than a mile from their school sometimes walk to school, compared to just 26% of those who live 1–2 miles away (NTS0614, National Travel Survey, 2018). In addition, the average distance between home and school for primary school aged children has steadily increased: in 2002/03, the average distance travelled to school by primary school children was 1.5 miles, compared to 1.7 miles now (NTS0615, National Travel Survey, 2018).



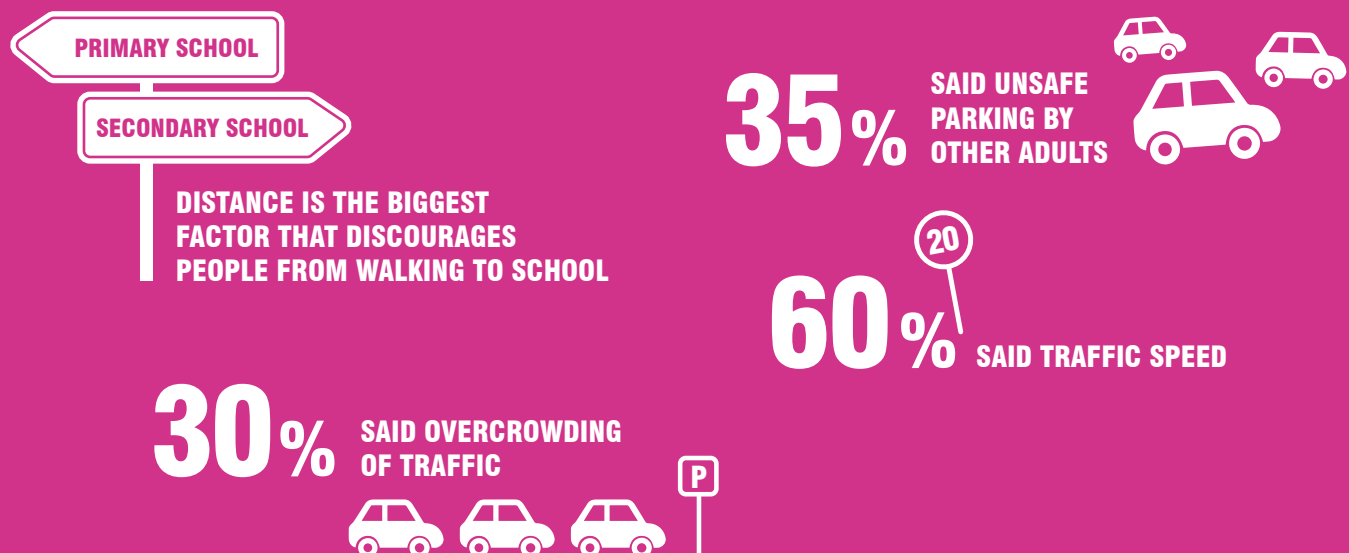
3.0

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

FACTORS CAUSING THE DECLINE IN RATES OF WALKING TO SCHOOL DO NOT EXIST IN ISOLATION. IN ORDER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST WORK TOGETHER WITH SCHOOLS, PARENTS AND CARERS, TO ENABLE AND SUPPORT CHILDREN TO WALK TO SCHOOL AND DEVELOP HEALTHY HABITS FOR LIFE.

The first step is to identify the barriers to children walking and the conditions which encourage car use, as well as how stakeholders can create a walking environment that supports and enables walking to school.

> PARENTS' BIGGEST WORRIES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL GATES WHEN WALKING



3.1

DISTANCE

Increasing home to school distance can partly explain falling rates of walking to school. Primary school children and their parents and carers say that the distance between home and school is the biggest factor affecting their propensity to walk to school (Arup, 2017). This assertion is backed up in a number of studies (see for example Page, Cooper, Griew, & Jago, 2010; Napier, Brown, Werner, & Gallimore, 2011; Larsen, Buliung, & Faulkner, 2015). Indeed one study calculated that the probability of children walking to school increased by 1% with every 2.37% decrease in the distance commuted (Ermagun & Samimi, 2015). And in a survey for Living Streets, 'the school [is] located far from home' was the most common reason for not walking to school, with 50% of parents who drive their child to school giving this as the reason for not walking (OnePoll, 2016).

There are a few factors contributing to increased distance between home and school, but the most significant is likely to be the fact that schools are getting larger and serving a wider catchment area. In England children have, on average, 0.2 miles further to travel to school than they did in 2002/03 (NTS0615, National Travel Survey, 2018). This trend has continued, despite the recommendation in the National Planning Policy Framework that schools should be within walking distance from new communities. Ensuring that schools are close to where people live typically relates to housing and community density, but also relates to the quality of walking routes available.

Even where schools and homes are geographically close, Living Streets' experience is that people will not choose to walk unless walking routes feel safe and attractive. Investment in walking networks for safer routes to school is also supported by the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. It may also be influenced by other government and local authority policies.

In England, parental freedom to choose which schools they apply to send their child to means that some children will not be attending their nearest primary school. But, even if they apply to attend a school further away, capacity and admissions criteria mean these applications will not necessarily be accepted. Through the Schools Census, the Department for Education collects statistics on the number of children who do not attend their nearest school, but this data is not publicly released. There is disagreement in the literature about the extent to which freedom to apply to any schools actually results in significant numbers of children attending schools other than their closest one. For example, Van Ritsell et al (2013) argue that school choice does play a significant role in reducing rates of walking to school, while Burgess et al (2011) concluded that in reality families of primary school aged children typically do not have a particularly free choice of school because of constraints such as a shortage of places or being priced out of a neighbourhood by house prices.

3.1.1 TIME

Time and distance are strongly related as factors contributing to falling rates of walking to school. Not only have schools, on average, moved further away from where people live, but parents report having insufficient time to walk their child to school. In a Living Streets survey a lack of time is one of the most commonly cited factors for not walking to school, second only to the school being located too far from home (OnePoll, 2016).

A significant factor contributing to this trend is the increasing proportion of families without a stay at home parent, and especially increasing numbers of mothers who work. Parents are increasingly reluctant to allow children to walk alone (see 3.5 Independent Mobility), and have limited time to accompany children on the walk. In a poll commissioned by Living Streets, nearly 4 in 10 parents said they prefer to drive their child to school because it was on their way to work (YouGov, 2015). Compounding this is the number of families who have children attending more than one school; this was cited as a barrier to walking to school by 16% of parents taking part in the survey. Particularly where schools are located far apart, this can add to the length of the school run such that it discourages walking.

One initiative that has been shown to support families to walk at least part of the way to school is the 'Park & Stride', which can confer significant benefits for families and children who live far from school or are short on time. We know that even a short walk can support good health and wellbeing, and reduce dangerous overcrowding at the school gates. Living Streets has been recommending a Park & Stride scheme to schools and families for years, and there is academic evidence that the schemes are a good way to tackle common barriers to walking to school (D'Haese, De Meester, De Bourdeaudhuij, Deforche, & Cardon, 2011).

Walking buses have also been employed by communities to share the responsibility of accompanying young children to school. They are convenient and enjoyable for many children, however they require a moderate level of organisation and tend not to last if the lead organiser is unwell or if their child leaves the school (Naef, 2017). This could be prevented to some extent by schools actively supporting the bus, providing staff as volunteers for example. Walking buses can be beneficial for supporting more children to walk and showing them that the walk to school can be fun and sociable, but they are not a substitute for designing our communities to be safe, enjoyable, and convenient for walking.

3.2

LAND USE MIX

Children are more likely to walk to school when there is a diverse land-use mix (Arup, 2017). Their propensity to walk is affected by their enjoyment of an area and influenced by their proximity, for example, to shops, school and friends (TfL, 2016). This underlines the importance of land use planning in creating mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity (paragraphs 69-78, NPPF, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2012). As stated within paragraph 69 of the NPPF, planning policies and decisions can and should aim to achieve places which promote:

- opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity;
- safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

This expands upon and highlights the linkages between active travel, safety and planning that ensures diverse land use mix. As well as creating vibrant and enjoyable neighbourhoods, planning for mixed-use improves actual and perceived safety of an area and encourages active travel. The revised NPPF must ensure this continues to be prioritised, and local authorities must do more to prioritise walking networks between schools, homes, shops, and community services, and connectivity of streets and active travel routes (Giles-Corti, et al., 2011).

3.3

STREET DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE

Poorly designed or maintained pedestrian infrastructure acts as a barrier to children and their families walking to school. Conversely, a pleasant walking environment can make walking a more attractive choice for getting to school.

3.3.1 SAFETY

Children and families are disproportionately affected by unsafe or inaccessible street design. Common issues include high traffic speeds, dangerous parking, inadequate crossings, and a generally hostile street environment for people walking. Living Streets is clear that children on the walk to school should never be put off walking because of road danger. Traffic calming and walking infrastructure improvements increase both absolute safety and perceived safety for children and families.

For parents in particular, the perception that a street is unsafe is a significant deterrent from walking to school, as evidenced by a variety of UK and international studies. For example, one study said that addressing parental safety fears increased the propensity to commute actively to school by 60% (Ermagun & Samimi, 2015). Parental safety concerns can be addressed by empowering children with road safety skills. But, good pedestrian infrastructure including traffic calming measures are significantly more effective at reducing child pedestrian injuries (Liabo, Lucas, & Roberts, 2003), and will create a more sustainable and long lasting change.

There is a package of road safety enhancements that can improve the local walking environment and in doing so, have a positive impact on rates of walking to school. There is strong evidence that tackling traffic volume and speed around schools are effective at improving the walk to school: in New South Wales, Australia, a comprehensive school street safety programme focused on reducing traffic speeds and volumes, and showed a 46% reduction in school-aged pedestrian casualties (NSW Audit Office, 2010). This specifically addresses the concerns of many families about speeding traffic, which, according to a survey commissioned by Living Streets, is cited by 60% of parents as a concern on their walk to school (OnePoll, 2016).

But, speed limits and compliance alone are not sufficient to create a safe environment for walking to school. In addition to 20mph speed limits, streets connecting schools, home, and community services must have sufficient traffic calming measures. Controlled crossings, located at key desire lines, have been identified as an essential improvement to encourage more walking to school. Controlled crossings improve actual safety, in terms of child pedestrian casualties, and significantly improve parental perceptions of safety (Evers, Boles, Johnson-Shelton, Schlossberg, & Richey, 2014). These factors combined mean that children with a high number and quality of crossings en route are more likely to walk to school (Yu & Zhu, 2016).

Another safety improvement to streets near schools, which is popular with parents and has significant benefits for walking to school, is banning cars from parking, particularly in dangerous locations such as on the pavement and near crossings. In the UK, 14% of all pedestrian casualties occurred near parked cars (RAS50004, Department for Transport, 2017). But for children, this danger is even greater, as traffic 'looming' limits whether they can see oncoming traffic, and vice versa (due to their smaller size) (Wann, Poulter, & Purcell, 2011). A survey commissioned by Living Streets has shown that 35% of parents say dangerous parking outside the gates is one of their biggest concerns about walking to school (OnePoll, 2016). Particularly hazardous is parking on the pavement, which forces families walking, especially wheelchair users and families with buggies, to use the road and walk amongst traffic. Over 40% of parents said enforcing a ban on parking near the school would make them more likely to walk to school (YouGov, 2014).

A final initiative that tackles perceived and road danger outside the school gates is school street closures, which have been successfully rolled out in Edinburgh, Solihull, and the London Boroughs of Hackney and Camden. Edinburgh has the most extensive school street closure scheme in the UK and has seen walking rates increase by 3% with a 6% drop in car use (Transport and Environment Committee, 2016). Potentially more significantly, traffic outside the school gates is eliminated, retaining streets for people, creating space where children can play safely and tackling school gate congestion and parking chaos.

3.3.2 QUALITY

In addition to safe walking routes, Living Streets believes that all children and families should have a pleasant, unpolluted, high quality and enjoyable walk to school. Well maintained walking infrastructure, mixed-use environments, and access to green space are all vital for ensuring the children's experiences of the walk to school are not only safe, but also enjoyable and unpolluted (Arup, 2017). There is a wealth of evidence that children are more likely to play and spend time outdoors when the built environment prioritises their needs, rather than cars (Timperio, Crawford, Telford, & Salmon, 2004). In addition, children should not have to walk alongside polluted roads to travel to school, even if those roads are safe from traffic danger. This fun and enjoyment of the outdoors translates into a greater propensity to walk to school (Romero, 2015).

3.4

INDEPENDENT MOBILITY

Walking with parents from a young age is one of the best ways to develop road safety skills and confidence navigating streets. The choice of when a child can walk alone should not be restricted by unsafe walking routes, fast or heavy traffic.

Independent mobility, defined as the freedom for children to venture outside the home alone or only with other children, is a significant contributor to rates of walking to school, particularly for older primary school children. Children today have lower levels of independent mobility than in previous generations, demonstrated by evidence that the number of children who walk to school unaccompanied by an adult has fallen faster than overall levels of walking to school (NTS0616, National Travel Survey, 2018). A previous Living Streets report found that children who are unable regularly to practice road safety and navigation will struggle to develop skills, experience and independence in older childhood and adolescence (Living Streets, 2008).

The most significant factor that has contributed to falling levels of independent mobility is perceived road danger - 60% of parents and carers who walk their child to school say that traffic danger is the main reason for accompanying them (NTS0617, National Travel Survey, 2018). The proportion of children aged 7-10 who are never allowed to cross roads alone has increased from 42% in 2002, to 62% today (NTS0618, National Travel Survey, 2018). Policy should be focused on 'removing danger from the road environment, not the removal of children from danger' (Shaw, Bicket, Elliott, Fagan-Watson, Mocca, & Hillman, 2015). This further strengthens the case for designing streets with children's safety and enjoyment in mind.

3.4.1 'STRANGER DANGER'

No child should be afraid to walk to school because of perceived danger from others. But another important parental concern, influencing the decline in independent mobility is 'stranger danger'. It is frequently cited by parents as a reason they do not allow their child to walk to school. A survey for Living Streets revealed, for example, that 23% of parents are so worried by stranger danger that they either accompany or drive their child to school (YouGov, 2015). The good news is that the percentage of parents reporting 'stranger danger' as a reason for accompanying children has fallen to 23% from 46% in 2003 (NTS0616, National Travel Survey, 2018). An in-depth report on independent mobility by the Policy Studies Institute has theorised that 'stranger danger' is linked to levels of (dis)trust between adults (Shaw, Bicket, Elliott, Fagan-Watson, Mocca, & Hillman, 2015).

Elements of public realm design, such as ensuring functioning street lights and clear sightlines along a route, can help to reduce this fear, and these should be prioritised in spending and design decisions. But, tackling perceptions of 'stranger danger' crosses cultural, as well as practical, policy areas. By encouraging and enabling more children to walk to school, perceptions of stranger danger are likely to adapt and more closely reflect the actual low level of risk, as walking and independent mobility becomes normalised. Moreover, enabling people to walk through public realm design and initiative delivery supports community cohesion and safety, helping tackle the fear of and actual threat from stranger danger.



3.5

CULTURE

To encourage more children to walk to school and create healthy habits for life, families and schools have a key role to play in normalising walking as a mode of travel, and ensuring that children are excited to get out and about walking.

There is strong evidence that normalising walking as a mode of travel can significantly increase children's propensity to walk (Yu & Zhu, 2016). Many of the factors discussed earlier in this section contribute to reducing the perception of walking as the normal mode of travel for everyday journeys, such as busy roads that make it feel unsafe or unattractive to walk. This partly explains the significant impact that parental physical activity has on children's active travel (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012) – seeing parents and carers engaging in everyday walking normalises healthy habits from a young age. It is also possible that walking short journeys not being normalised results in certain barriers being considered as more of a problem than the evidence demonstrates – for example, concerns about stranger danger may be inflated as walking is not normalised (Foster, Villanueva, Wood, Christian, & Giles-Corti, 2014).

There is strong evidence that encouraging children to walk to school from a young age increases their propensity for active travel during adolescence and adulthood (Chief Medical Officers, 2011). This underlines the significance of the drop in the proportion of children walking to school – not only does this have consequences for health, the environment, and communities, but can also reduce the likelihood of walking in wider and later life.

4.0

WHAT CAN KEY STAKEHOLDERS DO TO ENCOURAGE MODESHIFT TOWARDS WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL IN ENGLAND?

FACTORS CAUSING THE DECLINE IN RATES OF WALKING TO SCHOOL DO NOT EXIST IN ISOLATION. IN ORDER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST WORK TOGETHER WITH SCHOOLS, PARENTS AND CARERS, TO ENABLE AND SUPPORT CHILDREN TO WALK TO SCHOOL AND DEVELOP HEALTHY HABITS FOR LIFE.

The first step is to identify the barriers to children walking and the conditions which encourage car use, as well as how stakeholders can create a walking environment that supports and enables walking to school.



THIS INCLUDES POLICY CHANGE AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL, STREET DESIGN AND DELIVERING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INITIATIVES



SCHOOLS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENT NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT AND ENABLE MORE CHILDREN TO WALK TO SCHOOL

4.1

SCHOOLS



Most schools wish to support active and healthy journeys to school. Walking has been shown to support children's improved behaviour and mental health, helping to create a conducive and effective learning environment. And by enabling children to walk, schools can also help to reduce the number of parents parking at the school gates and in nearby streets, thus helping reduce the negative impacts on local residents.

Schools have instruments at their disposal to support walking to school, and an important step is to create a School Travel Plan (STP) which prioritises active travel. STPs help schools to develop and implement activities to support children to walk to school, and demonstrate a commitment to children's health and to improving the environment. However, Living Streets interviews with headteachers have shown that many schools do not develop or regularly update their STP (Living Streets, forthcoming). (Note: STPs are developed at school level. They are separate to, but should work in conjunction with, Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies, which are developed by local authorities).

An important part of creating an STP is to identify barriers to walking to school in the local area. For example, Living Streets undertakes 'School Route Audits', assessing streets from the perspective of school children, parents with buggies and people with limited mobility. This helps to build evidence about the condition of pathways and the roads, safety issues and convenience, which can be used to propose ways to improve the walking environment and make walking a more attractive option. It is vital that any school seeking to embed active travel and the walk to school into their culture brings children and families along on the journey, so that the whole school community has had the opportunity to be involved. Schools must also ensure they engage with pupils with additional and/or access needs, so that any initiatives undertaken meet the needs of the whole school community.



RECOMMENDATION 1:

Schools should actively develop and fully implement a School Travel Plan, which includes an assessment of the surrounding area, community consultation and promotes behaviour change through active travel initiatives.

School budgets are under pressure and it can be hard to find the resource to support active travel schemes. The PE and Sport Premium, amounting to at least £10 per child per year, can be spent on a range of physical activity interventions, including active travel. (Schools with 16 or fewer eligible pupils receive £1,000 per pupil. Schools with 17 or more eligible pupils receive £16,000 and an additional payment of £10 per pupil.) In the current climate of high demands on teacher time, investing in the walk to school allows schools to reap the rewards of physical activity without impeding on lesson time.

There are a range of existing active travel schemes that have been proven to effectively increase rates of walking to school, such as Living Streets' WOW - the year-round walk to school challenge, which increases walking by 23% in five weeks and costs just £2 per child. Schools can benefit across the board by investing in active travel, from reducing parking issues and conflict with neighbours, to supporting pupils' mental health and education outcomes. Furthermore, funding initiatives that promote and support walking to school are accessible to the widest range of children, as they do not need special equipment.

> RECOMMENDATION 2:

Schools should use their PE and Sport Premium to support more children to walk to school.

Sharing knowledge and best practice with other schools through accreditation schemes is one of the best ways to ensure that schools across the UK can learn from outstanding examples. In addition, there are a variety of behaviour change programmes that support and incentivise more children to walk. Initiatives such as Living Streets' WOW – the year-round walk to school challenge, Healthy Schools, Modeshift STARS/TfL STARS and Eco Schools create networks of schools working to improve active travel. Some provide centralised support

for creating School Travel Plans and conducting active travel activities. These initiatives also provide a way for schools to track their progress on improving active travel to school, and to demonstrate their commitment to physical activity to Ofsted. Living Streets interviews with headteachers suggests that signing up to best practice and accreditation schemes is a good way to mobilise the whole school community towards embedding the walk to school within the school's culture (Living Streets, forthcoming).

> RECOMMENDATION 3:

Schools should take advantage of available accreditation and behaviour change schemes to support more children to walk and recognise and share best practice.



➤ CASE STUDY

Percy Main Primary in North Shields ran WOW for four years up to September 2016 with fantastic results. After a change in funding in September 2016, which meant the school didn't run WOW for the six months, the number of children walking was down to 124 out of 214.

This prompted the school to fund WOW for themselves. They now use their PE and Sport Premium to fund WOW.

Karen Brownrigg, Percy Main's Eco Schools Coordinator, says funding sets out to develop, through sporting opportunities, confidence and a sense of achievement in our young people. It also successfully nurtures their character and build on skills that will enable them to succeed.

By April 2017, the school was already back up to 172 pupils walking to school.

“I'M ALL FOR CLEARING THE STREETS AND GIVING BACK OUR CHILDREN THEIR CHILDHOOD, WHICH STARTS EARLY IN THE MORNING AS THEY WALK TO SCHOOL AND OFTEN ENDS AT DUSK AS THEY PLAY OUTSIDE.”

KAREN BROWNRIGG

Schools can bridge the gap between local authorities and children, parents and carers campaigning for better streets. Our experience working with schools has shown that when schools proactively engage with their community and the local authority, for example surveying parents to feed into School Travel Plans, they can play an effective role in improving the local street environment.

Furthermore, when schools support initiatives such as Walking Buses, for example by providing volunteer teachers or by advertising the scheme, this helps to overcome some organisational challenges of Walking Buses, meaning they can be longer lasting and more sustainable.

> RECOMMENDATION 4:

Schools should proactively partner with local authorities and parents and carers, working together to support more children to walk to school.

Normalising walking as a mode of travel is one of the best ways to support more walking short journeys (Yu & Zhu, 2016). Schools, as learning environments and somewhere where children spend a large portion of their day, have significant potential to normalise walking. For example, walking for health should be prioritised in PE and Biology lessons, trips to sports centres or swimming pools should be walked all or part of the way and school trips should contain some level of walking, even if this is just parking the bus a ten minute walk away. These are all practical and simple steps that can make a huge difference to how children view walking.

Empowering children with road safety skills is one important component of a holistic approach to supporting more children to walk. In conjunction with

safety enhancements to the physical environment, road safety education can increase parents' and carers' confidence to allow children to walk. One study found that increasing parents' confidence in their child's road safety skills increased propensity to walk by as much as 60% (Ermagun & Samimi, 2015). As with many life skills, the best way to teach it is interactively. For example, road safety education can be incorporated as part of geography lessons, helping to meet curriculum objectives and learning about the school grounds and surrounding areas. Given that as many as two-thirds of children leave school with fewer than two hours of road safety education (Department for Transport, 2017), it is clear that schools can make a vital contribution towards empowering children to use and navigate roads safely.

> RECOMMENDATION 5:

Schools should mainstream walking into the school day by identifying opportunities for children to experience their local area on foot, to normalise walking for short trips and learn road safety skills interactively within the school day, for example as part of geography lessons.



➤ CASE STUDY

Coronation Recreation Ground was typically used as a way for pupils at Bell Farm Primary to get to school. It is a way to avoid busy roads but didn't have a formal path. This meant in wet weather it could be hazardous.

So the school and parents approached Living Streets to undertake a School Route Audit (SRA). They allow local people (including pupils) to assess streets from the perspective of those who use footways. The aim is to propose ways of making streets more encouraging for everyday walking.

Thanks to a determined effort by the school, parents and pupils the recommendations were taken to the council with a proposal to provide a purpose-built built through the Recreation Ground.

The cabinet of Elmbridge Borough Council awarded £43,000 to create a surfaced route across the site.

As any teacher or parent will know, leading by example is one of the best ways to encourage children to adopt healthy habits for life. Including staff in walk to school initiatives is essential to create a culture of active travel. Teachers, teaching assistants, and other school staff can also improve their own health and wellbeing by walking all or some of their commute, as walking to work has been shown to reduce strain and stress (Chatterjee, Clark, Martin, & Davis, 2017). To support staff to make this

lifestyle change, it will be necessary to address staff concerns, for example, about where to change clothes at school (by providing changing areas, lockers and showers), how they can carry books home to mark or where to park the car (for example by working with the local authority to identify parking areas a short walk away).

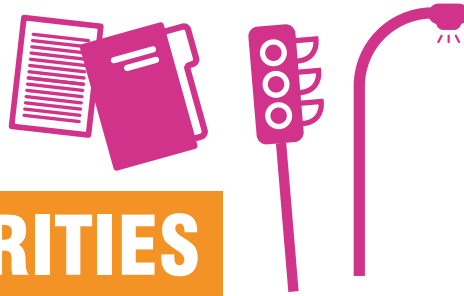


RECOMMENDATION 6:

Schools should enable and support their staff to walk all or part of the way to work.

4.2

LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Local authorities can experience a number of benefits as a result of improving the walk to school. From reducing congestion and pressure on their road network, to improving air quality and public health outcomes, supporting more children to walk to school supports local authorities to achieve a wide range of objectives. In addition, local authorities have wide ranging powers to encourage and enable more children to have safe, unpolluted, and enjoyable walks to school. This section will outline how and why local authorities should utilise these powers to ensure that their area prioritises the walk to school.

Designing streets with children's needs in mind benefits all road users. For this reason, local authority planning and design should put children's needs first, particularly for developments near schools and residential areas. Where communities are established, effective street design and the placement of footpaths can create a walking network that links homes, schools, shops, and public transport, enabling more walking to school.

Designing for the needs of children means considering land-use mix, connecting homes with schools and key services via safe and high-quality walking routes, having enough controlled crossings in convenient locations, slowing traffic through lower speed limits and traffic calming measures and providing green space for free play.

Actively incorporating children's needs also means reaching out to children as key stakeholders in consultations, using creative means of reaching groups such as attending assemblies and gathering views from children at school. Children will have unique insights into the appropriateness of existing or planned street and neighbourhood design. For example, a study by Transport for London found a diverse range of factors that encouraged children to walk more, including one child stating that 'feeding the ducks' was one of the enjoyable elements of his everyday walking (TfL, 2016). Conducting School Route Audits can help to understand children's perspective.

> RECOMMENDATION 7:

Local authorities should adopt a 'children first' approach to planning and street design, prioritising safe and enjoyable streets for children in all existing and new developments.

Traffic speeds have a direct relationship with the actual and perceived safety of a street. Achieving slower speeds, through a mix of slower speed limits, engineering and enforcement is an important part of making the streets around our schools safer and more attractive places to walk. Both case study and quantitative evidence shows that reducing speed limits to 20mph reduces overall child casualty rate while also improving perceptions of an area, increasing rates of walking to school (NSW Audit Office, 2010). For example, New South Wales' school zone safety programme, entailing speed limits as well as traffic calming and other safety enhancements, showed a clear reduction in child pedestrian fatalities, supporting and encouraging more walking to school. Streets around school should have 20mph limits enforced by traffic calming measures, including wider pavements and controlled crossings.

The Community Infrastructure Levy is one potential source of funding for local authorities to invest in safer streets for the walk to school. Other sources to which local authorities should consider applying to improve the walk to school include the Liveable Neighbourhoods fund in London, Transforming Cities for non-mayoral city regions and the government's Clean Air Fund. This spending should be considered a priority because improvements in the walk to school benefit the whole community and improve health outcomes.

> RECOMMENDATION 8:

Local authorities should make 20mph the default speed limit for all streets where people live, work, shop and play, and consider other road safety enhancements to provide the maximum safety benefit for children.

In the UK, 14% of all pedestrian casualties occurred near parked cars (RAS50004, Department for Transport, 2017). But for children, this danger is even greater, as their smaller size limits whether they can see oncoming traffic, and vice versa. Local authorities have the ability to restrict parking in certain areas, by creating a Controlled Parking Zone. Many schools already have parking restrictions immediately outside the gates, but in our survey over 40% of parents said enforcing a ban on

parking near the school would make them more likely to walk to school (YouGov, 2014). This clearly indicates that parking remains an issue for a wider area around schools. Cars parked on the carriageway, as well as on the pavement, are visual obstacles, the removal of which makes walking environments more pleasant, reduces car dominance, and increases safety by improving crossing visibility.

> RECOMMENDATION 9:

Local authorities should use their powers to create Controlled Parking Zones around schools, to prohibit parking on streets near schools.

“WITH THE SUPPORT OF LIVING STREETS AND THEIR INITIATIVES SUPPORTING AND ENABLING RAYSFIELD PUPILS TO WALK TO SCHOOL, SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES OF PARKING, TRAFFIC SPEED AND SAFETY COULD BE EASILY IDENTIFIED. THE EFFORTS OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN RE-FOCUSED TO IMPROVING THE WALK TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN HERE AND THIS CHANGE IS HAPPENING MORE QUICKLY AS WE HAVE A ROBUST DOCUMENT TO BACK UP NEED.”

HANNAH SAUNDERS,
CLERK TO COUNCIL, DODINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



➤ CASE STUDY

Raysfield Junior school is a large school set in a residential area of South Gloucestershire. Pupils walking to and from Raysfield were faced with unsafe parking, overcrowding of cars and fast traffic around the school. Moreover, some parents were parking in front of residents' garages, causing tension between the school and local community. In April 2015, a nine year old girl was involved in a collision as she crossed between parked cars, but fortunately she sustained only slight injuries.

This spurred action within the school and local authority to ensure the surrounding area was safe and pleasant for children to walk. A Living Streets coordinator, Catherine,

conducted a school SRA route audit with pupils and staff from the school in July 2017, which recommended a Park & Stride site for children to walk from, that 20mph speed limits around the school should be enforced, parking should be prohibited within a wider surrounding area and the road markings prohibiting parking should be refreshed. Both the parish council and South Gloucestershire Council agreed to take forward these recommendations.

87% of Raysfield pupils now travel actively to school, all of whom are doing their bit to tackle air pollution and congestion in their area.

Closing streets to cars outside schools is an effective way of improving the safety of the walk to school because it removes unsafe parking and speeding traffic. It also creates a more welcoming environment for children, parents and carers alike, who can socialise freely (University of Bristol and Play England, 2017). Edinburgh City Council is rolling out school street closures across the city, which have been shown to increase rates of walking to school by 3% (Transport and Environment Committee, 2016). Furthermore, by eliminating traffic and unsafe parking from outside the school gates, school street closures tackle the two biggest concerns raised by parents and carers when asked what makes the walk to school unpleasant: unsafe parking and fast traffic (OnePoll, 2016).

Another advantage of school street closures is that local authorities can adapt the enforcement mechanisms and exemption categories to suit their individual requirements. For example, enforcement can be carried out using police powers, traffic cameras, or removable bollards. Similarly, the range of nearby residents eligible for exemptions is flexible according to the street layout. These adaptable elements allow local authorities to respond to the needs of their area, which can support the success of the project and make it more popular with residents.



RECOMMENDATION 10:

Local authorities should support calls for street closures through pilot projects and roll-out schemes on a permanent basis where these are proved to be effective.



CASE STUDY

As part of its Healthy School Streets pilot project, Camden Council, the local council, decided to improve the safety of St Joseph's pupils and families by temporarily closing the road the school is situated on every weekday at school pick up and drop off times to vehicle traffic.

The combination of Macklin Street being a small road with narrow pavements, situated in central London, with heavy goods vehicle use, and the experiences of a number of near misses with pupils getting hit by vehicles and an actual incident of a pupil being hit – provided the support from within the school for the road closures.

Before the road closure Michelle Zini-Lopes, a parent said: "The benefits of the road closing is that parents, children and pedestrians can walk down the road safely and can enjoy their walk to school, and it will avoid a fatal accident."

After the road closure was in place, Nicola Scott Phillips, St Joseph's Deputy Head says: "People can take another road to get to their destination, well we have to kinda go there"

There are a number of proven effective behaviour change initiatives, such as Living Streets' WOW - the year-round walk to school challenge. While schools can fund these alone, our interviews with headteachers have shown that budget constraints prevent many from doing so, despite the many benefits it brings to the school community (Living Streets, forthcoming). Local authorities can meet many of their objectives and reduce their public health burden by delivering behaviour change initiatives in schools. Furthermore, by strategically targeting interventions in areas with particular air quality and/or congestion problems, local authorities can achieve greater value for money.

There are numerous organisations within England that are designed to provide support and knowledge sharing for local authorities and schools. For example, Modeshift enables and facilitates the sharing of best practice between local authorities and schools and celebrates

the successes of their local schools. It also provides a hub to support with passing and implementing policies that encouraging more everyday walking. There are numerous benefits to schools of joining Modeshift, but local authorities have to be signed up already in order to see what their local schools have recorded on the scheme. In order to fully support parents, carers and pupils in walking to school, local authorities should register with these organisations to provide full support and knowledge.

In addition, the local authority can support schools with creating and implementing their School Travel Plans (STPs), as well as ensure that STPs feed into Local Plans, Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies and other outputs, and vice versa. This will ensure that schools have the required knowledge to be able to developed their STP, and that walking improvements in the local authority area are identified and implemented holistically.

➤ **RECOMMENDATION 11:**

Local authorities should work with schools to deliver evidence based and effective behaviour change initiatives and accreditation schemes, as well as coordinate strategic planning for active school travel.

A lack of robust sub-national data collection and monitoring limits the extent to which local authorities can plan and evaluate school travel programmes. It also makes it more difficult for local authorities to make the case for extending funding for these programmes, as their impact cannot be reliably assessed. We suspect that many local authorities (especially in urban areas) will be UK leaders in active school travel, but have no

way reliably to state this. Collecting and monitoring data on school travel at regional and local levels would allow for more effective and targeted interventions, thereby having the greatest impact on children's health, on air pollution and on congestion. Living Streets' Travel Tracker, supported by the Department for Transport, is one tool available for local authorities to track journeys to school.

➤ **RECOMMENDATION 12:**

Local authorities should collect and monitor robust data on rates of walking to school in their area.



4.3

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

National government needs to provide the leadership and support for other key stakeholders to improve the walk to school for all children in England. While responsibility for walking and cycling rests with the Department for Transport, active travel potentially affects the work of several departments. The biggest difference to the walk to school will be made when all these Departments work together, with schools and local authorities. The following recommendations illustrate the wide range of actions the government could take which would hugely benefit children. We hope to see them brought forward as soon as possible in order to exceed the CWIS target for 55% of primary school children walking to school.

Central government could show strong leadership and direction by ensuring a long term capital and revenue funding pipeline for holistic improvements to the walk to school. Ensuring that physical infrastructure improvements and behaviour change schemes are combined is the most effective way to enable and support children to walk to school, as it holistically addresses the widest range of barriers. Such a pipeline could, for example, enable local authorities to apply for funding for specific enhancements to safety between homes, public transport and schools, in addition to supporting long term delivery of behaviour change schemes. The advantage of managing a programme like this at a national level is that the government is able to see the bigger picture and address regional inequalities in rates of walking to school.



RECOMMENDATION 13:

The Department for Transport should bring forward a long term revenue and capital funding pipeline, to support physical infrastructure improvements and behaviour change initiatives that will support and enable more children to walk to school.

The Childhood Obesity Plan outlined plans for a healthy lifestyle rating for schools, which Ofsted will take into account when conducting inspections. It also outlined plans for Ofsted to conduct a review into obesity, healthy eating, and physical activity in schools. However, neither the healthy schools rating nor the review have been published, and Ofsted does not currently assess active travel in its inspection framework for schools.

Given the numerous ways schools can benefit by promoting walking, it would make sense to integrate active travel into schools inspections. This would recognise its importance for schools and pupils, as well as encourage schools to prioritise active travel in decision making. Interviews with headteachers suggest that schools are much more likely to introduce a behaviour change or healthy lifestyle programme when Ofsted requires it (Living Streets, forthcoming).

> RECOMMENDATION 14:

Ofsted and the Department for Education should publish the healthy schools rating for schools in England and the review into obesity, healthy eating, and physical activity in schools as soon as possible.

School Travel Plans (STPs) are the first step for schools seeking to create a culture of active travel, as they identify the barriers to walking to school for families, and embed active travel into strategic planning. Creating an STP requires a time commitment as well as knowledge of what makes a good walking environment for children and families. Many schools may not have the capacity,

knowledge, budget or time to do this effectively (Living Streets, forthcoming), making it difficult for them to develop an STP and limiting the number of schools that can meet recommendation 1. Support from the Department for Education as well as their local authority could help to support them.

> RECOMMENDATION 15:

The Department for Education should require schools to develop a School Travel Plan that prioritises active travel, and provide the resources and expertise to enable them to do so.

Distance between home and school is one of the most significant barriers to walking to school. A significant aspect of this is community design, both in terms of where schools are located in relation to housing, and whether schools and residential areas are connected by convenient, safe, and attractive walking routes, rather than main roads. The current National Planning Policy Framework recognises that proximity to schools helps to create healthy communities: paragraph 38 states that 'key facilities such as primary schools [...] should be located within walking distance of most developments' (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2012). However, proposed changes to the NPPF (at the time of writing in the Spring of 2018) risk removing this provision. This goes against established best practice. For example, the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets identifies that a typical objective for a local planning framework to include would be to 'enable local

children to walk and cycle unaccompanied from all parts of a development to a school, local park or open space' (Department for Transport, 2007). Furthermore, schools in all areas should be located such that they are conveniently and safely interfaced with walking and cycling routes. While the revised NPPF includes a number of new lines about putting walking and cycling first within Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport, the existing line should be retained as it usefully complements these new lines. Furthermore, its removal would be a mistake when the public health benefits of walking are taken into consideration. Given the government's ambition to 'build the right houses in the right places' and the National Infrastructure Commission's proposal for the building of new communities it is essential that the NPPF continues to put active travel and public transport at the heart of placemaking.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

The Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government should ensure that the revised National Planning Policy Framework continues to require schools and other key services to be located within walkable distance of communities, and to be accessible by safe and high quality walking, cycling and public transport facilities.

Another factor influencing distance in relation to the walk to school is catchment areas, which many schools use to guide their admissions process. Schools, in conjunction with local authorities, are able to set their own catchment areas, which will vary according to the needs of a local area. It is necessary for catchment areas to be flexible, but guidance is minimal as to what should be considered when developing a catchment area. Considering active travel would encourage schools to take account of street layout, housing density the location of other schools, and therefore the ideal catchment area size. Conducting the process in conjunction with local authorities, as is already standard, should help to give schools the support and information they need to create an effective and healthy catchment area.

In addition, the Department for Education should investigate the possibility of giving families the right for their children to attend the same school. Currently, many schools do offer this, but it is not a requirement and creates unpredictability for families navigating the admissions system. Having children attending different schools is cited by 1 in 10 parents as the main reason they drive their child to school (OnePoll, 2016). Guaranteeing that siblings can attend the same school means that parents and carers will have greater flexibility to build the walk to school into their schedule, supporting active travel for the whole family.

> RECOMMENDATION 17:

The Department for Education should review the school Admissions Code and the School Transport Guidance to investigate the inclusion of active travel in catchment area and transportation decision making and consider giving families the right to send their children to the same school.

Local authorities in England and Wales do not have dedicated signage to use when closing school streets to traffic, unlike in Scotland. Our experience of working with local authorities suggests that this can make the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process more complicated and discourage them from applying for street closures. Similarly, local authorities would benefit from government guidance on the range of complementary measures available to them and the situations in which to use them, such as traffic cameras, removable bollards or

traffic control officers. The Department for Transport could assist local authorities in their decision making by producing a briefing and guidance on the methods available, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. This would clarify and streamline the process, helping local authorities to feel confident in piloting a school street closure and reducing unnecessary decision making time and expenditure.

> RECOMMENDATION 18:

In the next review of signage, the Department for Transport should bring forward proposals to create new signage and clarify enforcement measures for local authorities to implement school street closures.

National government has an opportunity to support its public health and environmental goals by communicating to families and to schools why walking to school should be valuable and prioritised in their busy schedules. This will be vital to ensure that the ambitious package of measures contained within this report are supported by

effective behaviour and culture change towards more active travel. While physical environment improvements are essential for enabling children and families to feel comfortable and safe walking to school, helping people to understand how it will benefit them is key for maintaining long term behaviour change.

> RECOMMENDATION 20:

The Department for Transport should take a lead on cross departmental awareness raising schemes, supporting families and schools to understand the myriad benefits of walking to school.

Interviews with headteachers have shown that some schools are not spending their PE and Sport Premium strictly on physical activity (Living Streets, forthcoming). Some schools have reported struggling to identify evidence based initiatives on which to spend the premium, for example resorting to funding minibuses for sports fixtures, which has the effect of reducing active travel and normalises unsustainable and unhealthy modes of transportation for short journeys. The Department for Education should ensure that schools are aware that they are allowed to spend their PE and Sport Premium

on active travel and highlight the wide range of benefits that it offers to the school community. It can do this by publishing case studies on the Department for Education website and by providing both the oversight and the strategic support to enable schools to prioritise active travel and spend their Premium the most effectively. In addition, the Department for Education requires schools to publish how they are spending their PE and Sport Premium on their website, and proactively support schools to do this as soon as possible.

> RECOMMENDATION 21:

The Department for Education should improve awareness, oversight and support to enable more schools to spend a proportion of their PE and Sport Premium on active travel.

5.0

CONCLUSIONS

THIS REPORT HAS PRESENTED A SERIES OF EVIDENCE BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS SCHOOLS, TO TRANSFORM THE WALK TO SCHOOL FOR EVERY CHILD. GETTING MORE CHILDREN WALKING TO SCHOOL HAS BENEFITS FOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING, ROAD SAFETY, CONGESTION AND AIR POLLUTION. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL TACKLE THE MOST COMMON AND SERIOUS BARRIERS TO CHILDREN WALKING TO SCHOOL.

But the recommendations also go further. In addition to encouraging and enabling families to swap the school run for the school walk, we want them to do so on safe, unpolluted and enjoyable streets. The walk to school should be a fun opportunity to spend time with family and friends, exploring and experiencing the local area and connecting with the community. This means streets and communities designed with children's enjoyment in mind, as well as their safety.

To make this a reality will require cooperation and leadership from national government. Living Streets knows that we as a society have the ability to make England a nation where every child who can walk to school along safe, unpolluted and enjoyable streets. This report is a strategy for how we can make that happen.





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WE ARE LIVING STREETS AND WE WANT TO CREATE A NATION WHERE WALKING IS THE NATURAL CHOICE FOR LOCAL, EVERYDAY JOURNEYS. WE BELIEVE THIS MEANS PROGRESS FOR EVERYONE.

OUR AMBITION IS TO GET PEOPLE OF ALL GENERATIONS TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS THAT THIS SIMPLE ACT BRINGS AND TO ENSURE ALL OUR STREETS ARE FIT FOR WALKING.