

**REDUCE  
SPEED  
NOW**

Stop, look and listen:  
children talk about traffic

TRANSPORT  
**2000**  
*trust*

 Association of  
London Government

  
**Barnardo's**  
GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

# SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Barnardo's and Transport 2000 are calling on governments across the UK to ensure that children and young people can use streets and roads safely by:

- Legislating to make 20 mph the default speed limit in residential areas and near schools
- Issuing guidance to local authorities requiring them to focus on vulnerable road users in their speed management strategies
- Increasing funding for traffic calming in the most deprived residential areas
- Increasing the use of speed cameras in deprived residential areas where there are large numbers of child pedestrians
- Increasing the number and frequency of traffic police patrols and making road safety a policing priority
- Running public information campaigns aimed at educating drivers on child-friendly road use
- Allocating funding for the development of more Home Zones
- Extending the network of safe cycle routes to meet the needs of child cyclists and pedestrians by linking leisure facilities, schools and parks
- Providing safe routes to school so that all children can walk or cycle to school in comfort and safety
- Imposing a planning requirement that all new housing developments include children's play space
- Issuing guidance on involving children and young people in local transport plans designed to increase their safety, or enhance their play opportunities

**THEY DON'T ASK US  
KIDS 'COS THEY THINK  
THAT CARS ARE  
NOTHING TO DO WITH US**

When we consider traffic it is usually from the motorist's point of view. Dense traffic and road works are causing delays to journeys and costing time and money, speed humps are increasingly seen as an inconvenience, and speed cameras are viewed by some as an infringement of their freedom to drive. But roads aren't just for motorists, and traffic flow isn't simply a question of how fast we can get from A to B. Roads and traffic have a direct impact on communities, particularly on children and young people.

## Using the roads in the UK places children at high risk of harm.

- The UK has one of the worst track records for child pedestrian casualties in Europe.<sup>1</sup>
- Road crashes are a leading cause of non-intentional death for children in the UK.<sup>2</sup>
- About 12 per cent of all deaths in the 5-14 year old age group are caused by road crashes.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2003 3,224 children aged between 0 and 15 years were killed or seriously injured on the roads.<sup>4</sup>
- The estimated value of preventing road traffic collisions in Great Britain is £12.2 billion.<sup>5</sup>





## These risks are the greatest for children living in areas of high deprivation:

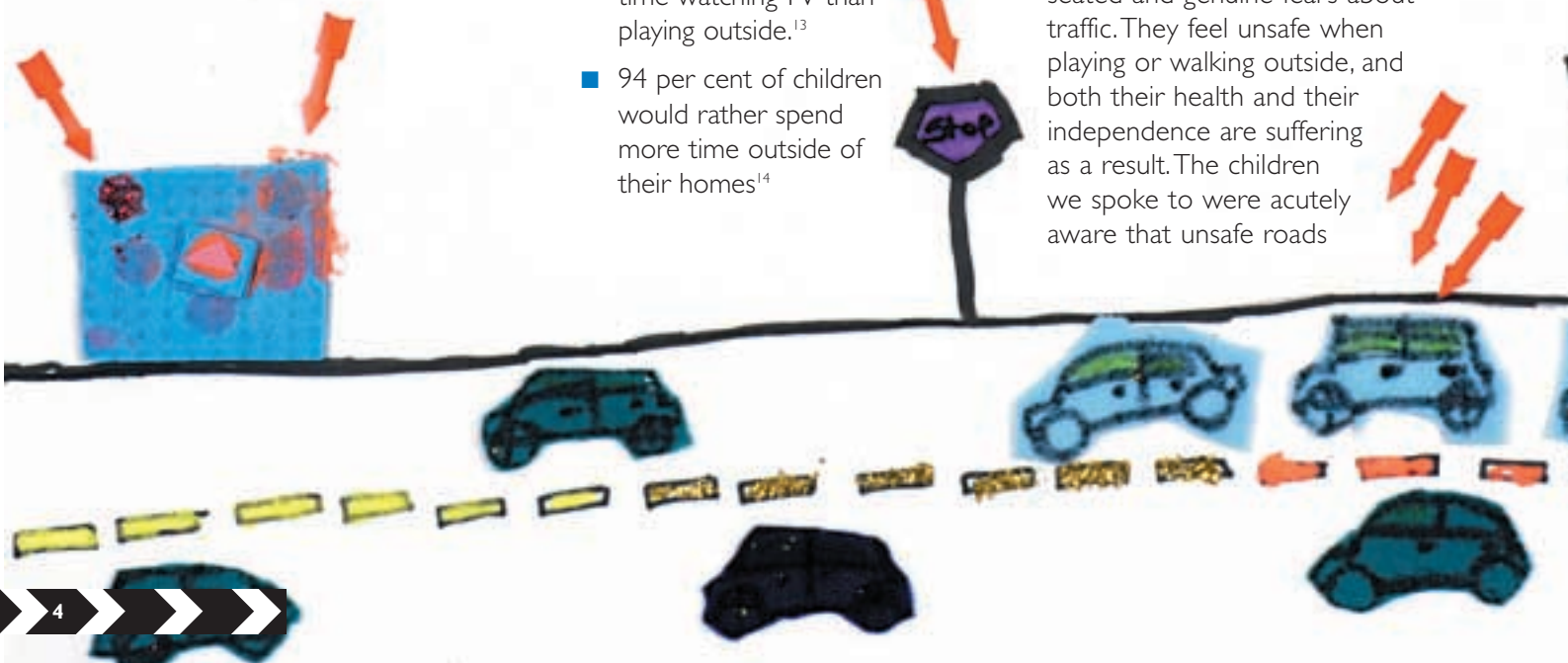
- More than 25 per cent of child pedestrian injuries take place in the 10 per cent of most deprived wards.<sup>6</sup>
- Children living in areas of high deprivation are five times more likely to be killed in a road crash than those in wealthier households.<sup>7</sup>
- The casualty and fatality rate is declining most slowly for those in lower socio-economic groups.<sup>8</sup>


## Speeding, poor driving and a lack of safe play space are also preventing children from walking, cycling and playing in safety.

- Fewer children walk to school than ever before.<sup>9</sup>
- The number of children playing unsupervised is steadily falling.<sup>10</sup>
- Only 3 per cent of children cycle to school.<sup>11</sup>
- The proportion of journeys to school by car has nearly doubled over the last decade.<sup>12</sup>
- Children spend more time watching TV than playing outside.<sup>13</sup>
- 94 per cent of children would rather spend more time outside of their homes<sup>14</sup>

Westminster, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive have set targets to reduce deaths and serious injuries of children on the roads.<sup>15</sup> However, these targets will not be achieved unless we make significant changes to the way in which we manage our roads and think about children's use of them.

Barnardo's and Transport 2000 have talked to more than 150 children in the four UK nations to find out how their lives are affected by traffic in their neighbourhoods; the results were startling. Children have deep-seated and genuine fears about traffic. They feel unsafe when playing or walking outside, and both their health and their independence are suffering as a result. The children we spoke to were acutely aware that unsafe roads





could place them at risk of serious injury and death.

Children want to feel safe on their own streets. They need to play and get around with as much independence as possible. They need to get to school and see their friends. Their health and their personal development are dependent on being able to do these things.

**We have a responsibility to make our streets safer for all children. This report sets out recommendations for how this can be done.**

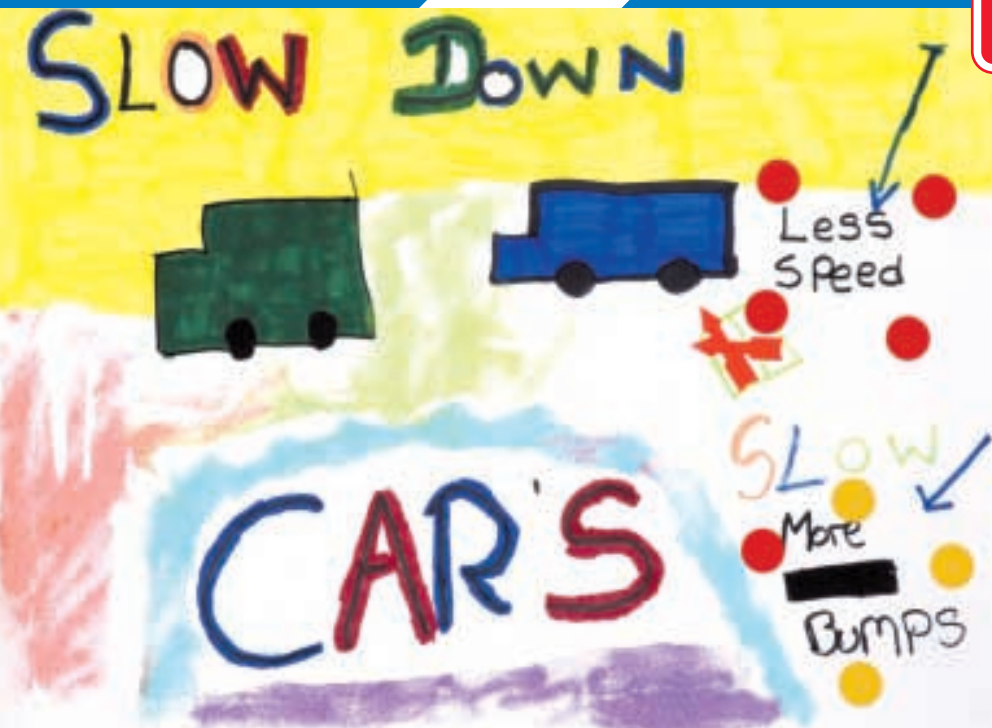


My mum won't let me play outside because of the traffic.

**REDUCE  
SPEED  
NOW**

## What children need!

**I LOVE TO RIDE MY BIKE BUT THERE'S TOO MUCH TRAFFIC**



These positive outcomes for children are contingent on being able to travel and play safely in an area where levels of pollution and traffic noise are low.

I feel more independent... walking. I prefer walking, because you get more energy.

However, extensive research<sup>17</sup> has shown that traffic prevents many children feeling safe enough to play outdoors or walk and cycle in the streets where they live. The children we spoke to told us that this lack of freedom makes socialising hard and means that they have fewer places to play:

I can't get to my friend's house because there is too much traffic.

My mum won't let me play outside because of the traffic.

Children enjoy being outside in their own communities where activities like walking, skateboarding, rollerblading and cycling, or simply playing and hanging out with friends, allow them to sustain friendships and develop a sense of independence. All children, including disabled children, need the opportunity to enjoy their local environment.

Play has a positive impact on children's health, and evidence shows that active childhoods contribute to active, fitter adulthoods.<sup>16</sup> At a time when there is increasing concern about an 'obesity epidemic', it is particularly important that we provide opportunities for children to play and exercise in safe, child-friendly environments.

The only safe places to play are in the school and in your back garden.

Children's health is also affected by traffic noise and fumes. Children who are exposed to high levels of traffic pollution are more at risk of getting asthma.<sup>18</sup> Traffic noise has also been shown to cause insomnia and stress.<sup>19</sup> Children want to breathe clean air and to escape from traffic noise but often do not have the opportunity.

At night time loads of cars keep coming up and down and I can't get to sleep and it really annoys me.

The pollution from cars is bad for animals and people.

When you're walking you're not polluting the air.

Children need to be able to play and exercise outdoors in safety. They also need to live in healthy, quieter environments. At present, many children live in areas where traffic makes this impossible.



They go by my house at night time, they're really loud, when you're sleeping you hear them go by and they're really loud.

# What has to change?

**CROSSING THE ROAD  
IS A PROBLEM COS  
THERE ARE TOO MANY  
CARS AND THEY  
DRIVE TOO FAST**

Children's biggest fear is being hit by a car. These fears are real. Of eight children in one of the groups we talked to, two had been knocked over and one child had been in hospital for months because of injuries.

I got run over by a jeep.

It's dangerous because we have to cross the road and we might get run over.

If we want children to be able to use our streets to walk to school, to play and to exercise we need to make sure they feel safe enough to cross the road. The two main issues affecting their safety are speeding and bad driving and the effects of these on children must be recognised across our society.

## Speeding cars

Speeding is endemic on our roads and research indicates that the majority of drivers believe there is nothing wrong with regularly breaking the speed limit.<sup>20</sup> Commonly, drivers fail to acknowledge the impact that speeding has on children.

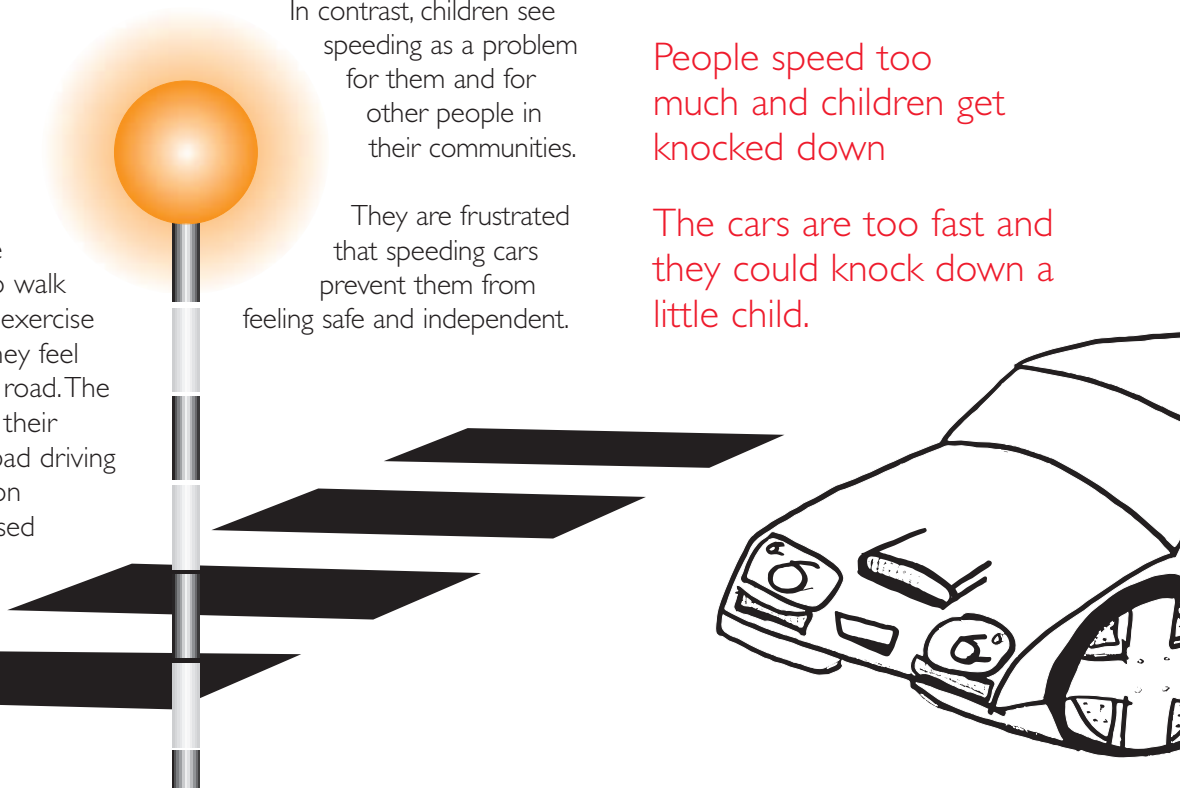
In contrast, children see speeding as a problem for them and for other people in their communities.

They are frustrated that speeding cars prevent them from feeling safe and independent.

A wee girl got run over, she was only a wee child and the car just hit her, we put flowers down where she was hit.

People speed too much and children get knocked down

The cars are too fast and they could knock down a little child.

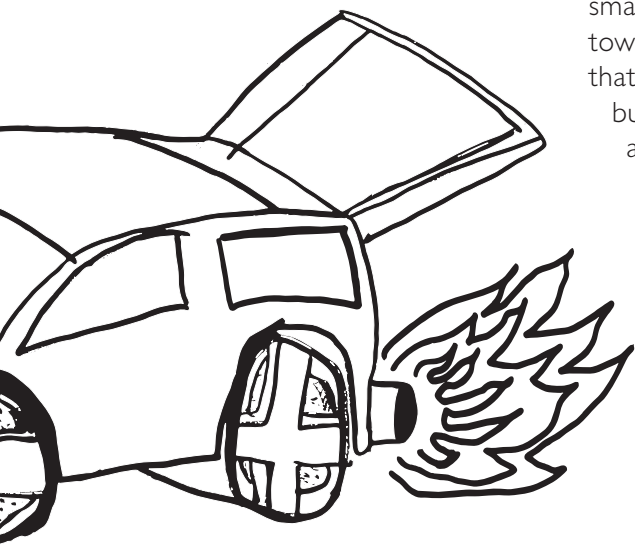


The road I live on is too wee for all the cars, and there are all these cars and you could get run over.

Children find speeding cars intimidating. They are angry that these drivers prevent them from enjoying their everyday lives:

I live by a road and sometimes I can't get to the shop.

The only thing that I find about traffic is that they speed too much and we can't cross the road and play or anything.



I can't get to my friend's house because there's too much traffic.

When we think about traffic, we often think about towns and cities where there are lots of cars. However, these problems also affect children in rural areas. The children we talked to in Wales said that although there was not a lot of traffic in their area, the cars that did pass were travelling really fast. These children lived in villages outside towns on the main trunk roads from North to South Wales.

Speed on trunk roads is a particular issue for rural areas and the solution is not purely about observing the speed limit. Trunk roads take increasing volumes of long-distance traffic which routinely pass through small villages. In rural areas and towns the children reminded us that the traffic is not just cars but 'there's taxis, lorries, cars and motorbikes'. The lorries were a real cause of concern to the children we spoke to, as hay and logging lorries passed through the 20 mph zone, an area calmed with speed bumps and past their primary school.

We need to act now to ensure that speeding cars no longer prevent children from using the streets safely, or from feeling secure in their own neighbourhoods, whether they live in urban or rural areas.

## Bad driving

Children do not feel safe crossing roads because they cannot predict how drivers will behave. Although they are taught that drivers will stop for them at pedestrian crossings, their experience shows them that this is not always the case.

One time I was crossing the road and he started edging forward and revving his engine and I was only half way across. There's a zebra crossing because the road, like really busy... and some cars go past even though you are standing there.

When we cross the road as kids they just drive straight past when you are on the crossing.



If the cars don't stop at the lights you get run over; when people cross the roads and the lights go the cars just go through and they're just walking and then they bash into them, I've seen it up the town.

...cars go speeding so you can't tell when to cross. And they come up on the pavement. To get past the buses they come up on the pavement and the grass. They don't think about who might be there...

Other traffic offences, including driving after drinking alcohol and racing on the roads, are also preventing children from using our roads safely.

The thing that bothers me is that people who are drunk or have taken drugs drive really fast.

When they race they don't stop and they go really fast... if you're crossing a road they can just hit you.

Boy racers go really fast and are dangerous.

Where drivers park their cars was also a concern for some children we talked to. They said it was really hard to cross the road in their neighbourhoods because of parked cars, and this was a particular concern outside their schools. They gave two reasons for this being dangerous. Firstly, because children are smaller, they can't see around parked cars without standing in the road which feels scary and is dangerous. Secondly, they said they can't tell when a parked car is going to move and the children had particular worries that a driver may reverse and not see them.

We need to ensure that bad driving is no longer seen as acceptable, and that traffic laws are enforced in order to make our streets safer for children.

## Places to play and to cycle.

Adults can be intolerant of children who are trying to walk or cycle on their local streets.

Children are often made to feel like they are a nuisance and 80 per cent of children are regularly told off for playing outside.<sup>21</sup> This puts children off using outdoor space in their local areas.

When children are playing near where they park, they beep.

Someone shouted out the window 'look where you're going'.

The cars also beep their horns at you which is really scary.

Drivers and other adults need to respect children's right to use public spaces, making sure that children feel safe and secure when they are travelling or playing outside of their homes.

Children also say that there aren't enough safe places where they can play. This means they spend more time hanging out on the streets where they

are at greater risk of exposure to traffic. For example, in one neighbourhood children showed us an area of open space which looked ideal for playing, but instead was covered in tarmac and marked with signs saying 'No ball games'. Spaces such as these should be used to create safe play space for children and young people at the heart of their communities.

We've got a big garage outside our house and we play there... there's a bit of grass but cars can park on it so it's a bit dangerous.

There's too much traffic and no parks so I can't play outside.

I don't think it's safe to play because round our way there are houses and then you walk right out onto the road and it's very dangerous because the cars come past and they can knock you down.



There was a little park over there but they had to knock it down... most people play on the roads in the estate on the parking places.





The path goes out wide but there's no cycle lane so you have to go on the road and then the cars go down.

Children are angry that traffic prevents them from cycling more. They think that access for cars is seen as more important than space to ride their bikes.

It's not fair because I'm not allowed to ride my bike in our square because there are too many cars.

I love to ride my bike but there's too much traffic.

Often, in cities where there is open space to play children do not feel able to use it. The children gave some of the reasons for this.

- Parks are next to main roads with crossings in the wrong place. This meant the children were unable to reach the park.
- Parks are too isolated. Many children said it felt dangerous in parks because they were so far away from other people that if something 'bad' happened no one would know. A safe park was defined as near other facilities, with open space that was fenced off.

No one has asked me what I'd like in my park.

- None of the children we spoke to had been consulted about what should be in local parks. This often meant that equipment was not 'exciting' because it was either too difficult to use or 'for babies' (ie, toddlers) and too small for older children to use.

In rural areas there were far fewer parks and general outdoor play provision, but older children made use of the natural resources around them, with many 10-year-olds, particularly girls, making comments such as 'I love the fields and lambs' and describing how they made dens and played in streams. However, children under the age of 10 were generally not allowed out in groups to play by themselves and were bored and frustrated as they had extremely limited outdoor opportunities.

Children know that it is dangerous to play near busy roads. However, a lack of accessible play space often leaves them with no other choice. We need to increase the availability of public spaces designed for children to ensure that they can play and exercise in safety.

## Conclusion

Children of all ages want to see changes that will enable them to play outside, walk and cycle more safely.<sup>22</sup> The children we spoke to say that speeding, bad driving and a lack of safe play spaces make them feel unsafe and unwelcome when they are outside their homes. Research tells us that this can prevent children, particularly children living in deprived areas, from realising their full potential.

Children also need to be listened to. The children we talked to were experts on their local communities. They knew the dangerous places. They knew where they and their friends wanted to play and they had some very clear ideas about what could make their neighbourhoods safer and better for everyone. Yet almost none of the children we spoke to had ever been asked their views on important issues such as traffic, parks and play spaces.

We need to make it safe for children to walk to schools, visit their friends and cycle to the parks. By taking action to make our streets safer we will be improving children's health and well being both now and in the future. We are calling on governments across the UK to implement our recommendations and ensure this vision can become a reality.

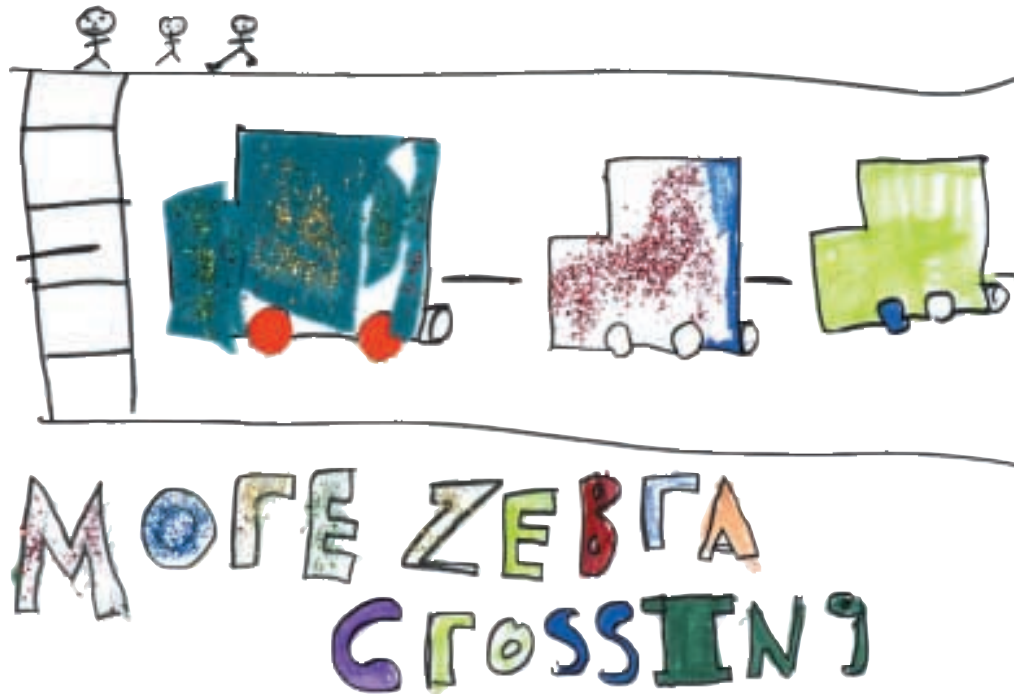


# Recommendations

**A WEE GIRL GOT RUN OVER, SHE WAS ONLY A WEE CHILD AND THE CAR JUST HIT HER, WE PUT FLOWERS DOWN WHERE SHE WAS HIT**

UK governments have said that they want children to feel safe enough to walk and cycle more. Furthermore, they acknowledge that children's social development, health and fitness depend on their having the freedom to use our roads safely.<sup>23</sup> Achieving these goals will require changes in local transport and environmental planning and driver behaviour. Reductions in casualty figures should not be achieved at the expense of children's road use. Children need to be able to walk, play and cycle on the streets without risk of injury or death.

Improving road safety is also contingent on increased recognition of the disproportionate risks faced by children living in areas of high deprivation. Children in low income households live in more dangerous road environments, have access to fewer safe play spaces and go out on foot more than children from wealthier homes. They are therefore much more likely to be involved in collisions. A substantial body of research has shown that child traffic injuries and deaths increase sharply in areas of higher socio-economic deprivation,<sup>23</sup> and that casualty reduction is slowest in these areas.<sup>24</sup> The poorest electoral wards should therefore be prioritised for road safety improvements.



## TWENTY IS PLENTY WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

# Speeding cars and bad driving

Barnardo's and Transport 2000 believe that the UK governments should implement the following recommendations to allow children's needs to be addressed.

- The Department for Transport should introduce legislation to ensure that 20 mph is the default speed limit in residential streets, some mixed routes and in the vicinity of schools in both rural and urban areas.<sup>25</sup>
- Until a default limit is in place local authorities should implement more 20 mph speed limits, particularly in areas of high deprivation.
- Guidance to local authorities on local transport planning should be amended to ensure that all highway authorities have a speed management strategy which gives priority to vulnerable road users. The guidance should also stipulate



that local authorities should consider levels of deprivation and community demand in prioritising road safety measures, not simply historical crash data.<sup>26</sup>

- In rural Wales, whilst we welcome the setting of speed limits according to environmental and social objectives as laid out in the Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative 2001,<sup>27</sup> this does not address the traffic

speed as it is experienced by residents. For example, hamlets and clusters of houses on trunk roads will still be homes for some children and, therefore, limits of 40 mph and 50 mph respectively will impede some children's access to play and to neighbours' houses. To overcome excessive speed, policy needs to consider wide-ranging integrated transport systems.

When we cross the road as kids they just drive straight past when you are on the crossing.



A reduction in speed limits to 20 mph would make it safe for streets to be used for a range of different purposes (including playing, cycling, walking and driving). The Health Development Agency (HDA) has found that expanding 20 mph zones could prevent 13,000 pedestrian deaths and injuries.<sup>28</sup> They also believe that increasing the number of 20 mph limits in areas of high pedestrian activity has the greatest scope to make short-term improvements to road safety in the UK. There is strong reasoning behind their findings: if a child is hit by a car at 20 mph there is a 95 per cent chance of survival; at 30 mph this drops to only 55 per cent; at 40 mph 85 per cent of pedestrians are killed.<sup>29</sup>

Evidence shows that most child pedestrian injuries occur in urban environments, close to residential streets.<sup>30</sup> We also know that safe play is contingent on low traffic speeds. Evaluations of 20 mph zones show reductions of 70 per cent in child traffic injuries.<sup>31</sup> There is also a strong evidence base to show that local authorities which increase the number of 20 mph zones experience significant decreases in child fatalities in traffic accidents.<sup>32</sup>

Increased play opportunities benefit children's social lives and their self esteem. Reduced traffic noise in residential areas also has

benefits for children, with research suggesting that traffic noise may be bad for mental health, affecting children's academic performance, behaviour and attention spans.<sup>33</sup> To increase children's health, safety and well being the number of 20 mph limits on residential streets should therefore be increased.

### More traffic calming in the most deprived residential areas

- The Department for Transport should increase funding for traffic calming in the most deprived residential areas.
- The Department for Transport should increase dissemination of best practice traffic calming measures to local highway authorities. This will ensure that local transport plans are evidence based.
- Local highway authorities should concentrate on the development of area-wide traffic calming, as opposed to focusing on accident 'black spots'. This may mean city-wide approaches to calming traffic flow, specific traffic calming in one community or, for example in rural areas, combined approaches between local authorities.

- The inclusion of integrated strategies for reducing car use and improving children's safety in local transport plans should become mandatory. In rural areas consideration should be given to community transport to enable children and young people to access play and leisure provision by using cheap and reliable transport.

Traffic calming schemes have been shown to reduce childhood injuries by up to 15 per cent.<sup>35</sup> Traffic calming is also likely to boost the number of child pedestrians and cyclists, leading to longer term health benefits for children. Evidence tells us that area-wide traffic calming initiatives are more effective than those with a 'black spot' focus.<sup>36</sup> The HDA has also called for traffic calming measures to become more systematic, and to be focused on inner city areas.<sup>37</sup> In Northern Ireland the Roads Service programme of traffic calming schemes has helped create a safer environment for walking and cycling as well as improving safety by reducing the volume and speed of traffic.<sup>38</sup> Increasing traffic calming measures across the most deprived residential areas therefore has high potential to benefit a large number of children. There are other examples of good practice in this area, where creative approaches are being taken to

traffic calming. One example is the work of the Community Design Service in Wales, which designed one of Wales' few home zone pilots in Aberaman; their designs for traffic calming include breaking traffic flow with tree planters and putting picnic benches and barbeques in communal spaces. This organisation also uses participatory techniques to ensure that community expertise and wishes inform planning processes.<sup>39</sup>

### Better speed enforcement on the most deprived residential streets

- All local transport plans should include a clear strategic speed management policy.
- Speed cameras should be used in deprived residential areas where there are large numbers of child pedestrians but have not yet been high numbers of casualties.
- The number of traffic police patrols should be increased.
- Traffic enforcement should be a priority in the national policing plans.

The Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland has stated that excessive speed is one of the main causes of deaths and serious injuries on the roads in Northern Ireland.<sup>40</sup>

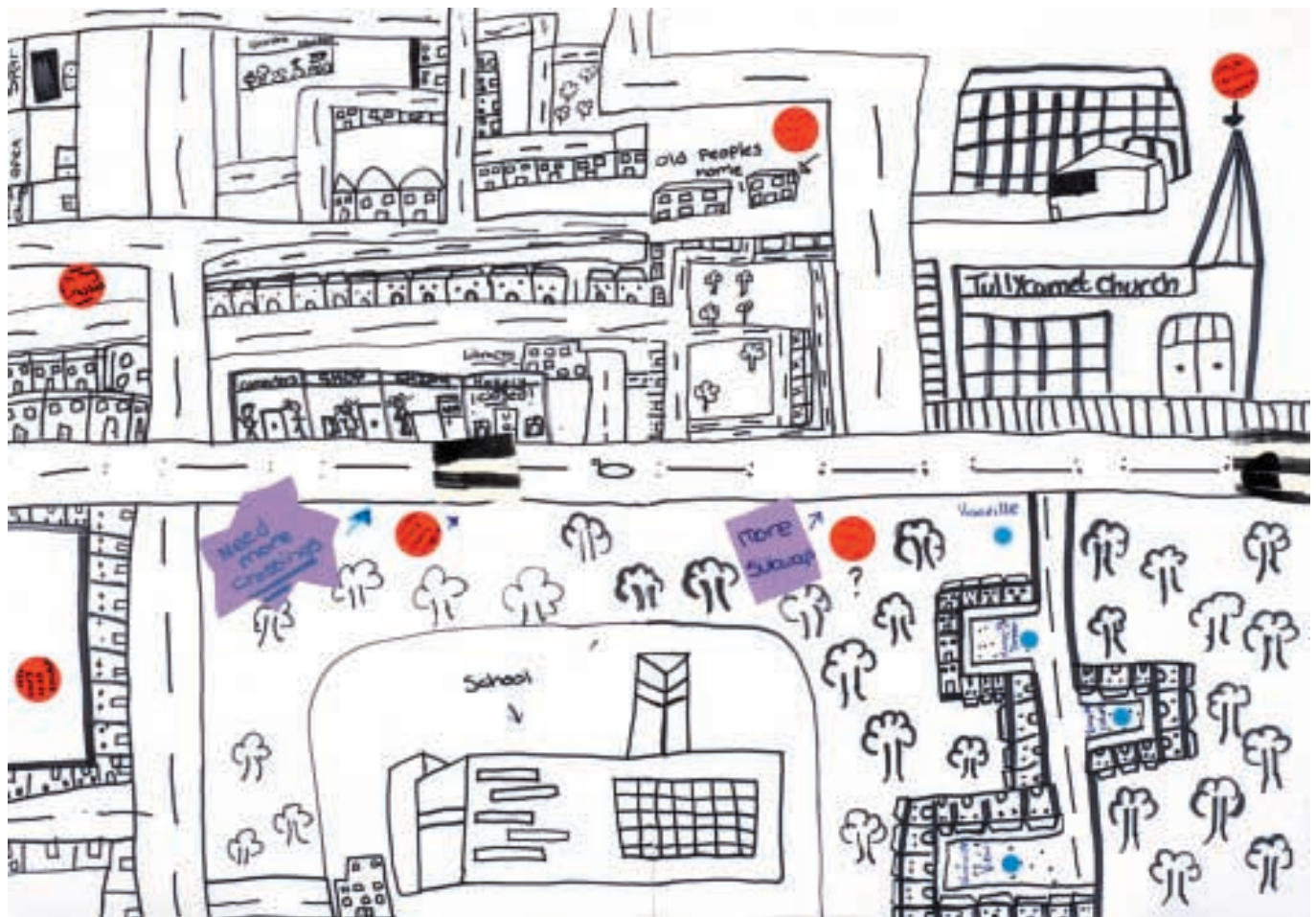


All local transport plans should include a clear strategic speed management policy.

The Department for Transport has found that a strategic speed management policy aimed at reducing the speed of the fastest drivers would have the biggest effect on reducing road casualties.<sup>41</sup> Research has also shown that for 20 mph to be maintained as a constant speed in residential areas high-quality effective enforcement measures are required. Speed cameras are one means to achieve

such measures: they have been shown to lead to significant reductions in road casualties,<sup>42</sup> and there is also widespread public support for increasing the numbers of cameras on roads where children could be in danger.<sup>43</sup> However, fixed cameras can only be used at present in areas with high fatality rates.<sup>44</sup> These criteria prevent their use on many residential streets where casualties have occurred but

no deaths have yet been recorded. Traffic police are another effective means of enforcing speed limits. However, since 1999, the number of dedicated traffic police officers in England has dropped by 8 per cent.<sup>45</sup> Increasing use of enforcement measures, such as speed cameras and police patrols, should be prioritised to ensure that lower speed limits are properly implemented.



## MORE SAFE CROSSINGS WHERE CHILDREN NEED THEM

- Local highway authorities should consult with children to determine which local roads they use most. These roads should then be prioritised for the development of safe crossings.
- Local highway authorities should work with leisure services and schools to carry out accessibility audits of all key facilities that are used by children.
- Child safety audits should always include consultation with children.
- Consideration should be given to extending the role of 'lollipop' people. The children we talked to found them approachable and knew that they would receive help to cross the road. An extension of this service could include 'play times' during weekends and school holidays where between certain times children would be able to have access to a lollipop person to help them cross the roads to access parks and other leisure facilities.

There is a lollipop lady in the morning and evening at school time but this doesn't help during holidays or at weekends.

A total of 88 per cent of child pedestrian casualties and fatalities occur while children are trying to cross roads.<sup>46</sup> These roads can be near schools, parks or playgrounds. Surveys have shown that children are aware of these risks: 70 per cent of children want drivers to slow down near their school, and 50 per cent want more places to cross the road.<sup>47</sup> Developing more crossings will make our streets safer for children.

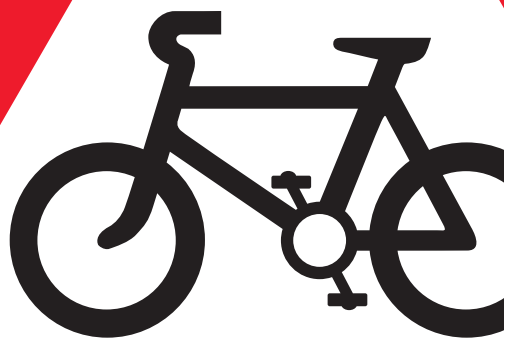
### Increased driver education

- The Department for Transport and other national bodies should run a campaign on the responsibilities that drivers have towards vulnerable road users, specifically informing drivers of children's experiences of using the streets.

- There should be an increase in funding for research into the effectiveness of driver, rather than pedestrian, education programmes.

Existing education and media campaigns often make children responsible for ensuring their own road safety. The Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012, for example, recommends improving education to children particularly in disadvantaged areas.<sup>48</sup> However, there is no conclusive research evidence to show that pedestrian education programmes prevent child deaths<sup>49</sup>. Although educating children is important, there is a much greater need to educate and remind drivers of their duty of care towards other vulnerable road users. In Northern Ireland, for example, policy has acknowledged the need to promote road safety through high publicity campaigns alongside commissioned research to assess

## Places to play and to cycle



their effectiveness in addressing the main causes of death and serious injury on roads<sup>50</sup> For too long it has been acceptable to blame road traffic victims for the behaviour of bad drivers.

### More Home Zones in the most deprived areas

Home Zones create street environments that enable children to play outside in safety while there is still traffic movement. Research has shown that home zone initiatives cut traffic speeds and make motorists more considerate towards children playing on the streets.<sup>51</sup> To date, pilot home zones have improved road safety, created safer places for children to play and helped to strengthen communities.<sup>52</sup> There is currently massive local authority demand for more central home zone funding. Increasing the number of home zones in areas of high deprivation would make our streets safer for children.

- The Department for Transport and other national government bodies should allocate funding for the development of more home zones.
- In Wales there is an opportunity to learn from the evaluation of the two home zone pilots that were

undertaken in Monmouthshire and Cynon Valley, which is not being fully realised. There should also be a specific home zone funding scheme for Wales.

- Despite a recommendation in a 1998 Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement,<sup>53</sup> home zones have yet to be piloted there.

### Prioritise opportunities for children to walk and cycle

- Funding for local authority transport schemes should be dependent on the authority employing the same hierarchy of road use as York City Council, ensuring that spending is focused on measures that benefit pedestrians, cyclists and disabled road users.
- The Department for Transport should allocate sufficient funds to complete the National Cycle Network and other strategic cycle routes, ensuring that they continue to meet the needs of child cyclists and pedestrians.
- Local authorities should expand existing cycle routes that link places used by children, such as leisure facilities, schools and parks. This should be done to National Cycle Network standards.

- The Department for Transport should introduce new planning policy guidance for cycle routes, to ensure that any proposals for development take cycle routes into account.
- Local authorities should aim to provide safe routes to school so that all children can walk or cycle to school in comfort and safety.

In 1989 York City Council adopted the priority road user hierarchy as a means of encouraging sustainable travel and reducing casualties. Pedestrians and disabled people are the top priority, followed by cyclists. Private car users are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. Additionally York City Council introduced traffic calming in around 20 per cent of residential areas alongside a range of other innovations designed to make walking and cycling safer.

In Northern Ireland the need to improve pedestrian and cycle paths has been highlighted as a priority in both regional transportation and neighbourhood renewal strategies.<sup>54</sup> New 'toucan crossings' are being provided along the route of the National Cycle Network in Belfast. These crossings provide a safe crossing for both cyclists and pedestrians crossing busy traffic routes.<sup>55</sup>

In 1999 Powys Council submitted a bid to undertake phase one of safe routes to school initiatives around the Newtown area. Subsequently, with money from the Welsh Assembly and working in close partnership with schools and other agencies two primary schools, one of which was involved in this research, have cycle parking facilities and locker facilities and integrated, improved cycle paths. Many of the children at the school now cycle and scoot to their school and feel safe to do so.<sup>56</sup>

The Transport Select Committee has described current walking conditions for young road users as 'all but impossible'.<sup>57</sup> Increasing provision for children to walk safely therefore needs to be prioritised by local authorities.

The National Cycle Network is built to a standard to ensure that an 11-year-old could cycle on it unsupervised.<sup>58</sup> At the moment many cycle facilities cater for adult cyclists, linking areas of employment and public transport modes. To increase numbers of children cycling, cycle networks need to include places children go, such as parks. This is especially important as it is illegal for all children to cycle on pavements.<sup>59</sup> To enable them to cycle more they need to have confidence to use the roads with cars nearby.



## Make more safe play spaces for children in areas of high deprivation

- Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 should include a requirement that all new housing developments include children's play space. This should be reflected in local authority planning and policy.
- Local authorities should consult with children on both the location and type of play areas that would be of most use for them.
- The Department for Education and Skills should ensure that guidance on extended schools accords the development of safe community play space a high priority.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises children's right to play and recreational activities. Play is vital to the development of all children, allowing them to experiment, to recognise their own limitations and discover their own skills. It also allows children to increase their practical experiences of risk management, and hence their abilities to recognise and deal with risky situations. Recent research<sup>60, 61</sup>

has identified a range of neighbourhood factors that restrict the opportunities children have for safe play in areas of high deprivation, including danger from traffic. Other prohibitive factors include poor street lighting and dilapidated local buildings.<sup>62</sup>

There is currently significant variation between the play opportunities offered in different areas, with some authorities spending 10 times more on play areas than others.<sup>63</sup> Government research<sup>64</sup> concludes that in recent years local authorities have given a low priority to play provision. In addition, current housing planning guidance<sup>65</sup> does not place requirements on local authorities to include children's play areas in

new housing developments. The need to prioritise the development of play space in areas of highest deprivation, and to make play funding more sustainable, is accepted by government.<sup>66</sup>

The government also accept that 'any effort to improve children's play opportunities must recognise as a fact of life that most play does not take place on sites formally designed as play spaces'.<sup>67</sup> To ensure that they are utilised, play spaces need to take account of children's own preferences. Designing play spaces that are safe, welcoming and shaped by children's needs and circumstances is contingent on ensuring that meaningful consultation is undertaken with children.



# Research method

We ran seven focus groups with children aged between 7 and 14. The groups used a range of creative qualitative methodologies and the sample comprised both urban and rural UK locations. These were: Bath; Belfast; Cardiff; Edinburgh; London; Newtown (rural Wales) and Oldham. In total the views of 154 children were included in the research.

## **Barnardo's Asha project, Oldham**

Provides high-standard, inclusive childcare resources and services to residents in the Westwood & Coldhurst areas of Oldham.

## **Barnardo's Blackford Brae, Edinburgh**

Provides day school education and family support services for children with educational and behavioural difficulties from Edinburgh and the Lothians.

## **Barnardo's Ely Family Centre, Cardiff**

Provides open access activities and support services, in partnership with other agencies, for parents, children and young people aged 0-15 living in the Ely and Caerau areas of Cardiff.

## **Barnardo's Heshima Family Centre, East Croydon**

In partnership with London Borough of Croydon provides a variety of family support services including groups for children and families, play schemes and after school clubs.

## **Barnardo's Tullycarnet Family Centre, Belfast**

Provides families in East Belfast with support and advice. The work of the service aims to improve women's development, education opportunities and community action.

## **Envolve, Bath**

Envolve is an independent Bath-based charity which works to protect the environment and help ensure future quality of life. Their

work is wide ranging with schools, community groups, youth groups, businesses and individuals.  
<http://www.envolve.co.uk/>

## **Maesyrrhandir Primary School, Newtown**

Has close links with the Barnardo's Cymru Parent Works / Rhieni ar Waith project in Newtown which offers early support and help to improve the emotional health and well-being of children between the ages of 4-11 and their parents, living in the North of Powys.

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