

6.12 Safer Routes to School

OBJECTIVE

To provide safe walking and cycling routes to schools, reducing the need for children to be dependent on a parent or guardian to drive them to school.

ISSUES

6.12.1 Recent surveys at Edinburgh primary schools show that on average 22% of children aged 7 - 11 are being driven to school. It is estimated that, nationally, almost one in five urban car trips in the morning peak are taking children to school.

6.12.2 The concern is that a culture of car dependency is being established at an early age. Growing evidence suggests that this is reducing health and fitness. But the 'school run' is not an inevitable consequence of increasing car ownership. It is extremely unusual in most Northern European countries, despite higher levels of car ownership. Part of growing up is developing independence. Walking/cycling to and from school is one way to do this.



School Crossing Patrol

6.12.3 The Council is committed to encouraging walking and cycling to school by developing safer routes to schools (SRTS). Between 1998 and 2002 the Scottish Executive made funds available specifically for the implementation of SRTS and, over this period, seven schemes were implemented. This source of funding has now, to the Council's disappointment, been withdrawn, and SRTS must be funded from the Council's general capital budget.

6.12.4 Safer Routes projects have been or are ongoing at a number of schools throughout the city. These are sometimes limited to new pedestrian crossing facilities at key junctions, but may extend to widespread traffic management and traffic calming to remove traffic from residential streets around the school, as at Boroughmuir in Bruntsfield. The first 20mph speed limits outside primary schools have also been implemented at this location, outside Sciennes Primary and at three other schools in the city. However, at current levels of funding, the full list of schemes will not be implemented for over 50 years. Implementation is prioritised on the basis of:

- Numbers of child casualties close to the school;
- The type of road on which the school is located; and
- The school's interest in SRTS, as their co-operation is very important if benefits are to be maximised.

6.12.5 The Council is already committed, where practical, to introducing 20mph speed limits at all primary schools and there is a rolling programme to make 'School Keep Clear' zigzag markings enforceable by the Council's parking attendants.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AUDIT

6.12.6 Providing safe walking and cycling facilities from residential areas to local schools means social exclusion is tackled head on. In establishing the habit of walking and cycling as a mode of transport early on, research has shown that it is more likely the

child will maintain these types of activity into adulthood thus contributing to the overall targets of the LTS.

POLICIES

The Council will:

- SR1 Encourage head teachers, and parents/guardians, to develop local proposals to encourage walking and cycling to school, and allocate sufficient funding to SRTS that a reasonable proportion of these proposals can be implemented.
- SR2 Work with schools and parent groups to facilitate development of School Travel Plans in conjunction with any SRTS infrastructure works to be implemented.
- SR3 Prioritise Safer Routes to School schemes based on the following criteria:
 - Numbers of child casualties close to the school;
 - The type of road on which the school is located; and
 - The school’s interest in SRTS.
- SR4 Promote road safety awareness at all schools in the city in consultation with head teachers and Lothian and Borders Police (see LTS Road Safety chapter for full details).
- SR5 Encourage schools to allow pupils to cycle to school and improve cycle rack security.
- SR6 Support and co-ordinate the work of Lothian and Borders Police, schools and voluntary organisations in training child cyclists.

ACTION PLAN

Base Strategy

Throughout the period of the Strategy, the Council will:

- SRP1 Deal with day to day issues relating to Safer Routes from schools not included in project works.

In the short term, the Council will:

- SRP2 Continue with its Safer Routes to School work, expanding the programme to include other priority schools, as funds permit.
- SRP3 Implement 20-mph speed limits at primary schools where appropriate, as funds permit.
- SRP4 Continue to provide cycle parking at schools as required.
- SRP5 Complete the programme of making school keep clear zigzag markings enforceable.

Preferred Strategy

The Council will carry out the measures listed in the Base Strategy, and will in addition:

- SRP6 Carry out Safer Routes to School project activities at all schools.
- SRP7 Implement each Safer Routes to School Plan.
- SRP8 Develop Travel Plans at all schools in conjunction with Safer Routes activities (see Chapter 6.14).
- SRP9 Monitor the success of a sample of school travel plans, to benefit from this information in implementing future SRTS projects.