

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 Streets response to Public Health England Consultation – Development of a national physical activity approach**

### **Introduction**

We are 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 work with communities, professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

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. Since then our ambition has grown. 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.

### **Introduction**

Living Streets welcomes the opportunity to feed our experiences and opinions into this consultation. Our response outlines the changes we believe need to take place in order to increase the number of people walking. We welcome the board approach taken by this consultation in considering issues beyond the traditional remit of public health. Our response is divided across the themes of social norms, technology, economic, environmental, political/legal and ethical.

### **Social norms**

The National Travel Survey (NTS) 2012 reveals that walking comprises 22% of all journeys and 20% of all journeys were less than a mile of which 77% of all trips under one mile were made on foot<sup>1</sup>. With this evidence in mind there is a compelling case to utilise a range of economic, legislative and policy based tools to encourage people who undertake shorter journeys, of between zero and up to two miles, to shift their travel mode from car/van to walking. However, the NTS has revealed a dramatic fall in walking trips by 8% compared to the previous year. This is part of a more rapid longer term decline in walking trips since the mid 1990s compared to other private travel modes which has seen walking journeys decrease by 28% compared to 1995/7. For example, in 2012, 47% of trips to and from school by primary school children (aged 5-10) were made on foot compared to 1995/97 when 53% of trips were made on foot whilst for secondary aged children (aged 11-16) 38% of school trips were on foot and 26% were by car, compared with

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2012>

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42% and 20% respectively in 1995/97<sup>2</sup>. However, there is a real opportunity to increase the number of walking trips. Over 30% of primary aged children live less than half a mile from their school and a further 20% travel between 0.5 and 1 mile. 16% of school journeys under a mile are driven to school, a distance that could be walked within 20 minutes.

The challenges to increasing the number of people walking in England can be broadly divided into environmental and behavioural barriers. The former are considered under the environmental section and the behavioural barriers are considered below.

Behavioural barriers include the real and perceived barriers to walking. These perceptions are supported by research from Living Streets with regards to walking to school which reveals that one in five primary school children don't walk to school because their parents state that they don't have time to walk with them<sup>3</sup> whilst an over reliance on the car by parents means that walking doesn't even occur to them. Research reveals that just over one in five (21%) parents of children who travel to primary school never considered making sure their child walks to school, and 27% say they tend to automatically drive their child to school rather than walking them there<sup>4</sup>.

Living Streets have operated the national Walk to School (WtS) campaign since 1995 and aims to encourage all parents and young people to make walking to school part of their daily routine. In the last five years, our Walk to School message has reached over two million children across the UK and this year Living Streets' Walk to School campaign reaches over 13 million people, making it one of the UK's leading behaviour change campaigns for young people. We work directly with over 750,000 children in 2,000 schools and every year thousands more take part in the national schemes and events we run, including Walk once a Week (WoW) and Walk to School Week.

Living Streets Walk to School outreach project began as a pilot project funded by the Department for Transport in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to work intensively with a cluster of schools. At the end of the project, walking to school had increased from 46% to 53%. Living Streets Walk once a Week (WoW) extension project for the Department of Health saw Living Streets working with 736 schools and over 118,000 children in order to increase walking levels in schools across England. 61,567 children and 6,515 parents took part in surveys which revealed a 25% increase in numbers of children walking to school (during the project lifetime) and a 35% decrease in car use. Before the WoW intervention, schools had a 43% walking proportion, and following the WoW interventions schools reached a peak of 59% walking in 2011, levelling at 54% in 2012 (the final year).

Living Streets has been funded to deliver walk to school interventions across England through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund since 2012. At the end of year two, the Walk to School

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2012>

<sup>3</sup> Living Streets (2011) Breaking down the barriers - <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/breakingdownthebarriers.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Must try harder: How school travel can make the grade* - <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/Must%20try%20harder%20final.pdf>

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Outreach project has already engaged 532 primary and 112 secondary schools from across thirteen local authority partner areas. Project coordinators have been working with schools to explore barriers to walking, deliver awareness events and implement incentive and reward schemes. The result has been an average 23% increase in the number of children walking at participating primary schools (equating to almost nine million new walking journeys by children and accompanying parents and carers) and over £140,000 of capital investment on physical route improvements.

Attached to this submission are a number of case studies which highlight the impact of Living Streets' Walk to School work in local communities.

Living Streets also works with employers to increase physical activity in the workforce through our Walking Works project which has engaged with adults in employment to encourage more walking to, from and at work. Funded by BIG Lottery's Health and Wellbeing Fund as part of the Travel Actively consortium, the campaign has raised awareness of the benefits of walking more to over 28,000 individuals so far, through walking pledges, regular digital campaigns and the annual Walk to Work Week challenge. Walking Works includes a programme of more in-depth support for workplaces, including helping establish 'walking champions', running bespoke walking challenges and activities and helping workplaces to integrate walking activity with their workplace travel plan.

Walk to Work Week is the aspect of the Walk to Work programme with the widest participation and the most significant evaluation data.

- Since participating in Walk to Work Week, 57% of respondents felt that their overall level of walking had increased.
- All respondents were asked how they felt after taking part in the project. The top three responses were 'I feel fitter' (45%), 'I feel more healthy' (41%) and 'I am more active' (39%).
- Individuals achieving 30 minutes or more physical activity on five or more days per week increased from 29% at registration to 50% at follow up.

Living Streets work with workplaces and schools are supported by Living Streets' annual campaign [National Walking Month](#) to promote walking for all. It takes place in May and includes our popular events [Walk to Work Week](#) and [Walk to School Week](#).

During National Walking Month 2013 the key successes were:

- **81,067** miles logged
- **6,340** new registered users
- **493** pieces of media coverage
- **34** radio interviews/clips, including BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Merseyside, BBC Radio Sheffield, BBC London and BBC Radio Wales
- An estimated reach figure of **25,978,838**
- **72,199** unique visitors to the Living Streets website during the month

3

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- Facebook reach at peak: **28,639**
- Over **50 MPs** supporting our Early Day Motion

During Walk to Work Week the key successes were:

- **25,060** walks logged
- Over **10,000** muffins burned off
- **14,000kg** of CO2 saved
- **93%** of participants said they'll take part in Walk to Work Week next year
- **54.6%** of participants say they intend to increase the amount they walk for work reasons as a result of taking part
- **6,325** mentions of Walk to Work Week on Twitter
- **Three** parliamentary walks to work with Norman Baker (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport); Yvonne Fovargue MP (Shadow Minister for Local Transport) and Maria Eagle (Shadow Secretary of State for Transport)

During Walk to Work Week the key successes were:

- **500,000 children in 1,500** schools were reached as part of Walk to School Week
- **Three** high profile Walk to School Week events. **One report on walking to school**, Must Try Harder, launched at an event in Portcullis House.
- **Over 400** primary school pupils helped assemble a giant jigsaw of Walk to School mascot Strider in Blackpool.
- **60 students from ten schools** across Tyne and Wear took part in organised walks and glass workshops at the National Glass Centre, Sunderland.
- Strider's five day activity challenge delivered in over **12,000 classrooms**
- Over **75,000** views of our walk to school pages on the Living Streets website during May

## **Technology**

Technological developments can impact on levels of physical activity and walking rates by improving the street environment. For example, we have campaigned on the issue of pedestrian crossings. Well designed pedestrian crossings can benefit all road users. They can provide safe and direct routes for pedestrians leading to healthier, active and sociable lifestyles, and they enable vehicles to proceed when there is no longer a pedestrian demand. National statistics for 2012<sup>5</sup> showed that 50% of pedestrian casualties occurred while they were crossing the road without using a pedestrian crossing. 14.2% occurred on a crossing and 9.4% occurred within 50m of a crossing. Living Streets research<sup>6</sup> revealed over one in five children and young people are concerned about the lack of safe crossing points on their journey to school.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/9280/rcgb2011-complete.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9280/rcgb2011-complete.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/breakingdownthebarriers.pdf>

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Inadequate crossing times are a major barrier to walking and research undertaken by University College London revealed that most older people are unable to cross the road in time. According to the research, 76% of men and 85% of women over the age of 65, have a walking speed slower than that needed to use a pedestrian crossing<sup>7</sup>. The current assumed walking speed in Department for Transport (DfT) guidance is 1.2m/s, which is used to calculate how much time pedestrians are given to cross the road. The current assumed walking speed does not take into account the major demographic changes which are taking place in the UK in terms of an increasingly older population. The DfT are currently reviewing pedestrian crossing guidance which includes reference to the current assumed walking speed. Given the evidence from UCL and a number of other researchers, over the years, we believe the Government should use this review to amend the current guidance to reduce the current assumed walking speed to 0.8m/s which, on an average road width, would increase the pedestrian crossing time by around three seconds.

## **Economic**

We believe changes in local government and new funding streams provide cost effective opportunities. For example, the recent transfer of public health responsibilities in England to local authorities provides a unique opportunity to embed public health strategy with inter-related policy areas such as transport and planning. Furthermore, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund process for 2015/16<sup>8</sup> requires Local Economic Partnerships to consider their role in supporting active travel such as walking in their Strategic Economic Plans. Therefore, the Single Growth Fund has a significant role to play in improving the public realm for walking which will deliver economic benefits for high streets as highlighted in Living Streets recent report the *Pedestrian Pound* which revealed that investment in high quality public realm for walking can deliver a commercial return and a much needed boost for our high streets and town centres. It suggests that making places better for walking can boost footfall and trading by up to 40 per cent<sup>9</sup>.

High quality public realm in high streets and town centres can encourage increased levels of walking and, therefore, physical activity. Successful high streets and town centres are more than just a shopping destination. They provide important public space, civic facilities, transport, employment and leisure opportunities. The Living Streets' Step Out in London project promoted a range of activities to complement and publicise public realm schemes, by encouraging people to spend more time walking in their local town centre. Surveys carried out after the activities found

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/1206/14062012-Most-older-people-unable-to-cross-roads-in-time>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/270568/lsf-revenue-competition-guide.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270568/lsf-revenue-competition-guide.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> *The Pedestrian Pound* 2013 - <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/make-a-change/library/the-pedestrian-pound-the-business-case-for-better-streets-and-places>

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that people reported walking more (47%), shopping more (52%), feeling safer and more part of a community (both 58%)<sup>10</sup>.

The policy area of winter maintenance can also have significant economic impacts. During times of severe winter weather trips and falls on icy pavements can have a serious impact on pedestrians – especially the elderly – and also significant costs to the economy in terms of health care. This is before any consideration of the physical and emotional impact of injuries. Amongst other actions we would like to see local authorities ensure paths are gritted so that people (including older, younger and disabled people) can walk to essential services and help is provided in order to organise teams of volunteer snow wardens. The Transport Select Committee's report on winter maintenance supported our call that local authorities and the Government could do more to organise snow wardens<sup>11</sup>.

## **Environmental**

As highlighted earlier the challenges to increasing the number of people walking in the UK can be broadly divided into environmental and behavioural barriers. The environmental barriers are considered below. Environmental barriers include infrastructure or design barriers the impact of which can vary on a variety of factors depending on age and personal circumstances, however, there are some common barriers which impact on everyone.

**20mph limits** - Actual and perceived road speeds can be a barrier to walking. Whilst the latest road statistics from the Department of Transport revealed a 7% decrease in the number of pedestrian fatalities the number of pedestrians seriously injured increased by 2%<sup>12</sup>. The increased use of 20mph limits in the areas where we live, work and shop is a significant action in reducing such danger. Furthermore, a wider fear of traffic speed adversely affects how we use our streets. For example speeding traffic scares over a third (36%) of children and young people when walking to school<sup>13</sup>. Significant numbers of councils across the UK are adopting 20mph speed limits but there is a need for a national default to break down road safety barriers to walking.

**Street clutter and pavement parking** - Street clutter and a poorly maintained public realm can be a barrier to walking, for example, poorly parked vehicles can force pedestrians into the road. They can inhibit the independence of many vulnerable people and be particularly dangerous for older people, for families with pushchairs and for those with visual or mobility impairments. Research undertaken by Living Streets in 2011 revealed that cars parked on the pavement was the biggest issue (41%) when asked about clutter in the streets. The current policy regarding

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/working-with-communities/step-out-in-london>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmtran/681/681.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/245754/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-main-results-2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/245754/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-main-results-2012.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Living Streets (2011) *Breaking down the barriers* -

<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/breakingdownthebarriers.pdf>

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pavement parking through the Traffic Regulation Order system is confusing and we would recommend that a national ban should be brought into place to tackle the problem across the UK.

## **Political/legal**

Increasing the number of people who walk by improving the quality of our streets has multiple health, economic and environmental benefits. We believe the Government should develop a vision of a high quality walking environment taking a strategic cross-departmental approach to improving walking infrastructure in order to increase the number of walking trips through behaviour changes programmes and projects. Walking should be considered alongside other modes as a standing item in the development and delivery of all national Government transport policy and practice and embedded across departments including Department for Transport, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Education and the Department of Health with Cabinet Office cross-Government co-ordination. We would also urge the Government to look at the experience of the Welsh Government in developing the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 which is designed to increase active travel journeys in Wales through legislation, behaviour change and supporting delivery and design guidance.<sup>14</sup> As highlighted above we also believe the introduction of a range of legislation including the introduction of national 20mph default speed limit and pavement parking ban would significantly improve the street environment for walking and break down the behavioural and environmental barriers highlighted above.

## **Ethical**

Living Streets' Fitter for Walking project involved approximately 150 communities, across 12 local authority areas and 5 regions of England, selected based on low reported levels of physical activity and high levels of obesity. Attached to this submission are a number of case studies which highlight the impact of the Fitter for Walking project in local communities.

Each region had a Living Streets project coordinator who recruited local community groups to drive projects forward. Working with the community group, the local authority and other local stakeholders, the coordinator helped identify barriers to walking in the area. This was often done through a Community Street Audit – one of Living Streets' key approaches to community engagement and street assessment, where small groups of local residents, traders, councillors and council officers, including vulnerable street users, are involved to assess a route on foot and identify problems and potential improvements. Improvement activity varied widely between projects according to the key needs identified by communities, and fell into three main categories: community-led improvements such as litter picking, clean ups and planting; more in-depth improvements such as resurfacing or lighting improvements led by the local authority, and awareness-raising activities such as led walks, the design of maps and street parties.

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/pdfs/anaw\\_20130007\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/pdfs/anaw_20130007_en.pdf)

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An analysis of 'pledge cards' from across the various Living Streets Fitter for Walking projects was undertaken in 2011<sup>15</sup>. 82% of those responding to follow-up surveys, carried out at least 3 months after the original pledge was made, stated that they met their pledge to walk more either regularly (64%) or occasionally (18%). 78% of those responding reported that the amount of walking they did, for any reason, had increased since they made their pledge. Of these, 73% reported walking to the shops more, 37% reported walking to or from work more and 31% reported walking children to / from school more often. The programme achieved a benefit cost ratio for decreased mortality as a result of more people walking of up to 46:1.

The Living Streets Fitter for Walking programme as a whole underwent a comprehensive independent evaluation in 2011<sup>16</sup>. Where residents were surveyed, almost two thirds (64 per cent) reported having walked more in their local area in the last 18 months for a variety of reasons including to get fitter or healthier, in response to a change in income or increasing transport costs, or because of improved knowledge of the local area. More than half agreed that they had seen more people walking locally in the last 18 months. The evaluation 'recommended that the Living Streets Fitter for Walking model is expanded to other communities in the UK as an approach to community engagement, increasing social interaction and improving the environment to promote walking'.

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<sup>15</sup> Sustrans Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. 2011. *Living Streets Fitter for Walking – Pledge Follow-up Summary*

<sup>16</sup> Adams, E., Goad, M. and Cavill, N. 2011. *Evaluation of Living Streets' Fitter for Walking Project*. Loughborough: BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health.