

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Land and Environmental Services)

Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee: 13 June 2007

Subject: Travelling Green Initiative

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To report and update the Committee on the ongoing success of the Travelling Green initiative developed and first introduced within West Dunbartonshire in 2001.

2. Background

- 2.1** Travelling Green is an active travel project encouraging children to change the way that they travel to and from school and choose an active journey i.e. walking. The project is designed for Primary 5 pupils because the children are at an age when they are more likely to:
- begin to have greater independence and maturity
 - be given the freedom to walk to and from school by their parents
 - be encouraged to engage in habitual physical activity.
- 2.2** The project has been developed through innovative and creative partnership working between West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) and Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS.
- 2.3** The original pilot took place in 2001 with a 'control' school (Gavinburn Primary School) and 'intervention' school (St. Mary's Primary School, Duntocher). The results reflecting changes between baseline and follow-up measurements were very encouraging. The baseline mean daily walking distance to school was 242 metres for the control children and 198 metres for the intervention children. After the intervention, there was a significant difference between the two schools in favour of the intervention school. The mean increase in the distance travelled by walking for intervention children was 602 metres compared to just 47 metres for control children. The mean distance walked to school by intervention school children was almost 800 metres per day at follow-up. In real terms, this represents roughly 12 minutes of walking during the journey to school. If repeated on the journey home, this would contribute to almost half of the 60 minutes of moderate physical activity recommended for health.

Following the evaluation of the materials used in the pilot, an updated Travelling Green pack was compiled for use starting in 2002/3.

- 2.4** In 2003, Travelling Green was given national recognition when WDC won the Scottish Transport Award for Road Safety.
- 2.5** Between 2003 and 2005, WDC developed, evaluated and refined the project, producing a practical, attractive and user-friendly teaching pack with resources for pupils and parents.
- 2.6** In 2007 an additional information leaflet for parents was published. This is available as background information.
- 2.7** The Travelling Green project has been included in the new draft Local Transport Strategy, helping to meet the goals of promoting choice and raising awareness of the need for change, promoting modal shift and promoting road safety.
- 2.8** In 2007, recognising the outstanding success of the initiative in West Dunbartonshire, the Scottish Executive have provided funding to WDC to prepare packs and training resources to enable a national roll out across all 32 local authorities in Scotland.

3. Main Issues

3.1 The Aims of Travelling Green are to:

- Change attitudes and positively influence behaviour towards walking to and from school.
- Reduce road casualties and achieve the National Targets for child casualty reduction.
- Improve pedestrian skills amongst Primary 5 children and prepare them for independent travel.
- Increase physical activity levels amongst Primary 5 children, using the school journey.

3.2 Why Travel Green?

- 3.2.1** Travelling Green encourages active travel, focusing on walking on the school journey. Active travel will not only support improved levels of physical activity amongst children, staff and parents but, if embedded within a whole-school approach, it can also contribute to better self-esteem, reduced bullying and a positive school ethos.
- 3.2.2** Increasing car ownership along with increased fears for personal safety, has led many families away from active travel. Current figures show that only 55% of primary-aged children walk to school and this figure drops substantially once they reach secondary school.
- 3.2.3** There are many reasons why pupils do not walk to school:
- lack of time in the morning if parents are working
 - fears for safety in busy traffic
 - fears for personal safety

- peer pressure
- provision of school bus transport.

3.2.4 The best ways to address these barriers involve children and their families in the planning and development of partnerships that can support active travel. By taking a 'whole school community' approach Travelling Green challenges many of these barriers, allowing children to become independent, active commuters on the school journey.

3.3 Improvements achieved from Travelling Green

3.3.1 The number of schools participating in the Travelling Green project in WDC has continued to increase.

3.3.2 From the initial 2 schools that participated in the project between 2001 and 2003, 4 primary schools (223 children) participated in Travelling Green in 2004. As with the pilot, the overall results were extremely positive. Before Travelling Green, 46% of children walked the whole way to school. After the project, this had risen to 62%. Overall, 81% walked some or all of the way to school every day at the end of the project.

3.3.3 By 2005, 7 primary schools (292 children) were participating in the project. Before Travelling Green, 59% of children travelled all or the main part of their journey to school on foot. After the project, this had risen to 72%. On the journey home, 64% travelled all or the main part on foot before the project, rising to 72% after the project.

3.3.4 In 2006, 13 primary schools (450 children) participated in Travelling Green. Before the project, 57% of children travelled all or the main part of their journey to school on foot. After the project, this had risen to 68%. On the journey home, 62% travelled all or the main part on foot before the project, rising to 72% after the project.

3.3.5 This year (2007), 20 primary schools (610 children) are participating in the project, with a further 5 schools planning to participate next year. This will mean that nearly three-quarters of WDC's primary schools will be Travelling Green.

3.3.6 The Travelling Green project links with national education policies and initiatives i.e. National Priorities in Education, A Curriculum for Excellence, Health Promoting School, Eco Schools. The project can also be integrated into School Travel Plans. These factors are fundamental to the successful uptake of Travelling Green by primary schools.

3.3.7 Evaluation of Travelling Green has highlighted the positive views that children, parents and teachers have about the project, e.g. "it was fun walking to and from school – it made you fit and healthy" (pupil); "it highlighted that children who normally come to school by car actually enjoyed walking to and from school with their friends" (parent); "the handbook was excellent and provided a lot of useful information" (teacher).

3.4 The Future for Travelling Green

- 3.4.1 Following the success of Travelling Green in WDC, there was an ambition to make the project available throughout Scotland. In 2006, a partnership between WDC, the Scottish Health Promoting School Unit (SHPSU) and Sustrans put forward a proposal to the Scottish Executive for the national rollout of Travelling Green. The proposal linked into both national and local policies on transport, road safety, health and physical activity.
- 3.4.2 The proposal was that the Scottish Executive provide funding to enable WDC, SHPSU and Sustrans to work together to support the delivery of training and resources on Travelling Green across Scotland. This funding has been granted.
- 3.4.3 The training is now currently being delivered by WDC and is being provided through the School Travel Co-ordinators (STCs) and Road Safety Officers (RSOs) networks in partnership with local health promotion departments. The training will support STCs and RSOs to return to their local areas to work with schools to deliver Travelling Green. The first training day took place on 29th March, with a further 3 days programmed for later in 2007.
- 3.4.4 The resources will be available to every primary school in Scotland free of charge, with schools undertaking local training and also participating in the evaluation of the project if required.
- 3.4.5 Sustrans and the SHPSU will commission evaluation of the impact of the project on active travel within schools across Scotland. This will build upon the initial evaluation of the project in WDC.

4 Personnel Issues

- 4.1 There are no Personnel issues

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The cost of the programme will be met fully from the Scottish Executive's allocated capital funding.

6 Risk Analysis

- 6.1 It was not considered necessary to carry out a risk analysis for this work.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Travelling Green was developed in West Dunbartonshire by a successful partnership between the Council and the local NHS. Since its inception in 2001, the project has gained national recognition and resulted in a number of awards for the Council and staff involved.

The initiatives goes from strength to strength with almost three quarters of our primary school children now involved. The national introduction is providing the opportunity for West Dunbartonshire's work to be showcased around Scotland and to make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of children across the country .

8 Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of this report and in particular the national recognition the Council is receiving as a result of this West Dunbartonshire initiative.

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Appendix: None

Background Papers: Information for Parents – Travelling Green leaflet

Wards Affected: All