

Services



Bradford schools tackle obesity



Pupils from Fagley Primary School on a led cycle ride

Bradford has one of the biggest childhood deprivation and obesity rates in the country. Working with Bradford Metropolitan District Council's Public Health team, we developed a programme of cycling and walking in 16 target schools to get 4,230 children moving.

After two years, The Sustrans Active Travel Schools achieved some great results;

The percentage of children:

- > who regularly cycle to school more than doubled
- > who regularly walk to school reached 62.8%
- > travelling actively by scooting or skating more than doubled
- > travelling to school by car decreased by 6.7%, to 33.4%
- > who regularly ride a bike when not at school rose to 53.9%

Economic and health inequalities

In 2014, Bradford City Council's Public Health team was operating in some of the most challenging conditions in the country. The **health of people in Bradford** was varied compared with the England average. Deprivation was higher than average with about 25.5% (30,700) children living in poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women was also lower than the England average.

In Year 6, 20.6% of children were classified as obese, growing up to develop poor health habits

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and weight problems.

Rates of obesity have a clear link to poverty and ethnicity, according to Alison Moore, Senior Public Health Manager at Bradford Metropolitan District Council. Bradford has the biggest Pakistani community in the country and around 40% of the city's population comes from a non-white British background.

"These communities are statistically much more likely to have problems with obesity and disability. It's poverty in the extreme and a real challenge."

"We get great results from Sustrans, one of the programme's real strengths is that we are able to prove change. "

- Alison Moore, Senior Public Health Manager at Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Tackling obesity in schools

The team identified 16 schools around the city that had high levels of obesity and physical inactivity and chose transport as part of a suite of measures to tackle poor health. While the majority of children in these areas lived in estates close to schools where it would be possible to walk or cycle to school, there were few bikes in the playgrounds and many children were dropped off by car. Alison Moore said:

"It's a hilly city and while there is some cycling and walking in more affluent areas, those in poorer neighbourhoods tend to see the car as the aspirational way to travel.

"We wanted to try and give people the means to try walking and cycling, especially as these activities are free".

Public Health works closely with the transport department at Bradford, which was already working with Sustrans to develop better cycle infrastructure in the city.

Project aims

The overall aim of the project was to increase the number of pupils travelling to school actively. More specifically the schools programme sought to:

1. Double regular cycling levels where the baseline level of regular cycling was lower than 10% of pupils.
2. Promote other modes of active travel to school, such as scooting and walking.
3. Reduce the number of young people travelling to school by car – with a shift to active travel modes.
4. Raise awareness of the benefits of active travel.
5. Create a culture of active travel within project schools that can be sustained.

How we helped

Moore's team recruited us to develop a programme of walking and cycling activities in the target schools, which would encourage children, teachers and parents to develop an appreciation of the simple bicycle, and a walk in the fresh air.

Our schools officers held regular bike workshops inside and outside the classroom, with practical skills sessions to learn to ride or maintain the bike and events to encourage children to walk, scoot or cycle their regular journeys.

They also trained parents, teachers and volunteers to lead bike rides and walks and provide bike maintenance, helping to create a school community committed to the benefits of active travel.

Bike maintenance was at the heart of the programme. In many cases, children had no bike or it was very poorly maintained and their parents couldn't afford to buy a new bike, so schools

officers worked to give them the skills to repair and maintain recycled bikes. Bike maintenance develops children's technical abilities and can help improve confidence for children who struggle in traditional learning settings, particularly if English is not their first language.

Claire Greenwood, Family Liaison Officer at Fagley Primary school said:

"We're focussed on the curriculum but things like this make a difference to children's wellbeing and day to day resilience at school and opens up children to what's out there in the world."

She said the Ofsted inspector was impressed by the high numbers of children cycling to school which contributed to their '**Outstanding**' score.

Events have proved an effective way of inspiring children and parents to change their travel habits. A 'Walk and Wheelie Wednesday' at Baildon Church of England Primary School captured children's imagination with promotions and prizes, as well as badges to everyone who walked, scooted or cycled.

The event also demonstrated to parents, teachers and the local community the benefits of leaving the car at home at a school. The school is on a cul-de-sac and experiences chronic parking issues at drop-off time, but on Wheelie Wednesday the roads were much quieter and there was no dangerous parking.

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, every child in the school received a scooter training session which covered basic skills and road safety. For many children this was the first time that they had been on a scooter and their enthusiasm for it was excellent.

Results

In 2015/16 the Active Travel Officers in Bradford delivered 283 activities across all schools engaged in the project with 13,285 attendances including pupils, siblings, parents, teachers and volunteers.

During our **Big Pedal Challenge** this year, where schools across the UK compete to cycle or scoot the most journeys to school, Fagley recorded 45 bikes in the playground in a school of around 200 children.

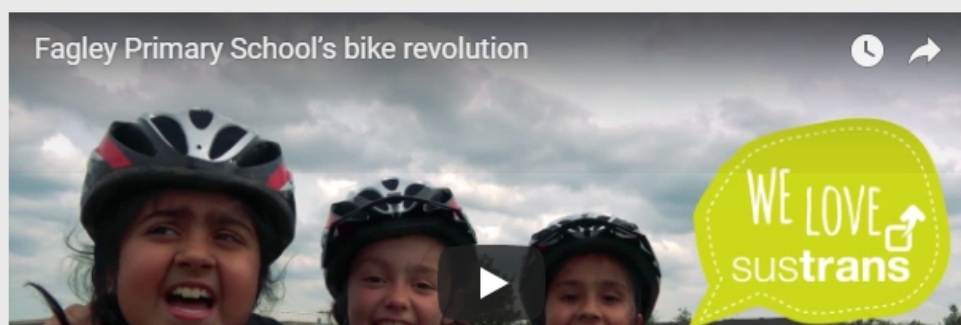
Enthusiasm for cycling and other forms of active travel has been supported by a highly motivated Head Teacher and school staff. Fagley now has a popular Cycle Club, where children learn to repair a donated bike, and ride it and then get to keep the bike at the end of the programme.

Claire Greenwood, Family Liaison Officer at Fagley Primary school said:

"They've got ownership of the bike and have put their time and energy into it. Many children in year 6 now come to school by bike and I expect that many will cycle to secondary school as it's really near the new cycle superhighway."

Full bike sheds and cycle clubs are music to the ears of Bradford's Public health team. While it will take time to monitor the effects of cycling and walking on obesity crisis, there is clear evidence that children are getting active, more often on their regular journeys.

What the pupils said





For more information on this project email [Kevin McCann](#), Head of Partnerships in the North or call 07920 527249.

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