

Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy Summary 2008

The School Travel Plan Programme in Gateshead

Gateshead schools began developing School Travel Plans (STPs) in 1999 and the target is for all schools to have a plan by 2010. STPs aim to achieve the following broad aims:

- A reduction in the number of car journeys made to schools by promoting and facilitating walking, cycling and use of public transport, and
- Improving the safety of the school journey

An authorised plan qualifies for a grant of approx. £5,000 for primary (and special) schools and £10,000 for secondary schools until 2010. Schools often also benefit from safety features through Gateshead Council's Safe Routes to School funding. Plans are designed to be updated on an annual basis so that they can evolve to meet changing travel needs. Currently, 68 Gateshead schools have authorised STPs, with further schools joining the programme on an ongoing basis. A list of schools with plans is on Gateshead Council's website or can be obtained by contacting Gateshead's School Travel Advisers on 0191 4333161 or 4333109.

Education & Inspections Act 2006

Under the Education & Inspections Act which came into force in April 2007, local authorities have a general duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport for school journeys. This general duty encompasses:

- an assessment of pupils' journey needs
- an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions
- development of a school travel strategy aimed at improving accessibility to schools and ensuring the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for.

This document summarises Gateshead Council's progress towards development of a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy. It is hoped that it will be of particular use to parents at the time they are giving consideration to (or expressing their preference for) the school their child will attend.

Assessing Gateshead pupils' journey needs

How Gateshead pupils currently make their school journeys – School Census

The 2006/7 Census, covering mandatory school age children only (age 5 – 16), showed that 59% of primary school pupils currently walk to school, 34% travel by car, 2% car share, 3.4% come by bus and less than 1% Cycle.

Among secondary school students, 36% currently walk, 18% travel by car, 1% car share and 44% travel by bus.

How Gateshead schoolchildren would prefer to make their school journeys

Data from 28 primary schools shows that 36% of pupils would prefer to walk, 22% to come by car, 6% would prefer to travel by bus and 35% to cycle to school.

Data from 5 secondary schools (50% of the secondary population) showed that 34% of pupils would prefer to walk, 28% to come by car, 29% would prefer to travel by bus and 9% would prefer to cycle to school.

School Journey Consultation Findings - Gateshead Schools 04 – 07

The most frequently repeated concerns and suggestions in respect of **cycling** included lack of suitable storage (pupils and parents), lack of dedicated cycle lanes, concern over speed and volume of traffic and requests for training opportunities including on-road. Concerns in respect of **bus journeys** included smoking, bullying and other anti-social behaviour, comfort of the journey, timing, routes and cost of travel, safe bus boarding, need for more accessible information on bus journeys/timetables/Under 16 cards and tickets, anonymous reporting of bullying/anti-social behaviour, consistent use of CCTV on all buses used for school journeys with follow up sanctions for rule-breaking and new routes. In respect of **walking** to school, concerns were mainly voiced by parents and included need for safe crossing points, volume and speed of traffic, lack of time for working parents and, in more rural areas, lack of safe pedestrian facilities. Similar concerns to those under walking were also raised in respect of Road Safety.

Pupil Population Locations - Maps

Maps are currently being compiled which will display the spread of a school's pupil population, coded by mode of travel to school. This information will be used by schools to help decide on initiatives to promote sustainable travel and also by transport planners to improve overall accessibility to schools. For further information on the progress of this work, please contact Gateshead Council School Travel Advisers on 0191 4333161 or 4333109.

Current Support for Sustainable School Journeys

Road Safety Team

Gateshead Council's Road Safety Team conducts road safety, cycle, pedestrian & independent travel training in schools. They also manage an extensive School Crossing Patrol (SCP) Service. Current SCP vacancies are advertised using a variety of different methods. Filling all vacancies remains a challenge however, both in Gateshead and nationally. Details of the current locations of SCP points and which schools are served by individual SCPs is available on the Council's website or can be supplied by contacting the Road Safety Officer on 0191 4333107.

Pedestrian Access and Rights of Way

School Travel Advisers liaise with the Public Rights of Way Officer to help improve pedestrian access to Gateshead schools. For example, pedestrian access was recently improved to a Gateshead secondary school through improvements to footpaths and street lighting.

Road and footway network maintenance

Gateshead Council's Transport & Highways Service is to begin a review of the highway/footway inspections policy during the current financial year. The review should encompass the frequency of inspections outside schools and take account of school journey needs.

Home to School Transport – free travel provision

For the 2006/2007 Academic Year, 840 Free Bus Passes were issued to Gateshead pupils with a small additional number receiving reimbursed costs for school travel. Free home to school transport is provided by Gateshead Council in the following certain circumstances:

Primary:

Any primary pupil who lives more than two miles from the nearest suitable school (based on the shortest available route). This travel will be by whatever means the authority considers the most suitable. Gateshead Council will not normally provide help if a choice has been made to send a child to a school outside their catchment area.

Secondary:

Any pupil in years 7 – 11 at a secondary school who lives more than 3 miles from the nearest appropriate school (based upon the shortest available route). This travel will be by whatever means we consider most suitable.

Changes from September 2008 brought about by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 apply to pupils who are in receipt of free school meals or whose household qualify for the maximum level of working tax credit on the date their school place is allocated:

- These pupils are entitled to free travel to one of their three nearest qualifying schools where they live more than two miles but no more than six miles from that school
- Where a parent has expressed a preference for a school, and that preference is based on the parent's religion or belief then a pupil will be eligible for free travel to their nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief where they live more than two miles, but not more than 15 miles from that school.

Qualification in future years is dependent upon continued eligibility for free school meals or maximum working tax credit.

Bus Journeys to School

Gateshead Council and Nexus (the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive) are committed to improving the experience of the bus and Metro journey for young people. School Travel Advisers meet regularly with Nexus to explore opportunities for joint working. A '**Travel Fact File**' has been developed which includes information on use of the bus and metro, timetables, buying tickets, under 16 cards, Teen Travel and also the standards of behaviour expected when travelling. A 'bus induction' programme is also being piloted where Year 6 pupils are provided with information, advice and reassurance and taken on a specially arranged journey to their future schools. More information on bus travel can be found at: www.nexus.org.uk. A list of current school buses can be found on Gateshead Council's website, however please confirm any provision by contacting Richard Rook at Nexus on 0191 2033333 or Richard.Rook@nexus.org.uk.

New Headteacher duties under the Education & Inspections Act (EIA)

Through the EIA 2006, headteachers are empowered to take action in respect of unacceptable behaviour on school buses. Schools are expected to work with the police, bus operators and the local community to promote positive behaviour on the school journey. In Gateshead, STAs will work with schools on this issue and discuss the powers under the EIA with headteachers at the beginning of STP development.

Cycling to School

40 Gateshead schools have included a cycling target in their plans and 18 now have secure cycle parking, with more currently making plans to do so. Gateshead has recently benefited from a 'Bike-It' Officer, who divides his time between Gateshead and South Tyneside Councils to promote cycling in schools. Encouraging cycling for the school journey forms part of Gateshead Council's overall cycling strategy. Further details can be obtained by contacting Gateshead's Cycling Officer on 0191 4333108

Child Pedestrian Training

Practical pedestrian training has been offered to Gateshead schools with a School Travel Plan since 1999. In addition, since 2003, a Gateshead Council 'Kerbcraft Officer' has coordinated the pedestrian training of over 1,000 Gateshead schoolchildren. Since 2006, he has continued this work as a Child Pedestrian Training Officer.

Independent Travel Training

Gateshead Council Road Safety Section is currently developing and delivering Pedestrian, Road Safety and Travel Awareness Training to pupils in special schools to help meet pupils needs in respect of improving, wherever possible, levels of independence and road safety confidence.

Walking Buses

Gateshead School Travel Advisers are currently supporting 3 Gateshead schools with 6 walking bus routes and a further 7 schools who are in the process of setting a bus up. Stickers and certificates are provided to help promote walking buses and also rewards/incentives whereby pupils can record their use of the walking bus to achieve a free family swim voucher.

Traffic Engineering Infrastructure Changes

Gateshead Council Safer Routes to School Programme has resulted in engineering improvements in and around schools both as a response to school journey consultations, and to complement the school-based measures in School Travel Plans. More fundamentally, Gateshead's Safer Routes to School Programme oversees the creation of School Zones at any school with an authorised STP. Each school zone is individually designed to meet the needs of the school in question, however the main components include enforceable zig-zags, waiting restrictions, school warning signs, road markings and traffic calming, where appropriate.

Overcoming Barriers to Sustainable School Journeys

Casualty Reduction in Gateshead

In Gateshead, considerable resources are invested in road safety, child pedestrian and cycle training with a clear focus on road accident prevention and reduction. Gateshead Council has an ongoing programme of specific, targeted initiatives involving extensive publicity and information dissemination directed to all sectors of the community.

Supporting Safe School Bus Journeys

Future partnership working in this area between Tyne & Wear STAs and Nexus will examine more systematic solutions to school bus journey problems, e.g. consistent and proper use of CCTV.

Congestion

The school journey contributes significantly to the problem of traffic congestion. Increasing use of sustainable transport for the school journey will contribute to Tyne and Wear's **Congestion Reduction Plan**.

Air Quality

Traffic is a major cause of air pollution and 'Air Quality Management Areas' have been declared in Newcastle and Gateshead. Progress towards deterring use of the car for the school journey will contribute towards the aims of an Air Quality Action Plan for Tyne and Wear.

Key Objectives and Targets

As part of the overall Sustainable School Travel Strategy, objectives and targets have been devised based on an assessment of school journey needs and what is already in place to facilitate school journeys. These objectives and targets can be found, along with an action plan, in the Sustainable School Travel Strategy available on the Council's website:

www.gateshead.gov.uk/Education%20and%20Learning/Schools/SustainableSchoolTransport.aspx or by contacting Gateshead's School Travel Advisers on 0191 4333161 or 4333109.

Please direct any queries about Gateshead's Sustainable School Travel Strategy to:

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