

PROMOTION/ **AWARENESS RAISING**

TARGETED CYCLING CAMPAIGNS – SCHOOLS

Overview

A study in the UK showed that nearly half of children wanted to cycle to school but their parents or schools were opposed for safety reasons. In areas where very few adults cycle, children aren't able to learn the habit – and the necessary skills – of cycling from their parents. In such cases, a school cycling campaign can help children develop skills and habits to make them life-long cyclists, and perhaps even to influence their parents' transportation choices.

Background and Objectives

Definition

School cycling campaigns are about working directly with pupils, parents and school staff to help them overcome whatever it is that prevents them from cycling to school and making cycling a safe, fun, and normal mode of transport for children (and others in the school community). This includes teaching safe cycling skills, incorporating cycling into the curriculum, hosting cycling activities and events, making appropriate infrastructure adaptations around the school, and developing school travel plans.

Function/Objective

Parents need to have a certain degree of peace of mind allowing their children to go out alone on their bikes, and children need to know that cycling is an option for them. School cycling campaigns are intended to promote a culture of cycling in schools such that children see cycling as a valid (and fun!) transportation choice, parents see it as a safe and healthy choice for their children, and the school demonstrates support for the choice through infrastructure and other cycling-related initiatives.

Scope/Field of application

School cycling campaigns can be implemented at schools where a good number of children live within cycling distance of school but where many are nonetheless driven by their parents and where perhaps the environment around the school is becoming unsafe due to the number of parents' vehicles.

School cycling campaigns tend to see the most striking results in starter or climber cities where parents are initially less likely to cycle themselves and thus would be nervous about their children doing so. However, even in champion cities, some schools are noticing an increasing level of "parent taxis," resulting in the area around schools becoming less safe for children and more polluted.

Target group

While the aim is to encourage children to cycle to school, a school cycling campaign will not succeed unless parents, teachers and school administrators are also seen as part of the target audience.

Implementation

Partnerships

- The local authority: Their help may be needed in making routes to school safe for children (reduced speed zones, traffic calming, traffic signals near the school, etc.).
- Depending on your situation, a bike shop or bike manufacturer could be asked to supply a set of bikes so that children who don't currently have their own bikes can participate.



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- All members of the individual school community (teachers, administrators, pupils, parents) need to be committed to the idea.
- Local cycling organisation

Planning considerations

A school cycling campaign can be implemented internally within a school if it has champions to move it forward and the buy-in of the school community, but it is generally more effective to contract an outside coordinator to come into the school to help set up the programme and to monitor and support it on a regular basis for a given period of time.

Sustrans has established a programme to serve primary schools nation-wide in the UK and the city of Graz, Austria has set up a local programme there to encourage cycling for kindergarteners and their parents (see the good practice examples below for more information on both of these programmes).

To find out if similar programmes exist that you could take advantage of, contact a cycling organisation in your area through the European Cyclists' Federation (www.ecf.com/4_1) website.

Components of a cycling campaign

The tasks of a school campaign coordinator include:

- assessing the school's infrastructure and other needs and helping to implement adaptations around the school: This could include creating safe, covered bike parking, rearranging car parking to make cycling safer, or creating a "no drop off" radius around the school to make the approach safer for children on foot or on bikes.
- training the teachers to incorporate cycling into the regular curriculum: Lessons can tie into health, nutrition, physical activity, the environment, or climate change.
- cycling training for the teachers (if there is a need)
- helping teachers, pupils (depending on their age), and parents develop school travel plans
- setting up workshops for the parents to get them involved and to encourage them to cycle to school with their young children
- establishing relationships with the local authority in cases where traffic calming or other measures may be needed around the school
- teaching safe cycling skills to the pupils (or training teachers to do so)
- planning and organising bike-related events and activities at the school: This could include, for example, "bike trains" from various points to the school in the morning, "bikers' breakfasts" at school for those who cycle in on a given day, or a competition among classes for the most kilometres cycled in a week or month
- creating excitement among the children about the idea of cycling

Cost considerations

If a programme doesn't already exist in your area, you may want to partner with other local schools to share the costs of developing a programme specific to your local needs.

The cost of hiring a programme coordinator can also be shared by several schools (or perhaps by the local authority on behalf of participating schools).

Your school may need to make some infrastructure investments as part of a cycling campaign, such as bike parking for the children's bikes.

Your school may choose to invest in a fleet of bikes so that children who don't have their own can use them for safety skills training and practice. In kindergartens, those may be so-called "run bikes" or "balance bikes" – bikes without pedals that small children use to learn to develop balance before they begin riding a regular bicycle.

Forerunner – and some climber – cities would likely not require the same level of investment and activity as a starter city, where levels of awareness about cycling are significantly lower both among children and their parents and teachers.

Considerations

Strengths

- Teaching children to cycle at a young age greatly increases the chance that they will continue to do so as adults.
- Incorporating cycling into school activities makes it fun and social for children.
- Cycling helps develop children's independence and physical fitness and gives them an outlet for their energy before starting the school day.
- The focus on the health and safety of children is a topic almost everyone can relate to and support.
- School cycling programmes can also have an impact on the children's parents; parents of younger children are encouraged to cycle with their children to school rather than driving them.

Weaknesses

- Success depends on the buy-in of each individual school and its teachers and administrators. If they aren't supportive, the programme is unlikely to succeed.
- In schools where the teachers themselves are uncertain about cycling, it may be difficult to maintain a programme without sustained outside support.

Success factors and barriers

- Success depends on engaging parents and teachers and overcoming their fear of traffic danger.
- The school must take ownership of the programme in order for it to successfully continue after the coordinator has left.
- Infrastructure needs to be addressed. For example, children need a safe place to park their bikes at school.
- The local authority must play a role in cases where traffic calming or other measures are required to make the route to school safe.
- The programme must be fun.

Evaluation of impact

Counts can be done at regular intervals of the number of children who continue to cycle to school after the programme has been fully implemented.

Good Practice Cases

Case 1

Bike It – in towns and cities across the UK

Bike It (a programme of Sustrans – www.sustrans.org.uk) works directly with schools, getting children on their bikes and cycling to school every day by helping schools to make the case for cycling in their school travel plans, supporting cycling champions in schools, and demonstrating that cycling is a popular choice amongst children and their parents.

The Bike It programme has been running since 2005 and is currently carried out in schools in 55 towns and cities across the UK. A Bike It officer works with each participating school for a year, with the aim creating a pro-cycling culture in the school that continues long after the Bike It officer has finished his or her work.





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The programme is funded through a combination of sources, including local authorities, health authorities, Cycling England, lottery funding, and the national association of bike manufacturers and retailers.

Bike It has quadrupled the number of children biking to its target schools.

You can find out more at www.sustrans.org.uk/bikeit or by contacting Mike Madin, Bike It Project Manager at mike.madin@sustrans.org.uk.

All of the towns and cities participating in the Bike It programme are starter cities with cycling modal splits between 1 and 3%.

Picture: by Sustrans

Case 2

Mobility Management for Kindergartens: "There is nothing like starting young," Graz (AU)

In 2009, within the EU-project LIFECYCLE a kindergarten programme was developed and carried out in the city of Graz, Austria (population 255,000) involving 46 kindergartens (115 children groups). Every group received run bikes (two-wheelers with no pedals) to learn to cycle. A special picture book was developed in connection with the activity of telling stories about cycling and children who learned how to cycle received "I can bike" certificates. Activities to help motivate parents to reduce car trips to the kindergarten were also carried out.



For more information, go to www.eltis.org/study_sheet.phtml?study_id=2170&lang1=en or contact Margit Braun at braun@fgm.at.

Graz is a climber city with a 14% cycling modal split.

Pictures: by FGM