

Identifying Barriers to Sustainable Travel

When your Travel Plan Working Group get together it is likely that you will already have an idea of what campaigns and initiatives you would like to organise to encourage more children and parents to travel sustainably. However it is important to understand the barriers to sustainable travel in order to ensure you provide the most appropriate and useful solution. For example:

Charlie's mum would love to walk to school but doesn't have time in the morning because she has to get to work; she can't leave any earlier because she also has to drop her daughter Sophie off at Nursery. The school sets up a Park and Stride to enable parents and pupils to walk to school but this doesn't help Charlie and his mum because they don't have time to walk. A better solution would have been a Walking Bus to enable Charlie to walk to school accompanied by the Walking Bus volunteers; thus allowing his mum to continue on her journey to work.

Obviously this only addresses Charlie's mum's barriers to travelling sustainably, and you will need to, as part of your Travel Plan, explore the common issues and concerns of your parents.

Perceived or Real?

Sometimes it is difficult to get to the bottom of whether or not some barriers to sustainable travel are real or perceived. Care must be taken when investigating this, because some perceived barriers seem very real in some people's minds.

An example of this is weather. Some people say that they can't walk or cycle to school because it always rains. However, if families are encouraged to keep a weather diary and pledge to try if it's dry, and only take the car if it's wet, they may find that they are in fact walking or cycling more often than using the car!

How to identify barriers?

You will need to find out if people have barriers that are related to attitude and behaviour (i.e. lack of motivation, fear, they don't understand why it's important to travel sustainably) or circumstances and location (i.e. their home location or work commitments prevent them from travel sustainably)

- Ask parents to complete a survey and ask them to describe why they don't or can't travel sustainably to school.
- Ask parents about what types of initiatives they would like to see developed to make travelling to school easier.
- You could hold an assembly about the benefits of sustainable travel, and invite parents along. Ask parents to stay behind after the assembly and ask them about what would make sustainable travel easier for them.
- Include parents in your Working Group so they can represent the views of other parents.

Overcome the barriers

Whilst it is unlikely that you will be able to find a solution to suit all parents' needs, consider your options after you have found out what the main barriers to sustainable travel are and discuss these with the working group. Discuss too whether you think the barriers are real or perceived. Some barriers schools have overcome in the past are listed below. This is intended as an example only and not to give the definitive solution to each issue; obviously what works at one school may not be successful in others. In addition this list is only given as an example, and you should discourage your working group from trying to associate all of these issues with your school! You will find information on all the solutions mentioned below in the [resource index](#).

Barrier	Example of Solution
Living too far away from school	Park and Stride, Walking Zone or possibly a car share scheme if the former are not possible to set up.
Parent have to get to work and don't have time to walk	Walking Bus
Lack of motivation / apathy / can't be bothered	WOW scheme (Walk Once a Week), possibly combined with a reward scheme
Don't understand why it's necessary to travel sustainably	Assemblies presented by the pupils to explain to their parents why it's important – sustainable travel messages brought into the annual school production / play
Dog fouling	Contact the Local Civic Pride Officer, develop posters and display in local shops. Ensure there are dog fouling bins in the community
The family has siblings which are too little to walk to school.	WOW campaign (Walk Once a Week), possibly combined with a Park and Stride
Child too little to walk the whole distance.	WOW scheme or Park and Stride initiative
Can't get up in time to walk.	Education in classroom about benefits of walking to school, encourage pupils to take part because everyone else is participating. Offer incentives for pupils to take part
No cycle parking	Hold fund raising events to provide this facility. Investigate if there are any grants available from cycling charities like Sustrans.
Not sure which bus to catch	Use Durham County Council's Bus Basics resource to teach pupils how to find public transport information, plan journeys, and buy tickets.