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SAFER JOURNEYS TO SCHOOL >>>

Regional Development
ROADS Service
NICCY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner (NICCY), Department for Regional Development (DRD) and the General Consumer Council (GCCNI) commissioned this research into children and young people's views into what are the key issues affecting their journeys to school and how could their journeys be improved. The impetus for this research came from children and young people who expressed concerns to NICCY about no seatbelts, the three for two rule, overcrowding and bullying on buses. For those who do not travel by bus, concerns were raised about the absence of footpaths and cycle paths and congestion at school buildings. This research also comes at a time when there have been widespread discussions about the cost of school transport provision. It is widely recognised that falling pupil numbers, the existence of selection and separation of pupils by religious denominations combined with the increasing cost of bus operations for home to school transport has meant a close scrutiny of school transport. Travel to school in Northern Ireland is provided by a variety of means. Free home to school transport is provided to a third of school children by Education and Library Boards (ELBs) through free travel on public transport, ELB bus, hire of other buses and taxis and the payment of cycle or car allowances.

This report has presented information from a large number of pupils and parents on their experiences and perceptions of the ways in which they travel to and from school. Concerns have been highlighted regarding safety on school buses, congestion, parking and traffic, road safety and personal safety and security while walking and travelling by public transport. The key concerns expressed by young people and parents through the school workshops, focus groups and questionnaire surveys are;

- Road safety – traffic levels and speeds, crossing roads and using footpaths safely
- Congestion
- Behaviour of other young people
- Fear of strangers
- Safety in some areas
- Journey times and distances to be travelled
- Perceived safety on public transport – supervision, overcrowding, standing and seating arrangements, behaviour and the age of vehicles

There are many reasons why particular modes are chosen for journeys to and/or from school. The reasons stated are all legitimate ones but some emanate from perceptions about other modes of transport and concerns about safety and security which form many of these perceptions. There can be no doubt that there are serious issues and concerns surrounding the provision of school transport. Many of these concerns have been expressed by the stakeholders who responded to the research as well. Operators, politicians and interested parties alike consider the following issues as cause for concern;

- overcrowding and behaviour on school buses
- seating arrangements and provision on buses
- standing on buses
- provision and enforcement of seatbelt wearing
- the 3 for 2 rule and capacity issues
- bullying

SCHOOL TRANSPORT STEERING GROUP

The steering group and supporting organisations with input for the school transport research consists of;

- Alison Loughlin, Parents Advice Centre
- Andy Bready, Department for Regional Development Roads Service
- Christina McKeever, NICCY Youth Panel
- Conor Fitzpatrick, NICCY Youth Panel
- Eamonn Brown, Sustrans
- Eddie Lynch, General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
- Ken Smyth, NICCY Participation Manager
- Mary Anne Webb, NICCY Policy Officer
- Susan Dolan, Department for the Environment Northern Ireland
- Teresa Devlin, NICCY Head of Research, Policy and Service Review
- Professor Julian Hine, University of Ulster
- Dr Scott Mackey, University of Ulster
- Dr Banihan Gunay, University of Ulster

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- Ellie Lavan
- Daniel McGlade
- Niall Bole
- Victoria Keas
- Swapnil Patra
- Ciara Rehill
- Deborah Curley

We would also like to thank the following schools, youth groups and parent groups for participating in the research:

Workshops:

- St Joseph's College, 518 Ravenhill Road, Belfast, BT6 0BY
- St Brigid's College, Glengallaigh Road, L/derry, BT48 8DU
- Cambridge House Grammar School, Cambridge Avenue, Ballymena, BT42 2EL
- Methodist College, 1 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6BY
- Dalriada School, St James Road, Ballymoney, BT53 6EL
- Fort Hill Integrated College, Belfast Road, Lisburn, BT27 4TL
- Lagan College, 44 Manse Road, Lisnabreeny, Castlereagh, BT8 4SA
- Mitchell House Special School, Marmont, Holywood Road, Belfast, BT4 2GT
- Ballymacrickett Primary School, Scroggy Road, Glenavy, Crumlin, BT29 4NE
- Ballinamallard Primary School, Baragh Road, Ballinamallard, BT94 2AJ
- Forge Integrated Primary School, Carolan Road, Belfast, BT7 3HE
- Enniskillen Integrated Primary School, Drumcoo, Enniskillen, BT74 4FW

Pupil/parent questionnaires

- St Anne's Primary School, Kingsway Finaghy, Belfast BT10 0LF
- St Brigid's Primary School, Rathkeltair Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6NL
- Whiteabbey Primary School, Old Manse Road, Whiteabbey, BT37 0RU
- Edenderry Primary School, Lurgan Road, Banbridge, BT32 4AF
- Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, Castle Park, Bangor, BT20 4ST
- Oakgrove Integrated PS, Rectory Field, Limavady Rd, L/derry, BT47 1JY
- Desertmartin Primary School, 20 Dromore Road, Magherafelt, BT45 5JZ
- Glenlola Collegiate Prep (Signet House) Castle Park Rd, Bangor, BT20 4TH
- Down High School Prep Dept, Mount Crescent, Downpatrick, BT30 6EU
- Fullerton House Prep School, Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6BY
- Dalriada Prep School, St James Road, Ballymoney, BT53 6BL
- Wellington College, Carolan Road, Belfast, BT7 3EF
- Banbridge Academy, Lurgan Road, Banbridge, BT32 4AQ
- The Wallace High School, Clonevin Park, Lisburn, BT28 3AD
- Portora Royal School, Derrygonnelly Road, Enniskillen, BT74 7HA
- Edmund Rice College, Hightown Road, Glengormley, BT36 7AU
- Holy Trinity College, Chapel Street, Cookstown, BT80 8QB

- Dromore High School, Banbridge Road, Dromore, BT25 1ND
- Brownlow College, Tullygally Road, Lurgan, Craigavon, BT65 5BS
- Armagh Integrated College, Abbey Street Complex, Armagh, BT61 8BB
- Meanscoil Feirste, Teach Ard na bhFea, Bothar na bhFal, Belfast, BT12 6FD
- Beechlawn Special School, Dromore Road, Hillsborough, BT26 6PA

Youth Organisations who participated in workshops:

- Derry Childrens Commission, Bishop Street, L/derry, BT48 6PP
- Broughshane Scouts
- Youth Action (Rainbow Factory), College Court, Belfast
- Dromore Cathedral Girl's Brigade, c/o 30 Church St, Dromore
- Collin Community, Dairy Farm, Stewartstown Rd, Twinbrook
- Chinese After School Club, Morton Centre, Lorne St, Belfast
- Blind Association Youth, North Road, Belfast
- Barnardos Disabled Youth Project, Dobbin Street, Armagh

Parents Groups who participated in workshops/discussions:

- Youth Action (Rainbow Factory), College Court, Belfast
- Dromore Cathedral Girl's Brigade, c/o 30 Church St, Dromore
- Collin Community, Dairy Farm, Stewartstown Rd, Twinbrook
- Harberton Special School, Harberton Park, Belfast
- Parents Group, Bocombra Lodge, Old Lurgan Road, Portadown
- Parents Group, Holy Family PS, Newington Avenue, Belfast
- Blind Association Youth, North Road, Belfast
- Barnardos Disabled Youth Project, Dobbin Street, Armagh

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