There is a saying that the older a man gets, the further he had to walk to school as a boy. Such tales of deprivation may be lost on today's generation of students, since the vast majority of them are chauffeur-driven to school just in time for their lessons on why the school-run is polluting the air that they breathe and endangering the very planet they are sitting on.

However, there is another side to the story. A recent survey by the National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) revealed some concerning trends in the way students travel to school.

### National Healthy School Standard

**How our surveys can help you**

- **LEAs are surveying their schools using our questionnaire**
  - to identify their NHSS priorities
  - LEAs include: Bedfordshire, Brent, Bury & Rochdale, Camden & Islington, Cornwall, Dudley, North Essex, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Liverpool, Northants, South Tyne, and Wandsworth

  *The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) is being used by schools across the UK. It has evolved since 1976 and has become the leading standardised questionnaire in primary and secondary schools. The HRBQ:*
  - Supports Healthy School co-ordinator's work in achieving the NHS Standard
  - Provides baseline data which will contribute to monitoring and evaluation
  - Includes items relevant to all the NHSS themes
  - Provides support from SHEU's experienced primary and secondary teachers

  **Contact The Schools Health Education Unit for details (Tel: 01392 66 72 72)**

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 the choice of travel.

### Peter Gimber

**Safer journeys to school and school travel plans**

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

- **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.**

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 352 primary schools, and 33 secondary schools. Attending these schools are 54,545 primary children, and 33,679 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
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. Continual 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 the occasional 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 fear 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 at 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 safe 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 Cressing 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 3 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 4,000 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 cyclists 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.

A 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 phases 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 office encouragement and advice. Small low cost improvements to be implemented using a £5k 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 S4J programmes in Exeter Independent Schools

Introduction of S4J programmes in partnership with Global Action Plan in Exeter and Newton Abbot Travel Zones

Identify suitable schools to develop programmes as part of Phase 3 in all Dartmoor/Tamar Valley Travel Zone Travel Zones

Target

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.

Phase 2 - 2001/2

Continuation of Phase 1 programmes

Introduction of S4J programmes in 2 school areas in the Northern Travel Zone, and 1 programme in the South West Travel Zone

John Colwell is Principal Lecturer in Psychology, and Tracey Cockerton is Principal Lecturer in Psychology at the School of Social Science Middlesex University

What Teachers need to know about child pedestrian safety: Pointers for your next lesson

New approaches focus on practical training and should begin as soon as children start school

John Colwell and Tracey Cockerton

Child pedestrian road accidents are 56% higher in the UK compared with other European countries.

Child pedestrian road accidents, responsible for a quarter of deaths among children, are 56% higher in the UK compared with other European countries.

The International Road Traffic Accident Database shows that in 1995 the average death rate per 100,000 population for child pedestrians in European countries was 0.9 whereas in Great Britain it was 1.2. This contrasts with Britain's overall performance in road safety, with the casualty rate among the lowest in the world.

The problem may get worse in future, given increased government emphasis on children walking to school, with many local authorities having a 'walk to school' week.

Increased car use

Paradoxically, the reduction in child pedestrian casualty figures achieved before the nineties may be due to increased car use due to the dangerous road environment (Hillman et al., 1990). Between 1971 and 1991 the percentage of 7 and 8 year old children travelling to school alone dropped from 80% to 9%. Unfortunately this also reduced opportunities to practise pedestrian skills.

Road accident rates rise with age, peaking at about twelve years of age. Boys, and children from lower socio-economic groups, display higher rates, though these may be due to greater exposure. Such children are allowed more freedom on the roads without adult supervision.

Increased exposure is associated with higher accident rates, though Demetre (1997) argues that safe behaviour can only be attained through a degree of exposure on real roads. Also evidence exists linking accidents with dimensions which could be labelled 'problem behaviour', for example delinquency, deprived background, dangerous behaviour, and aggression.

West et al (1999) obtained measures of anti-social behaviour such as theft, violence, vandalism, fighting, and bullying, using self-report, parent, and teacher ratings, in a sample of 381 children. Problem behaviour was found to be a strong predictor of road accidents. Most accidents involving older children (11-16 years of age) occur while crossing or waiting to cross the road, while with younger children they tend to occur while playing (Christie, 1995).

Reducing casualty rates

Government attempts to reduce casualty rates can broadly be divided into engineering and educational. No-one who drives in a city can have failed to notice a range of traffic calming measures such as narrowing roads, creating more pedestrian 'islands', and the infamous speed 'humps'. Educational measures have traditionally been conducted in the classroom using the Green Cross Code, or Stop, Look, Listen, Think, for under 7 year olds.

However, as Thomson et al (1996) point out