

# Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy

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April 2024



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extended the statutory duties of local authorities to support parental choice of school through the consideration of travel and transport arrangements. The new section placed a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel to school and publish a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy.
- 1.2. The duty relates to journeys to and from institutions where education or training is delivered and applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority's area.
- 1.3. Warrington's original 2006 strategy was adopted as part of Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2) and updated regularly most recently as part of LTP4.
- 1.4. There are five main elements to the duty that all local authorities must satisfy:
  - An **assessment** of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area.
  - An **audit** of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions.
  - A **strategy** to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for.
  - The **promotion** of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.
  - The **publication** of the current Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

## 2. Setting the Context

- 2.1. Warrington's resident population now stands at 211,580, an increase of 18,500 since the first SMOTS document in 2006.
- 2.2. Warrington has a total of 90 schools and colleges attended by 31,680 children and young people and 4,591 studying further education both within and outside the borough. Within Warrington there are:
  - 15 community primary schools

- 25 primary academy schools
- 29 primary faith schools
- 5 nurseries and SEN schools
- 1 community high school
- 2 faith high schools
- 1 technical College
- 10 academy/free high school
- 7 schools and colleges with post 16 provision

2.3. There are 90,538 households in Warrington, 41% owning one car, 32% owning 2 cars and 10% owning 3 or more cars.

2.4. The Travel Choices team within the Transport for Warrington service already works with a wide range of council departments, schools, and other organisations to enable and promote sustainable travel to school. This document sets out how that work can be sustained.

2.5. Central funding for regional and local school travel advisers (STAs) was provided until March 2011, with the aim of ensuring every school had an effective School Travel Plan. Although this funding was continued at a reduced amount after the change of government in 2010, it was un-ringfenced which allowed local education authorities to determine how it was used. In Warrington the funding has remained within the general education budget and has not been used to sustain the STA post.

2.6. Additionally, a considerable number of schools have or are planning to become academies which distances them from local authority financial control. This presents new challenges in communication and co-operation, but also creates opportunities to seek funding for services ranging from travel planning and parking management to road safety education and training.

### **3. An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area**

3.1. The guidance advises that local authorities should base their assessment of children and young people's travel and transport needs on the data provided by schools or colleges, often contained within school travel plans.

3.2. Effective school travel plans, updated as necessary, put forward a package of measures to improve safety and reduce car use, backed by a partnership involving the school, education, health and transport officers from the local authority, and the police.

3.3. Although at the time Warrington met the government target of all schools having a travel plan by 2011, many have not been updated since then and are now inadequate and out of date. The intention that schools would update their own travel plans has not materialised, and the resource that the council can currently devote to this results in school travel plans only being developed or updated because of planning conditions placed on new or expanding schools, or when the schools themselves request assistance.

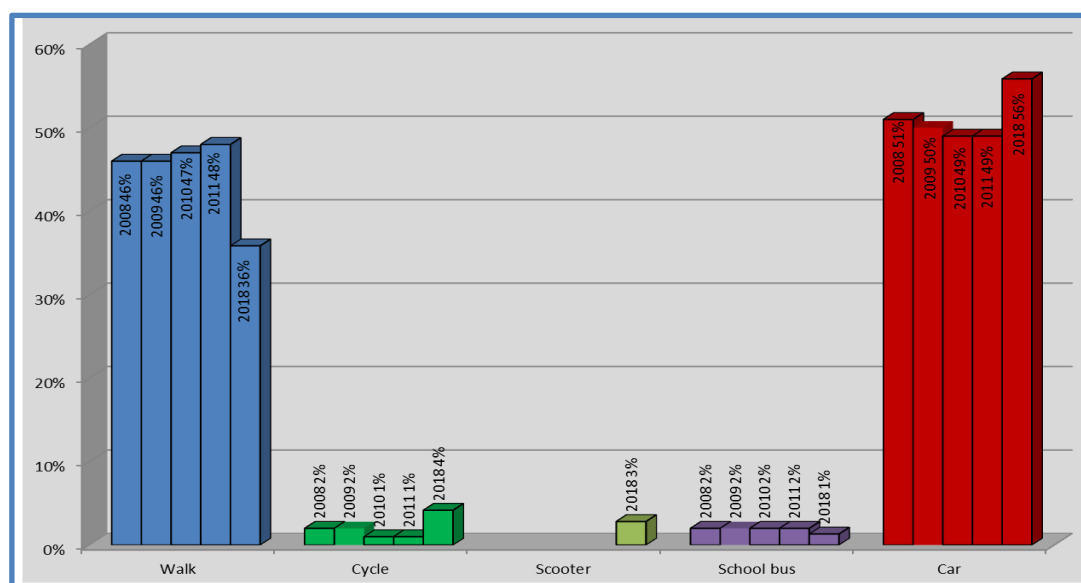
3.4. A School Travel Adviser is available to support schools that require help to produce and implement their travel plans. This function also offers a

programme of support that schools can choose to include in their travel plans. This includes classroom and assembly awareness raising lessons, scooter training, programmes to support transition from primary to high school, junior PCSO and JSO schemes and anti idling campaigns to highlight the impact car engines left running when stationary can have on air quality. These measures are jointly run with colleagues from Road Safety and the Police.

3.5. The data on how children currently travel to school and how they would prefer to make this journey is key to assessing their needs. Until 2011 this data was collected from each school within the national school census, but the government's direction to reduce pressure on data collection from schools resulted in these travel questions being withdrawn. This data has not been routinely collected since then, except on an ad-hoc basis when travel plans are updated.

3.6. To give a full current picture, a borough-wide primary classroom hands-up survey was undertaken in the autumn term of 2018. This involved class teachers and council staff surveying the children in a classroom hands-up.

The results of the primary school survey are shown below together with the data previously collected in 2011 and the previous 3 years. It shows a marked reduction in walking to school, with an increase in being driven. Cycle and scooter training appear to have had a positive effect with an increase in both modes.



3.7. There are several possible reasons for the increase in driving to school, including the high employment rate of Warrington residents (parents dropping off children on the way to work) and the ability to choose a school which is not necessarily the nearest to home.

3.8. We propose to repeat this as part of LTP5 and although challenging to collect, this continued process will help to assess the specific travel needs of pupils through the school travel plan and survey data.

3.9. A consultation on the Home to School Transport Policy (0–25-year-olds) was carried out in February 2024 because of a review of the current policy and taking into account the Department for Education's revised guidance on travel

to school for children of compulsory school age. The proposed policy will apply for the 2024 to 2025 academic year onwards.

3.10. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continued development and update of school travel plans when required by planning applications and requested by schools.
- Continue to work with schools to gather travel-to-school surveys.
- Continue to deliver an education programme in all schools.

**4. An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions.**

- 4.1. Much of the information required for the audit of the infrastructure supporting sustainable school travel is already collected as part of the consideration of accessibility to key services like education as an integral part of the Local Transport Plan.
- 4.2. Catchment area maps linked to pupil postcode data are currently being updated and are useful to identify the relative distance pupils are travelling to school and evaluate the potential numbers likely to walk, cycle or are located on a bus route. The maps will enable us to identify suitable walking and cycling routes to school and park and stride locations as well as assisting us in identifying locations where we could improve infrastructure to support active travel.
- 4.3. Some schools have expressed an interest in having the road immediately outside the school developed as a School Street. This involves temporarily blocking the road to traffic during start and finish times to allow for safer pedestrian access. This does however require the assistance of school staff or volunteers to physically move the barriers into place and work is underway to determine locations where this is feasible and enable as many as possible to be put in place.
- 4.4. Any rebuilding or expansion of schools and colleges is also an opportunity to consider travel and transport provision. Travel planning is a standard requirement of planning consent which brings collaboration between several council departments, working together to provide highway infrastructure and identifying where additional links to schools and colleges will be required.
- 4.5. The council also has a Home to School Transport Policy which outlines which pupils are eligible for subsidised transport to school, often by school bus or taxi. This relates to distance from home to nearest school rather than following specific mapped routes. The policy sets out our approach to providing transport to schools/educational settings for students up to 19 years old, and up to 25 for students with special educational needs and disabilities. The policy and eligibility guidance can be found on the council's website [www.warrington.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.warrington.gov.uk/schooltransport). A consultation on the Home to School Transport Policy was carried out in February 2024 because of a review of the current policy and considering the Department for Education's revised guidance. The proposed policy will apply for the 2024 to 2025 academic year onwards.

4.6. Commercial bus services also provide for the journey to school and from Monday 1 April 2024 all people under the age of 22 will be able to buy a ticket for any Warrington bus for £1 each way. This is part of the councils plans to make bus travel more accessible and affordable for young people in Warrington, so they see it as an attractive, viable travel option. The latest enhancements support the ongoing work through the 'Better by Bus' campaign to deliver modern, efficient, and environmentally friendly bus travel, with cheaper fares, improved routes, and more frequent services. Certain routes are provided by smaller independent operators, whilst much of the network is covered by the larger operators, such as Warrington's Own Buses and Arriva. The larger operators offer season tickets which further subsidise use of public transport and enable additional journeys to be made during the evenings, at weekends and in the school holidays, further promoting sustainable and independent travel. Maps of routes and services are available online at the respective websites.

4.7. In addition, all the borough's schools are identified on the Warrington Cycle Map. This not only features cycle routes but maps the entire highway network, colour-coded to highlight where more advanced cycling skills are required. Most schools are surrounded by streets identified as quieter, low risk routes where families could consider walking and cycling to school as an option. The map has recently been updated to include crossing points and new infrastructure, giving additional support for routes to school. The map colour-coding is also used to identify barriers to cycling and walking and to help prioritise new infrastructure locations to reduce these obstacles.

4.8. Government funded cycle training, Bikeability, is offered to every 9-year-old in the borough through their school. This free instruction provides the skill and confidence to cycle on quieter roads and is ideal to enable cycling from home to school. Other age groups are also catered for, building on the basic knowledge to enable safe cycling to secondary school and eventually to the workplace. £680k has been secured to continue this training until 2028.



4.9. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continue to use the cycle map to identify safer routes to school and to
- target available funds to reduce any barriers.
- Continue to work together on new developments and through the planning process to identify where new infrastructure is needed.
- Ensure schools are aware of mapping and timetable websites and encourage them to add to their own websites to allow them to promote routes to school and help to identify missing links.
- provide all schools with pupil postcode maps and work with them to identify and promote walking and cycling routes to school and park and stride locations.

**5. A strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for.**

- 5.1. The Travel Planning programme will continue, however schools who are required to implement a travel plan as a condition of planning consent will be prioritised.
- 5.2. The Transport Planning team will continue to work in partnership with Traffic Management and road safety to deliver education, engineering, and enforcement.
- 5.3. The smarter choices team will continue to promote the 'better by bus' campaign.
- 5.4. When funding becomes available, we will continue to create and upgrade infrastructure to support active travel to school.

**6. The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.**

- 6.1. The sustainable school travel strategy has a broad impact, including providing health benefits for children and families through active journeys such as walking and cycling. It can also bring significant environmental improvements, through reduced levels of congestion and improvements in poor air quality to which children are particularly vulnerable.
- 6.2. Promotion will continue through the implementation of school travel plans and the delivery of specific schemes identified in them, including the classroom and assembly awareness raising lessons, scooter training, transition from primary to high school programmes, junior PCSO schemes, Junior Safety Officer schemes, anti idling campaigns etc.
- 6.3. The Department of Education updated the sustainability and climate change strategy in December 2023 a main requirement being that all education settings will have a nominated sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan by 2025.
- 6.4. Communications using social media and my school services will continue to be used to promote national campaigns such as Walk to School week, bike to school week, world environment day, National Clean Air Day etc.
- 6.5. New travel choices webpages are currently being developed for the WBC website and these pages will include information outlining the work that the school travel advisor and road safety officers deliver in schools, advice and guidance to schools and parents about national and local campaigns as well as providing information and links to other pages such as Bikeability cycle training and cycling routes.
- 6.6. Central grant funding has been secured until 2028 to allow the Bikeability cycle training to continue delivering courses to develop practical skills to enable people to ride bikes in progressively more challenging environments.
  - Balance is generally aimed at reception to year 2 and develops cycle handling and awareness skills.

- Learn to ride - for all ages but most usually year 3 and 4, progress to start, pedal, steer and stop from not riding at all.
- Level 1 & 2 - for year 5 developing balance, control skills and cycling in traffic along quieter roads.
- Level 3 - for secondary school pupils, using route planning and dealing with busier roads.
- Family: to enable families to plan enjoyable group rides

Over the last 12 months level 1 & 2 has been completed by 2632 year 5 & 6 children and Warrington have earned a national top 10 place for the delivery of training across our primary schools.

#### 6.7. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continue to deliver a travel planning programme including awareness raising assemblies and lessons.
- Continue borough-wide promotion through social media outlets.
- Continue to work closely with Bikeright our training partners to ensure that every child receives cycle training.

## **7. The publication of Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.**

7.1. The original Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy was consulted upon and approved as part of the wider LTP2 development. Once complete it was published on the council's website with the other documents making up the council's transport strategy. It is proposed to follow that procedure for this refreshed strategy.