Children’s Independent Mobility: An International Comparison and Recommendations for Action

Appendix III. Working Paper: Policies and actions to enable Children’s Independent Mobility
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This is an appendix to the report, *Children’s Independent Mobility*:

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This working paper considers the policies and actions that could be used to enable greater levels of children’s independent mobility. An earlier draft was produced for the project workshop held in September 2013 with this paper being based on the research done before that date.
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1 Introduction: the challenge for policy

The findings from the international surveys show low levels of children’s independent mobility are typical in the 16 countries studied. A significant decline in children’s independent mobility has also been observed in England since 1971 and Germany since 1990 (Shaw et al, 2013) and the literature review included in this latter work also presented clear evidence from other sources that children’s physical, mental and social development are likely to benefit from increased independent mobility.

However, the often long-term and sometimes hard to perceive benefits of independent mobility tend to be outweighed by parental concerns related to the more immediate and obvious dangers presented by traffic, strangers and even other children (e.g. from bullying). Shaw et al. (2013) found traffic to the greatest concern for parents in England and Germany in regard to granting independent mobility and traffic has, not surprisingly, been reported elsewhere as a key concern (e.g. Hillman, et al., 1990; Lynch, 1977; Karsten et al., 2002; Johansson, 2006; and Zwerts et al., 2010). Additionally, increased car dependency – by preference and need – has reduced provision of local facilities. This in turn means longer distance to access them, which is another important factor of concern for parents in granting their children the permission to travel alone.

Previous work (reported in Shaw et al, 2013) highlighted that parent’s willingness to grant independent mobility to their children going out alone is affected by real and perceived risks such as traffic, stranger danger and bullying and the nature of the external environment. It is also affected by the parent’s perception of their child’s abilities to safely negotiate the external environment. However, in addition to this there would seem to be an important normative aspect to granting children independent mobility. Parents may not grant their children independent mobility because to do so would be to risk displaying poor parenting

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6 Zwerts et al., 2010. How children view their travel behaviour: a case study from Flanders (Belgium). *Journal of Transport Geography*. 
skills and associated perceived or real social censure (Dowling, 2000\textsuperscript{7}; Dyck, 1990\textsuperscript{8}; Sanger, 1995\textsuperscript{9}).

A recent survey by Play England for Playday 2013 on the barriers to children playing outside where they live illustrates this point\textsuperscript{10}. As well as concerns about traffic (53 per cent of parents expressed concerns) and stranger danger (40 per cent), 28 per cent of the parents surveyed expressed fear of being judged by neighbours if they let their children play unsupervised outdoors, while almost a third (32 per cent) believe allowing their children to play ball games or make noise outdoors would cause problems with other residents. Social norms may be a powerful mechanism acting against children being granted independent mobility even when the levels of risk and the child’s capabilities to negotiate the external environmental alone would seem to warrant independence.

Similar issues were apparent in our previous report in this area (Shaw et al, 2013) in which a polarisation could be observed between those wishing to see a society in which children’s independent mobility should be significantly increased on one hand and, on the other, those who see letting children out alone as dangerous and irresponsible and even the curtailment of children’s freedom as a necessary enabler of the wider benefits of a car-dependent society. Addressing social norms requires a very different response from policy-makers and practitioners and broader society to those measures focused on, for example, shaping the built environment.

So while there appear to benefits to be gained for children from increasing their independent mobility there are multiple challenges related to traffic, urban (and rural) environments and social norms to be overcome. What can be done by policy-makers and other actors to enable an increase in children’s independent mobility?

1.1 Learning from existing policy and actions

To move towards answering the question of what policy-makers could do to increase children’s independent mobility this working paper considers the evidence from a range of policies and actions to improve children’s independent mobility that have been implemented by public authorities (local, national, European and international), international organisations and non-governmental organisations. It then makes

\begin{itemize}
  \item For further information see: \url{http://www.playengland.org.uk/news/2013/08/unwelcoming-communities-stop-children-playing-out.aspx}. This survey also notes a decline in the proportion of children being allowed to play outside and found that over 50 per cent of adults reported playing out at least seven times a week when they were growing up, compared to less than a quarter of children (23 per cent) today, with 40 per cent of children saying they want to play out more.
\end{itemize}
recommendations on the range of measures and actions that are likely to be required to significantly increase children’s independent mobility.

The aim of this review of policies and actions is two-fold. On the one hand, the cases collected offer a snapshot of the ways in which children’s independent mobility has been addressed by policy-makers and practitioners across a range of countries; on the other, the examples gathered shed light on strengths and weaknesses of the interventions implemented which future approaches to increasing children’s mobility can learn from.

The case studies collected for this document were drawn from both primary and secondary sources of information – e.g. reports and databases prepared for EU institutions (such as SMILE project) and international organisations (e.g. World Health Organization). It has to be noted that this review is not meant to be a comprehensive collection of best practice, since a wealth of policies, programmes, initiatives and campaigns have been implemented worldwide, review of which is beyond the resources available for this work.

There are few evaluations of interventions

The undertaking of a thorough analysis of policies to enable children’s independent mobility is hampered by a scarcity of project evaluations of the interventions made, i.e. while there is plenty of information available on actions taken, there is very little rigorous evaluation to assess the success of implementation or its impact. Therefore, it is difficult to provide objective data about the factors of the success/failure of an intervention. Nevertheless, the examples here reported still provide a useful insight on the variety of approaches adopted by institutions and organisations to deal with children’s independent mobility.

Children’s independent mobility is rarely an explicit policy objective

In our search for case studies very few policy interventions were identified where children’s independent mobility was an explicit objective. Yet, there is a wealth of cases in which children’s independent mobility was pursued as a likely corollary goal of broad initiatives and programmes addressing children well-being or as part of broader urban renewal projects. At a national level, children’s independent mobility can result from programmes aimed at improving general living conditions and well-being of children. At an urban level, many initiatives are aimed at developing the “child-friendly city” agenda – see Boxes 1 and 2, which are aimed at ensuring children’s rights, including walking safely in the streets on their own, are fulfilled.

For these reasons, the examples given here address children’s autonomy in more general terms such as the freedom to engage in activities including playing, walking, cycling etc. without or with minimum supervision from adults.
Box 1: The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative

The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative was launched by Unicef and UN-Habitat in 1996 as a multi-stakeholder partnership to put children at the centre of the urban agenda. It has identified nine principal building blocks for local administrations aiming to be child-friendly which need to be addressed in the context of long-term commitment to the delivery of child rights:

1. Child participation at all stages of planning and implementation.
3. A child rights strategy.
4. A coordinating mechanism or agency for children.
5. Assessment of policy and programme impact on children.
6. A budget and resources for children.
8. Awareness-raising and capacity building on child rights.

The child-friendly cities approach has been implemented in diverse settings in both developing and developed countries. Approaches vary from single-city endeavours (e.g. Amman, Jordan) to national-level networks (e.g. France) with multi-level approaches being an important aspect (e.g. Brazil). In high-income countries the focus has been on urban planning, creating safe and green environments and child participation. In low-income countries, service delivery in health, nutrition, education and child protection have been prioritised.


Box 2: Child Friendly Cities in detail: the case of Leeds.

The City of Leeds with the involvement of children and young people elaborated an action plan in June 2012 to convey their ideas and create twelve “wishes” about a child friendly Leeds:

1. Children and young people can make safe journeys and easily travel around the city;
2. Children and young people find the city centre welcoming and safe, with friendly places to go, have fun and play;
3. There are places and spaces to play and things to do, in all areas and open to all;
4. Children and young people can easily find out what they want to know, when they want it and how they want it;
5. Children, young people and adults have a good understanding of children’s rights, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
6. Children and young people are treated fairly and feel respected;
7. Children and young people have the support and information they need to make healthy lifestyle choices;
8. All our learning places identify and address the barriers that prevent children and young people from engaging in and enjoying learning;

For further information see: [http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/CFC_Action%20plan%20v5.pdf](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/CFC_Action%20plan%20v5.pdf)
Children do more than just go to school

When considering children’s independent mobility there is often a tendency to assume a focus only on the journey to and from school. However, it needs to be remembered that children do, or want to do, much more than go to school and need to be enabled to access a much wider range of places and destinations. As Shaw et al. (2013) note, once weekends and school holidays are taken into account, children in the UK only go to school on around half of the days in the year and less than half of their waking hours on school days are spent at school. For this reason, we have sought initiatives supporting not only independent journeys to school, but also any other activities outside school that children might want to engage in independently.

2 Approaches to enabling children’s independent mobility

On the basis of the interventions we have considered, approaches to enabling children’s independent mobility can be grouped into main five categories, some of which are more focused on policies intended to affect the physical environment and nature of traffic in it, while others are intended to affect the perception of modes of travel children (and parents) and ability to use them safely. These categories are:

1. Urban planning interventions,
2. Public transport policy,
3. Mobility programmes,
4. Education programmes,
5. Campaigns and one-off events,
   a. Travel behaviours,
   b. Independent play,

See: http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/12%20Wishes%20for%20Child%20Friendly%20Leeds.pdf
Further details are given for each of these categories of intervention below.

2.1 Urban Planning Projects

This group of interventions includes fully-fledged policy and planning interventions aimed at creating safe environment fit for children. Due to their nature, these projects are proposed and developed by local governments with the involvement of private professionals and, in the case of participatory design, of children and schools. Such urban planning projects consist of changes in the physical allocation and use of the space within neighbourhoods.

Some interesting examples are: Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Dapto dreaming project, Wollongong, Australia; Donnerschwee wird freizeitfit, Oldenburg, Germany; Gun Wharf Home Zone, Plymouth, UK; Home Zones, Bristol, UK; Planning for Real with Children, Rome, Italy; Play happens everywhere — Vauban, Germany; Safe Routes to School Program, California and Stapelbäddsparken – Malmö, Sweden.

Building Blocks for a Child Friendly Rotterdam - Rotterdam, Netherlands

In Rotterdam the motivation for developing a child friendly city goes beyond meeting the (important) objective of meeting the needs of children, to making the city a place in which families wish to live and is seen as part of the strategy for economic and social regeneration of the city.

“Being a Child Friendly City...means that children form an intrinsic part of the city and should be allowed space everywhere to be young, to blossom and to become an asset to the city.”

“Rotterdam provides a practical roadmap for making urban neighbourhoods a better place for children to grow up in. With the implementation of these building blocks, the city truly becomes an appealing place for families to live and play in.”

The ‘Building Blocks’ is an urban planning method that incorporates action to develop the following elements:

2. Public space: outdoor play areas, green play areas in the area outside the front door and public space meeting children’s needs;
3. Local Facilities: such as shops, sport clubs and extended schools: i.e. a primary or a secondary school offering additional activity programmes;

13 For further information see: http://www.rotterdam.nl/JOS/kindvriendelijk/Rotterdam%20City%20with%20a%20future.pdf

**Donnerschwee wird freizeitfit – Oldenburg, Germany**

The City of Oldenburg was the winner of the European Award of Excellence "City for Children" 2012 on the topic of "Child-friendly Neighbourhood Planning" with the project "Donnerschwee wird freizeitfit". Donnerschwee is a district of Oldenburg lacking of open space and green areas. The project, supported by ExWoSt\(^{14}\), involved young people in planning process: in the summer 2009 around 600 children and young people were actively engaged in designing ideas to improve the area. Children investigated their district by taking photos or interviewing residents. Sixteen adolescents were educated in different types of project management skills (e.g. in moderation and public relation works) to support them in running their own projects. One of these was the organisation of an Open-Air-Festival. This project continued in 2010. Some ideas of children participating the year before were realised, such as the temporary use of a former barrack for skateboarders and BMX drivers. A summer feast for young people and all other neighbours was organised in this area, not usually open to the public. The festival comprised various activities, such as guided tours, concerts and theatre performances by the youngsters\(^{15}\).

**Gun Wharf Home Zone – Plymouth, UK\(^{16}\)**

Gun Wharf was formerly a run-down post-war estate redeveloped in 2006 with intensive involvement from the local community. This redevelopment project took into account the importance of pedestrians, cyclists and children playing in the area. For instance, the use of home zone principles has significantly improved the environment on the estate. Priority of pedestrians over vehicles is enabled by street design. Additionally, roads are shared by drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic calming is achieved through the choice of road surface materials, a twisting road layout and the positioning of bollards and planters. Traffic speed is restricted by the built environment, producing an average of 12mph that significantly improves safety for pedestrians, cyclists and children playing.

Additionally, a large circular communal open space provides a popular and varied children’s play space. It is also open to a wide range of uses without any segregation through signage or fencing. Plenty of seating is also provided, along with a level area for parking pushchairs.

**Home Zones – Bristol, UK\(^{17}\)**

The concept of home zone appeared in the UK for the first time in the 1980’s based on concepts such as the Dutch "woonerven" – that is streets where people can meet, pedestrians and cyclists can

\(^{14}\) Experimenteller Wohnungs- und Städtebauf (Experimental Housing and Urban Development).

\(^{15}\) From Eisinger (2012).

\(^{16}\) From Sustrans (2009).

\(^{17}\) This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
move around freely, and children can play safely\textsuperscript{18} - and traffic-calming. Similar approaches to create amenable neighbourhoods and foster sustainable modes have been implemented for decades in Europe.

Home zones challenge 2002

In 1999, the Bristol city council began investigating the possibility of a home zone in Henbury, within the framework of the Safer Routes to Schools programme. Three roads in the area were chosen and residents were involved in the project. Participants pointed out crucial issues, such as the lack of space for younger children to play in, the desire to see environmental improvements, and dangerous entrances to schools. Construction began in February 2001, while the second phase, which introduced 20mph zones and landscaping, was completed in 2002.

In addition to Bristol experience, other local authorities in the UK have developed Home Zones. Gill (2007) evaluated London Play’s Home Zones in five London Boroughs. The report gives six key findings which in summary are:

1. Home zones make a real difference to children’s outdoor play
2. The home zone vision is very popular amongst the public - but not universally so
3. Prospects for taking forward retrofit home zone schemes are limited
4. Policy support for home zones is adequate, but more research and good practice support is needed on effective designs
5. Children’s policy and public health policy are not yet major influences on activity
6. The impact of involving children is not yet clear, but there are clear benefits when adults act effectively on their behalf. What is clear is that adult advocacy and expertise grounded in good evidence about what works in making streets more child-friendly has been shown to be effective.

Gill concludes that ‘home zones enjoy support across many public policy areas, and completed schemes are proving popular. The experience of those residents and local advocates involved in the HZfL project shows that the home zone vision remains popular as well as relevant to public policy. The home zone model is also a proven tool for tackling neighbourhood blight, building cohesive communities and making housing estates into places where families want to live’.

\textit{Planning for Real with Children – Rome, Italy}\textsuperscript{19}

A planning method that is widely increasing is the “participatory design”. It consists of the engagement of end-users in urban planning. Participatory design has been used in the context of child-friendly city planning. An example is the “planning for real with children project” run in Rome. Planning for real is simple and user-friendly planning method used to identify areas in need of improvement with the involvement of inhabitants. This technique has been widely used to deal with several urban planning issues, including traffic and community safety. On an operational level, the

\textsuperscript{18} See \url{http://www.woonerfgoed.nl/int/Introduction.html}

\textsuperscript{19} This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
planning for real method begins with the creation of a large 3-D model of the planning area, which is used for people to put their ideas in and set priorities for future development. Participants are provided with cut-outs or pictorial option cards (such as shrubs, zebra crossings, phone boxes) to be placed in the model and propose their planning option.

This method has proved to be effective and particularly appropriate to involve children in urban planning. For instance, planning for real was used in Rome in a nursery and primary school. Teachers, children and their parents were involved in the process of designing the school garden, together with university staff (DiPSA) and some municipal technicians. Children had a very positive attitude towards the model and added their everyday knowledge of the place, which was useful and an important contribution to the design process. At the end of each interactive session, the children’s ideas were carefully studied by the municipal laboratory staff and then captured on a drawing of large size. This drawing was presented to the parents during a meeting/party in which they were invited to express their opinions about the garden planning options.

*Play happens everywhere — Vauban, Germany*  

The opportunity for children to play everywhere was the central concern of urban planning in Vauban, an ‘eco-district’ on the edge of Freiburg in Germany. The neighbourhood was designed to be practically car-free, with 40 per cent of residents not owning a car and car owners parking in ‘solar garages’ on the edge of the development. The majority of the outside space is given over to green, child-friendly playable space, and the few roads in the district have a 5km/h speed limit. Thanks to the great availability of green spaces, there are no set play areas: play happens everywhere. Sandpits, climbing rocks, swings and other playing equipment are scattered across the neighbourhood. In a nutshell, there are no boundaries between gardens, streets, parks, and play area, children have a far wider choice of spaces where to play. The idea underpinning this design approach is that play should be free and undirected by adults. Similarly, play spaces defined by adults, with play equipment designed by adults, significantly diminishes the ability for the child to use their imagination.

*Stapelbäddsparken – Malmö, Sweden*  

Built in an emerging district of Malmö, Stapelbäddsparken is a skating park for young people. The site is located in a popular development area, the train station and city centre can be reached by foot. Therefore, it can be easily accessed by young visitors.

This park was aimed at providing young people with a gathering place where to skate and meet. In addition to spaces for skateboarding and rock climbing, this skating park was designed to offer spaces for artistic and cultural activities for young people.

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21 [http://skatemalmo.se/skatespots/stapelbaddsparken/](http://skatemalmo.se/skatespots/stapelbaddsparken/)
For its success in securing a place for young citizens, this project was awarded with the 1st European Award of Excellence “City for Children” in 2009 for the category “Design of Open Spaces and Play Areas”.

2.2 Public Transport Policy

This category of interventions groups those programmes that seek to make public transport widely available for children. The main objective of these policy interventions is the provision of free or discounted travel passes for children and young people. The rationale behind this intervention is two-fold: on the one-hand it seeks to reduce car dependency in the short-term, as children do not need to be always accompanied by car; on the other it addresses car-dependency in the long-term, by educating younger generations in alternatives car use. As for urban planning projects, also this type of programmes is developed by local authorities. Some examples are: see Free Public Transport for Children, Gent, Belgium; and Imagine ‘R’ Card, Ile de France, France.

*Free Public Transport for Children – Gent, Belgium*

The aim of policies allowing children to use public transport for free is to make children familiar with public transport and to encourage them to use public transport not only for travel to school, but also for leisure purposes. An example of free transport scheme for children was implemented in Gent. The municipality sought to increase public transport use by providing more, better and cheaper public transport. As a result, the offer of free public transport already existing for the 6-11 age group has been extended to the 12-14 age group, which is already able to travel independently.

*Imagine ‘R’ Card - Ile de France, France*

A scheme to incentive use of public transport and replace the use of private cars with more environmentally friendly ways of travelling was launched in 1998 in the Île de France region. In particular, the image of public transport is being improved by attractive offers. The Imagine ‘R’ card offers a special tariff to young people giving them a range of privileges, such as discounts at certain commercial activities. The card also has secondary advantages, such as a magazine, a website and an SMS community. The Imagine ‘R’ card is a community card and a kind of "urban pass" meant.

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22 This project is part of the EU project SMILE.

23 [http://www.imagine-r.com/](http://www.imagine-r.com/)
2.3 Mobility Programmes

These programmes consist of projects incentivising and enabling children’s walking and cycling activities, both autonomous or with minimum supervision. They are not one-off events, but occur regularly, allowing children to walk to school semi-independently (one or few adults supervise). In this way, parental fear of granting their children the licence to walk alone can be overcome and children can enjoy the benefits of going to school with their peers. A few examples are: A pé para a escolar, Barreiro and Loures, Portugal; a pied c’est mieux!, Neuchâtel, Switzerland; Children’s Tracks, Vestfold County, Norway; “GiroGavasseto”, Gavasseto, Italy; Identification of Unsafe Traffic Spots and Travel Behaviour, Lund, Sweden; Pédibus, Lausanne, Switzerland; Promoting Cycling and a Healthy Lifestyle - Kecskemét, Hungary; Safe Routes to School Program, Marin County, California; Safe Travel to School; Nottingham, UK; Schoolway.net, Austria; The City of Children, Italy Travelling Green, Scotland; and Project U-Turn, Jackson, Michigan.

A pied c’est mieux! (It’s better on foot!) – Neuchâtel, Switzerland\(^\text{24,25}\)

This project was aimed at encouraging parents to walk their children to school and at a later time let the children walk alone. The project was implemented through meetings to bring different sectors together and take decisions. The following actions were implemented:

- teachers and people in charge of it taught road safety to pupils;
- Teachers were engaged in raising awareness among parents of the benefits of walking to school rather than driving their children. Often local police and local authorities were involved in such activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation level</th>
<th>Regional (an entire Swiss canton)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Kindergarten through third year of primary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project duration</td>
<td>2 weeks to take action; 2 or 4 times a year to repeat it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population reached</td>
<td>6,073 pupils, plus community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the evaluation of parents’ questionnaires carried out in 2002 by the University of Bern\(^\text{26}\), the overwhelming majority of the respondents considered the campaigned positively (59.6% very positive and 30.9% positive), and thought that it contributed to improve children’s health (89.3%). By contrasts, 74.6% of the respondents found the campaign little effective in changing modal choice in home-school travel. Around one quarter of the respondents said their children began walking more frequently, and only 4% reported more frequent cycling.

\(^{24}\) From WHO (2004).
\(^{25}\) \url{http://www.rpn.ch/pedibus/}
**La Citta dei Bambini - The City of Children - Italy**

The project "The City of Children" was created in Fano in May 1991. Children from six to eleven are asked to go to school and come back on their own without being accompanied by an adult. This initiative involves various Borough Councils and various administrative sectors. A Working Group should be formed, which includes representatives of the various councils and administrative sectors: education, public works, urban mobility, city police, social services, urban issues, traffic signals, trade. This working group coordinated by the "City of Children" Laboratory implements and develops the project.

The school plays a pivotal role in the running of the initiative. The classes define the children’s individual routes, then compare them and examine their difficulty. Supported by their teachers and the police, they pick the best routes. Following this analysis, the meeting points - where the children can meet in the morning before walking to school - are established. The children are required to prepare a list of requests aimed at improving safety of the routes that will be presented to the local authority.

This initiative requires the involvement of families. The parents keen on participating can set up a Committee to propose interventions to improve the safety of the route and to promote the project to reluctant parents. Additionally – whenever possible – environmentalist, professional and citizens associations may be engaged.

Before starting the project, a celebration is organised for the purpose of launching the activity, when children present their requests for improving street safety to the Mayor.

In order to monitor the project, various activities can be organised, such as the setting-up of a Children's Committee that controls the progress through monthly surveys; the introduction of a "pedestrian’s license" and eventually one for cyclists; the organisation of a laboratory ("the bicycle: a myth") within the school; the use of “traffic fines” to punish adults’ behaviours against pedestrians. Afterwards a series of activities aimed at training the young pedestrians and cyclists are undertaken.

**Children’s Tracks - Vestfold County, Norway**

The Children's tracks programme started in 1989 and is funded by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, and the Ministry of the Environment. Participants are mainly school children (11–12 years), the children’s teachers and teachers in the local kindergartens. Children and young people register their use of urban outdoor areas based on their knowledge and identify informal green and play-areas, tracks and paths they feel are important for their games, movement and physical activity. Children point out the areas they use by drawing them on a map.

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27 http://www.lacittadeibambini.org/attivita/soli_valut.htm
The programme relies on the close cooperation between the school, where children are together during the day, and the planning or technical unit of the municipality - in charge of the maps and is responsible for land use planning- and the local schools and kindergartens. Teachers register the land use of school and kindergarten during the day time. Since 1993, the “Children’s Tracks” method has been adopted throughout Norway and in Sweden as well\textsuperscript{30}.

Acknowledging the pressure on urban space and the threat this places on informal play space the aim of the approach is to record children’s informal use of all sorts of areas for play so these become visible in the planning process and is used at local regional and national level.

“Children’s Tracks aims to give children the possibility to take part in the land use planning – it’s about democracy and it’s about sustainability.”

\textit{“GiroGavasetto” (i.e. “GAVASSETO TOUR”) – Gavasetto, Italy}

This participatory planning project involved primary school students to improve the safety of the roads and the surrounding areas leading to the school. The project was carried out in two stages:

- collection of information, mainly through questionnaires;
- an educational workshop in classes structured into two sessions to exchange experiences of home-school trips.

Data on habits of the students and their families and their view on the problems and difficulties were collected though questionnaires; the workshop provided insights on personal experiences. The results of this project were the requalification of the main roads to school, and an increase cycling and walking to school.

\textit{Identification of Unsafe Traffic Spots and Travel Behaviour – Lund, Sweden}\textsuperscript{31}

The city of Lund introduced in 1997 a sustainable transport strategy, LundaMaTs (miljöanpassat transportsystem i Lund). The strategy hinged on five pillars:

- better public transport with improved intermodality for city buses and regional transport services;
- bicycle city;
- industrial transportation including more sustainable commuter transport;
- environmentally friendly car traffic;
- sustainable urban planning\textsuperscript{32}.

As part of the ‘Walk and Bike to School’ project within LundaMaTs, children and their parents filled in a questionnaire about unsafe traffic spots and transport modes to travel to school. The results of

\textsuperscript{30} WHO (2004).
\textsuperscript{31} This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
\textsuperscript{32} For further information see: \url{http://www.eltis.org/docs/studies/Lund%202.pdf}
the questionnaire were the basis for a list of the most critical spots around Lund that needed to be improved. This list has been used to fix the critical spots. For instance, speed limits have been reduced to 30 km/h in different residential areas and speed humps have been installed. An additional measure arising from the project is the walking school bus, where parents take turns walking their own and neighbourhood children to and from school.

**Pédibus - Lausanne, Switzerland**

The municipality of Lausanne set out a Transport Planning Directive (Plan Directeur des Déplacements, PDD) supporting sustainable modes of transports (on foot, by bicycle and on public transport). Within this policy context, the pédibus – or walking bus - was a solution to walk children to school. A pedestrian bus is based on a public transport model: children wait for the pédibus at "stops" in front of specified signs (displaying pédibus schedules and details of volunteer parents) and then join the bus to complete their journey to school. Volunteer parents with identification badges accompany the children. The pédibus operates thanks to voluntary parental cooperation, with organisational and logistics support from local authorities. In 2005 there were 22 pedibus lines in Lausanne reaching 9 schools.

**Promoting Cycling and a Healthy Lifestyle - Kecskemét, Hungary**

Sustainable modes of transport have been strongly promoted over the past years in Kecskemét. In particular, the municipality introduced a bicycle programme in 2000/2001 based on:

- the development of a bicycle route network,
- the organisation of Bicycle tours, for example:
  - a bicycle tour for students of Kecskemét to the Arad (Romania) Hungarian Martyrs Memorial,
  - programmes organised by the Kecskemét House of Nature,
- the 2003 "By Bike to School" action within the framework of the European Car Free Day and Mobility Week campaigns,
- the creation of secured and guarded bicycle parks near railway stations (especially in areas with high traffic congestion and in the city centre).

33 This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
34 From http://www.managenergy.net/resources/646
35 See: http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&study_id=1272
36 This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
37 See: http://www.managenergy.net/resources/577
Safe Travel to School – Nottingham, UK

The Safer Routes to School programme includes various engineering measures, such as signing and lining schemes, crossing facilities, cycle paths etc., with the aim of improving road safety and increasing the number of pupils cycling and walking to school. Between April 1999 and March 2005 a total of 166 safer routes to school schemes were installed throughout Nottinghamshire, improving road safety at 54 schools. The 2005 child safety audit showed that:

- 11 per cent of 0-15 year old child pedestrian and cyclist KSI casualties (4 out of 35) occurred on school journeys
- 26 per cent of 0-15 year old child pedestrian and cyclist slight casualties (26 out of 100) occurred on school journeys
- No child cyclist KSI casualties occurred on school journeys.

Furthermore, the audit also pointed out that 38 per cent and 39 per cent of the total number of 5-11 year old and 12-15 year old pedestrian casualties (which include KSI and slight casualties) occurred on school journeys. Yet, the majority of slight child pedal cyclist casualties on school journeys involved 12-15 year olds. In light of this evidence, the safer routes to school schemes currently focus mainly on journeys made to secondary schools.

Schoolway.net and Mobility Management Plans – Austria

Starting in 2002, four ministries were behind a staged approach to the development of Mobility Management Plans in Austria. After two phases of pilot projects the approach was then rolled out nationally. Mobility Management Plans have become an important part of the Austrian federal climate strategy in relation to mobility, ‘klimaaktiv mobil’. Strategic objectives include modal shift to sustainable transport modes and developing support for these modes among children. Further objectives are improved physical and mental performance of children through increased exercise and the promotion of independent and autonomous mobility.

While the mobility management plans are delivered at the local level through partnership working between local authorities, schools, transport bodies, police and consultants they are supported at the federal level by klimaaktiv mobil. This includes general promotion and awareness-raising to reinforce messages about sustainable travel, materials to give to children, free consultation and financial support and even bicycle rental schemes and

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38 See Nottinghamshire County Council, no date.
campaigns. Guidelines for mobility management plans are also produced at the federal level and in 2013 the mobility management plans programme was extended to 2020.

Further examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BiciBus – an Innovative Alternative to the Car, Reggio Emilia, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking to School is fun!, Liechtenstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walking Bus, Sofia, Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Routes to School, California</td>
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</table>

2.4 Road safety and sustainable mobility education programmes

Another way to enable children’s independent mobility is through the implementation of specific education programmes aimed at equipping children with adequate skills and information to be safe when walking or cycling in the street. Training on road safety and practical examples are given by the police or road safety officers to children to develop their capabilities to negotiate busy streets. Such programmes are generally organised by local government departments in charge of traffic and safety with the cooperation of school and childcare providers, and are addressed to children and in some cases also to parents. Some examples are: Biking Education, Tours, France; Carta de Peão Infantil, Parede, Portugal; Permis cycliste pour les enfants, France; Traffic Park and Environmental Classroom, Avila, Spain; Transport for London, London.

Biking Education – Tours, France

During the 2001 In Town Without My Car! day, 3000 “Two-Wheel Education” bulletins were distributed to secondary school pupils, as well as leaflets entitled “The Journey to School” and registration forms for various workshops (on road safety, and for teachers). The “Two-Wheel Education Village” (run by the police during the day as an experiment) has been given a permanent basis as the road safety education unit. Similar events were organised in September 2002.

The police organises regular events at schools throughout the year. In particular, three workshops are offered:

- information, a video film, and a quiz game based on knowledge of the highway code;
- a manouevrability course with slaloms, slopes, obstacles, and seesaws;
- a simulated journey through the city centre.

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40 These interventions are mentioned in the SMILE report (2004).
41 This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
Three policemen train children aged eight to twelve. Prizes such as helmets, repair kits, bicycle lights, and card games are distributed at the end of the workshops.

**Traffic Park and Environmental Classroom - Avila, Spain**

In 2001 a children’s traffic park was opened in Avila. This playground consists of a classroom and marked circuit area of 6,000 square metres. The a two-day learning programme is offered during which pupils learn are informed on road safety and are engaged in environmental-friendly and sustainable mobility activities using audio-visual media in the classroom. They then put theory into practice on the marked circuit using bicycles on the first day, and go-carts on the second day.

**Transport for London - London**

Transport for London (TfL) and the London boroughs provide road safety education programme with pre-school age children. Information is also provided for parents and carers. For children between five and 15, and young adults (16-19), considerable work has been carried out locally by borough road safety officers, linking into programmes from TfL and the National Curriculum. In 2012 TfL delivered an enhanced programme of road safety campaigns, including those focused on children, and worked with the London boroughs to promote school cycle training in every school across London, each year. In addition, TfL engaged with nurseries and early-years providers to deliver basic road safety training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key actions proposed by Transport for London (TfL) to improve children’s road safety</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure London pre-school children are road safety ‘savvy’ by continuing a comprehensive programme of engagement with nurseries, other childcare and health care providers, London boroughs, local education authorities, Children’s Centres and Sure Starts</td>
<td>TfL / Boroughs</td>
<td>2012 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with boroughs to promote cycle training in schools via their Local Implementation Plans</td>
<td>TfL / Boroughs</td>
<td>2012 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with teachers to expand the reach and impact of campaigns aimed at children’s safety</td>
<td>TfL</td>
<td>2012 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximise the impact of collaborative activity by the public sector across London, by ensuring TfL road safety marketing materials are made freely available to London boroughs and that boroughs are briefed on forthcoming road safety campaigns</td>
<td>TfL</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42 This project is part of the EU project SMILE.
43 For the purpose of equipping pre-school age children with basic road safety skills TfL has funded the Children’s Traffic Club in 2003. See: [http://www.childrenstrafficclub.com/](http://www.childrenstrafficclub.com/)
### Other Education Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness raising campaign for changing mobility behaviour</td>
<td>Toulouse, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness raising on cycling through art competitions</td>
<td>Miercurea Ciuc, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle Training for Children in Real Traffic Conditions</td>
<td>Graz, Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>How kids discover the world by bike</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Management at Kindergartens to promote cycling</td>
<td>Graz, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport awareness campaign at schools</td>
<td>Maribor, Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LOOP project: Mobility management guidance for primary schools</td>
<td>Helsinki, Finland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.5 Campaigns and one of events

Many charities, NGOs, and activists with the help of schools, families and policy-makers have run one-off events and longer campaigns to promote and enable the right for children to travel or play alone while addressing parental concerns. These events might occur only once or be repeated on an annual, monthly or more frequent basis. They can serve as a means to raise awareness about the importance children’s freedom of movement, and hopefully, trigger behaviour changes. In this sense, campaigns might be conceived as a preparatory stage to increase public acceptance of future policy interventions to foster children’s independent mobility. It is also interesting to note that a number of these initiatives which tend to be led by NGOs now receive support from central government, for example, the UK Cabinet Office’s support for initiatives such as 'Love Outdoor Play' and 'Get Involved in Play' and the Department of Health’s support for ‘Change4Life School Sports Clubs’, street play and walking initiatives.

The bulk of campaigning or community enabling activities examples gathered for the purpose of this report comprises those initiatives aimed at promoting independent walking either to school (Living Streets Walk to School Campaign, UK; Safe and Environmentally-friendly Ways to School, Limbourg, Belgium; Walk Safely to School Day, New South Wales, Australia) or incentivising children’s independent travel (ZOOM Campaign, Europe). Other initiatives have sought to raise awareness of dangers children incur in roads traffic (Big Danger for Small Road Users, Austria; Give us Some Space Campaign, Geel, Belgium) which moves the focus from equipping the child with skills to be safe to encouraging drivers to drive responsibly and with consideration for children.

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45 For further information see: [www.eltis.org](http://www.eltis.org)
46 For details see [http://loveoutdoorplay.net/media/](http://loveoutdoorplay.net/media/)
Independent play is another issue widely covered by campaigning activities. Although not directly linked to independent mobility, such events and campaigns can sensitize families about the importance for children of getting experiences without parents’ supervision.

Most of the events found promote free play mainly in urban environments (Hundred streets to play, Italy; KidsSquare, Belfast; Playday, UK; Playing Out\(^{48}\), Bristol and Hackney, UK); however, an apparently burgeoning level of activity in the UK focus on play and independence and broader links to the value of play outside, and in natural environments, for instance, Outdoor Nation\(^{49}\) and Project Wild Thing\(^{50}\).

Travel behaviours

**Big Danger for Small Road Users - Austria\(^{51}\)**

The overarching aim of the *Big World of Small People* campaign is to draw attention to the problems children face in road traffic and sensitize adults to these dangers. A central feature of this intervention was an enormous car used to illustrate the contrast between the size of cars and children, shedding light on the way children perceive things. Additionally, the campaign offered games, opportunities for discussion, information, videos about children's safety, a “better vision for more safety” eye test, and an interactive computer programme about braking distances.

**Give us Some Space Campaign- Geel, Belgium\(^{52}\)**

This campaign targeted pupils from six to twelve at primary schools with the aim of tackling the issue of young vulnerable road users. The campaign sought to raise awareness of schools’ role in promoting sustainable transport behaviours in home to school trips. The findings of a survey carried out to monitor the impact of the campaign showed that the proportion of pupils who preferred car over cycling - because of "speed", "cool character", "easy door-to-door travel" and "enjoyable way to travel" - significantly decreased. The most important result was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of children cycling to school (from 40.6 up to 50.5%) and a corresponding decrease in those travelling by car (from 47.8 down to 37.3%).

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\(^{49}\) See [http://outdoornation.org.uk/](http://outdoornation.org.uk/)

\(^{50}\) See [http://www.projectwildthing.com/](http://www.projectwildthing.com/)

\(^{51}\) This project is part of the EU project SMILE. For further information see: Sustainable Mobility Initiatives for Local Environment (2004).

\(^{52}\) This project is part of the EU project SMILE. For further information see: Sustainable Mobility Initiatives for Local Environment (2004).
**Living Streets Walk to School and Free your Feet Campaigns**

The *Walk to School Campaign* is organised by Living Streets, a national charity in the UK campaigning for pedestrians and better public spaces. The aim of the campaign, which has run since 1995, is to encourage children and parents to walk to school. As part of this campaign, various initiatives are organised, such as Walk to School Week and Walk to School Month and Walk Once a Week.

Living Streets commissioned an evaluation of the Walk Once a Week scheme in 2009. The programme evaluation involved interviews with key stakeholders and 30 School Travel Advisors as well as a ‘hands-up’ and ‘stand-up’ survey undertaken in 341 schools. The findings showed that in the schools running the scheme 59% girls and 60% of boys – as percentage of the total school population - walked into school on the day of the survey. The National Travel Survey 2007 reported that the walking population of children from 5 to 10 walk was 51%; this showed a beneficial effect of Walk Once a Week scheme. The Walk Once a Week survey found that 19% of the children surveyed said that they started to walk to school because of the scheme and that 23% of the children walk to school with one parent. From a financial standpoint, a cost benefit analysis showed that the Walk Once a Week scheme provides more benefits than costs.

A second programme evaluation was carried out during the period 2010-2012. Using a ‘hands-up’ or ‘stand-up’ method, 239 schools for a total of 61,567 children were surveyed. The Walk Once a Week evaluation showed that before the scheme in 2010 around 43% of children walked to school, while after its introduction in 2012 54% walked to school. At the same time, travelling in a car or taxi has fallen from 43% to 28% across the period. The findings revealed that more children would choose to walk in 2012 than 2010 (41% compared to 32%), and fewer would choose a lift (28% compared to 18%).

Another initiative run by Living Streets was *Free your Feet*, a week-long incentive-based campaign which sought to raise awareness of walking and increase the number of secondary school pupils walking to and from school. This initiative was delivered in over 300 schools in the UK in the period May and July 2011. The schools taking part in this initiative were given a set of resources, included a DVD explaining the initiative, posters, banners, record cards and a £50 voucher. The pupils participating in the initiative had to keep track of the walking by filling the record card, and submit it at the end of the week to enter into a draw to win the £50 voucher.

An evaluation of the Free your Feet campaign was undertaken to explore the experience of schools and children participating in the initiative. Data were collected from a survey with a free your feet coordinator in each school and five qualitative case studies. Students were asked about their perceptions of walking environment around school, modal split in their journey to school. The results reported that 85% of the students increased their knowledge of the benefits of walking to

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53 For more information see: [http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school)


school and 69% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that they increased the length of the walking on the school journey.

**Safe and Environmentally-friendly Ways to School – Limbourg, Belgium**

The campaign aims to improve the safety and environmental friendliness of travel to school, stimulate discussion on traffic safety and alternative ways of travelling, and raise awareness among parents, pupils and teachers of their own travel behaviour. Every year 200 schools take part in The Safe and Environmentally-Friendly Ways to School campaign. During this week, competitive games for pupils aged six to twelve (elementary schools) serve to promote environmentally-friendly and safe travel from home to school, such as a "snake game" to encourage children and parents to change their travel behaviour. It has been noted that whilst during the campaign week there is an increase of more environmental-friendly transport behaviours, in the longer run this behavioural shift is not starkly positive or negative.

**ZOOM Campaign - Europe**

Since 2002 the ZOOM campaign has encouraged children aged 4-12 years old all over Europe to make their daily journeys independently and in a climate-friendly way. Each year from April until the beginning of the UN Climate Summit, during an activity week on sustainable mobility each journey made on foot, by bike, skater, bus, train etc. counts one “Green Footprint”. Children behaving in an environmentally-friendly way are rewarded. In November Climate Alliance hands over the amount of collected "Green Footprints" to the participants of the UN-Climate Change Conference. The Smile (2004) report points out an initiative undertaken within the framework of the European ZOOM project. Children carried out “hot spot” expeditions to shed light on their daily journeys. Children identified areas of concern - hot spots - in their surroundings, such as dangerous crossings, a lack of traffic lights, or pavements always blocked by parked cars. They developed solutions to their vision of a child-friendly, green and safe transport system. Questionnaires were given to primary school pupils, while pre-school children were asked to draw or create handicrafts expressing their views. The results of the questionnaires together with the children's drawings, ideas, and wishes were collated into a children's mobility report, delivered to local decision-makers and town planners, with the aim of advocate the need to plan and design child-friendly local transport systems.

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57 This project is part of the EU project SMILE. For further information see: Sustainable Mobility Initiatives for Local Environment (2004).
58 [http://www.milieuvriendelijknaarschool.be/](http://www.milieuvriendelijknaarschool.be/)
60 [http://www.zoom-kidsforclimate.eu/](http://www.zoom-kidsforclimate.eu/)
61 This project is part of the EU project SMILE. For further information see: Sustainable Mobility Initiatives for Local Environment (2004).
Independent playing

_Hundred streets to play - Italy_

The initiative _Cento strade per giocare_ (hundred streets to play) is organised by Legambiente, the most influential environmental non-governmental organisation in Italy. Since 1995, on one day a year (usually a Sunday in springtime) some streets in many cities are closed to cars so that children can play. Volunteers from the organisation engage children in various activities to make them aware of road safety, such as “photographic blitz” and symbolic fares to prevent drivers’ unsafe behaviours; ad hoc traffic signs to encourage drivers to be careful of pedestrians and cyclists; street decorations and draws of new cycling lanes to be proposed to the mayor. Additionally, games, workshops and shows are organised for children. 62

_KidsSquare – Belfast_ 63

KidsSquare was a project run in September 2011 and supported financially by the Department for Social Development, through the Laganside Events Grant, and planned in collaboration with a working group including Belfast City Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Public Health Agency. Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provided staff to assist with facilitation during the event, while Belfast City Council assisted with equipment. Belfast Healthy Cities contributed funding and provided staff time.

The KidsSquare project aimed at producing a model for developing a child friendly urban centre, while gathering information about ideas and needs of children and their families to inform policy and decision making. The event programme was designed to engage children from 3 to 14 years. The event, which took place at St Anne’s Square, a new development located in Belfast city centre, consisted of three five hour sessions throughout the weekend. During this period, various activities were offered to kids to play; these activities were grouped in: Creative Space, Active Space, and Free Space. Active Space included physical and skill games. Under the remit of the Creative Space theme artists facilitated small arts activities, which changed daily, and a cardboard city, which developed throughout the weekend. Additionally, open space was reserved in the square to enable children’s spontaneous activity. Giant versions of board games were provided for children and families to play together. The project also gathered participants’ opinions on the event and on child friendly space in the city centre. Children were encouraged to express their views through art work. Participants were able to leave written feedback or discuss their views 64. KidsSquare attracted over 1,000 children and families.

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63 For further information on the project see Belfast Healthy Cities (2012).
64 Detailed information on suggestions from children and families participating to the event can be found in Jeffrey (2001).
**Playday – UK**

Playday is the UK national day for play and is held on the first Wednesday of August. The aim is to stress the importance of children’s right to play. The first Playday dates back to 1986. It is an initiative organised by a variety of actors, included local authorities, organisations and community groups. This initiative is coordinated by Play England - a non-profit organisation promoting the importance of playing for children and young people - in partnership with Play Wales, Play Scotland, PlayBoard Northern Ireland and a national steering group. The latter is composed of Play England, Leeds Play Network, PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland, Play Wales, Bristol City Council and London Play.

**Playing Out – Bristol, UK**

‘Playing Out’ started as a parent-led project concerned at the diminishing opportunities for children to play freely in their own streets and neighbourhood. In response to these concerns in 2009 two mothers applied to Bristol City Council to close their street to traffic after school on one day to open it up for play.

A very positive response to this first event from children and adults led to similar events in other local streets, then the development of a Playing Out website to capture and share learning and ideas with other interested communities. ‘Temporary Play Street Orders’ (TPSO) were developed and trailed with the Council to allow residents to dedicate their streets to play three hours a week. The success of the TPSOs means they are now an ongoing Council policy. A pilot evaluation of the scheme by Bristol University showed that the playing out sessions significantly increased both children’s time spent outdoors and their physical activity levels.

The approach has spread to other cities with a grassroots network developing; over 30 local authorities putting similar policies in place and over 100 streets regularly holding playing out sessions. Playing Out is now a Community Interest Company employing a small staff to promote the Playing Out approach and to enable others to adopt it.

**Other examples**

- *Active Mobility Day, Ljutomer, Slovenia*
- *Children’s streets, Bois-le-Roi, France*
- *Play Streets, Hackney, UK*

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65 For further information see: [http://playingout.net/](http://playingout.net/)
66 [www.eltis.org](http://www.eltis.org)
67 [www.eltis.org](http://www.eltis.org)
3 Conclusions from existing policies and actions

Improving the environment children live in and autonomy they have to move around it has become a growing concern for activists, NGOs and policy-makers in many developed and developing countries. The growing attention for this matter can be ascribed to a more general emphasis placed on quality of life and living in a healthy and safe environment. A good quality environment is a child-friendly space, that is a city where children can safely move around it and walk and play it on their own. In this respect, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)\textsuperscript{69} enshrines the right of children to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, and requires that states should promote this right and encourage provision to satisfy it (Article 31), and also that every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs (Article 27).

The ways in which children’s mobility is addressed are various and range from short events to more radical interventions to reshape the urban environment. For the sake of simplicity, the case studies have been grouped into narrow categories, although some examples may go beyond the boundaries of a given category, encompassing a variety of measures. Far from being an exhaustive list of examples, this collection of case studies seeks to illustrate how local authorities as well as national governments and international organisations have incorporated children’s well-being, expressed in their freedom of mobility, into their policy agenda.

As shown by the cases discussed above, different types of actors are involved in children’s independent mobility initiatives and play different roles. NGOs and charities take on the role of pressure groups in that they seek to influence public (and policy-maker’s) attitudes towards this issue. Interestingly, a number of initiatives in this field of outdoor play, for example, Playing Out, are community driven and are the result of grass roots activity rather than top down policy frameworks. Local authorities play either a supporting role in cases of campaigns/one-off events or take on a more incisive role by planning and delivering physical changes to urban space. For instance, building new green community spaces and play-friendly areas as well as redeveloping those in decaying urban areas may induce parents to allow their children to play out. Similarly, more pedestrianized areas may increase the number of children walking and cycling alone.

Supra-national institutions and organisations (especially the EU) act as enabler by funding projects to foster children’s autonomy. By contrast, it can be observed that, despite few exceptions, central states do not appear to be explicitly involved in policy-making for children’s mobility. However, they have a vital enabling role to play.

The scope of success of initiatives in support of children’s mobility would seem to depend upon the depth and length of the intervention: the more incisive and long-term is the intervention the successful in changing attitudes is. Hence, policy projects, especially those with an urban planning focus, are more promising in delivering a safer and fit for children environment. Through urban planning, the main hindrances to children’s mobility (traffic, dangerous areas etc.) can be taken into account and even removed. Particularly, the engagement of children and/or families might be helpful in signalling “hot spots” and dangers the removal of which would make parent more likely to grant independent mobility to their children.

3.1 What level of independent mobility is desirable and what does that imply for the level of policy response required?

While we have found examples of a wide range of actions and initiatives intended to enable children to have better access to play, mobility and independence it is striking that very little consideration is given to the question of what an appropriate level of children’s independent mobility might be and the scale of intervention that would be required to enable these levels to be achieved. The Rotterdam example is notable and perhaps exceptional for its level of ambition and focus on transforming urban space for children and wider societal benefit. Many other initiatives focus on what might be seen as mitigating measures to equip children with the skills required to survive in traffic-dominated environments rather than creating environments in which children, and people more broadly, might thrive. Teaching children (and adults) road safety is a necessary and important life skill and will encourage marginal increases in mobility, but not addressing the fundamental threats posed by traffic will inevitable result in children being withdrawn from the risk.

Against this backdrop, and in the light of both a rights-based and developmental-based justification for it, it would seem that children’s independent mobility should be a much more explicit object of policy-making, where parents’ concerns, road users’ behaviour and physical barriers are addressed. Achieving this objective requires cross-cutting policy from government at both the local and national levels to work together to address the various facets of children’s independent mobility: transport, education, road safety, policy health, community cohesion and urban planning. From this perspective, policy measures to enable children’s independent mobility would need to focus on:
1. Reducing car dependency:
   - Encouraging provision and use of local public services,
   - Encouraging walking and cycling,
   - Increase of pedestrianized areas,
   - Improving provision and affordability of public transport,
   - Training and skills for children about use of public transport.

2. Road safety:
   - Increased use of traffic calming,
   - Implementation and enforcement of appropriately low speed limits,
   - Changed liability and insurance regimes that better protect vulnerable road users and incentivise safe and considerate driving,
   - Information, education and training on road safety for children and drivers.

3. Delivering child-friendly cities and places through:
   - Specific urban (and rural) planning that takes into account children’s safety issues and parental concerns,
   - Developing child safe networks,
   - Consultation and involvement of children in design processes.

4. Measurements of road safety and perceptions of road safety that reflect and inform progress on policy objectives beyond narrow casualty reduction and include the liveability and utility of road space to a range of users, pedestrians, children, and vulnerable users.

5. Interventions to reduce ‘social fear’, i.e. ‘stranger danger’, centred on:
   - Enabling community development and community-led initiatives,
   - Changing the communication style and language of media and political institutions, which are too focused on security themes.

Such policy interventions require the involvement of a range of governmental and non-governmental actors. While national governments need to create national legislative frameworks – especially in the domain of road safety and education - local governments can implement the policy changes required to transform cities into child-friendly spaces, with wider and efficient public transport networks, more green and recreational spaces, play spaces and pedestrianized areas.

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While it can be argued that policy change will be resisted by vocal portions of the population, it has been shown that, in the domain of transport policy, people’s transport behaviours are not fixed and immutable - they change over time in response to personal and external factors, and the disruptions they create is accommodated. The predictions made before schemes reallocating road space are implemented have been found to be excessively pessimistic and significant deteriorations in traffic conditions rarely result (Cairns et al 2002\textsuperscript{72}). In fact Marsden and Docherty, (2013)\textsuperscript{73} contend that the population is far more adaptable to major change than the policy process currently assumes. NGOs and activists, in cooperation with local councils, could use their experience to strengthen a ‘sense of community’, which is pivotal to develop trust and tolerance among neighbours.

To summarise, the experiences reported in this working paper show that to enhance children’s independent mobility policy-makers need to develop an approach that is:

- **Holistic**: capable of linking different policy sectors in an organic and integrated manner. This means to manage public transport network in such a way that car use is discouraged when not necessary; to design child-friendly urban spaces (for instance: introducing traffic calming, proper lighting on streets, more green spaces etc.); and to educate children about risks and behaviours when walking and cycling.
- **Multi-level**: an effective implementation of policies and initiatives to enhance children’s independent mobility requires the coordinated action of local, regional and national levels of governments.
- **Inclusive**: schools, non-governmental organisations working for children’s well-being, children and parents play an important part in decision-making and policy implementation. The involvement of these actors will support policy-makers in identifying the factors affecting children’s mobility and providing innovative solutions to tackle them.
- **Integrated**: an effective approach to enhance children’s independent mobility should combine both physical interventions on the built environment and initiatives changing parental attitudes towards children’s freedom to move.

An important step in implementing and delivering more effective children’s independent mobility policies will be to better evaluate the effectiveness of past policies and interventions. While some evidence on post-intervention impact was available, it was not available for the majority of cases or based on rigorous evaluation techniques. In this respect, it would be beneficial to examine the most interesting examples in more detail and ideally build more evaluation into future interventions. Further information may be

obtained through analysing policy documents and reports, or, when assessment documentation is not available, interviewing people involved in the development or implementation of the programmes.

3.2 Concluding comments

We have highlighted that increasing children’s independent mobility would seem to be justified in terms of both a developmental and right-based perspective. We have also identified a range of possible policy options that could be used to deliver increased children’s independent mobility. Delivering this agenda is of course challenging. The dominance of traffic in local environments, which is reported by parents as a major concern in relation to their children’s independent mobility, is engrained in attitudes, behaviour and, not least, infrastructures. However, we have identified examples of more radical approaches that place children’s needs at the centre of the urban development and have delivered real change on the ground in challenging economic and social circumstances.

Encouragement should be taken that significant change is possible. The level of community-led activity on reclaiming outdoor space for children (and adults) also suggests there is public desire for greater action from policy-makers to enable change. However, if these examples of good practice are to become more widespread consideration of children’s independent mobility needs to be made a much more explicit consideration in policy-making. Better public and media debate is needed on the implications of low levels of children’s independent mobility and the means by which these levels can be increased. At its most fundamental the debate is about the quality of the environments we wish to bring up our children in and how we enable them to flourish. We hope this work makes a contribution to this debate.
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