

Devon has had an active programme of Safer Journeys to School since 1990 and its policies were derived from a study of young people's travel patterns and attitudes surrounding choice of travel.

Peter Gimber is the Road Safety Group Manager for Devon County Council

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Safer journeys to school and school travel plans

Devon addresses the education and health issues surrounding safe non-car travel to school

Devon has had an active programme of Safer Journeys to School since 1990 from an average annual budget of £50k. The county has worked with over 100 primary schools to improve facilities and safety for pedestrians and cyclists in the immediate zone around the school.

Most schools have undertaken a survey of pupils and parents to establish where there were particular dangers. Many of these schools have a written Road Safety Policy.







Casualties to children on the school journey have more than halved during the 1990s and are now at an all time low. As well as improving road safety for young people other education and health issues have been identified which relate to safer journeys. They include young people's physical fitness, their personal security and independence.

Safer Journeys, stakeholders, and policies

In order to review policy, Devon County Council held a conference of stakeholders to consider the future aims and objectives for the Safer Journeys to school programme.

Those attending the conference included: police, governors, head-teachers, transport groups, cycle groups, the Schools Health Education Unit, University of Exeter Health and Exercise Research Centre, Health Authority, Education Director, Government Office (South West), parents, Devon County Council scientific officer, bus operators, councillors.

Recommendations of the conference were:

-  A commitment to continue improving safety, but incorporating within the programmes a strong emphasis upon sustainable travel, and a presumption against measures that would accommodate an increase in the use of private cars.
 -  The creation of a Devon Safer Journeys Strategy Group representing most of the groups above
 -  Publication of a study by the Schools Health Education Unit into children's travel habits and attitudes
 -  Agreement of the Education Director to fund a video-pack of safe and sustainable practice in home to school travel
 -  Agreement to investigate ways to improve behaviour and safety on school transport
 -  Increasing the emphasis upon schoolchild safety in a Devon Speed Management Programme.
- All these recommendations have been adopted, and most achieved.

Patterns of travel

Currently, the patterns of travel to school in Devon include the number of pupils and schools. There are 323 state primary schools, and 33 state secondary schools. Attending these schools are 54,545 primary children, and 33,879 secondary children.

These young people attend school for 190 days per annum, and make two journeys per day. Using national travel data, primary children travel an average of 2.6 miles per day to and from school. Secondary pupils travel an average of 6.2 miles per day. On this basis, there are around 33,600,000 home to school journeys each year. Mileage for these journeys will be 27

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million miles (primary) and 40 million miles (secondary). A total 67 million miles per annum.

Study

In order to get a better idea of how these trips were made, Devon County Council commissioned the Schools Health Education Unit to undertake a study of travel patterns, and some of the attitudes surrounding choice of travel.


The survey was of 3,447 Devon secondary pupils in Years 7, 9 and 10 from 15 colleges chosen to provide a good urban and rural mix.


Overall, the travel split was as follows:


Travel mode	Average for Yrs 7, 9 and 10	Year 6 (primary)
Walking	39%	60%
Car travel	26%	35%
School bus	31%	8%
Other bus	6%	1.5%
Bicycle	2%	2.5%
Train	1%	0.3%
Taxi	1%	0.7%


Further information about travel preferences of secondary pupils was gleaned from the study:

20% of youngsters want to travel by car, but currently do not.

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Over half this group currently walk
They are less likely to feel safe travelling at the moment
They are less likely to consider themselves physically fit

 13% of pupils want to travel by bicycle, but currently do not
Most of these currently travel by car
Most of them are year 7 males
Most of this group enjoy physical exercise
Most enjoy cycling, but are less likely than others to always wear a safety helmet

 18% of pupils do not want to have to walk
These are more likely to travel alone, to feel less safe outside, and to come from a family that does not own a car

 12% of pupils, who are currently travelling by school bus, would prefer not to
These pupils are more likely to fear bullying

Policy Implications from the study:

1. There is substantial enthusiasm from within the school population, particularly Year 7 boys, for the increased use of bicycles. Better cycle lanes and cycle storage were cited as being needed.
2. Continued support for the 39% of pedestrians is needed if we are to avoid a further migration from walking to car use.
3. School buses do not appear to be attractive to a substantial proportion of users, and this needs to be addressed (if only to increase usage of buses in later life).
4. School Travel Plans need to address children's fears of bullying, their levels of fitness, their safe behaviour on the roads and the perceived advantages of car travel if they are to be successful in meeting targets to improve the levels of non-car travel.
5. More attention should be paid to the travel implications of the transition from Year 6 (primary) to Year 7 (secondary), in order to retain as high a level of walking as possible.

Objectives

In June 2000 the Devon Safer Journeys to School programme was launched. Its objectives are:

1. To improve features of the highway network identified by children, parents and safety officers as presenting particular dangers on journeys to and from schools.
2. To encourage the school community to consult on, and implement, a Road Safety Policy for parents, staff and pupils. This Policy would incorporate reference to road safety education in the classroom.
3. To identify the travel modes of pupils, teachers and parents on home to school journeys, and take steps to enhance the safety, convenience and attractiveness of routes for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
4. To encourage and support school communities to consult on, produce, and implement School Travel Plans for parents, staff and pupils.
5. To work with school communities to achieve target reductions in the number of car journeys associated with home to school travel.

Current programmes

Current Devon programmes to support safe non-car travel to school:

- ✓ Devon provides paid School Crossing Patrols at every site where sufficient numbers of primary aged children cross to meet the national PV2 formula

There are currently 117 paid patrols. Devon will also usually permit Crossing Patrols to operate at any other sites, where the criteria for a paid patrol are not met, on a voluntary or sponsored basis. There are currently 19 unpaid patrols, given full support and training by the County Council. In addition, Devon supports the use of Walking Buses, of which there are currently 5 operating regularly.

- ✓ Devon has approximately 22,000 pupils who are entitled to free school transport

The authority exceeds its minimum legal duties by providing transport to denominational schools and post-16 establishments (an extra 4000 pupils daily). The County Council also transports a significant number of pupils who live within walking distance where the walking route is acknowledged as being hazardous.

All pupils (except those using public licensed bus services) use vehicles fitted with seatbelts. Devon is planning a programme of risk assessments over the arrangements for boarding and alighting from school transport, and it is planning to disseminate to schools examples of good practice for managing pupil behaviour on transport. Experiments are underway to see how CCTV may reduce anti-social behaviour on board buses.

- ✓ Devon works in partnership with Global Action Plan to support the Action on Transport Education programmes in secondary schools and colleges

It also works with other organisations with an interest in school travel, notably Transport 2000 and Sustrans.

- ✓ Devon supplies 30,000 youngsters, each year, with copies of a child casualty factsheet used in schools and at home

- ✓ Devon has a Speed Management Strategy that includes an emphasis on reducing speeds around schools and residential areas, to reduce danger to cyclist and pedestrians

- ✓ Devon places high importance on sustainable travel when planning the construction and development of new schools

A new primary school in North Devon was included in the DETR Case Studies report as part of its School Travel Strategies and Plans document

- ✓ Devon has a Safer Journeys Strategy Group which meets regularly

It comprises Road Safety Officers, Traffic

Safety Engineers, Education Officers (Health and Safety, School Transport, Premises, Governor Support, Curriculum Advisory Service), School Transport Officer and Health Promotion Officer.

- ✓ Devon offers a free 'Toolkit' of support to any school intent upon addressing school travel issues. (see below)

Toolkit

The Devon Safer Journeys to School Toolkit was available to schools from September 2000. The Toolkit comprises:

A video, produced in Devon and funded by the Education Directorate, which sets out the travel to school issues and highlights examples of good practice in several Devon schools;

A selection of travel questionnaires for school surveys, and a data analysis service purchased from the Schools Health Education Unit;

Literature and practical help in setting up a Walking Bus service, Child Cyclist Training scheme, Pedestrian Safety Training Scheme, School Bus Club, Car Share Schemes;

Advice on integrating Travel Plans with the Devon Healthy Schools Award Scheme and Environmental Education Programme;

A mapping facility (or free software) to enable each travel survey to be presented graphically;

A Year 7 Travelwise pack for assemblies and tutorials, produced for Devon schools by the Schools Health Education Unit;

Customised advice and support for any school wishing to set up and publicise Walk to School Weeks, or similar awareness raising events;

A free air quality measurement service using diffusion tubes outside schools.

Safer Journeys

Safer Journeys to School is a phased programme which has targets and monitoring for the years 2001-2006. The programme consists of 6 phases and phase 1 & 2 are shown below: Phase 1 - 2000 to 2001

- ★ General awareness-raising to all schools. Each school may apply for a free Devon Safer Journeys Toolkit, supported by officer encouragement and advice. Small low-cost improvements to be implemented using a £50k revenue budget to address matters of road danger.

Analysis and review of pilot Safer Journeys Programme in Exmouth Community College and feeder primaries

- ★ Implementation of improvements to support Safer Journeys programmes in Exeter Independent Schools
- ★ Introduction of Safer Journeys programmes in partnership with Global Action Plan in Exeter and Newton Abbot Travel Zones
- ★ Identify suitable schools to develop programmes as part of Phase 2 in Northern Travel Zone, South West Travel Zone, Dartmoor/Tamar Valley Travel Zone

Phase 2 - 2001/2

- ★ Continuation of Phase 1 programmes
- ★ Introduction of Safer Journeys programmes in 2 school areas in the Northern Travel Zone, and 1 programme in the South West Travel Zone

- ★ Identify 4 suitable school areas to develop programmes as part of Phase 3 in all Dartmoor/Tamar Valley Travel Zone Travel Zones

Targets

It will be for the school communities themselves, in discussion with Devon County Council officers, to decide what set of targets for modal shift they should commit themselves to each year. This will vary from school to school. Exmouth Community College set itself a target of 10% fewer cars.

Some urban schools with a tight catchment area may well opt for a more ambitious target. Some rural schools will opt for a lower, but more realistic target.