

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

## **Living Street' comments on Everybody Active, Every Day**

*Submitted to Public Health England, September 2014*

### **Introduction**

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We have welcomed the opportunity to work with Public Health England in the preparation of this physical activity framework because we know that making it safer and easier for people to walk is one of the most effective ways of improving public health.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy the benefits of walking. In our 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, our Walk once a Week (WoW) scheme encourages more than 300,000 children nationwide to walk to school once a week and our Walk to School Outreach project (funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund since 2012) has achieved an average 23 per cent increase in the number of children walking, across 532 participating primary schools.

### **Getting everybody active, every day**

Both the 'evidence based approach' and the 'implementation and evidence guide' present a clear and concise argument for the benefits of physical activity. However, the introduction to the 'evidence based approach' document could usefully say more about how the two documents (and any supplementary documents, see below) work together and set out clear steps for future action.

Case studies of interventions that illustrate how to bring about behaviour change are noticeably absent. We understand that these will be presented elsewhere, selected by the NESTA criteria developed by Sheffield Hallam University and ukactive. Our concern is that the need to demonstrate the impact, while essential, overlooks the shortage of funding available and the operational difficulties in the way of rigorous evaluation of active travel projects (for example, delays in local authority funding for footway improvements).

There is a predisposition towards physical activity interventions with the strongest level of evidence of impact. Due to their generally small-scale nature, walking interventions are unlikely to ever generate this level of evidence unless a lot of funding is made available for walking interventions and analysis. It should be acknowledged that many charities and other public and third sector organisations do not have the time, money or expertise to evaluate to this level; even the Standard Evaluation Framework (mentioned on page 19) requires a good deal more time and resources than many will have. If the focus is on the small number of projects for which there is strong evidence, this risks excluding 95 per cent of interventions out there!

1

Living Streets  
4th Floor, Universal House, 88–94 Wentworth Street E1 7SA  
Tel 020 7377 4900  
info@livingstreets.org.uk www.livingstreets.org.uk

Living Streets (The Pedestrians Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland), Company Limited by Guarantee (England & Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409



### 1) An evidence based approach to physical activity

This document outlines four domains where action needs to be focused: creating the right social environment, activating networks of expertise, creating the right environments for active lives and doing so at a big enough scale. We would like the ‘active lives’ domain to be renamed ‘active environments’ because without a supportive environment it can be very difficult to make ‘active choices’.

The importance of spatial planning to create active environments cannot be underestimated. It involves land use, urban, regional, transport and environmental planning – and in particular in terms of government policy and the availability of funding – how these are mobilised in support of local businesses and economic development. These are the networks of professionals that need to be engaged in order to bring about radical change.

Detailed comments:

- Page 5, the infographic is misleading and not very helpful. For example, the top illustration seems to suggest that 3 out of 4 of men are active not that 33 per cent of men are *inactive*.
- Page 8, paragraph 3, it is not only the design of public spaces, but the on-going prioritisation of private motor transport over more active travel and sustainable transport systems which is discouraging people from walking or cycling. Also, concerns about vandalism affect everyone, not only through the removal of benches and toilets which prevent some older and/or disabled people from going out.
- Page 9, the quick snapshot should include the benefits of reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, lowering blood pressure and improving cholesterol levels – as these are common health problems.
- Page 11, “Being active everyday needs to be embedded across every community and **every place** in every aspect of life”. Place should be referenced because the creation of active environments addresses health inequalities by benefiting everyone equally.
- Page 11, bullet point 5, sport is physical activity. Since the message being communicated is that being physically active includes a wide variety of activities (walking, gardening, cleaning or carrying shopping) and all such activity is beneficial, this is not a useful distinction.
- Page 15, in the education section, ‘making every contact count’ should also include talking to students about their own physical activity, for example, through walking to school everyday.

### 2) Implementation and evidence guide

We are very pleased with many of the actions called for in this document, but must take issue with the front cover because the photos show organised physical activities instead of supporting the message that you can meet Chief medical Office physical activity guidelines by something as easy as walking to local shops.

We especially welcome the recommendation that Government should accelerate a modal shift in transport from cars to walking, cycling and public transport, together with the recommendation that it should evaluate the case for an active travel bill for England, following the example of the Active Travel (Wales) Act.

Detailed comments:

- Page 9, the paragraph on road transport must acknowledge the impact of private motorised transport, not just ‘road transport’. This is where good intentions to promote active lifestyles

2

Living Streets  
4th Floor, Universal House, 88–94 Wentworth Street E1 7SA  
Tel 020 7377 4900  
info@livingstreets.org.uk www.livingstreets.org.uk

Living Streets (The Pedestrians Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland), Company Limited by Guarantee (England & Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409



Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

stumble against the reality that transport funding and planning is heavily weighted in favour of the motorist. Default 20 mph limits should be referenced as the single most effective measure to improve road safety, and reduce noise and air pollution.

- Page 10, last paragraph, we agree with the need to maximise existing assets, but it's also about making better decisions and allocating funding, now and in the future, to create active places and support active lifestyles.
- Page 11, this section should also make the link with the physical environment. Community wide interventions may not work without a supportive 'active environment'.
- Page 14, second paragraph, we would like 'walking buses' to be broadened out to walking programmes (NICE PH41, recommendation 6), with an accompanying reference to our Walk to School programme (<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school>). Walking buses rely on volunteer leaders and cannot always be sustained.
- Page 16, research gaps, we support investigation into the gaps identified, nevertheless, it should be noted that based on the evidence available, there is already an overwhelming case for action now.
- Page 17, we should build environments where it is safe and easy for all ages to walk or cycle. By designing places for our most vulnerable members of society (children, older people, people with visual or mobility impairments), everyone benefits.
- Page 22, we strongly support the recommendation that national capital investment strategies and delivery plans integrate active travel planning. However, an additional recommendation is needed to address capital and revenue funding to promote active travel interventions, building on the success of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Given the benefits cut across Government perhaps as has been suggested by Sustrans "departments which benefit from raised physical activity levels, such as DH, DWP and BIS, or from co-benefits of active travel, such as Defra and DECC" should co-finance active transport investment.
- Page 23, section on schools and higher education, support walk to school interventions, such as pupil priority zones, 'walk and stride' and school route audits.

**For more details please contact:**

Dr Rachel Lee – Policy and Research Coordinator  
Email: [Rachel.lee@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:Rachel.lee@livingstreets.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 7377 4919