

1 Purpose of the Walk Once a Week Project

The Walk Once a Week (WoW) project rewards children in primary schools who walk (or cycle) once a week, with collectable pin badges every month. This walk to school campaign is intended to promote behaviour change among pupils and families, so that every child who can walk to school does so. Alongside the primary approach of incentives, the project offers a wide range of classroom resources and lesson plans for primary schools to promote active travel.

This project is delivered by Living Streets Scotland, under the management of Paths for All, and is funded by the Scottish Government. NHS Health Scotland has responsibility for performance management of Paths for All, which has subcontracted this project to Living Streets Scotland.

2 Why impact assess the Walk Once a Week Project?

The focus of this impact assessment is on the Living Streets/Paths for All outcomes relating to active travel to school, as detailed in their national work plan. One of the main funding criteria previously been requested by the Scottish Government is that funded organisations must 'achieve health improvement with an increase in physical activity and reduction in health inequalities'. This impact assessment sought to identify where there are areas of concern or knowledge gaps in work towards this outcome (and others). This would then assist the project in the development of options for the future.

Whilst the broad outcomes and key activities of the WoW national work plan were agreed between Living Streets and Paths for All, a number of outputs as well as delivery routes and style were open for amendment in response to recommendations from the impact assessment.

3 Scoping workshop

The Equality team facilitated the scoping workshop, delivering a presentation on health inequalities impact assessment (HIIA) as an introduction to the workshop and systematically guiding participants through the equality, health and human rights issues. Discussion included actions that could be taken to promote positive impacts and remove or mitigate any negative impacts.

The following organisations were present at the scoping workshop and contributed to the discussions:

- NHS Health Scotland
- Living Streets Scotland
- Paths for All
- Children in Scotland
- Sustrans
- Scottish Government
- Midlothian Council
- West Lothian Council

The stakeholders were chosen by the Physical Activity Development Manager, following discussion with Equality Team members and Living Streets Scotland. There were 13 participants, mainly from council and voluntary organisations. These organisations provided valuable insights into the potential impacts on populations groups.

All participants were sent a briefing paper which described the roles and expectations of workshop participants and a comprehensive data pack with background information on active travel evidence prior to the scoping workshop. Participants were also sent a copy of the WoW work plan and were asked to think about any potential negative or positive impacts in advance.

The following table provides examples of the types of impacts and questions (to fill gaps in knowledge) that were identified at the scoping workshop. This was circulated to participants for comment and used to guide next steps – prioritisation and appraisal of evidence. Feedback from this scoping workshop suggested that more time is needed to give sufficient consideration to each part of the workshop checklist.

4 Findings

Examples of the potential impacts (refer to full report for more detail):

	Area of impact	Potential differential impact or question
Potential differential impacts on population groups	Disabled people	<p>The materials do not currently provide specific alternatives to support disabled children's participation – focus is on those with no physical impairment.</p> <p>What do we know about uptake of walking around the playground instead of walking to school? Is it worthwhile given how long it takes for physical activity to be effective? Also what can be learned from previous evaluations of participation of special schools?</p> <p>What can we learn from similar health interventions in terms of improving equality of opportunity for disabled people?</p>
Health impact	Physical Environment	Traffic is reduced, impacting positively on congestion, which in turn has environmental benefits. There will also be a reduction in CO ₂ emissions and noise.
Human rights impact	Private and family life (Article 8, ECHR)	Relations between family and community could be strengthened by the opportunity for inclusion provided. This may lead to increased participation in local community activity.

A prioritisation meeting was held with the steering group in October 2012 to consider the findings from the scoping workshop. This was in order to focus resource on areas most likely to have significant impact on the health of population groups. This process is intended to be light yet robust, and is based on steering group judgement and consensus, guided by a scoring system. Evidence was then appraised by the NHS Health Scotland evidence team member on the steering group, for prioritised areas of impact and/or research questions.

5 Research questions and evidence

To avoid assumptions being made about impacts and, therefore, recommendations being potentially misguided, evidence was gathered to inform the assessment.

Research questions were further refined through the prioritisation process by the Development Manager and evidence team member. The table shows some examples of research questions deemed 'high priority' through prioritisation and the evidence used to support these questions.

Population group	Research question(s)	Evidence
Age (all age groups)	What evidence is there to support the success of incentivised school based walk/cycle programmes for embedding permanent behaviour change among primary school children and their carers?	<p>Primary studies suggest that children who regularly walk (or cycle) to school have higher overall levels of physical activity outwith travel to/from school, although this is not supported by SHeS data. Whether children participate at all is influenced by personal, socio-cultural and environmental factors.</p> <p>Pupils aged 4–11 are more likely to walk (58%–41%) or go by car (28%–18%) than pupils aged 12–18.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that younger children respond better to incentives approach to encourage participation than older children. Although little evidence on differential impacts of incentives over the age range within a primary school children.</p> <p>Studies show adults are more likely to choose money over a 'prize' as an incentive, but would be more satisfied with a 'prize' over the long-term.</p>
Socio-economic status	Is there a potential to widen inequalities because of the cost to schools associated with participating in WoW? How might the cost issue affect sustainability and impact of the project?	No evidence on the characteristics of schools more likely or less likely to participate in an intervention which required financial resource to participate.
Religion and belief	To what extent do issues relating to religious/cultural practices and beliefs mean participating is not an option? Is there information about the numbers of children who do not participate for these reasons?	No evidence available on the impact of religious festivals on participating in active travel.

6 Outcomes

From the review of the evidence it appears that a great deal is unknown about the differential impact on different population groups of an incentive scheme to encourage active travel.

Therefore, the **key recommendation** from this impact assessment is that the WoW project looks to expand its current monitoring database to include demographic information about children participating, patterns of participation over time and the perceptions of children, parents and staff about active travel to school. This will allow the project to assess impact against its identified outcomes, better understand inequality related to the project, shape future plans as well as develop the evidence base in this area. Such changes to the monitoring of the project should be proportionate to the scale and budget for the project and enhance existing monitoring mechanisms.

Recommendations for project delivery improvements are:

1. Living Streets share local good practice on involving disabled children and representative organisations in the development of improved options for accessing the project.

By promoting wider consultation with disabled children and representative organisations, the WoW project can look for creative solutions to encourage participation of disabled children. Including groups in the design of services is a positive way to encourage a sense of involvement in a project.

2. Living Streets promote and share good practice of school travel planning programmes across participating schools.

The WoW project could provide a national perspective to encourage and support schools develop school travel planning programmes that address health inequalities in physical activity. This may also include suggestions on the role of local authorities in supporting schools from an environment and transport perspective. Using evidence and knowledge of practice in other areas could influence the development of these plans to include bullying/harassment policies.

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