



# How to get more children walking to school

A best practice guide by Living Streets





## Who we are

Living Streets is the national charity that works to make walking safer and easier.

We have a vision that every child who can walk to school does so, and are committed to reversing the decline in young people's walking levels.

## What we do

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.

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# Introduction

## Walk to School outreach

Between September 2012 and March 2015, Living Streets delivered a ground-breaking project to raise levels of walking to school among primary and secondary school pupils in partnership with 15 local authorities across England led by Durham County Council.

Through the project we engaged a total of 854 primary schools and 184 secondary schools.

Funded by £4.6million from the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund the project targeted areas where the school run is having a significant negative impact on congestion, journey times and economic growth.

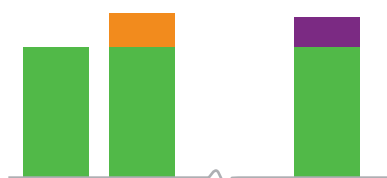
We've brought together our experiences from the past three years and present them here in a best practice guide.

## External evaluation

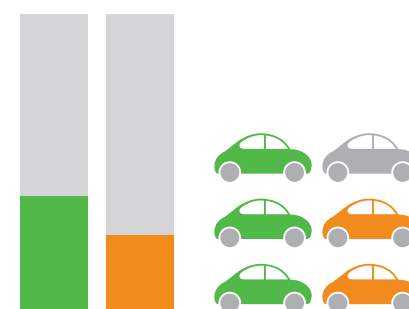
External evaluation of the Walk to School outreach project has show that:

- the project has good strategic fit contributing to local and national active travel objectives
- there is strong evidence the project is directly increasing walking, understanding of the benefits of walking and awareness of walking as active travel
- pupils who walk to school enjoy it, and feel fitter and more alert
- engagement between Living Streets and local authorities works well
- there is emerging evidence of benefits to local economies.

## The results



Children's walking levels increased **26 per cent** in five weeks – an increase sustained at **23 per cent** a year on.



Car use on the school run fell by around a third, from **39 per cent** to **26 per cent**.



Overall, an estimated 5.7 million journeys are now taken on foot rather than by car.

# Executive summary

## Walking: the benefits

Walking is an easy, free and healthy way for children to get to school with benefits for everyone. It helps support:

### Children's health

- Walking to and from school helps children achieve the recommended government target of 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Physically active children are more alert, ready to learn, do better in tests and achieve better grades than children who are driven to school.

### The economy

- Families could save an average of £400 a year if children walked to school rather than going by car.
- Walking boosts footfall for local businesses.
- The physical benefits of walking means a lower health spend for local authorities.

### The planet

- The school run generates two million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year.
- Converting car journeys to walking improves local air quality and contributes globally to a reduction in carbon emissions.

Yet today the number of children walking to school is in decline.

**One in five (21 per cent) of parents with children who travel to primary school have never considered making sure their child walks to school.**

# Best practice recommendations

## 1 Partnership working

The Walk to School outreach project was delivered by a team of Living Streets staff working closely with local authorities, schools and wider partners. Stakeholders came together regularly to share successes, best practice and contribute to project plans.

### Recommendations

- Align the project with the local authorities' priorities. Walking initiatives can support a range of areas, including travel, public health and urban renewal.
- Embed project staff within local authorities. This provides the chance to ensure activities are coordinated with other projects and opportunities for departments to work together.
- Join the dots between local and national. Linking the local and national focus ensures you can adapt to differences between local authority areas and helps identify opportunities for new partners and additional funding.

## 2 Inspiring behaviour change

Using a range of innovative initiatives based on 20 years' experience of getting children walking, we engaged schools, children and communities, offering the right incentives to get results. We ensured children and teachers felt they owned each project and that the resources could be easily adapted for the needs of different groups.

### Recommendations

- Think about what motivates young people to take part and match your incentives to work for each age group.
- Ensure clear communications to manage roles, responsibilities and expectations for the project.
- From the start, use regular monitoring and evaluation to reflect on how the project is performing, and be prepared to change and adapt things as you go along.

## 3 Physical infrastructure improvements

We engaged 364 schools to bring together communities and identify the barriers to safe walking. We then worked with local authorities to fund simple, cost-effective improvements.

### Recommendations

- Make sure you have buy-in from everyone. The land rights ownership, engineering and road works, as well as the way the council approves schemes and budgets all need to be considered.
- Be realistic about timescales. You need a lot of time to make improvements and to have the impact measured before seeing the results.
- When looking for funding to implement improvements, consider different local authority directorates, such as transportation, public health, highways and public realm.

# How to use this guide

This guide is for professionals and practitioners working in school travel and everyone who wants to make walking the natural choice for children and families.

In the following pages you'll hear about the positive outcomes of our Walk to School outreach project and the practical steps we took to achieve them.

You'll also hear about what we learned along the way through best practice in three key areas: partnership working, inspiring behaviour change and physical infrastructure improvements.



“I love the walk to school. My dad loves it too. We talk about school on the way in and I love collecting the Walk once a Week badges because they show everyone that I walk to school.”

**Elouise, pupil, Durham**



# Walking: the benefits

## Why walking?

**Walking is the most reliable, easy and healthy way to travel.**

Yet today the number of children walking to school is in decline. This has damaging consequences for our children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Over 70 per cent of today's parents walked to school when they were children but less than half of children walk to school today.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the number of children being driven to school is growing, with an increasingly negative impact on congestion, health and communities.

**Walking to school delivers:**

- **A safer and healthier population** through improved physical and mental health for children, parents and carers, plus improved road safety at the school gates
- **Improved transport capacity** through fewer cars on the road, so reducing congestion
- **A stronger economy and reduced cost of living** through cost savings by reduced carbon emissions and improved public health.

## Healthier children

The activities we enjoy as children often become habits for life. With this in mind, walking to school should be a positive and natural choice for children, families and the wider community. Children need encouragement and support to get healthier. Currently, 80 per cent of children don't meet the government's minimum daily recommendation for exercise<sup>2</sup> while one in three leave school overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>

Walking is an easy, free way for children to fight back against obesity and stay fit.

### Walking works

- Walking to and from school would go a long way to get children to the recommended government target of 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Children who actively commute to school are more physically active than those who do not.<sup>4</sup>
- Physically active children are more alert, ready to learn<sup>5</sup>, do better in tests and achieve better grades than children who are driven to school.<sup>6</sup>
- Walking to school helps form good habits for life.

### A healthy planet

Climate change is a pressing global issue. The Department for Transport's own research reveals that the school run is a major contributor to both congestion and the carbon emissions that cause global warming. In fact, it's responsible for generating around two million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year.<sup>7</sup>

Converting car journeys to walking improves local air quality and contributes globally to a reduction in carbon emissions.





# Encouraging families to Park and Stride

St Godric's Roman Catholic Primary School in Durham has taken part in Living Streets' Walk once a Week scheme since November 2012. As a result it has seen walking rates among pupils rise from 32 per cent to 80 per cent.

"The WoW scheme is easy to run and manageable," says head teacher Catherine Craig.

"We use Living Streets' Travel Tracker to record pupils' daily journeys. It's fun and interactive – the children like using it."

The school rewards children who are walking to school with WoW badges – which ensures pupils are excited about the scheme all year round. "There is huge excitement when the badges are handed out at the end of each month, together with the 'class of the month' trophy," says Catherine.

A key part of the project is Living Streets' Park and Stride, which allows parents and carers to park near the school and then walk the rest of the way in.

William, Janet and their six-year-old grand-daughter Erin have been walking to school from the designated Park and Stride car parks on a regular basis.

"Walking to school is a great start to the day as it helps children and families to get a bit of exercise every day," says Janet. "Children don't play outdoors as much as we used to, so this is a really good way to help them stay fit and healthy. It's also sociable as we meet other families who walk."

**"Parents and grandparents can get so busy but the walk to school allows us to spend some quality time with each other."**



## Fewer cars, safer streets

Around 1,200 children are involved in road accidents near schools<sup>8</sup> each month.

The school run now accounts for nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of car journeys by residents of urban areas during term time, with one in five cars taking children to school during the morning rush.<sup>9</sup>

Encouraging more children to walk to school means fewer cars on the road at peak times, helping to make the school gates a safer place for children. Plus, it helps the local economy by boosting footfall for shops.

It also reduces the congestion and inconsiderate parking that can make getting to school a headache for everyone. Walking saves families money too. Walking to school can save families an average of £400 a year versus the cost of running a family car.<sup>10</sup>

## Walking works

- Hertfordshire County Council recorded an average traffic reduction of 15.5 per cent on roads during school holidays. At some points the number of cars on the road was cut by nearly half.<sup>11</sup>
- Between 1997 and 2012 the proportion of children being driven to school increased by 16 per cent (primary school pupils)<sup>12</sup> and 23 per cent (secondary school pupils).
- With the number of school pupils projected to rise year on year the school run is expected to have an increasingly negative impact.<sup>13</sup>
- If nothing is done to address the proportion of children being driven to school, by 2021 our local road network will need to manage an additional 4.9 billion peak time vehicle miles every year.

# Conclusion

- Walking to school has benefits for everyone
- Walking is good for you and anyone can do it – it's easy, accessible, free, healthy and sociable
- It has positive impacts on health, transport, communities, environment and the economy.

But while the benefits are clear, the real challenge is encouraging families to change their behaviour. Research reveals that one in five (21 per cent) of parents with children who travel to primary school have never considered making sure their child walks to school, while 27 per cent say they tend to automatically drive.<sup>14</sup>



# Best practice guide

In this section you'll find out what we've learned from our Walk to School outreach project and outline recommendations for success with similar schemes.

In reviewing the project we identified three key approaches which made it a success.

These are:

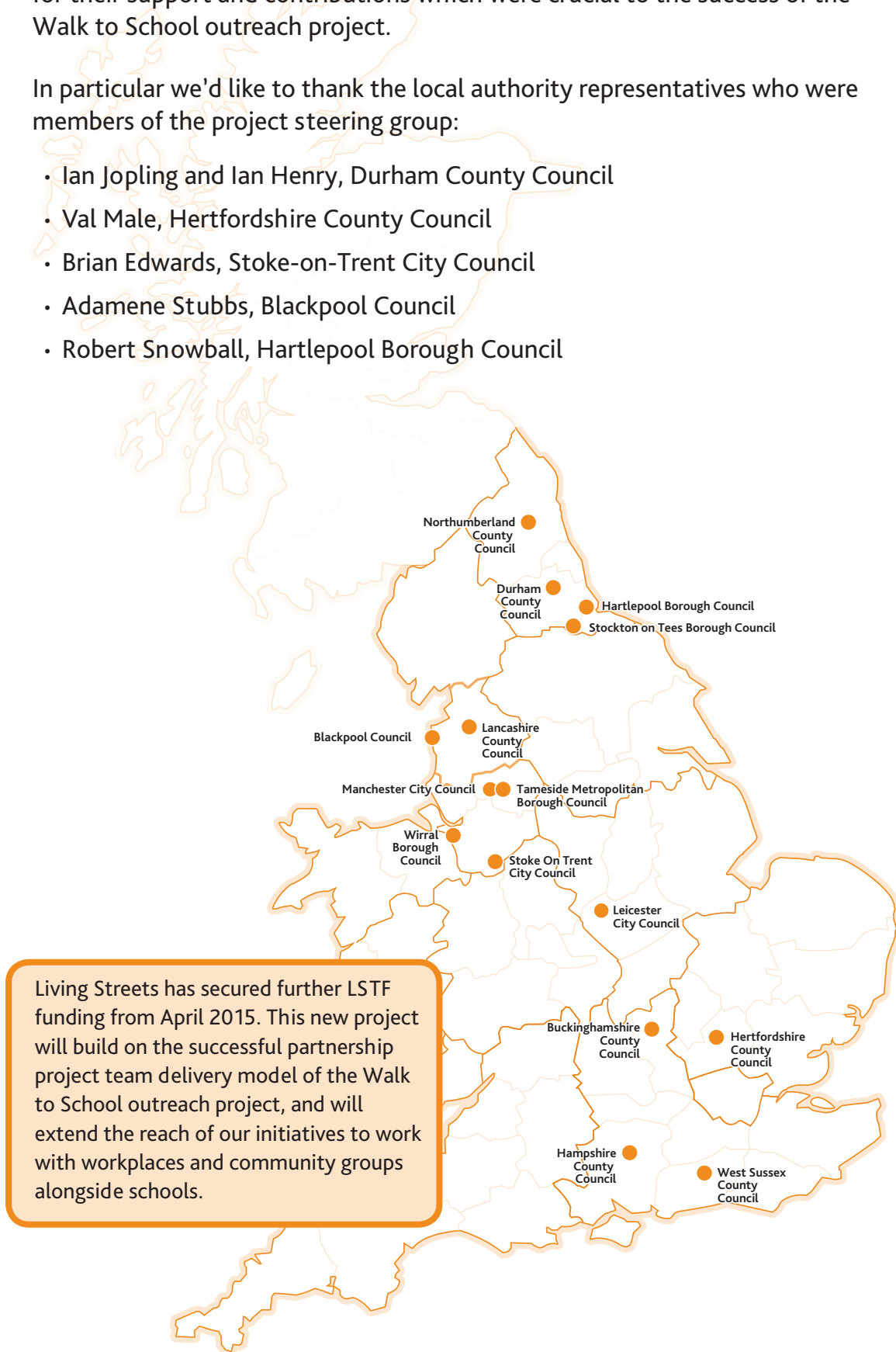
- 1 Partnership working
- 2 Inspiring behaviour change
- 3 Physical infrastructure improvements.

## Our partners

The Walk to School outreach project took place in partnership with 15 local authorities in England. Living Streets would like to thank all our project partners for their support and contributions which were crucial to the success of the Walk to School outreach project.

In particular we'd like to thank the local authority representatives who were members of the project steering group:

- Ian Jopling and Ian Henry, Durham County Council
- Val Male, Hertfordshire County Council
- Brian Edwards, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Adamene Stubbs, Blackpool Council
- Robert Snowball, Hartlepool Borough Council



Living Streets has secured further LSTF funding from April 2015. This new project will build on the successful partnership project team delivery model of the Walk to School outreach project, and will extend the reach of our initiatives to work with workplaces and community groups alongside schools.



# 1

## Partnership working

Building and facilitating relationships with key partners and stakeholders was essential to the project's success. We applied this approach not only when managing the project team, but also when embedding staff within decision-making bodies (such as local authorities) and targeting and influencing wider partners.

### The project team

The Walk to School outreach project was delivered by a team of 15 Living Streets project coordinators, and supported by a range of Living Streets staff including regional managers and head office staff.

A link officer was identified within each local authority to act as the main point of contact, and was actively involved in planning and delivering the project in each area.

The entire Living Streets project team came together at regular intervals to share successes, best practice and contribute to project plans. In addition, a partners' meeting was held annually, bringing link officers and partners at participating local authorities together, along with the Living Streets team, to review project progress and contribute to overall plans.

The project was overseen by a project steering group consisting of the Living Streets staff managing the project and representatives from five partner authorities.

With this approach we secured commitment and buy-in from key stakeholders who participated in planning and key decision points over the course of the project.

### Winning recognition

The Walk to School outreach project was a Best LSTF Project Team Award Finalist at the Smarter Travel Awards 2015, sponsored by the Department for Transport, demonstrating the positive endorsement of our approach.

## Working closely with local authorities

We agreed that each Living Streets project coordinator would be embedded within the partner local authority, splitting their time between the relevant local authority office, Living Streets offices and being out in schools across the country.

This ensured everyone was aware of how the project fitted alongside other council priorities and activities. It also gave our staff a unique position to influence decision making, ensure the project was kept high on the agenda and facilitate its smooth running.

In addition Living Streets staff offered the local authority a neutral voice when approaching schools and the wider community. They could act as an intermediary in supporting effective communication between participants and the local authority.

The nature of the project meant it cut across a range of local authority priorities, from transport to health, communities and education. The project coordinator helped these departments work together to ensure a joint approach to behaviour change accessing funding from a range of sources and ensuring the right decision makers were involved.

## Engaging wider partners

As an ambitious project team, we looked to involve wider partners to deliver on the objectives of the project on both national and local levels. Key to this was our relationship with Modeshift, the membership organisation for active and sustainable travel, which has a majority local authority membership.

Modeshift STARS (Sustainable Travel Accreditation and Recognition for Schools) is a national awards scheme established to recognise schools that demonstrate excellence in supporting walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable travel.

The scheme is popular in many of the local authority areas we work in. Living Streets worked collaboratively with Modeshift to avoid duplication of effort and maximise impact.

Modeshift will continue to work with Living Streets as an official project partner to enhance the scheme by working with schools on a range of interventions to increase walking.



## Collaboration in action

In Hampshire the county council has been commissioning Modeshift STARS for primary schools since 2008. At the start of our project, Living Streets coordinators were trained to use and administer STARS and actively promote it to the 110 schools engaged with WoW through the Walk to School outreach project.

We also supported STARS by presenting and exhibiting at STARS conferences which attracted schools from Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight.



# Partnership working in Tameside

In Tameside, our network of project partners included public health professionals and New Charter Housing Trust. Both groups recognised the value the project had in achieving their objectives.

Our School Route Audits (SRAs), in which the community comes together to identify barriers to walking, helped New Charter to identify and carry out improvements on their land to benefit residents. By working with us, they were able to engage the local community directly in this process, through events such as a bulb planting day, arranged with the Living Streets coordinator and involving children from the local school.

Our partners in public health recognised the benefits of improving the walking environment so more local people would have the opportunity to increase their physical activity. They contributed £14,000 towards practical improvements identified through the School Route Audit process.

This funding will help the community make improvements that otherwise would not have been possible.

They include:

- cutting back vegetation and improving lighting on a popular pedestrian route to Greswell Primary School
- constructing a footpath link to a canal route which improved access to Fairfield Road Primary School
- installing fun 'pencil' bollards outside Aldwyn Primary School to prevent pavement parking and brighten up the approach to school.

# Partnership working: what we recommend

**1 Make sure the project aligns with the local authorities' priorities.**

Walking initiatives can support a range of areas, including travel, public health and urban renewal.

**2 It's smart to embed project coordinators within local authorities.**

There they have the chance to become part of the team, ensure activities are coordinated with other projects and identify opportunities for departments to work together in areas like travel, health and engineering.

**3 Join the dots between local and national.**

Linking the local and national focus ensures you can adapt to differences between local authority areas. It also helps identify local opportunities like new partners and additional funding. Being supported by a national charity adds weight to key messages and makes project participants feel part of something larger.

## 2

# Inspiring behaviour change

Our walking initiatives are based on over 20 years' experience working to get young people walking more.

These initiatives focus on six key themes:

- 1 engaging schools, children and communities
- 2 offering incentives to get children walking
- 3 ensuring children and teachers own each project
- 4 making projects adaptable so they're effective anywhere
- 5 raising the profile of our projects
- 6 measuring impact.

The overall goal is to change behaviour. But behaviour change is not a linear experience.

A huge number of factors influence every element of our behaviour at any given moment. As practitioners aiming to increase active travel, we need to be aware of these factors when encouraging children to walk more.



## 2.1 Engaging schools, children and communities

Living Streets coordinators focused on engaging schools in agreed target areas to become part of the project.

This involved identifying the relevant member of staff in the school and explaining the benefits to pupils, parents and staff of taking part. We prepared standard letters and materials to explain what Living Streets was offering, what was needed from staff and the school, and the nature of the project activities.

There were also template letters and information sheets for staff and parents to be circulated once the school was signed up to take part.

### Being clear on responsibilities

As part of the recruitment process, all schools were asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that confirmed they would be taking part, which clearly outlined Living Streets' and the school's responsibilities. This helped ensure the schools were actively engaged, managed expectations and mitigated for schools dropping out of the project at a later date.

Once schools were engaged, coordinators organised activities such as assemblies and staff training days to launch the project. They also provided the school with all the materials and practical tools they needed to take part. Living Streets developed a range of resource packs for different types of engagement, such as our Park and Stride toolkit.

### School Route Audits

We believe that streets are most successful when the people who use them have the opportunity to influence decisions about them. Our School Route Audits (which have their roots in our highly commended Community Street Audits) are a practical way to do just that.

A School Route Audit allows pupils, their families, teachers and local community staff to identify the barriers to walking to school that most concern them. These could include everything from road congestion to a lack of street lights on the route to school. After the audit, we can then start the process of finding solutions together.

## Setting up walking zones

A walking zone is a clearly defined area around a school, within which children and families are encouraged to walk rather than drive. Families who live in, or near the walking zone are encouraged to walk to and from school every day. Those who live further away and choose to drive are asked to park outside the zone and walk the rest of their journey.



### Walking zones in action

Pupils at Edward Bryant school in Bognor Regis faced many barriers to walking to school. Issues like speeding vehicles and traffic congestion were brought up during the community School Route Audit, as was the lack of pedestrian crossing. As a result West Sussex County Council carried out a feasibility study and a formal community consultation for a formalised School Safety Zone. Installed in November 2013, the zone has helped to keep students safer on their way to school.



## 2.2 Offering incentives to get children walking

Offering incentives to children and staff has inspired more people to get walking, boosting the overall impact of our projects.

For primary school pupils the incentive for taking part is a collectible badge awarded for walking to school at least once a week. At secondary school level high street shopping vouchers, offered through prize draws, are popular.

We've also used shopping vouchers as incentives to encourage teachers to collect and return monitoring data. This has helped tackle the low response rates experienced in the past.

Competition is another strong incentive. For instance, during the Free Your Feet challenge in Stoke rival schools competed to see who could walk the most.

## 2.3 Ensuring children and teachers own each project

A key element to our success is to give staff and pupils ownership of the project where possible.

This is an effective way to make sure it becomes embedded within the school. It also supports the sustainability of the work as schools feel able to continue the activities beyond the end of the project without on-going support.

For instance, the Walk once a Week (WoW) scheme for primary schools is designed to be run independently by the school, often supported by WoW champion pupils, junior road safety teams or other groups within the school.

In secondary schools the campaigns are designed to be student-led, asking them to lead on identifying and tackling barriers to walking to school and encouraging peers to walk.

### Making walking part of the curriculum

At St Peter's Academy in Stoke-on-Trent Living Streets worked with pupils and teachers to put the benefits of walking at the heart of geography lessons.

Cuts to local bus routes meant promoting active travel was more important than ever – and so embedding active travel into the curriculum was welcomed by everyone.

After consulting with the head of humanities we helped brainstorm a six-week scheme of work which covered subjects from the health benefits of active travel to how to complete a School Route Audit.

Teachers welcomed the consultation, since it reduced their workload, and the year sevens got a new and exciting scheme of work.



## Pupil power in Wirral

At St John Plessington College in Wirral a group of students successfully campaigned for a new zebra crossing to help encourage more pupils to walk to school. Calling themselves the 'SJP Road Safety Team' they used Living Streets' Campaign in a Box tools to contact the local council and request safety improvements.

"We have written to Mrs Muspratt at the council," wrote the team on their blog.

"We are hoping to get some speed guns to check the average speed that people drive around the school. A success would be to slow the cars down as they are speeding."

As a direct result of their campaign a new zebra crossing was installed with Living Streets contributing £10,000, and Wirral Council funding the remainder.

## 2.4 Safer routes for everyone – making projects adaptable

Walking is the most accessible form of exercise, but it is the accessibility of our streets that defines where we can and can't go. For students with disabilities the street environment can pose a serious barrier to independent travel. A significant majority of SEN (special educational needs) students are reliant on mini-bus, taxi or private car for their school journeys.

With this in mind, we were keen to be as inclusive as possible when recruiting schools to the project and have worked with several SEN schools in partnership with local authorities. This has helped us to further understand the specific physical and emotional barriers to physical activity that these students face.

Through these projects students have:

- created maps of the local area providing key information on safe walking routes
- run campaigns to raise awareness of the difficulties of getting around the streets for wheelchair users and students with restricted mobility
- engaged staff and parents to build trust and confidence in enabling students to travel independently.

Living Streets has further supported the programmes by securing physical changes around the SEN schools including improving crossing points and signage.

### Engaging children at Meadow Hall

Because some of the pupils at Meadow Wood Primary School in Hertfordshire have special needs, we made sure that our project resources reflected their own individual concerns. For instance, pupils were able to swim their way to a WoW badge, not just walk. Meanwhile, during the School Route Audit pupils were encouraged to record when they felt bumps on their wheelchairs, or were helped on their way by dropped kerbs.

### Speaking the same language

In Hampshire we worked with schools which have a high population of Nepalese pupils. To help everyone fully engage with the project we produced and offered translated versions of our resources and organised a special walking event from the Park and Stride point to the school.



### Campaigning for change

Pupils with special educational needs at Catcote Academy in Hartlepool faced a big challenge when it came to getting around. The crossing outside their school featured markings that had faded over time, meaning drivers would often park over it and preventing students from being able to cross the road.

Through the project we empowered students to ask the local council for improvements through a student-led campaign. The improvements, including new signage and a better zebra crossing have been a big win for everyone at the school which helps encourage pupils to move more.

## 2.5 Raising the profile of our projects

We want to show as many people as possible that walking works. Linking local success stories to national behaviour change campaigns gives us the chance to connect with more people across the UK.

We maximised regional opportunities around Living Streets' national events including National Walking Month. As part of Walk to School Week 2013, more than 400 pupils put together a giant jigsaw featuring Walk to School mascot Strider on Blackpool promenade, an event that captured the imagination of newspapers and radio.

The following year during Walk to School Week 2014 we organised a series dance walks around the country, involving schools, local authority partners and businesses.

The local-first nature of our projects means we can engage MPs and councillors who can then influence national policy.

It also helps create powerful campaigns, such as our recent petition calling on David Cameron to make walking to school safer and easier. The petition attracted 20,000 signatures and inspired children to write personally to the prime minister about why they felt walking was so important.

At local level we shared success and progress with local authority partners through our popular termly 'report cards' – a snappy and visual one-page summary of all the key information. Nationally, we celebrated success through our regular e-news bulletins and at partner meetings.

Overall, the project has received almost 200 pieces of separate coverage across a range of media, reaching over three million people.

## Strictly come walking

Our partnership approach (alongside the passion and energy of 38 primary and secondary schools) made the Dance Walk events a morning to remember.

In May 2014 over 3,500 pupils, parents and teachers met our challenge to dance to school in Newcastle, Blackpool, Wirral, West Sussex, Stoke-on-Trent and Leicester.

Behind the scenes Living Streets coordinated the national events with support from local authority staff across a variety of departments including road safety and sustainable transport.

The Dance Walk events were a fun way to celebrate the benefits of walking to school for pupils, their families, schools and communities. And in November 2014 Dance Walks won the Modeshift Award for Walking in recognition of their innovation, pupil involvement and partnership working.



## 2.6 Measuring impact

Across the three years of the project we estimate that 5.7 million journeys have been converted from car to walking, and a further 2.8 million journeys converted from car to Park and Stride, successfully meeting the project aims.

At the start of the project we established clear systems to measure the impact and results. These included in-school surveys to capture before and after walking rates. Among participating primary schools, these showed an average sustained 23 per cent increase in walking one year after the project started, with a corresponding fall in car use. And in secondary schools walking rates typically increased by around 13 per cent post-intervention.

In year two we introduced our interactive whiteboard tool, the Travel Tracker. With it, primary school pupils record their journey to school each day in the classroom, through a fun, easy-to-use interface which further engages them in the project. The Travel Tracker also provides us, the schools and the local authorities with robust mode-of-travel data to monitor the success of the project.

### Healthier, more confident kids

We also commissioned an objective external evaluation, developed in consultation with our project partners. Over 18 months The Centre for Local Economic Strategies surveyed pupils, ran focus groups, interviewed stakeholders and concluded that the project had been highly effective in getting more children walking and in contributing to local and national priorities.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, a second study<sup>16</sup> into the social impact of the project examined the value of the outcomes to participating children.

These included:

- improved health
- increased confidence
- greater independence
- improved social connections (time with friends).





# Behaviour change: what we recommend

## 1 Find out what incentives work for each age group.

While badges work for primary pupils, secondary school students may prefer vouchers. Think about what motivates young people to take part: younger pupils might be interested in helping the planet or being healthy, teenagers could enjoy the independence and time with friends that walking to school brings.

## 2 Ensure clear communications to manage roles, responsibilities and expectations for the project.

Use consistent messages and resources, and tools such as a Memorandum of Understanding, to achieve buy-in from the start.

## 3 Use regular monitoring and evaluation and be prepared to change and adapt the project.

Also make sure you're getting an external perspective and involving beneficiaries and stakeholders to get the full picture.

# 3

## Physical improvements – a lasting legacy

Inspiring people to walk more is just the start. Findings from our previous projects suggest that communities need the kind of environment that makes walking a safe and simple choice.

Over the course of the project we've worked intensively with 364 schools to identify and tackle the barriers to walking. Along the way we've engaged staff, parents, local residents and businesses to attend School Route Audits.

During the audit participants walk around the area on foot, to create audit maps that highlight accessibility, safety or concerns about conditions – and make recommendations for physical improvements.

Because pupils, parents and teachers are directly involved in the audit they're more likely to feel they own the project, and be empowered through the solutions they help implement.

### Cost-effective improvements

During the project we identified cost-effective physical improvements which help overcome barriers to walking. For example, in year two, we saw £214,000 spent on physical improvements that benefited school walking routes for 10,000 pupils and their families.

This process starts with the School Route Audit. Once everyone is happy with the findings a feasibility study is carried out to evaluate which improvements are possible.

This takes into account:

- the structural and engineering work required
- property rights
- time commitments
- financial commitments
- the cost to the local authority, schools, residents and other stakeholders.

This process takes quite a bit of time. Because we work on short timescales we look at what can be done quickly and effectively as well as in the longer-term.



## Enabling life-saving changes

Safety improvements don't have to be expensive. Pupils and staff at Uplands Primary School in Leicester, working alongside Living Streets, made a life-saving change to their environment without any associated spend.

After a comprehensive School Route Audit they found that the area outside the school entrance was a big cause for concern. Some parents were illegally parking outside the school gates, which meant pupils had to weave between cars to reach their classes.

The solution was simple. We spoke with the council and asked if the school's lollipop person could move from the nearby traffic lights to the school gates.

After a successful trial the move is now permanent, which means a safer journey to school for more pupils.

"Following the relocation of the School Crossing Patrol, parking on the zig-zag lines has significantly reduced and the majority of our families are now safely crossing the road," said head teacher Michelle Orton.

**"It is amazing how such a simple adjustment has impacted on the safety of families."**



## Providing solutions

Since the project began we've worked with councils to improve crossings, signs, footways, traffic speeds and road layout.

We also help make improvements happen like:

- resurfacing a wet, slippery and badly-lit footpath to school with 'Starp' at Greenway First and St Thomas More schools. This luminous, high quality path provides safer access for pupils.
- installing a wider pedestrian gate at Brookland Infant and Junior schools so more pupils can cross the busy driveway and enter the school quickly.
- parent waiting shelters built or improved at four schools in Durham.

# Physical improvements: what we recommend

**1 Make sure you have buy-in from everyone.**

The land rights ownership, engineering and road works, as well as the way the council approves schemes and budgets all needs to be considered.

**2 Be realistic about timescales.**

You need a lot of time to make improvements and to have the impact measured before seeing the results.

**3 Look further afield for funding to implement improvements.**

Different local authority directorates, such as transportation, public health, highways and public realm may have funding available. Physical improvements can support objectives for a range of different directorates.



# How Living Streets can help you

Living Streets can help local authorities meet multiple targets for children and their families including:

- increasing walk to school rates
- enhancing children's independence and enjoyment of walking
- helping build good habits for life
- identifying and tackling physical and perceived barriers to walking
- improving public health.

## Simple and cost-effective

Living Streets' Walk to School outreach project has shown that simple cost-effective interventions work.

 = £1.31

At just £1.31 per pupil WoW is a simple, proven, cost effective way of getting children walking to school.<sup>17</sup>

£1 > £7.64

A recent independent study projected that for every £1 invested in our Walk to School programme (including WoW) there is a return of £7.64 in benefits to the wider community.<sup>18</sup>

## Where we fit in

Local authorities need support with everything from boosting the local economy to improving public health. As you've seen in this guide, walking is proven to help with all these issues.

As the leading national charity working to make walking safer and easier we have over 85 years' experience promoting walking for everybody.

We can offer:

- an expert, evidence-based range of solutions. We have the knowledge to deliver innovative projects proven to improve outcomes for everyone.
- a cost-effective approach. We work to ensure our projects deliver tangible results and value for money .
- projects tailored to your needs. Living Streets recognises there is never a 'one size fits all' solution when tackling behaviour change. We provide the right solution to meet the specific needs of all our partners.

### What our partners say:

**"Living Streets have been excellent to work with. Extremely positive, helpful and understanding. Great partnership working balancing the needs of both the charity and the local authority."**

– Buckinghamshire County Council

A survey of our partners showed 98 per cent rated our work good or excellent and 100 per cent would recommend us to others.





### Living Streets

The national charity that works to make walking safer and easier.

We have a vision that every child who can walk to school does so, and are committed to reversing the decline in young people's walking levels.

### Walking to school delivers:

- A safer and healthier population through improved physical and mental health for children, parents and carers, plus improved road safety at the school gates
- Improved transport capacity through fewer cars on the road, so reducing congestion
- A stronger economy and reduced cost of living through cost savings by reduced carbon emissions and improved public health.

# References

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- 2 Health and Social Care Information Centre (2013) Health Survey for England 2012
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- 6 Rauner, R, Walters, R, Avery, M and Wanser, T (2013) Evidence that Aerobic Fitness Is More Salient than Weight Status in Predicting Standardized Math and Reading Outcomes in Fourth- through Eighth- Grade Students, *The Journal of Pediatrics* – 04 March 2013 (10.1016/j.jpeds.2013.01.006)
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- 8 Surveyer Transport Network [www.transport-network.co.uk/1200-children-a-month-involved-in-road-accidents-near-schools/9346#.U3IrSv53vMB](http://www.transport-network.co.uk/1200-children-a-month-involved-in-road-accidents-near-schools/9346#.U3IrSv53vMB)
- 9 Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, 2010
- 10 Calculated using AA motoring costs and National Travel Survey average distance driven to school
- 11 Living Streets LSTF proposal
- 12 Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, 2012
- 13 Department for Education, National Pupil Projections, 2013
- 14 Must try harder: How school travel can make the grade [www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/Must%20try%20harder%20final.pdf](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/Must%20try%20harder%20final.pdf)
- 15 Final report is expected in May 2015 and will be available on request
- 16 Social Return on Investment study, available from Living Streets on request
- 17 Economic analysis carried out by Capita, March 2014
- 18 Total cost of WoW £315.12 based on an average school of 240 pupils with 60 per cent walking rates.



Goffs Oak  
Primary School

Goffs O  
Primary Scho

### Get in touch

To find out more about the work we are doing in your area, or how we can help you increase walking rates in schools, workplaces and communities please contact your nearest Living Streets office.

[www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-in-touch](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-in-touch)

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