

Active Travel to School, Primary-Secondary Transition

Background

ACCIDENT LEVELS

Frequency of accident rates for children increases considerably at the age when children start to travel to secondary school (DfT, 2006)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

Research has consistently shown evidence of decreases in physical activity levels during adolescence, particularly among girls.

Boys are more active than girls in all years and physical activity participation decreases with age. This decrease is gradual among boys but, among girls, there is a marked decrease across the primary-secondary school transition, with a further decline during the secondary school years. (Physical Activity in Scottish Schoolchildren (PASS) Study, 2008)

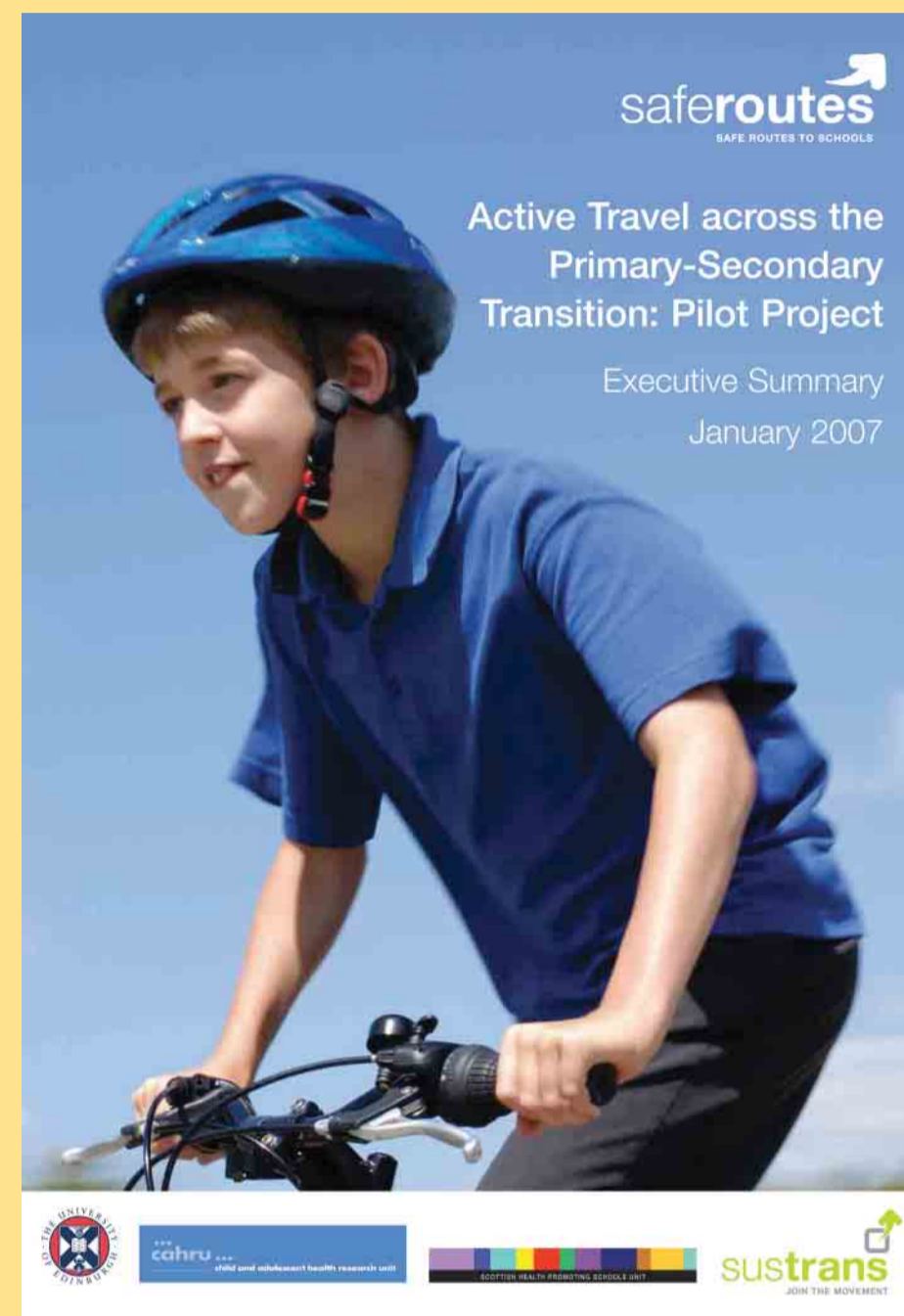
SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAMMES (PRIMARY TO SECONDARY TRANSITION)

While most secondary schools in Scotland have Transition Programmes, taking place at the end of the summer term of P7, to help pupils prepare for Secondary School, very few of these include any information about how to get to school.

CHANGING TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR WHEN LIFESTYLE CHANGES TAKE PLACE

Transport Policy has been reorientated from alleviating or preventing congestion to Travel Demand Management. This seeks to achieve more rational and effective use of the transport system by changing when, where, how and how much people travel or more simply, 'changing travel behaviour'.

Travel behaviour change requires that individuals periodically review their travel choices and outcomes. Research suggests that familiar, embedded behaviours (such as travel) can be habitual to the extent that



change is inhibited or prevented (Verplanken, Aarts and van Knippenburg, 1997; Garling, 1998; Kenyon and Lyons, 2003). Moving house or changing job has been found to be a good opportunity to encourage people to review their travel choices.

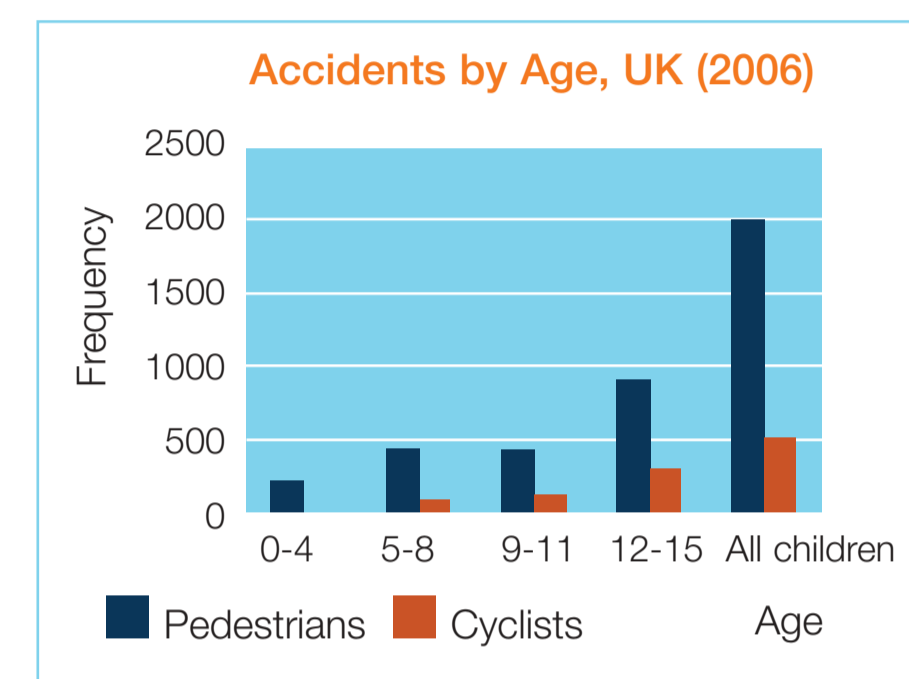
These projects sought to identify whether the change from Primary to Secondary schools could follow a similar pattern.



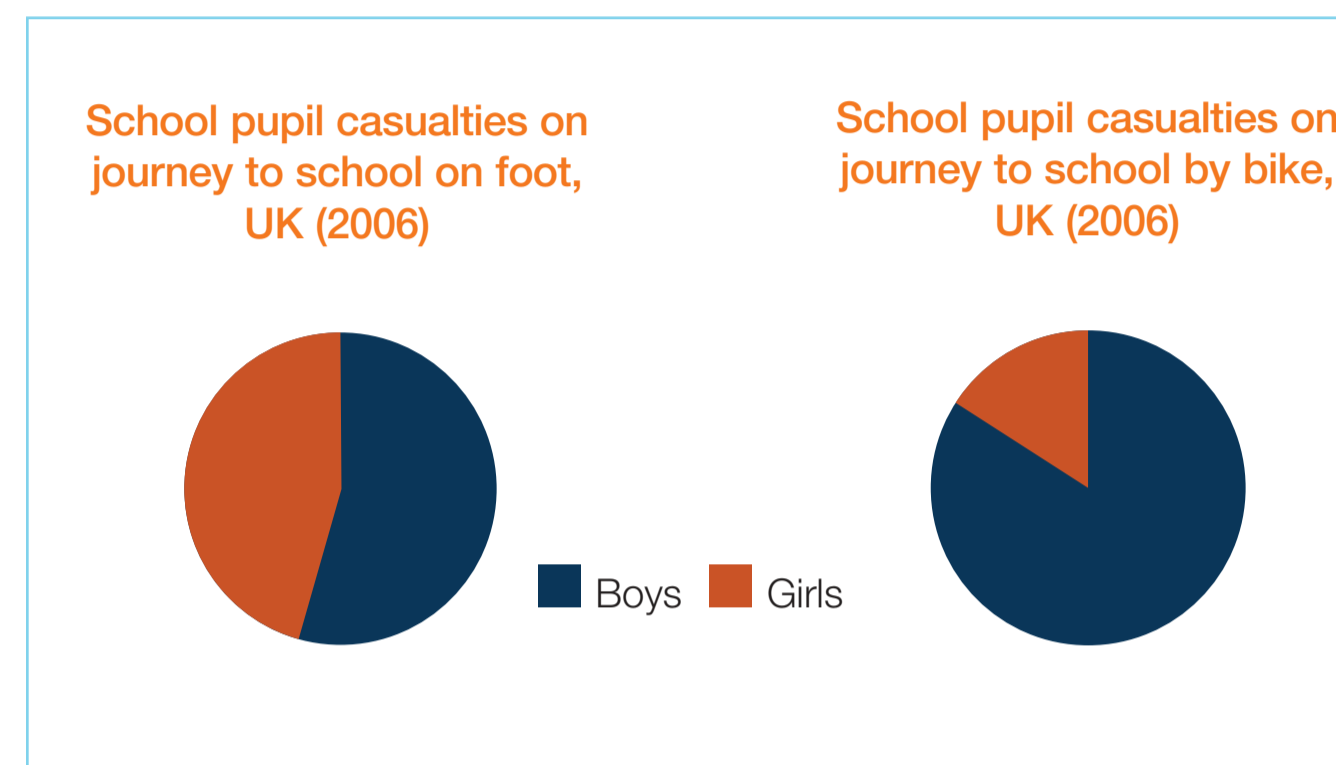
Development of local authority pilot projects supported by Sustrans and Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit.

ACCIDENT LEVELS

Frequency of accident rates for children increases considerably at the age when children start to travel to secondary school (DfT, 2006)



Boys are more likely to have accidents than girls (DfT, 2006)



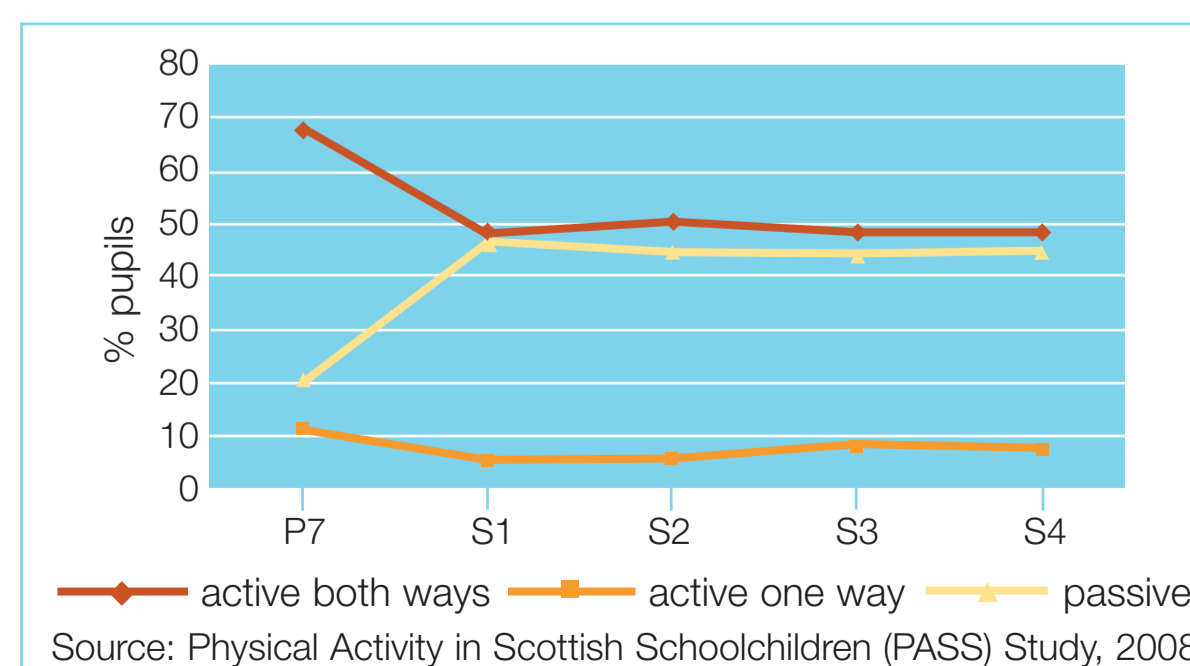
DECREASING LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Previous research has consistently shown evidence of decreases in physical activity levels during adolescence, particularly among girls.

The Physical Activity in Scottish Schoolchildren (PASS) project is a five year longitudinal study investigating patterns and determinants of physical activity among early adolescents across the primary-secondary school transition and early secondary school years.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

As expected, findings showed that boys were more active than girls in all years and that physical activity participation decreased with age. This decrease was gradual among boys but, among girls, there was a marked decrease across the primary-secondary school transition, with a further decline during the secondary school years.

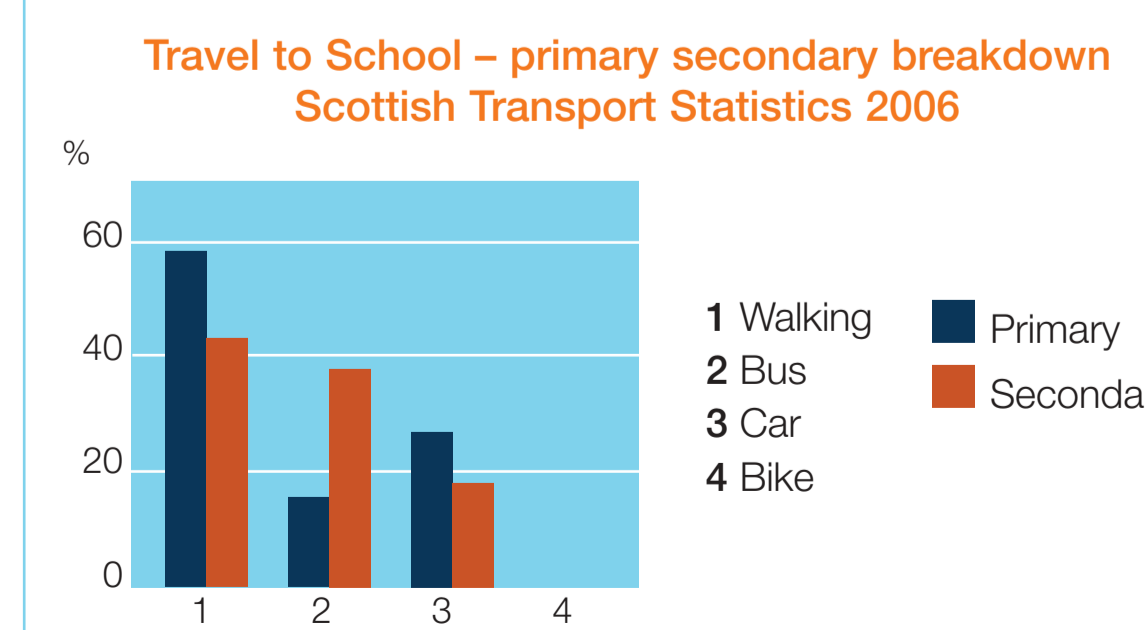


PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL

There was no gender difference in active travel to school but the proportion of pupils who walked or cycled to school decreased across the primary-secondary school transition. It then remained stable during the secondary years, indicating the importance of establishing active travel habits when children first move up to secondary school.

Most active travel was on foot with very few pupils cycling to school. Use of passive modes of transport increased in secondary school which is likely to reflect an increased reliance on school buses and increasing autonomy in relation to use of public transport.

Among P7 pupils, car use was the most common form of passive travel but, as pupils moved to secondary school, travel by bus or train was more commonly reported.

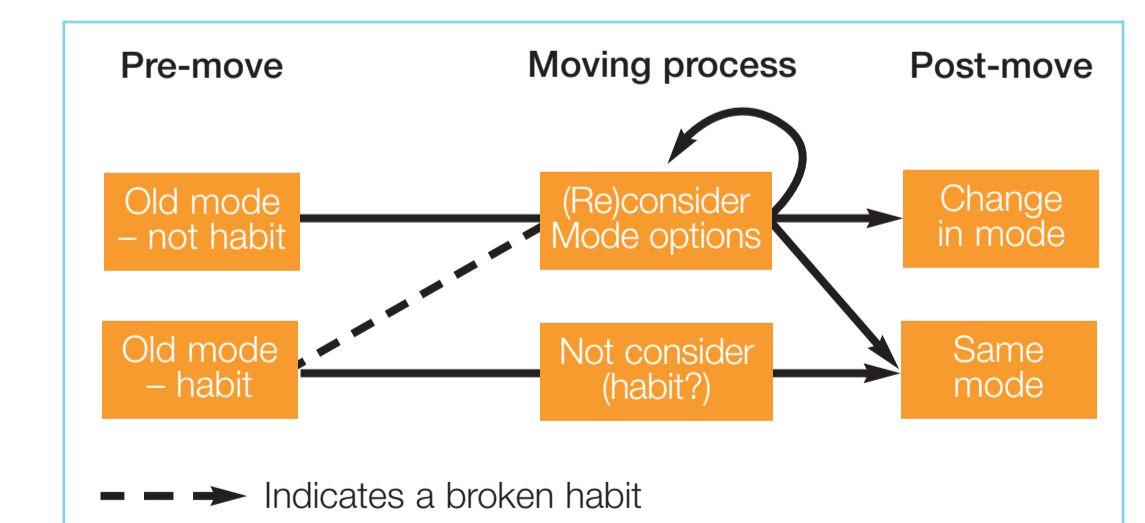


USING CHANGE OF SCHOOL AS AN INTERVENTION POINT FOR BREAKING TRAVEL HABITS ON THE JOURNEY TO SCHOOL

Important prerequisites for breaking habits (including habitual travel behaviour) are a change to the situational context and behaviour becoming more conscious and deliberate.

Research carried out into the effect of moving house as an opportunity to change habitual travel behavior confirms that in many instances people are consciously considering the travel mode implications during the course of moving home. That some people change travel modes for particular journey purposes following a home move is perhaps not surprising. What is of greater significance in relation to understanding travel behaviour and changing behaviour is the recognition that people are consciously considering the issue of mode choice at one or more points during the course of the moving process. This highlights a propensity for behaviour change. (Stanbridge et al, 2004)

The Physical Activity in Scottish Schoolchildren (PASS) Study found that the proportion of pupils who walked or cycled to school decreased across the primary-secondary school transition. It then remained stable during the secondary years, indicating the importance of establishing active travel habits when children first move up to secondary school. Most active travel was on foot with very few pupils cycling to school. Use of passive modes of transport increased in secondary school which is likely to reflect an increased reliance on school buses and increasing autonomy in relation to use of public transport. Among P7 pupils, car use was the most common form of passive travel but, as pupils moved to secondary school, travel by bus or train was more commonly reported. (PASS, 2008)



The transition from primary to secondary school was identified as a potential intervention stage to raise awareness of the benefits of active travel to school and to encourage children living near to their secondary school to choose to travel on foot or by bicycle.

Case studies

Elgin Academy and East End Primary (Moray Council)

YEAR ONE

"The emphasis of the project was to make sure that the P7s leaving East End Primary had done some travel planning. They'd not done this before, they'd not considered their journey beyond the fact that they would be going to Elgin Academy.

...actually map their route, look at safe routes and suggest more sustainable ways of doing it so those that were possibly going to contemplate getting a lift were going to perhaps take a healthier option and take their bikes." (School Travel Co-ordinator)

YEAR TWO

Improvements in year 2

- More than one school
- More involvement with Primary Schools
- An Activity at the Academy

School staff and others felt that the project had been easy to continue for a second year. of the initial groundwork, such as route planning, risk assessment, consent forms etc. was already in place. , this made it much easier to pick up this year, 'you can pick that bit

up off the shelf almost; you can start to look at the added bits'. The reduced workload

associated with the original setting up of the project meant that the Academy were able to play a bigger role this year, in particular the school travel committee.

YEAR THREE

The project was described as being successful 'beyond expectations' – well up on the previous years numbers primarily due to the fact it is embedded in the secondary school

Project developments:

- Allowing for travel on foot and by cycle
- Activities at more primary schools
- Competition
- Led by school travel team at Secondary
- Linked to 'the riderz' visit to schools



Oban High School (Argyll and Bute) 'Transition Challenge' for all S1 pupils

YEAR ONE

- Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- All pupil groups prepared a presentation for a panel of external judges on 'how to get to Oban High using Active Travel modes'
- Preparation work developed within Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- Winning group visited the main primary school in Oban to give their presentation to P7 pupils and were also awarded a prize of an adventure boat trip as this was considered to be an important motivating factor for the pupils.
- Early feedback from Senior Management indicated that the work was seen as being a vital part of the school's Transition Programme and that it would be continued, 'I'm surprised that we haven't been doing this before, it's so important to discuss with pupils how they're going to get to their new school'
- Active School Manager took a lead role in ensuring that the school had support with developing this piece of work in its first year

YEAR TWO

- Year 2 tied in with Enterprise Education and (each group was given £100 to use towards their presentation) and the work becomes fully integrated into the developing curriculum as part of Curriculum for Excellence
- Active Travel information becomes fully integrated into Oban High School's Transition Programme
- An incentive continues to be essential
- Continued positive feedback from school management



YEAR THREE

Project Continues.

Alness Academy (Highland Council)

The active travel transition project involved two main events with a particular focus on cycling.

– A visit by the Active Schools Co-ordinator to feeder primary schools to give a safety talk on wearing cycle helmets.

– Transition day at the secondary school

- Demonstration of trial bikes by two local young people
- Question and answer panel of representatives made up of:
 - Junior Mountain Bike Cross Country Champion
 - Female Mountain Bike Cross Country Champion
 - Local mountain biker from Alness Academy

Throughout the transition week an incentive scheme was run to encourage pupils to bring their bikes to school. Senior pupils were paired up with a P7 pupil and were given the responsibility of stamping a card every time their P7 cycled to school.

Pupils who lived in more rural too far away to cycle were also able to take part in the initiative by cycling during the holidays. Parents could stamp the card every time their child had been out on their bike.

Prizes for cycling included being given tickets for a match at the local Football Club



CHALLENGES TO THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- Geographical location – many of the pupils at the High Schools that took part lived than 5 miles from the school
- Lack of time
- Inadequate planning
- Lack of leadership when projects initially developed
- Curricular pressures
- Poor communication between schools

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- Carrying out a survey of P7 pupils and their parents – to identify school travel needs & concerns
- Peer-led activities raised awareness and helped address issues around active travel
 - involving pupils in designing active travel leaflets
 - giving presentations to their peers or younger children
- The importance of active pupil participation on School Travel Committee
- Provided an opportunity for using postcode data to map safe routes to school
- Providing information for parents on school transport and local bus services
- The importance of embedding the project within the curriculum in order to overcome the challenge of lack of time available
- The importance of a practical element – such as a led cycle ride to the secondary school.

RESULTS

Although there was little measurable increase in active travel as pupils moved from primary to secondary school, this was as expected given the scope and timescale of the projects. In all three schools, active travel behaviour remained fairly stable across the primary-secondary transition.

However, it was felt that the projects had been a positive experience and had raised awareness of the benefits of active travel to school and opportunities for walking and cycling within the local area. In Moray, pupils from the pilot primary school were more likely to report that they had discussed school travel and been given travel information in P7 than pupils at any of the other associated primary schools. Levels of cycling were also high relative to other schools.

The evaluation highlighted a number of factors which helped to facilitate the success of the project:

- Strong internal leadership and management,
- A positive attitude within the school
- The willingness and enthusiasm of key members of staff.
- The value of having a 'school champion' who was passionate about the issue.
- Active travel initiatives focusing on the primary-secondary transition are most likely to be sustainable when they are integrated into existing programmes within schools. The use of critical skills within PSE at Oban High School was an excellent example of this.

Good partnership working was also essential for maximising the effectiveness of the projects. Schools have the opportunity to draw on the expertise and resources of a wide range of external agencies and individuals. In relation to school travel, these include Active School Coordinators, Road Safety Teams and

other staff from the local council Transport or Roads department School Travel Coordinators played a key role in bringing relevant partners on board.

Partnership working was most effective when there were:

- A range of people involved;
- Shared aims and values;
- Clear mutual benefits;
- Willingness to contribute time and resources
- Good communication channels

Developing strong primary-secondary links and establishing good communication between staff at participating primary and secondary schools was seen as critical for maximising the potential of transition-related work.

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Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, working on practical projects so people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

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