

Item: 10

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 3 February 2021.

Draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy.

Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Council assesses walking routes for school pupils where the journey is below statutory distance and that this activity is undertaken by Roads Services.

2.2.

That the process has never been formally documented and this deficiency has resulted in otherwise avoidable challenge, with a consequent impact upon resource.

2.3.

That the draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, seeks to provide a proportionate, user-friendly documentation of the process and is based upon identified best-practice in Orkney and guidance notes issued by Road Safety GB.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

In common with other local authorities, the Council assesses walking routes for school pupils where the journey is below statutory distance. Such assessments, which are undertaken by Roads Services, are normally required where there is a claim that the route is not safe and that, as a consequence, the local authority should provide free transport.

3.2.

The Council does not currently have a formal, documented policy or process for the assessment of school walking routes.

3.3.

Road Safety GB published guidance <https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/resources-services/identification-of-hazards-and-the-assessment-of-risk-of-walked-routes-to-school/> to support officers in the assessment of walking routes in 2012, which was updated in 2016. The guidance provides a proposed method of assessing walked routes to school, and it is the recommended approach set out in this document that forms the basis of the draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report. This draft Policy is further augmented by advice published in Transport Scotland's Guide to Improving School Transport Safety, which is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

3.4.

As documented in the Council's School Transport Policy, free transport is provided to all pupils who live more than the statutory walking distance from the designated school, which is two miles for pupils less than 8 years old and three miles for pupils aged 8 and over. In Orkney, this reduces to 1.5 miles for all pupils during the winter terms (October break to Easter break). These distances are measured by the shortest available safe walking route. This approach is more generous than that prescribed by statute and therefore may be reviewed at any time.

3.5.

Parents/carers are responsible for their child's journey to and from school, or where transport is provided, between home and the pick-up and drop off point. The safety of the pupil's journey is therefore considered to include being accompanied by a responsible adult.

3.6.

Where a route is deemed as unsuitable, transport provision will be organised. This may be in the form of providing transport or paying a parental allowance per mile. In assessing any route, a combination of factors and criteria are used. Therefore, what is acceptable for a road with high traffic volume will be different from what is acceptable for routes with low or very low traffic volume.

3.7.

The instances of parental challenge in respect of the perceived safety of walking routes is increasing. The substance of these challenges includes references to a lack of pavement, street lighting, adverse weather and traffic flow.

3.8.

The absence of a formal, documented process for determining safe school walking routes has resulted in a debilitating drain on resources as each challenge requires a bespoke response. The draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy, attached as Appendix 1, seeks to ameliorate this deficiency in process documentation and thereby enhance Service efficiency and effectiveness.

4. Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy

4.1.

The intention in publishing the Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is to present service users and managers with a clear, easily digestible overview of the Council's responsibilities, with regard to ensuring that pupils are able to safely travel to and from school, of the process that will be undertaken to determine this, and of the circumstances in which that process should be deployed.

4.2.

The Policy communicates the variables that will be considered in determining the safety of a walking route and states that, having taken into account these variables, a route will be deemed suitable where it is determined that an accompanied pupil could walk it in reasonable safety.

4.3.

The Policy determines that, where a request for school transport is made, and the journey is below statutory distance, an assessment of the walking route should be conducted and that, in addition to determining whether the route is suitable, the ensuing report should make recommendations for potential enhancements to the route.

4.4.

The Policy concludes with a description of the appeals process and, in so doing, explains that dissatisfaction with a judgement will not, in itself, be grounds to instigate a review.

5. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

6. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

7. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

8. Legal Aspects

8.1.

The legal basis for school transport provision is found in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, sections 42(4) (statutory distances) and 51(1) (Provision of transport or other facilities as Local authority consider necessary where school placement exceeds walking distances which includes pupils` safety in respect to this duty) as amended and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, section 37 which adds a discretionary power to provide transport or other facilities to nurseries etc.

8.2.

The nearest available route is defined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, section 42(1)(a) there is within walking distance of the pupil's home measured by the nearest available route no public or other school the managers of which are willing to receive the pupil and to provide him with free education.

8.3.

Authorities have a common law duty of care for the safety of pupils under their charge and this duty extends to pupils travelling on dedicated transport arranged by the authority. Others (e.g. parents) also have a duty of care for the safety of pupils on the journey to school this would cover walking routes and cycle routes and is a joint responsibility between parents and the local authority and in the case of an incident it would turn on its own facts and circumstances to establish where responsibility lay. Generally, a walking route is considered suitable if it is determined that a pupil, "accompanied as necessary", could walk the route in reasonable safety.

8.4.

A duty of care for pupils' safety is also covered by the Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. The Regulations place upon local authorities a general duty to secure, as far as is practicable, the safety of pupils when under their charge.

8.5.

School Walking routes are not covered by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. There is case law where public consultation is required if there is a legitimate expectation or promise or a loss to a benefited group. There is no promise or loss to a benefited group and the service view on expectation is that this is a policy consolidation at a technical level; if specific routes were being considered then that would require consultation. A public consultation on the policy is therefore not required.

9. Contact Officers

James Wylie, Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, extension 2401, Email james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk.

Peter Diamond, Heads of Education (Leisure, Culture and Inclusion), extension 2436, Email peter.diamond@orkney.gov.uk.

Steven Burnett, Education Resources Manager, extension 2421, Email steven.burnett@orkney.gov.uk.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy.

Appendix 2: Transport Scotland's Guide to Improving School Transport Safety.

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment.



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Education, Leisure and Housing

Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy

Version Control

Document reference	Version	Issue Date	Reason for issue	Reviewer	Sign
ELH002	1.0	19/01/2021	New Policy	Education Resources Manager	

DRAFT

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Background

The greatest road casualty risk to school pupils occurs when they are walking (including when walking to or from a bus or a car) or cycling.

The statutory walking distance is two miles for pupils less than 8 years-old and three miles for pupils aged 8 or over from a pupil's designated school. The distance from the school is measured as the nearest available route.

Education authorities are required to make such arrangements as *they consider necessary* for school pupils residing, and attending schools, in their area.

As set out in the Scottish Government's A Guide to Improving Transport Safety document authorities must consider the safety of walking and cycling routes to school for pupils living within statutory walking distances from their designated school. If the routes could be considered unsafe, then transport should be provided, even when distances may fall short of eligibility criteria.

Authorities are expected to review the eligibility criteria and have flexibility to consider safety factors such as volume and speed of traffic, availability of safe crossings, and sufficiency of pavements, footpaths and street lighting.

Roads Services undertake assessments of walking routes on behalf of the Council for school pupils where a request for transport is made and the journey is below statutory distance. This Policy document provides the process together with associated guidance on the framework under which the assessments take place. The Policy is predicated upon both Transport Scotland advice and the 2016 guidance note issued by Road Safety GB, "Assessment of Walked Routes to School".

Route Assessment

Walking route assessments incorporate the public road network from the point that a private property accesses the public network to the school or the designated school transport pick-up and drop-off point.

The process of walking route assessment outlined in this document is consistent with others used across the UK.

The process of assessment is subjective and is based on a range of factors including available traffic and accident data, a consideration of the physical and environmental characteristic of the route, and professional judgement based on experience of and training in road safety matters.

The main parameters considered during the process are as follows:

- Traffic Flow
 - Typically expressed as Annual Average Daily Traffic flows (AADT) but flows during the walking periods are looked at in detail.

- Traffic Speed
 - Consideration is given to both the average and 85% speeds. Attention will be given to excessive speed during the walking periods.
- Traffic Composition
 - In some circumstances HGVs may form a significant percentage of the traffic movements on the route during the walking periods.
- Accident History
 - Accidents along the route to be considered.
- Road Widths
 - Considered where relevant to traffic flows, speeds and composition.
- Verge Widths and Shape
 - Grass verges are generally not considered suitable for walking along but are used to provide refuge when meeting oncoming vehicles.
- Visibility
 - Assessed along the route in relation to vehicle speeds, but specifically considered at points such as summits, bends, road narrowing and where step-off is limited.
- Structures along the Route
 - Bridges, cattle grids, retaining and boundary walls and culverts may pose a hazard in certain circumstances.
- Controlled and Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossings
 - Particularly on busy roads.
- School Crossing Patrol
 - Locations
- Existing signage
- Footway / Streetlighting Provision
- Ditch Location, Width and Depth

The process of assessing a walking route cannot determine absolutely whether a route is inherently “safe” or “dangerous” This is because due to their nature, all roads inherently present some element of road safety risk, whether they are heavily-trafficked urban routes, or more lightly-trafficked rural routes.

A walking route is considered suitable if it is determined that a child, “accompanied as necessary”, could walk the route in reasonable safety. The requirement to make assessments based on pupils accompanied as necessary comes from the Road Safety GB guidance on home to school travel. The walking route assessment process therefore offers a methodology to allow the authority to determine whether school transport should be provided because a walking route is perceived to present exceptional road safety hazards.

The flowchart provided at Appendix 1 describes the assessment procedure used to determine the suitability of the route for school pedestrians.

Accompanied Pupils

The assessment process is to be used to assess the suitability of a route for one accompanied pupil. It is not practical to consider all potential variables for example the presence of a pram or buggy, double buggy or additional children.

Notwithstanding this, there may be circumstances where it will be unreasonable to expect a parent to be able to accompany a pupil, e.g. permanent or long-term mobility or disability issues and other medical conditions of pupil and parent. In such cases a bespoke re-evaluation of the route suitability in the context of that specific situation will be appropriate. This complies with the Scottish guidance “Authorities are expected to review the eligibility criteria and have flexibility to consider safety factors such as volume and speed of traffic, availability of safe crossings, and sufficiency of pavements, footpaths and street lighting. Authorities are also expected to consider medical conditions of pupils which may affect their travel to school, and also the medical condition of parents where they may be expected to accompany their child for part or all of a journey”

Adverse Weather

Adverse weather can occur at any time of the year and, as such, the process takes into account average conditions. In the case of Orkney, the assessment considers the suitability of the route separately for summer (return from Easter break through to October break) and winter (return from October break through to Easter break), taking into consideration the significant differences in daylight between these seasons.

Weather conditions may be considered as a factor in the winter months’ assessment for particularly exposed sections. However, it remains the parent’s responsibility to decide whether or not it is safe for their child to travel to school in bad weather, either by transport or on foot.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their pupils have suitable clothing, footwear, reflective clothing or other visibility aids, torches etc. appropriate for the walking route and weather conditions.

Traffic Flows

The assessment of traffic flows and speeds is carried out using data collected at peak morning and afternoon travel periods during a minimum of three school days. Unless significant local factors have changed that may have impacted traffic flows, any count undertaken within the past five years will be considered relevant. In some locations, where demonstrably there has been little change locally, counts older than five years will be considered relevant.

The assessment process expects that road users will be acting in a reasonable manner and abiding by road traffic regulations.

HGV and other large vehicles are only considered relevant where numbers are greater than 10 in the hourly flow corresponding with the walking period, and where this constitutes more than 10% of the traffic volume.

Drivers of large vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, have a legal duty to consider the suitability of any route they drive along and a responsibility not to create a safety risk for other road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

The traffic flow can vary from very low on some rural roads to very heavy in urban areas. Suggested two-way low levels are:

- Low traffic flow – up to 400 vehicles per hour.
- Medium traffic flow – 400 to 840 vehicles per hour.
- Heavy traffic flow over 840 vehicles per hour.

Locally flows below 60 vehicles per hour are considered to be very low.

Walking Provision

Footway and roadside strips are those surfaces which are considered to provide an adequate width and a reasonable surface condition to facilitate walking. The normal minimum width is defined as “at least one metre wide”.

A verge is considered to be an area of ground adjacent to the road carriageway that is not considered suitable for walking along. This area may however provide space for “step-offs”. The normal minimum requirement for a step-off is a reasonably firm and even surface with a minimum width of 0.5 metre over a 1.5 metre length.

On roads with low and very low traffic flows a verge with adequate “step-offs” is considered suitable for a school walking route, as long as there is also adequate visibility. The number or frequency of step-offs required depends on the width of the carriageway and the number of vehicles travelling along the road during the periods that walking occurs. Adequate visibility is determined from the 85% speed of vehicles along the route. This can vary along the length of a given route and is assessed by experienced roads engineers. It may also be confirmed by automated traffic count equipment.

Crossing Roads

In the case of journeys involving roads that need to be crossed, specific consideration will be given to the approaching speed and volume of traffic and the level of visibility available. Before a road can be crossed safely there needs to be sufficient identifiable gaps in the traffic to allow enough time to cross. On roads with two-way traffic flows of over 240 vehicles per hour a specific gap time analysis may be required. The Road Safety GB guidance states that where traffic flows are below 240 vehicles per hour sufficient gaps will be available to cross safely.

School crossing patrols will be deployed to aid the crossing of busy roads. However, continuous queuing or significant volumes of HGV traffic at a junction can make it difficult to cross safely and a site-specific study may need to be undertaken.

It is not uncommon for roads, particularly single-track ones, to have to be crossed more than once to improve sight lines. It is also quite normal to do so to make use of footways or better stretches of verge, or to avoid a hazard. In assessing such a route, the availability of suitable crossing points will be considered.

Highway Code

Reference should be made to the Highway Code Rules for Pedestrians.

Assessment Outcome

A report on the route will be prepared and assessed by Roads Services. The report will summarise details of the route and identify any points of concern. Particular improvements or maintenance works that would significantly enhance the safety of the route will be noted.

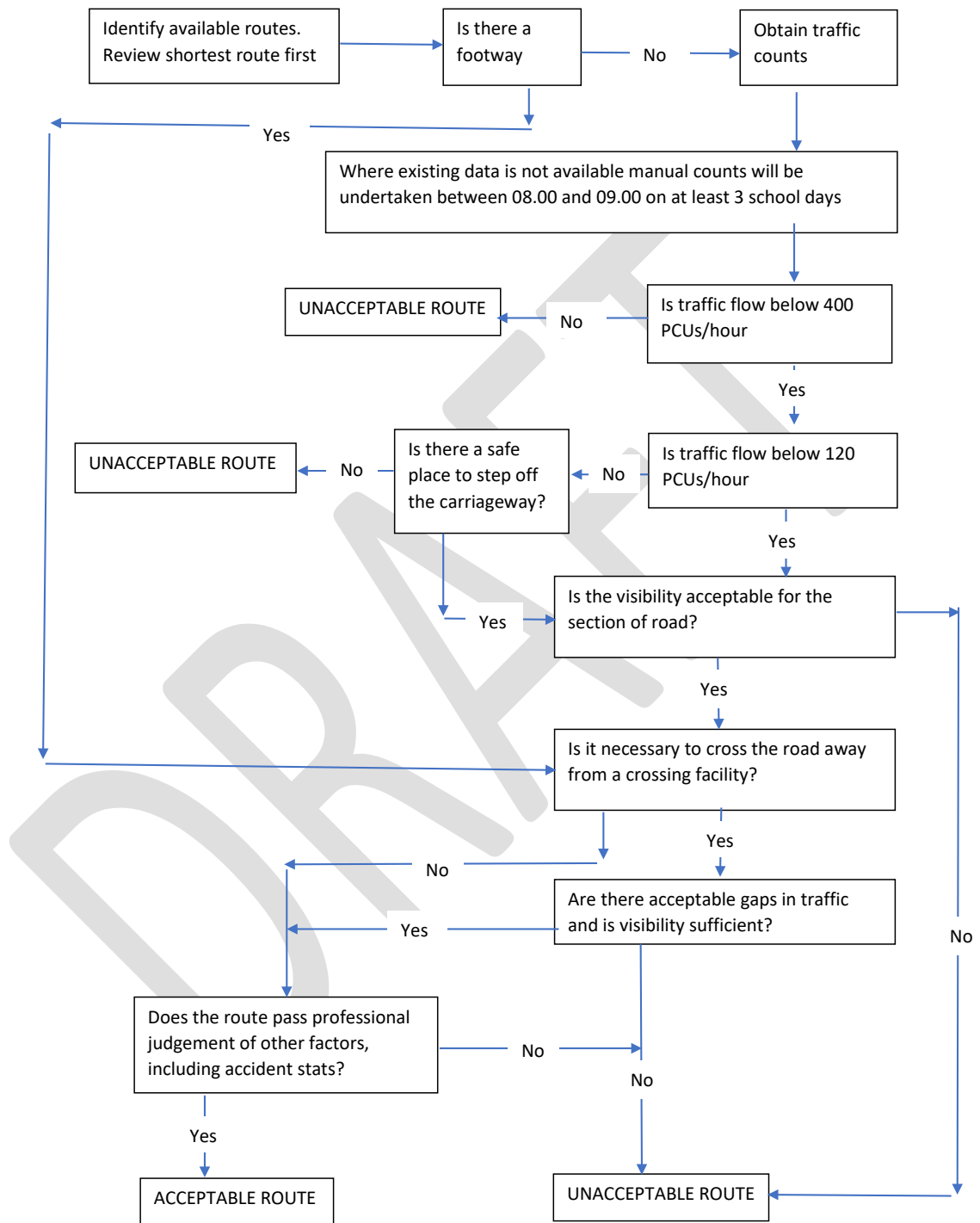
In line with the Council's School Transport Policy, if parents or carers are dissatisfied with the initial assessment of a route then they may make a request to the Education Resources Manager for it to be reviewed. However, dissatisfaction with an outcome is in itself insufficient grounds for a review. A review will normally only be instructed if:

- There has been a material change in the environmental or physical features of the walking route since it was last assessed; or
- There is an aspect of the environmental or physical features of the route which does not appear to have been considered within the assessment.

The review process will determine what material changes, if any, have occurred along the route and to check if there have been any omissions in the assessment process.

The request for a review should be made in writing to Education Resources Manager, and it must clearly outline the grounds for the request.

Appendix 1





A Guide to Improving School Transport Safety

Casualty risk, responsibilities and legal requirements, and ten ways to reduce risk on the school journey



Foreword

Children are identified as one of the national priorities in Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020. Whilst there is a greatly improving picture in reducing child road fatalities in Scotland this does not mean there is room for complacency and is why Scotland will have distinct reduction in road fatality and serious injury targets for children from January 2011.

There is a determination across all partners to do our utmost to further improve Scotland's standing on child road safety through a range of measures including education and engineering. I believe it is particularly important that we do all we can to promote road safety for children on the school journey. That is why this guide was commissioned, to raise awareness and make recommendations for how local authorities and school transport operators can reduce journey risk and improve the safety of children travelling to and from school.

The intention of the guide is to provide a comprehensive document setting out the current legislative position, outlining current policy, good practice procedures and case studies in the field of school transport safety as well as reflecting the work we have been undertaking in partnership with local authorities, particularly Aberdeenshire Council. I believe that this guide will be invaluable for local authorities and operators as a reference point for their responsibilities in terms of school transport and will provide local authorities with a toolkit of measures that they could consider in seeking to implement best practice.



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive name.

Minister for Transport and
Infrastructure

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Who is this for?

This guide has been prepared by TRL for Transport Scotland and SCOTS. It is primarily for use by Scottish local authorities; however, it may be of use to anyone who has an interest in or responsibility for the provision of school transport, including transport operators.

The guide presents information on the following:

- Casualty risk on the school journey in Scotland
- Responsibilities and legal obligations for the provision of school transport
- Ten ways that local authorities and others can reduce risk and improve the safety of pupils when travelling to and from school

Local authorities are welcome to share this guide with others responsible for school transport safety in their area.

What is the aim of this document?

The aim of this document is to promote road safety on the school journey by raising awareness, identifying responsibilities and by providing recommendations for how casualty risk on the school journey can be reduced. Authorities and their partners are encouraged to take a consistent and holistic approach to school transport provision and school transport safety.

The ultimate aim is to reduce child casualties on Scotland's roads.



Where can I find further information?

The information and recommendations detailed within this document are based on a report where more detail and information can be found.

This guide will refer the reader to specific areas of the report where further information is available, and where applicable, will suggest links to further useful information.

D [Improving School Transport Safety: Main report](#)

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020 outlines road safety targets and priority areas.

Reducing child casualties is defined as one of the priority areas; therefore seeking to improve school travel safety is aligned with the framework.

The Scottish Government aims to reduce the number of children (aged <16 years) killed on Scotland's roads by **50%** and those seriously injured by **65%** by 2020.



Go Safe Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020

The Scottish Government is also committed to encouraging active travel to and from school that will reduce car use and dependency.

At peak times in the morning and afternoon, one in five cars on the road is on the 'school run'.

Every day around **800,000** people travel to and from the **2,722** schools that cover the **teaching** and **breadbasket** of Scotland.

Source: Scottish Government (2010)

A reduction in car use can improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people as well as reducing congestion and decreasing CO₂ emissions. However, in order for active travel to be a viable alternative to the car, there must be safe routes to school.

The promotion of walking and cycling to and from school is also compatible with both the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Health and Wellbeing outcomes in the Curriculum for Excellence.



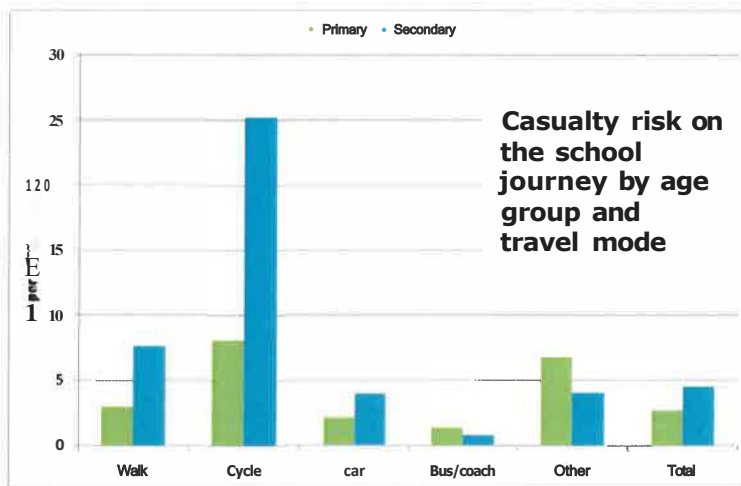
Curriculum for Excellence

School transport casualty risk in Scotland

rJ See Chapter 3 of the [Main Report](#)

From 2005 to 2009 there were 270 children killed or seriously injured on Scotland's roads officially recorded as pupils on a journey to or from school. In addition, 1,473 children were slightly injured on the school journey during the same time period.

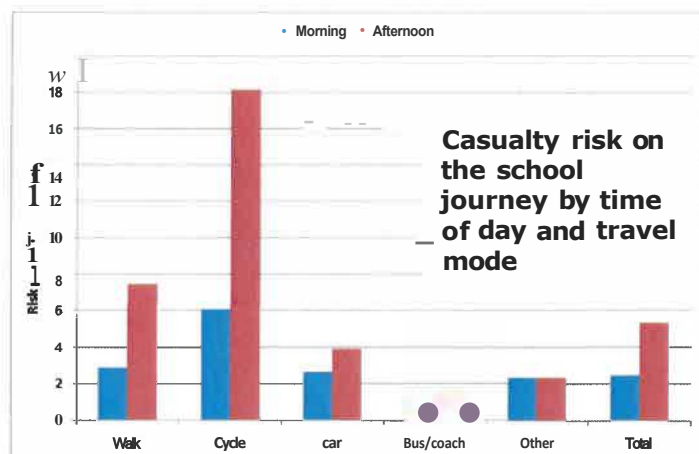
Between 25% and 45% of child road casualties are estimated to have occurred on the school journey in Scotland between 2005 and 2009. The lower estimate is based on the figures above, with the higher estimate based on an alternative measure of school journey casualties by time of day. Further detail can be seen in the main report.



Casualty risk increases dramatically when pupils make the transition from primary to secondary school.

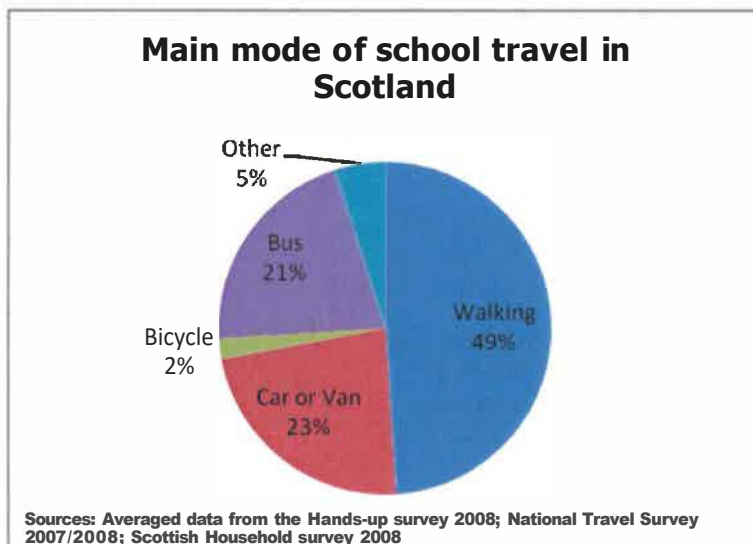
Therefore, this is an appropriate time for suitable, targeted road safety interventions.

The journey home from school in the afternoon is riskier than the journey to school in the morning, especially when walking or cycling. However, note that children killed or injured when walking after leaving a bus or a car are often classed as pedestrian casualties.



School transport casualty risk in Scotland continued ...

In general, walking is the most popular mode for getting to and from school. Walking is more common in urban areas, while taking the bus is more common in rural areas. Bus use is also more common in the most deprived areas.

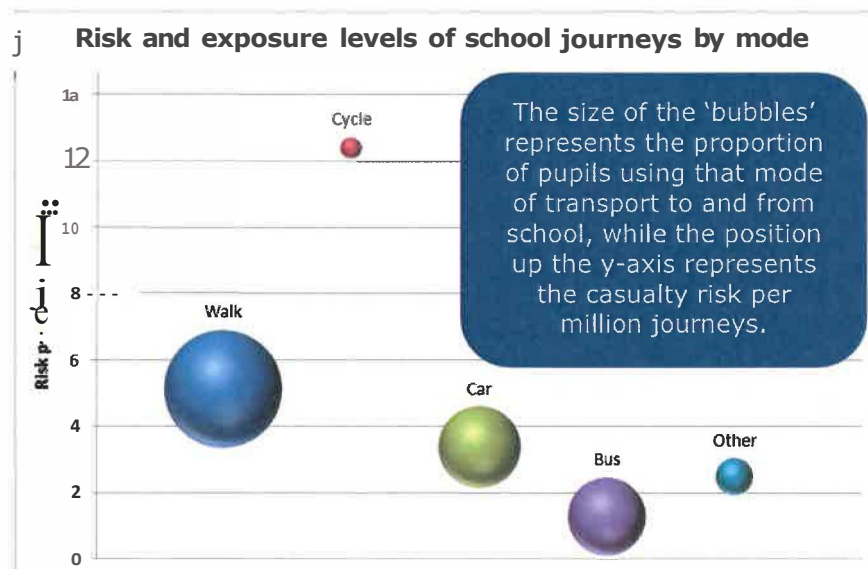


Most school journeys are multi-modal and involve an element of walking, requiring interaction with public roads.

Travelling to school by bus is the safest mode of transport. However, because so many pupils walk to school, walking represents the greatest exposure to risk overall.

While cycling is statistically the riskiest mode of travel, 65% of school child road casualties occur when walking.

Therefore, an improvement in pedestrian safety would be most beneficial due to the large number of pupils walking as part of their journey to and from school.



Responsibilities and legal requirements



See Chapter 4 of the [Main Report](#)

Statutory walking distances

The statutory walking distance is two miles for children less than 8 years-old and three miles for children aged 8 or over from a child's designated school. The distance from the school is measured as the nearest available route.

Education authorities are required to make such arrangements *as they consider necessary* for school pupils residing, and attending schools, in their area. This can include:

- the provision of free school transport for some or all of the journey;
- making bicycles or other suitable means of transport available to pupils;
- paying some or all of the travelling costs; or
- any combination of these.

Authorities must consider the safety of walking and cycling routes to school for pupils living within statutory walking distances from their designated school. If the routes could be considered unsafe, then transport should be provided, even when distances may fall short of eligibility criteria.

Authorities are expected to review the eligibility criteria and have flexibility to consider safety factors such as volume and speed of traffic, availability of safe crossings, and sufficiency of pavements, footpaths and street lighting.

Authorities are also expected to consider medical conditions of pupils which may affect their travel to school, and also the medical condition of parents where they may be expected to accompany their child for part or all of a journey.

Duty of care

Authorities have a common law duty of care for the safety of pupils under their charge and this duty extends to pupils travelling on dedicated transport arranged by the authority. Others (e.g. parents) also have a duty of care for the safety of pupils on the journey to school (as shown in the diagram on page 15).

A duty of care for pupils' safety is also covered by the Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. The Regulations place upon local authorities a general duty to secure, as far as is practicable, the safety of pupils when under their charge.

Pupils travelling on dedicated school transport arranged by local authorities are under the charge of the authorities. Therefore authorities are expected to keep school transport provision under review to ensure the safety of pupils when travelling on school transport.

Responsibilities and legal requirements continued ...

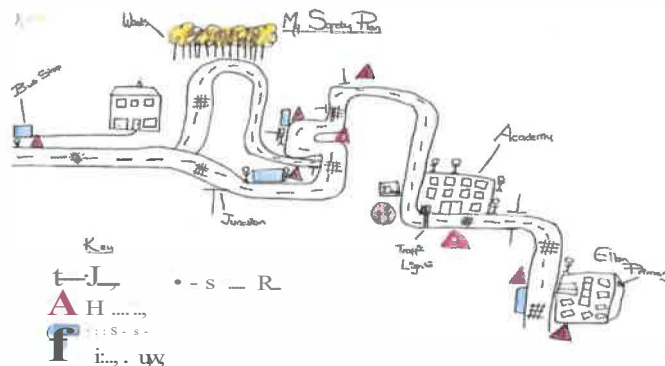
School transport provision

All new coaches, minibuses and buses (except 'urban buses') have had to be fitted with seat belts since 1 October 2001; there was a previous requirement to fit seat belts to all new coaches and to all minibuses whenever they were used specifically for the transport of children under 16 from February 1997. For legislation, a seatbelt is defined as a minimum of a lap belt.

Only forward-facing seats fitted with seat belts can be used for carrying school children; rearward or side-facing seats cannot be used by pupils for school travel, even if fitted with a seat belt.

Vehicle operators must notify passengers that seat belt wearing is compulsory.

All passengers in minibuses must wear a seat belt. The driver is responsible for ensuring that passengers aged 3 to 13 years wear a seat belt. In other buses and coaches, passengers aged 14 years or over are responsible for wearing a seat belt where they are fitted.



Minibuses, buses and coaches used to transport school children are required to display the retro-reflective yellow school bus sign at the front and the rear of the vehicle on journeys to and from school. While there is no statutory obligation for operators to remove the signs from vehicles when not being used to transport school children, local authorities are encouraged to make it a requirement for operators to do so.

School bus signs must meet minimum size regulations (not less than 250 x 250 mm at the front and with a black border not less than 20 mm wide; and not less than 400 mm x 400 mm at the rear with a black border not less than 30 mm). There is no maximum size.

All drivers, attendants and supervisors on arranged school transport require an enhanced disclosure check by Disclosure Scotland in line with the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003.

Ten ways to improve school transport safety in Scotland

The remainder of this guide presents ten ways to improve school transport safety in Scotland. These recommendations are based on an objective appraisal of the evidence presented within the main report.

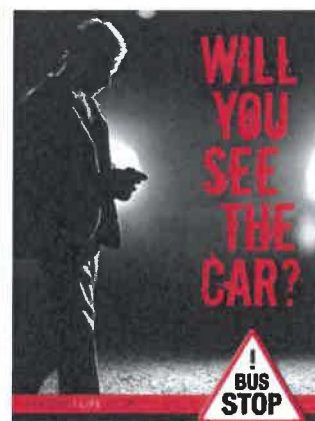
The recommendations are not an exhaustive list of safety measures and individual authorities may identify other safety measures specific to their needs. The recommendations suggest ways to address the key areas of child casualty risk when travelling on the school journey.

The recommendations aim to encourage a holistic and consistent approach across Scotland. For example, were all school buses in Scotland to use hazard warning lights when picking up or dropping off school children-as they are legally permitted to do-this approach would also require a publicity campaign to educate school bus drivers, other motorists, parents and pupils of the meaning of the use of hazard warning lights in this situation. Local authorities are encouraged to work together to create a consistent approach across Scotland.

Where school transport safety is concerned, everyone has a role to play: local authorities, parents, pupils, schools, transport operators, other motorists and other agencies (e.g. the police, VOSA). There is no single solution to improving school transport safety and we encourage authorities to consider how the following recommendations could help improve school transport safety in their area.

Aberdeenshire Council has taken a holistic approach to improving school transport safety through various measures. This has included the implementation of various demonstration projects and trials, including:

- Evaluation of new, higher-visibility, school bus signage
- Trials of the interactive SeeMe® bus stop technology at school transport pick-up/drop-off locations
- Development of the Bus Stop! Education Pack, as rolled out in all schools across the region and promoted for inclusion in operators' induction training
- Implementation of a wider School Transport Safety Campaign



IRIII 1 second 1 life
II.a Aberdeenshire Council School Transport

1.Reduce speeds on school routes and around schools

 See Chapters 4 & 6 of the [Main Report](#)

The greatest road casualty risk to school pupils occurs when they are walking (including when walking to or from a bus or a car) or cycling. Reducing motorists' speeds on routes used by school pupils and around the school zone will reduce the likelihood of collisions occurring and will reduce the severity of any collisions that do occur.

While many local authorities have already put in place measures to reduce speeds around schools, further improvements may be possible. Authorities should use the powers available to them to set permanent or part-time 20 mph limits around schools where possible, divert unnecessary traffic from school routes in the morning and afternoon, and use traffic calming measures to reduce average speeds.



Speed humps reduce traffic by 25%, speed by 33%, and accidents by 48% on roads where they are installed.

Source: Elvik & Vaa (2004)

Local authorities have the power to introduce 20 mph zones or speed limits where it is deemed appropriate (see Road Traffic Regulation Act (Amendment) Order 1999). Guidance on setting 20 mph limits is provided by the Scottish Government. Follow the information link for more details.

 [Setting local speed limits: Guidance for local authorities](#)

Local Authorities can also use Traffic Regulation Orders to restrict parking around schools or to exclude vehicles at particular times.

2. Encourage motorists to reduce their speed when passing stationary school buses

D See Chapters 4 & 6 of the [Main Report](#)

One of the most common casualties involving a school bus occurs when pupils cross the road after alighting from the bus. The school bus can act as a visual barrier to other drivers intent on passing the bus to continue their journey. Motorists unaware that a pupil has begun to cross from behind the bus can only react once the pupil suddenly appears in the road. At slower speeds drivers have more time to react and, where a collision does take place, the severity is reduced.

It is important that speeds are lowered around stationary school buses so that the casualty risk to children as pedestrians is reduced. To achieve this, motorists need to be made aware of two things:

1. How to identify a school bus that is picking up or dropping off school children.
2. That there is a legitimate reason for reducing speed around school buses due to the specific risk of a child suddenly appearing on the road from behind the bus.

Local authorities and operators could consider the following ways of increasing school bus conspicuity. In some instances, changes will need to be introduced alongside an awareness raising campaign to inform motorists of what the change means and the desired behaviour.

Improving signage

It is suggested that the current bus sign is not sufficient and is unlikely to have any impact on drivers' speeds around school buses.

Larger, more conspicuous signs should be used, and removed when school pupils are not being carried.

Signs should be placed on vehicles in areas clearly visible to other motorists. Signs should **not** be placed behind vehicle windows.



Aberdeenshire Council have trialled a new school bus sign that is more easily identifiable and conspicuous to motorists.

Aberdeenshire Council insists that school transport operators remove school bus signs when not carrying school children, under conditions of their contract.

2. continued ...

Using lights

Hazard warning lights should always be used when pupils are embarking or alighting from school buses to improve the consistency of use across Scotland. Operators could install additional hazard warning lights where possible, although this will be dependent on the vehicle.

Additional lit signage could also be used to improve school bus conspicuity when pupils are embarking or alighting from the bus, although authorities should refer to the Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 1994.



Australian research recommends that flashing lights should be visible from 250 metres away to enable other drivers to reduce their speed to pass the school bus safely.

Source: Paine & Fisher (1996)

Using technology

SAFEWAY2SCHOOL is a European research project that is focused on developing an Intelligent Transport System to improve communication with, and the safety of, children using the bus to get to school. The project started in September 2009 and will run through to September 2012.

D SAFEWAY2SCHOOL

Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray Councils have been trialling SeeMe® technology that involves flashing lights at school bus stops, triggered by transponders carried by pupils.

Initial results suggest the scheme led to a reduction in drivers' speeds. No council has plans to install the system at this time although Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils are happy to share information with anyone interested in the system.



3. Set minimum safety standards in school transport contracts



See Chapters 4 & 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Many authorities are already aware that school transport contracts offer an opportunity for local authorities to stipulate minimum standards required of school transport operators to guarantee safe practices.

Local authorities could check the vehicle operator's history with VOSA prior to awarding a contract and, once a contract is awarded, regular unannounced spot checks should be carried out either through local authority inspectors or VOSA.

Possible stipulations in school transport contracts

- / School bus signs must be removed when not carrying children to or from school
- / Larger and more conspicuous school bus signs must be used
- / Hazard warning lights must always be used when pupils are embarking and alighting from the vehicle
- / Vehicles must be fitted with three-point seatbelts
- / Operators must assist authorities to encourage all pupils to wear seat belts
- / Operators must demonstrate that they are aware of how seat belts should be worn correctly by pupils on their vehicles
- / CCTV must be fitted on all buses
- / Drivers must have a minimum level of experience (suggested 3 years' driving experience; for bus drivers this means 3 years' bus driving experience)
- / Drivers must be of a minimum age requirement (suggested minimum age of 25 years)
- / Drivers must attend defensive driver training or similar evaluated training to improve safe driving skills
- / Introduce a penalty point system for non-compliance (e.g. failure to display school bus sign on a school journey) with the option of contract termination for repeated failure to comply

4. Risk assess school transport pick-up and drop-off points

D See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

All local authorities should have a procedure in place for undertaking formal risk assessment of school pick-up and drop-off areas. These areas must be fit for purpose and should not put school pupils at risk when being picked up, dropped off or when waiting.

Particular attention should be given to pupil behaviour when they alight from the vehicle and to their 'desire line' (the most commonly used pedestrian route) where they may need to cross the road. Additional infrastructure (e.g. guardrails, formal crossings) may be necessary to deter pupils from alighting from the bus and immediately crossing the road.

Other important factors include visibility distances (i.e. from what distance can a motorist see a pupil at the pick-up point?) and waiting areas (e.g. how safe is the waiting area for the number of pupils being picked up?).

Local authorities should communicate with drivers, operators, parents and pupils to identify specific risks where pupils are being picked up and dropped off.

West Dunbartonshire Council, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and MVA developed an assessment tool for school bus 'Pick-Up and Drop-Off' points (PUDO).

The PUDO assessment tool requires a trained assessor to visit PUDO points and carry out an on-the-spot assessment.

The assessor records data such as approach visibility, road widths, footway widths, speed limits, guardrails, lighting, and stopping location.

Development of a portable data logging system has been completed with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

In November 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government issued guidance on home to school transport risk assessments with the expectation that local authorities would ensure that all home to school transport routes and bus stops were risk assessed by August 2011.

School transport operators are required to complete assessments for each route they cover.

5. Review school travel plans, improve communication and clarify responsibilities

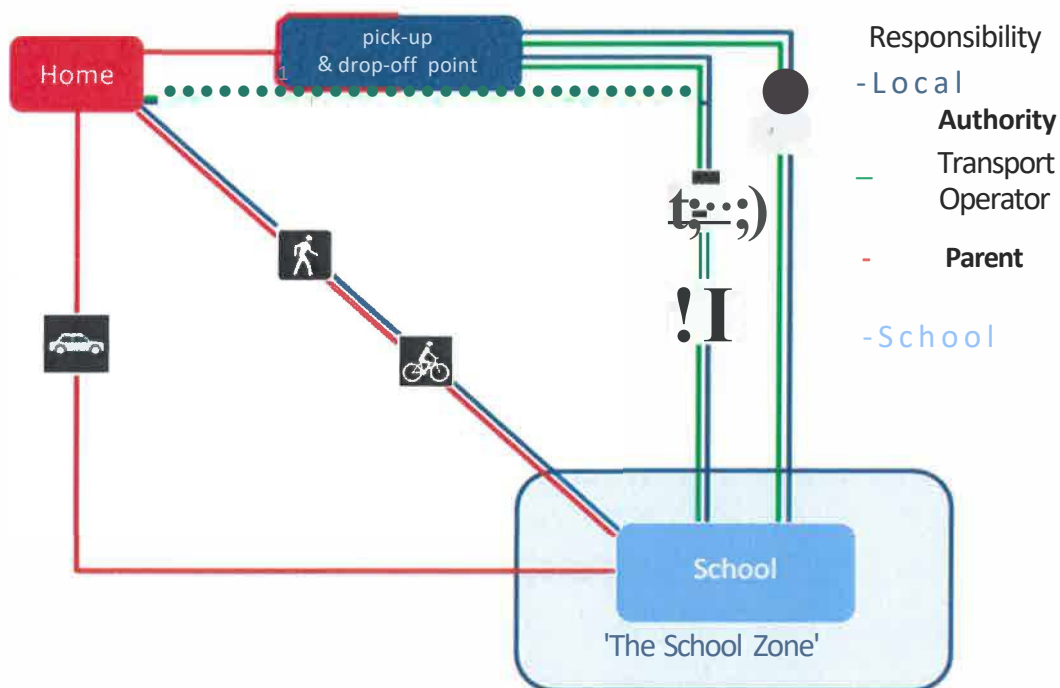
 See Chapters 5 & 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Some school travel plans and safer routes to school schemes may benefit from being reviewed in light of the new road safety targets for 2020.

Local authorities should continue to actively encourage and support schools with their school travel plans.

The best school safety schemes demonstrate good communication between local authorities and the other parties involved with school transport, from transport operators to the pupils themselves.

Open lines of communication with the local authority coupled with enthusiastic 'road safety champions' have the ability to drive significant improvements towards increasing school transport safety.



In addition, local authorities should clarify and document their responsibilities for school transport safety and detail what is expected of parents, pupils, transport operators, schools, school travel coordinators, active travel coordinators and road safety officers.

This clarification should be communicated to everyone involved in the provision and use of school transport.

6. Raise awareness of desired behaviours



See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Local authorities should communicate desired behaviours that improve safety to parents and pupils. These might include highlighting areas of risk and preferred behaviours. For example, suggesting that parents wait for pupils on the side of the road where they are dropped **off**, which avoids pupils seeking to cross immediately after alighting from the bus. Similarly, parents should be made aware of drop-off rules outside the school to improve congestion and safety.

Authorities should be aware that the distribution of educational material, in some instances, can have the undesirable consequence of increasing risk (see Recommendation No.10). For this reason, authorities must consider educational material carefully and should seek advice where they are uncertain of whether the material will result in a positive behavioural outcome.

It is suggested that authorities monitor the desired behavioural change (e.g. whether parents follow recently-promoted drop-off rules or not) and consider whether the material should be stopped where negative behavioural change is perceived, or reinforced, possibly with enforcement, where positive behavioural change requires support.

Possible key messages:

Target audience	Key message
School children	Never cross in front of, or behind a bus.
	Wait until the bus has gone and you can see clearly in both directions before crossing safely.
	Always wear your seat belt.
Bus drivers	How to identify the main hazards for children around the school bus.
	How to encourage pupils to wear their seat belts.
Parents	Children are still developing their perceptual and cognitive skills, which puts them at increased risk when using public roads.
	Pupils' casualty risk increases when moving from primary to secondary school.
	Encourage children to wear seat belts at all times.
	Wait for your child at the bus stop, not on the other side of the road.
	Behaviour and parking within the school zone.
Other motorists	Slow down around schools and school buses.
	Be aware of pupils crossing from behind stationary school buses.

7. Promote on-road pedestrian and cyclist training



See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Forms of on-road training for pedestrians and cyclists have been evaluated and suggest that important road safety skills can be learned.

All schools that encourage active travel should offer 'real world' training that has been suitably evaluated to improve desired behavioural safety outcomes and not simply approval ratings.

Training should be offered in the format in which it was designed and evaluated. Training that has not been evaluated could lead to overconfidence and can increase pupil exposure and risk, resulting in an increase in casualties.

Kerbcraft is a good example of an education or training scheme that has been scientifically evaluated, both in terms of 'outcome' variables (behavioural change, cost effectiveness) and in terms of 'process' variables such as its impact on the organisations using it (schools) and its sustainability.

Kerbcraft is designed to teach pedestrian skills to 5-7 year-old children through practical training at the roadside. A number of Local Authorities in Scotland have already participated in Kerbcraft.

It is important that training is delivered in the way it was designed and evaluated to ensure effectiveness.

Some schools will be more 'cycle friendly' than others. Some will have opportunities for off-road access or are on roads with low traffic volume. Authorities should identify which schools and pupils would safely benefit from cycling infrastructure and on-road cycle training.

Cycling Scotland provides information about on-road cycle training.



 [Kerbcraft](#)
[Cycling Scotland](#)

S.Encourage schools to use Road Safety Scotland's educational material



See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Road Safety Scotland (RSS) offers a full range of educational material with themes that develop with pupils as they grow older and require focus on different road safety skills. The educational material has been designed to comply with the Experiences and Outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence especially within Health and Wellbeing and provides active learning which enables links to Literacy, Numeracy and the wider curriculum. This material should be used throughout Scotland to communicate a consistent road safety message and aid the development of a road safety culture, although care should be taken to evaluate against desired outcomes wherever possible (see Recommendation No.10).

D Road Safety Scotland

Road Safety Scotland's educational material	
Pre-school	Go-safe - Ziggy's road safety mission
Primary	Streetsense and Streetsense2
	Junior Road Safety Officer (JRSO) scheme
	Streetwise Guys
	Theatre in Education-The Journey
Secondary	Your Call
	Crash Magnets
	Theatre in Education
Additional educational support	a2bsafely
	On the Road
Extra curricular	Out of School Care Activity pack
	Roadways
	Travel pack
Curriculum for Excellence	Road Safety Education in the Curriculum for Excellence

9. Discourage young novice drivers from driving to school and transporting others



See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Young novice drivers are more likely to be crash-involved than experienced drivers. Crash risk increases further when driving in the presence of peers.

Young novice drivers should be discouraged from driving to and from school and parents should be discouraged from allowing young novice drivers to transport siblings or friends to school on their own.

Supervised driving (e.g. with a parent) is a safer way for new drivers to gain experience and parents should be encouraged to travel with young drivers.

Authorities and schools could target pupils who drive to school and encourage and support them to use an alternative mode of transport where supervised driving is not possible.

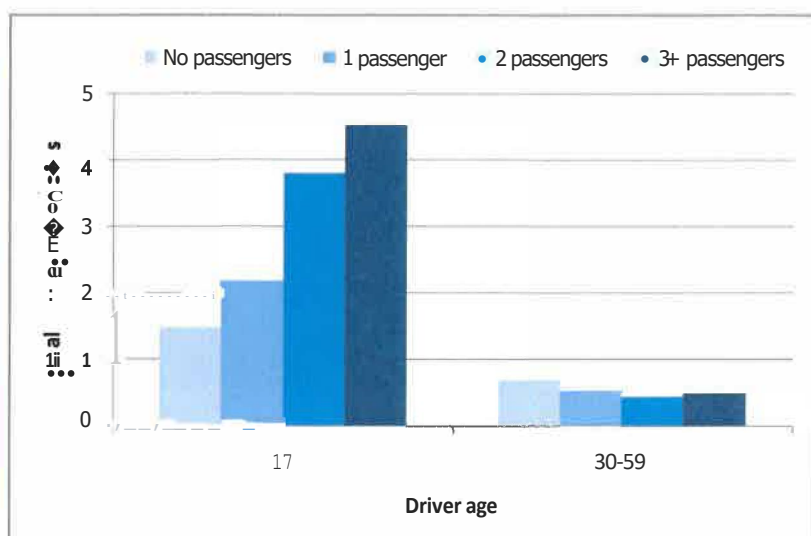


More than half of 15 year-old male car passenger casualties occur while being driven by a 17-20 year-old driver.

Source: Scottish Government (2008)

Driver fatality rate by driver age and number of passengers

Source: figure reproduced from Chen et al. (2000)



10. Evaluate all interventions

 See Chapter 6 of the [Main Report](#)

Good intentions do not necessarily lead to good interventions. Some well-meaning interventions can increase casualty risk. Education, training, infrastructure improvements and publicity have all been shown in some circumstances to increase, rather than decrease, risk in various domains seeking to change behaviour, including road safety.

All new interventions should be well thought out, and based on a formal body of knowledge wherever possible; the desired safety outcomes should be defined, and an evaluation with measurement of these outcomes designed.



A large safer routes to school programme in Odense, Denmark was evaluated in 2002. The evaluation found that there was an 18% reduction in accidents and a 20% reduction in casualties as a result of the programme. The effects were mainly due to speed reduction measures such as low speed limits, traffic calming, and various types of signage to warn drivers.

However, the Odense evaluation also found that **half of the interventions had made travel to school less safe.** Interventions that were found to decrease safety mainly involved cycle paths (although in some places where cycle paths had been installed safety had improved.)

Interventions should always be carefully considered so not to increase the risk to pupils travelling to school.

 [Road safety evaluation toolkit; E-valu-it](#)

Summary table

	Recommendation	Identified risk
1	Reduce speeds on school routes and around schools	Speed is a key determinant in road casualty rate and severity. Any reduction in speed on school routes and around schools will improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
2	Encourage motorists to reduce speeds when passing stationary school buses	The most common casualty related to the school bus occurs when a pupil alights from the school bus in the afternoon and crosses the road. A reduction in speed reduction by passing motorists would give them more time to react and reduce severity where a collision does take place.
3	Set minimum standards in school transport contracts	There are several risks related to using external operators such as the quality of the vehicles and the experience of the drivers. By setting minimum safety standards in contracts, local authorities can improve and ensure the safety of pupils when being transported to and from school.
4	Risk assess school transport pick-up and drop-off areas	School transport pick-up and drop-off areas are often convenient but do not usually benefit from the safety infrastructure or risk assessment accorded to public bus stops.
5	Review school travel plans, improve communication and clarify responsibilities	Effective school travel plans can be important to improving safety and reducing pupil casualties. Good communication has been found to be important for success. In addition, research has established a void of responsibility whereby parents and local authorities assume the other is primarily responsible for pupil safety.
6	Raise awareness of desired behaviours	School transport risks and safety messages are not regularly communicated. There is, therefore, scope to raise awareness of some desired behaviours to improve safety. However, any communication should be well thought out and evaluated to avoid any unintended outcomes.
7	Promote on-road pedestrian and cyclist training	Children's cognitive and perceptual processes are still developing; therefore, they are at increased risk when dealing with public roads and traffic. On-road training has been shown to be an effective way of increasing safe behaviours. Courses should be implemented as they were evaluated and as recommended.
8	Encourage schools to use Road Safety Scotland's educational material	Inconsistent road safety messages can dilute meaning hence authorities and schools should utilise Road Safety Scotland's full range of educational materials for pupils aged 3-18 years.
9	Discourage young novice drivers from driving to school and transporting others	Young drivers are at increased risk of being crash-involved. Young drivers should either be supervised (e.g. by parents) when driving to and from school or discouraged from driving to school to reduce the risk to themselves, their passengers and other road users.
10	<u>Evaluate all interventions</u>	Some well-meaning interventions can actually increase casualty risk. It is essential that all interventions to improve safety are evaluated to determine if they are achieving their desired outcome and are not increasing casualty risk.

Useful Links

Improving School Transport Safety: Main Report

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/improving-school-transport-safety-report>

School Transport Guidance Circular

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Parents/transport-guidance

Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/10/01090036/0

School Transport: Survey of good practice

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/16091028/7

Road Safety Scotland

www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk

Cycling Scotland

www.cyclingscotland.org/

Sustrans

www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/safe-routes-to-schools/whats-in-your-area/scotland

Department for Transport: School travel

www.dft.gov.uk/pqr/sustainable/schooltravel/

Kerbcraft

www.kerbcraft.org

E-valu-it

www.roadsafetvevaluation.com/

The Safety of School Transport covers driver regulations, seat belts and taxis:

www.rospa.com/RoadSafety/info/schooltransport.pdf

Minibus safety code of practice:

www.rosoa.com/roadsafety/info/minibus_code_2008.pdf

Cycling by Design: Transport Scotland cycle infrastructure guidelines

www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/cycling-by-design

Scottish Consumer Council: Travelling to School

http://web.archive.org/web/20090724135150/http://scotcons.demonweb.co.uk/publications/reports/documents/rp12travel_000.pdf

The North East School Transport Safety Group's Bus Stop! Campaign

www.lsecondlife.co.uk

EU SAFEWAY2SCHOOL project

<http://safeway2school-eu.org>

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This report has been prepared for Transport Scotland and SCOTS.

PPRS44

Images courtesy of Aberdeenshire Council, TRL and Department for Transport (Kerbcraft logo only).



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy
Service / service area responsible.	Education, Leisure and Housing.
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Steven Burnett: Education Resources Manager Steven.burnett@orkney.gov.uk
Date of assessment.	11-01-2021
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	New policy.

2. Initial Screening	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	To ensure consistency in approach when conducting assessments of the suitability of pupil walking routes.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	(Strategic plans include major investment plans, new strategic frameworks or plans such as annual budgets, locality plans or corporate plans).
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	All pupils who are required to undertake all or part of their journey to and from school on foot.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	The principles underpinning this Policy are fundamental to the development of School Travel Plans. The Plans are directly informed by service-

	<p>user stakeholders through the auspices of parent councils.</p> <p>The Policy has been developed by ELH in direct consultation with OIC Roads Team.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise.</p> <p>E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>There are no available equalities-related data in respect of safe walking routes to school.</p> <p>There have been no equalities issues raised in the consideration of any complaints or feedback to OIC on the topic of safe walking routes.</p>
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise.</p> <p>E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Interim Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.</p>	<p>There are no such available data in respect of safe walking routes to school. It would be reasonable to assume that those families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage have a lower likelihood of having access to a vehicle as an alternative means of travelling to school.</p> <p>There have been no issues of disadvantage raised in the consideration of any complaints or feedback to OIC on the topic of safe walking routes.</p>
<p>Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality strands?</p>	<p>(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons).</p>
<p>1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.</p>	<p>The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>2. Sex: a man or a woman.</p>	<p>The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p>	<p>The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.</p>	<p>The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>5. Pregnancy and maternity.</p>	<p>The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.</p>

6. Age: people of different ages.	Whilst the Policy is intended to support the identification of safe walking routes for school-age children the impact of its implementation will impact on those of all ages accompanying the children, as such the Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this personal characteristic.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.
8. Caring responsibilities.	The Policy is predicated upon a single accompanied child. There may be some differential impact for those accompanying more than one child.
9. Care experienced.	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this personal characteristic.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic. The Policy allows for bespoke evaluation of individual circumstances.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of this protected characteristic.
13. Isles-proofing.	The Policy is not expected to have any additional positive or negative impact in respect of isles proofing.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	Continuous review.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No.
What action is to be taken?	Once the Policy is approved it will be necessary to publish and communicate it both within and out with OIC.
Who will undertake it?	Education Resources Manager
When will it be done?	School year 2021-22
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	Annual review.

Signature:



Date: 11-01-2021

Name: Steven Burnett

(BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk