

## **ANNEX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Stage one - Literature review and identification of secondary data**

A school transport literature review which covers previous research and examples of best practice can be found in Chapter 3. All materials used in the review were identified using electronic databases, Universities Transport Study Group mailing list. The review also included an internet search of policy statements and best practice guidance and examples.

Examples of best practice have also been considered for this stage of the research. These include policies adopted by school transport operators/providers and statutory bodies in the wider United Kingdom context. Examples include 'safer routes to school initiatives (Sustrans etc), walking and cycling infrastructure developments, bus usage initiatives, school travel plans and school safety zones (developed by 2 schools in Northern Ireland – St Brigid's College, L'derry and St Joseph's College, Ravenhill Road, Belfast; with further developments pending).

The review phase of this research has also included a review of secondary data using the ESRC Data Archive at Essex University this found no secondary data.

### **Stage two - Work with children to enable them to carry out research into safe journeys to school and their views on public transport.**

The peer researchers from NICCY's Youth Panel worked well with all participants who produced posters and drawings detailing their travel to and from school – the modes used, positive and negative experiences as well as improvements they would like to see made. All the groups considered issues such as the provision and use of seatbelts on buses, overcrowding, behaviour, road safety, congestion and personal security. This phase of the work took much longer than was anticipated. The main problem was securing agreement of the schools to take part.

Each workshop lasted approximately 45 minutes and was organised as follows;

- Post –primary schools – 1) introduction to the project and setting the scene; 2) split into groups (3 groups of 5 or 2 groups of 6); 3) start discussion group; 4) feedback.
- Primary schools and special school – 1) talking about your journey to school and what we will be doing in next half an hour or so; 2) picture discussion board – peer researcher would ask participants to write and say what they felt/own experiences; 3) Draw/write about their journey to school what they encounter on there walk to school or on the bus; 4) Feedback.

The schools involved in this phase of the work were carefully selected to ensure representation of the secondary, grammar, primary and special education sectors as well as the Integrated, State controlled sectors and schools that operate under the auspices of the Council for Catholic Maintained schools (CCMS). This chapter presents an overview of each of the schools involvement in this part of the study, followed by a detailed account of the key issues raised by pupils in their workshops. The key outcomes of the workshops highlighted serious reservations about school bus provision – safety, age of vehicles, seating and standing arrangements and overcrowding. Concerns about the impact of congestion was another issue that featured heavily in the workshops; especially where it occurs close to schools, as well as parking or drop off/pick up arrangements for many pupils. Issues of personal safety and security were also raised in the discussions.

**Table 9.1 Peer to Peer Focus Groups**

Post Primary Schools		Primary Schools		Special Schools	
School	Date	School	Date	School	Date
St Joseph's College	5 Dec 2005	Forge Integrated Primary	12 Oct 2005	Mitchell House Special School	19 Oct 2005
St Brigid's College	11 Oct 2005	Ballymacrickett Primary	13 Oct 2005		
Cambridge House Grammar	14 Oct 2005	Ballinamallard Primary	17 Oct 2005		
Methodist College	18 Oct 2005	Enniskillen Integrated Primary	17 Oct 2005		
Fort Hill Integrated College	12 Oct 2005				
Lagan College	4 Oct 2005				
Dalriada School	14 Oct 2005				

### **Stage three – Focus groups with parents and young people**

For this stage of the research, a number of community and youth groups were identified and contacted. These organisations represented the more disadvantaged sections of Northern Ireland society, including the homeless, disabled, different ethnic groups and care sector with a youth work element. A topic guide was

developed for the focus groups with parents and with different youth groups. The target was to hold 8 focus groups of parents and a further 6 with young people, representative of the Section 75 sections of Northern Ireland population. 20 groups were contacted and sent an overview of the project. It proved particularly difficult and extremely time consuming to secure agreement from these organisations. We managed to arrange meetings with 8 parents groups and 8 youth groups.

These groups were drawn from across the province, representing all sections of society – Chinese children, disabled youth, blind children and parents from both an inner city interface area and from an area with a high proportion of immigrant workers and families. These four groups were selected to ensure a representation of sections of society who are included in S75 Equality Impact Assessments – ethnic minorities, those from deprived areas, the disabled and those with statements of special educational needs.

**Table 9.2 Summary of Focus Groups**

Group	Young People	Parents
Derry Children's Commission	8	-
Broughshane Scouts	5	-
Dromore Cathedral Girls' Brigade	8	3
Rainbow Project – Youth Action	15	2
Blind Association Youth	6	3
Barnardos Disabled Youth	15	3
Twinbrook Celebration Partnership	12	2
Chinese After School Club	6	-
Harberton Special School	-	5
Craigavon	-	8
Antrim Road, Belfast	-	6
Larne	-	-

**Stage four - Electronic survey of key stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sectors.**

An electronic survey form was developed and forwarded to a number of key stakeholders. These included public and private transport operators, Education and Library Boards, Government agencies and statutory bodies. Each organisation participating in this phase of the research received a copy of the survey during October. There were 15 returns with some organisations enclosing statements of policy relating to school transport.

Stakeholders were identified and contacted and questionnaires were distributed electronically. A number of organisations successfully completed and returned the stakeholders questionnaires. A small number of organisations which had been contacted, as they had been identified as organisations with an interest in the travel patterns of young people (Disability Action and The Office of the First and Deputy First Minister), stated that as they were not involved in school transport provision they would not be participating in the survey. One organisation preferred not to fill in the questionnaire but they sent a copy of a briefing paper they produced covering the area of transport to schools. Three organisations expressed their opinion with regard to the questionnaire but they did not want their identity to be revealed. Three politicians responded to the consultation – Wilson Clyde MLA (Democratic Unionist Party, Antrim), Samuel Gardiner (Ulster Unionist, Upper Bann) and Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA (Democratic Unionist Party, Lagan Valley). Other political representatives from all parties were asked to complete a questionnaire, but no returns were received. Some information, however, from political parties has been obtained through press releases and party policy statements or manifestos relating to the issue of school travel, namely from Derek Hussey, Ulster Unionist spokesman on education; Sammy Wilson, Democratic Unionist spokesman on education; Tommy Gallagher, SDLP spokesman on education and John Dallat, SDLP MLA for East Derry.

#### **Stage five – Large scale quantitative survey of children and young people (plus survey of parents).**

This stage of the research was carried out with pupils in class under teacher supervision and guidance and with a number of parents identified through schools, for which the young people took the questionnaire home to be completed before collection by the school. The purpose of the questionnaire was several fold, it allowed information to be gathered on children and young people's views of their current experiences of travelling to and from school; views of what could make their journeys easier, and safer; information on the extent of bullying while travelling to school; information on children and young people's views on public transport in general; and quantitative information on usage of school transport. The pupil survey data is representative of the Northern Ireland school population and reflects the structure of the education sector by school management type. A survey of 21 schools across Northern Ireland was carried out using questionnaires to be completed by pupils in class under teacher supervision. Completions were obtained from primary, preparatory, secondary, grammar and special schools in the State Controlled, Integrated and Catholic maintained sectors. Schools were selected using data obtained from the Department for Education (DE) database to ensure proportional representation from all school levels, management types, locations and age groups. The questionnaires covered all aspects of travel to and from school, namely journeys by car, bus, train, taxi, walking and cycling. Pupils were asked to complete the sections relevant to their own individual trips, why they use the mode they do, why they choose not to use certain modes, their experiences (both positive

and negative) of journeys to school and thoughts and feelings about ways in which the experience may be improved or made safer. A parallel survey of parents was also carried out to obtain information on their perceptions of their childrens' travel to and from school. This questionnaire also asked for completions on all aspects of travel to and from school, namely journeys by car, bus, train, taxi, walking and cycling from a parental point of view and parents were asked to complete the survey for one of their children only

**Table 9.3 Survey returns from School Pupils' Surveys**

	Number of returns	Percent
The Wallace High (Grammar) School	165	12.2%
Dromore High School	155	11.9%
Wellington College, Belfast	40	3.0%
St Anne's Primary School, Dunmurry	86	6.2%
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School, L'derry	35	2.8%
Dalriada Preparatory School, Ballymoney	33	2.4%
Desertmartin Primary School, Magherafelt	42	3.0%
Fullerton House Preparatory School, Belfast	31	2.2%
St Brigids Primary School, Downpatrick	88	6.3%
Down High Preparatory School	39	2.9%
Banbridge Academy	40	3.0%
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen	70	5.0%
Armagh Integrated College	40	3.0%
Brownlow College, Craigavon	43	3.1%
Edmund Rice College, Glengormley	77	5.5%
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	100	7.5%
Edenderry Primary School, Banbridge	63	4.5%
Whiteabbey Primary School	112	8.5%
Beechlawn Special School, Hillsborough	50	3.8%
Glenlola Collegiate Preparatory (Sygnet House)	17	1.5%
Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	18	1.7%
	1394	100%

The schools listed in table 9.3 were drawn from urban and rural areas, Greater Belfast, Counties Antrim, Derry/Londonderry, Tyrone, Down, Fermanagh and Armagh. Table 9.4 below shows the target completions and actual completions of pupils' surveys. Smaller numbers of younger children participated in the questionnaire, with just ten 5 year olds and seventy two 6 year olds. A small number of just three 17 year olds (year 16/6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils) participated mainly due to the nature of A-level commitments and impending examinations when the survey was being implemented.

**Table 9.4 Participation by age group – pupils’ surveys**

Age (years)	School year group	Target completions	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
5	Year 1	75	10	0.76%
6	Year 2	95	72	5.16%
7	Year 3	120	138	9.90%
8	Year 4	120	103	7.39%
9	Year 5	125	136	9.76%
10	Year 6	110	96	6.89%
11	Year 7 (final primary school year)	120	126	9.06%
12	Year 8	125	125	8.97%
13	Year 9	130	172	11.34%
14	Year 10	185	233	16.71%
15	Year 11	150	140	10.06%
16	Year 12 (GCSE stage)	100	48	3.68%
17	Year 13 (A/S level stage)	45	3	0.23%
Total		1500	1394	100%

All school types were represented in the pupils’ questionnaire survey – special education, primary and preparatory schools and secondary/high and grammar schools. The largest proportion of completions (3.54%) came from primary school pupils, with a total of 52.4% of questionnaires completed by post primary pupils (both secondary and grammar).

**Table 9.5 Participation by school type – pupils’ surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Special Schools	50	3.6%
Primary Schools	494	35.4%
Preparatory Schools	120	8.6%
Secondary/high schools	415	29.8%
Grammar schools	315	22.6%
Total	1394	100%

Participation by school management type shows that the state controlled sector accounted for just over half of all pupil completions. The CCMS sector accounted for around one third of the total with just over 17% of completions from schools within the integrated sector (both controlled integrated and grant maintained integrated).

**Table 9.6 Participation by school management type – pupils’ surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	429	30.7%
State Controlled schools	722	51.8%
Integrated schools	243	17.5%

More male pupils completed surveys than female pupils. This, however, is as a result of the targeting of particular school types, management sectors, age groups and school locations.

**Table 9.7 Participation by gender – pupils’ surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Girls	612	43.9%
Boys	782	56.1%
Total	1394	100%

The survey returns secured from parents included representations from two primary and two post primary schools. Both post primary schools are located in urban areas, while one of the primary schools is in a rural setting, just outside Glenavy in County Antrim. These schools also facilitated peer to peer focus groups with pupils for stage two of the research.

**Table 9.8 Survey returns from Parental Surveys**

	Number of returns	Percent
Methodist College, Belfast	71	24.2%
Ballymacrickett Primary School, Glenavy	75	25.6%
Forge Integrated Primary School, Belfast	75	25.6%
Fort Hill Integrated College, Lisburn	72	24.6%
	293	100%

Parental completions were undertaken for pupils ranging in age from 5 (school year 1) to 15 (school year 11). The largest proportion of respondents saw parents with pupils aged 15 (24.9%) while a smaller proportion of responses was drawn from parents with pupils aged 11 (1%) and 5 (0.3%).

**Table 9.9 Participation by age group – parental surveys**

Age (years)	School year group	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
5	Year 1	1	0.3%
6	Year 2	22	7.5%
7	Year 3	33	11.3%
8	Year 4	16	5.5%
9	Year 5	45	15.4%
10	Year 6	30	10.2%
11	Year 7 (final primary school year)	3	1.0%
12	Year 8	21	7.2%
13	Year 9	15	5.1%
14	Year 10	34	11.6%
15	Year 11	73	24.9%
Total		293	100%

Responses by school type saw an almost 50/50 split between primary and post primary schools. For the responses from parents with children in post primary schools, the disaggregation shows an almost 50/50 split between secondary/high schools and grammar schools.

**Table 9.10 Participation by school type – parental surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Primary Schools	150	51.2%
Secondary/high schools	72	24.6%
Grammar schools	71	24.2%
Total	293	100%

For this aspect of the research, however, there was a much higher representation from the integrated school sector. This combines the completions from Forge Integrated Primary School and Fort Hill Integrated College. Those parental completions from Methodist College are indicated by the state controlled sector and those for Ballymacrickett Primary School come from the CCMS sector. Each school was allocated 100 surveys and, the proportion of completions and returns accounts for a high proportion of those allocated to four of the six schools.



**Table 9.11 Participation by school management type – parental surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	75	25.6%
State Controlled schools	71	24.2%
Integrated schools	147	50.2%

Unlike the pupils' surveys, there is a marginally greater female representation here. The male/female split is almost exactly 50/50 as shown in table 9.12 below.

**Table 9.12 Participation by gender – parental surveys**

	Number of completions	Percentage of completions
Girls	152	51.9
Boys	141	48.1
Total	293	100%

The information contained in tables 9.3 to 9.12 highlights the representation of the survey samples for both the pupil and parental surveys. The objectives that informed the methodology of the research programme were identified to:

1. Work with children and young people to enable them to carry out research into safe journeys to school and views on public transport;
2. Collate information on children and young people's views of their current experiences of travelling to and from school;
3. Collate information on children and young people's views of what could make their journeys easier, and safer;
4. Collate information on the extent of bullying while travelling to school;
5. Collate information on parent's/carer's views on safe journeys to school;
6. Collate information on children and young people's views on public transport in general;
7. Collate information from key agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors;
8. Carry out a literature and research review;
9. Identify and comment on policy and procedural issues within Government Departments and Education and Library Boards on the assessment of need and allocation of resources to enable children and young people to travel safely to school;
10. Provide quantitative information on usage of school transport and allocation of funding;
11. Identify existing and future known barriers to safe journeys to school;

12. Identify known future changes in supply and or demand likely to impact on this issue;
13. Provide a comparison of the Northern Ireland situation in relation to the provision of these services within the remainder of the UK.