Children and Travel
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Preface

Habits and attitudes we develop at a young age can often have a profound effect on our behaviour in later life. In the transport arena, our childhood experiences of travel and of various transport modes can shape adult lifestyle choices. Recent statistics have shown striking changes in child travel patterns in the UK over the past couple of decades, with children travelling less, making fewer journeys by walking, and travelling less independently. What might this mean for transport policy as a whole, and is there a case for trying to reverse some of these trends?

In this context the ITC is pleased to publish this timely paper from social research expert Kris Beuret OBE, which offers a wide-ranging viewpoint on transport policy and children. The paper not only highlights recent changes in children’s travel, but also explores some of the factors behind those trends, including perceptions of road safety, the issues associated with reduced childhood mobility, and how receptive public transport operators are to children’s transport needs. By uncovering these issues, and providing examples of good practice, the paper makes the case for encouraging greater independent travel by children, and offers suggestions for making public transport more child-friendly. We commend this paper to all policy makers and transport providers, especially those interested in improving childhood mobility and in enhancing the provision of public transport. The ITC will be continuing to contribute to this debate through our wider research programme exploring the changing nature of road and rail travel behaviour in Britain.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................. 2
  Why is the ITC publishing this Occasional Paper? ...................... 2
  Children are travelling less independently ................................ 2
  Variations: Location, socio-economic background and sex .......... 3
  Why are children travelling less? ............................................. 3
  Concerns about safety and security ....................................... 3
  Confusion about fares ......................................................... 4
  Children are not consulted .................................................. 5
  Summary and Objectives ..................................................... 5

Chapter 2: The effects of reduced independent childhood mobility ....... 6
  It’s not just about ‘Stranger Danger’ ..................................... 6
  The impact of reduced childhood independent mobility on health .. 6
  The social role of independent mobility ................................ 7
  What can be done? ................................................................. 8
  Some examples of good practice ........................................... 9
  Conclusion ........................................................................... 10

Chapter 3: Public Transport ......................................................... 11
  Child fare structures are difficult to understand ...................... 11
  Children and Train Travel fares .......................................... 12
  Entitlement to school transport ........................................... 13
  Reasons for the variation and complexity of child fares .......... 14
  Another deterrent is customer care and staff attitudes towards children .... 14
  The opportunities ............................................................... 15

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Summary .......................................... 16
  The perspective of providers .............................................. 16
  The perspective of parents ................................................ 17
  The perspective of children ............................................... 17
  The perspective of policy makers ....................................... 17
  Recommendations ............................................................. 18
  Key reading ........................................................................ 19
  Endnotes ............................................................................ 20
Chapter 1: Introduction

Why is the ITC publishing this Occasional Paper?
Everyone knows that childhood experiences are crucial in influencing our future lives. In this light, major initiatives have been set up such as Sure Start for children under 5 years or the Youth Sports Trust targeted to older children. Yet there is far less understanding of how and where children travel and the impact of this on both childhood and later adult attitudes and lifestyles in spite of the strong strand in educational psychology which advocates the importance of movement and travel on neurological and cognitive development.¹

This Occasional Paper will set out some outline facts about child travel trends and also explore this knowledge gap. Our aim is to raise awareness and encourage further discussion and research.

Children are travelling less independently
Children’s per capita distance travelled is virtually the same today as in the mid-1990s, but the balance has changed with more of the travel being made by car, particularly for education purposes. This is in part due to longer journeys which are inevitably more likely to be made by car alongside fewer overall trips, especially by walking².

This decline in children’s independent travel also applies to trips by all modes. For example, the National Travel Survey (NTS) shows that a growing percentage of trips by under 16s are accompanied by an adult (62% in 2010 compared to 41% in 1971).

Similarly, a longitudinal study showed a marked decline in children travelling to school unaccompanied in 1971 compared to 2010³.

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¹ Throughout this Paper we refer to 'children' rather than the more usual 'children and young people' partly to save space, partly because there is no agreement on the distinction, but also to emphasise the status of those under 16 (or even in UK elections under 18 years of age) as lacking power in the decision making process.
Variations: Location, socio-economic background and sex

Beyond the general picture, just as with all age groups, child travel trends vary depending on circumstances. In fact, many of these trends mirror differences in adult travel. For example, household car ownership is crucial – especially in rural areas – in offering wider destination and activity choices. In contrast, children in London are travelling much more by bus and national rail whereas elsewhere the use of bus (but not rail) has declined. Another more positive example is that children from low-income households in urban areas seem to play outside more and get more physical exercise. But perhaps the major demographic difference is by sex, with boys spending more time outdoors and allowed more independence at earlier ages than girls. Clearly this impacts on health, but more importantly is likely to be a factor in the steep decline in female participation in sport in later life, which is now being addressed by initiatives such as “This Girl Can”.

Why are children travelling less?

Speculation and some research indicated that the decline in trips overall and also by walking or cycling is in part due to spending more time indoors with electronic and media based activities. Today’s teenagers spend around 6.5 hours a day in front of a screen on games, social media or watching video clips, compared to about 3 hours in 1995.

In 2014, 75% of children aged 5-16 owned their own computer and 95% of children aged 5-16 had a PC at home. In addition, 33% of children aged 5-10 and 94% of children aged 11-16 owned a mobile phone with 66% of those aged 7-16 owning a smart phone. These trends have been related to further evidence of a decline in children's physical activity and an associated increase in child obesity (in 2012, 14% of children aged 2-15 were obese). Associated with this is the increase in time spent alone indoors compared to a decline in time spent outdoors with other children.

Another influencing factor in why children are travelling less is the distance which children travel to school, which varies by geographical area. For example, primary schools in London have increasingly local catchment areas whilst in rural areas schools have been forced to close requiring longer journeys to larger schools. Overall the average distance to school increased by 31% since 1995/97.

Concerns about safety and security

Clearly another factor influencing children's travel is concern about road safety in spite of significant improvements to child casualty rates. In 2014, 2,299 children (0-15 years) were killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents compared to 4,073 in 2004.

Taking the largest group of children killed and seriously injured (KSIs), namely as pedestrians, the UK has a middling record compared to other West European countries. However, the UK is bottom of the league for child KSIs as a percentage of all KSIs.
Many children would prefer to go to school independently and quote parental concerns as the obstacle. One study\(^1\) found that half of children would prefer to go to school in a different way – mainly independently – but were not allowed to. Yet adults, including parents and professionals, are themselves unsure of what is the right approach to child travel, so the result is that much of what happens is by default.

Such concerns are also reflected by the recent example of the 7-year old girl in Lincolnshire whose parents were cautioned by the local authority for letting their daughter travel alone to the bus stop\(^b\).

**Confusion about fares**

Another problem is that there is massive confusion about the cost of child travel as indicated by these extracts from recent research\(^12\).

Such uncertainties and differences in child fare structures often result in the decision to travel by car, including a tendency to therefore need a second household car.

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\(^{b} \text{http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8001444/Girl-cannot-walk-to-bus-stop-alone.html}\)
Children are not consulted
Finally, it is clear that children are rarely consulted on transport issues. A check of consultation programmes for 20 different local authority transport plans showed no specific input from children, although in some cases there was evidence of discussions with parents or information pamphlets targeting children. Perhaps this lack of direct involvement with children is part of the explanation as to why their transport needs and priorities are not considered in a comprehensive manner.

Summary and Objectives
This paper will explore these issues in more detail and conclude with suggestions of what can be done to improve the situation. The ITC’s view is that encouraging travel, including children’s travel, is desirable and an essential element of what makes us successful human beings. Our view is that it is an important factor in the context of healthy child development and also on later attitudes and lifestyles. We need to think about this issue, especially if we want to children to grow up to travel more sustainably not just in relation to modal choice but also to improve health and wider cohesion in the public realm.
Chapter 2: The effects of reduced independent childhood mobility

Summary

- Perceptions of risk (as distinct from actual risk) are higher so children are less likely to travel independently than in the past and are also spending more time indoors, etc.
- This leads to an increase in obesity and lack of social and cognitive skills, especially mathematical.
- Is the outside environment becoming more dangerous for children? Changes over years – e.g. park keepers no longer employed but there is more CCTV surveillance and generally better design for security in the public realm.
- ‘Stranger Danger’ the wrong emphasis – most child abuse is by relatives or known adults.

Children’s experience of space and travel is essential for an understanding of the complexity of our technological world. This view, stemming from the work of Piaget (The Origins of Intelligence in Children, 1952), has become fundamental to our understanding of child development and educational achievement, especially in relation to mathematical ability but also to the development of social connectivity. Yet children are spending less time outdoors engaging in physical activity and informal play, which is a key element of acquiring essential human skills.

It’s not just about ‘Stranger Danger’

After road safety, fears about children’s security and personal safety is the second highest concern expressed by parents. A study of children’s travel in England and Germany found that there has been an increase in accompanying children on non-school journeys in both countries. Not surprisingly, far fewer children were allowed to go out at night unaccompanied, particularly when compared to the 1970s, with many parents justifying this by saying there was ‘no need’.

However, explanations for whether children are allowed to travel independently are complex and vary by location, socio-economic group, ethnicity and parental and children’s capabilities as well as attitudes. What can be said is that the decline in independent mobility and the rise in car dependency by children are of concern both in terms of cognitive development and physical health.

The impact of reduced childhood independent mobility on health

Statistics show that obesity rates in children began to rise in the UK in the mid 1980s, but there has been a rapid escalation in the period 1995-2005. Today, children expend about 600 calories per day less in physical activity than 50 years ago and evidence confirms that the more sedentary lifestyle is well established even in pre-school children. Watching television and playing computer games contribute to this. The number of children aged 10-15 who spend more than three hours a day on social media has risen from 6% in 2010 to 9.2% in 2014, and children who spend this amount of time on social media are twice as likely to experience mental illness.
Current statistics for the UK suggest the prevalence of obesity in children is at least four times higher today than it was 30 years ago but has recently levelled out (Table 1). Nevertheless, there are moves to reduce sugar in children’s diets, although some experts suggest that the real problem is lack of physical exercise to burn excess calories. They point to the current obesity epidemic that appears to be taking place against a background of declining calorie intake in children, especially younger children. Similarly, junk food advertising seems to have limited impact.  

The social role of independent mobility  
The role of play and interaction with other children is a key factor in cognitive development. If such activities take place in a supervised environment there are fewer opportunities for children to develop the social skills they need for independence, self-confidence, creativity, use of imagination and the general ability to cope in an increasingly complex society. This is underlined by Play England in their Charter for Children's Play, which defines play as “what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons rather than being told what to do by adults.”

Jenny Brown, Head of St Albans High School for Girls speaking of the ‘health and safety’ haven in which the current generation of University students have grown up and which has led to the current backlash against free speech.
Other studies have gone further and argued that encouraging independent mobility addresses social exclusion and that exclusion from participation is linked to immobility, disempowerment or dependency on adults for transport\textsuperscript{18}. In the same way, children in rural areas can experience isolation and exclusion.

Conversely others have highlighted the inverse relationship between children’s independence and household car ownership. Sustrans argues that “families who have access to cars show increasing use of them to take children to organised leisure activities, perhaps in part because these are often further away from the home; however, this move towards structured activities located at a distance requiring car use is denying children the opportunity to play with their friends in their local environment.” \textsuperscript{19}

**What can be done?**

It is clear that reducing the incidence of crime and anti-social actions against children is a key factor in encouraging independent travel. Solutions are varied depending on particular circumstances, but usually require partnerships. Many Community Safety Partnerships have addressed this need, although too many have over-emphasised road safety to the neglect of personal security issues. Also, the emphasis has largely been on the immediate neighbourhood rather than the wider area, which would be needed to encourage cycling or the use of public transport. In addition, many of the initiatives that do exist focus on school journeys rather than wider travel\textsuperscript{20}. This is understandable in that it is easier to work with children when they are clustered in schools, but this neglects the wider need. Another problem is that there is generally very poor knowledge of where children would like to go – or indeed where they do go – outside the journey to school\textsuperscript{21}. 

![Safety initiatives can help to encourage children walking](image-url)
In addition, there is a limit to what education can achieve when the problem is a wider one of inappropriate design of the public domain especially in relation to housing, open space and car dominated development. A recent plan to reverse such problems is the NHS “Healthy Towns” town planning initiative whereby the NHS will guide the development of ten towns and villages to include Adventure Playgrounds as a standard feature of street designs.

Another issue is a genuine risk of bad things happening ranging from bullying, through to theft of trainers or mobile phones or even sexual assaults. It is undoubtedly the case that there is still good reason to worry about children, especially in some neighbourhoods where gangs are a feature.

Of course, these safety concerns are nothing new and some older people interviewed for this report described situations from their past that today would be quite alarming incidents.

“We all know about the flashers in the local park – we just laughed and ran off.”

“We had a thing in the children’s recreation ground called a Jazz that was frankly lethal – in fact the whole playground would fail any health and safety test today.”

Suggestions to ease these safety concerns included

- Pocket parks
- Facilities in parks (libraries/cafes) neighbourhood planting groups
- Design standards for security
- Child security training
- Help points – shops, businesses, etc.
- Get me home taxi cards

Some examples of good practice

In 2014, the Travelsafe Partnership launched a Youth Education Programme to help promote safer travel on the public transport network across Greater Manchester. Under this programme, uniformed officers from the Travelsafe Partnership visit local schools and youth groups talk to young people about the dangers, impacts and consequences of crime, antisocial behaviour and fare evasion.

Oldham City Council worked with local communities to refurbish local parks that were not being used by children due to concern about drugs, uncontrolled dogs and lack of play activities. Actions included signing up local people as community wardens and better maintenance. Evaluation of the site before and after showed increased use by children, especially from minority ethnic families and reduced road accidents.

http://www.gmtravelsafe.co.uk/
The potential of technology

As part of the research for this paper, two discussion groups were held with parents of children aged 8-15 about what would persuade them to allow their children to play outside or travel independently. The parents' priority was to increase police and other staff especially in parks, but they were also realistic about how many such posts could be made available. A strongly favoured alternative was the use of CCTV or tracking children using smart phones. Indeed, there was majority support for actually 'chipping' children with heated discussion as to whether such a measure would enhance or reduce children's independent travel.

“I've had a chip put in our dog so why not the children – then I would let them go out more on their own.”

“When I was young all parks had a 'parky' – they could be terrifying but they did keep order in the playground.”

Conclusion

There is no doubt that there has been a reduction in children's independent mobility and that there is widespread support for reversing the situation.

However, achieving this is wrought with challenges including uncertainty about acceptable risks and a lack of associated advice. In particular there is fear of being identified as irresponsible parents by the media, with many parents citing the risk of involvement with social services. On the same basis, professionals such as road safety experts are notoriously reluctant to identify a particular age at which children can travel independently in spite of parents frequently asking for guidance on this issue.
Chapter 3: Public Transport

Summary
- Child fare structures and costs are varied: this leads to confusion and for some parents to give up on using public transport.
- Entitlement to school transport varies and is frequently contested.
- There is a lack of marketing to children.
- Little is being done to address front line staff and driver attitudes towards children.
- Training for children to use public transport is rare.
- But there are some good examples stemming from targeted marketing and new products.

As shown previously, travelling by car is the most common mode for children’s travel. Transferring some of these car trips to public transport is a key element of UK transport policy, but there are considerable obstacles in achieving this including the complexity of current child fare structures, rules about entitlement to free or concessionary travel and attitudes by transport staff (at all levels) to children.

Child fare structures are difficult to understand
The structure of child fares, especially on buses, is varied. A few examples, some from the same company are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Bus day travel ticket prices for children

As shown previously, travelling by car is the most common mode for children’s travel. Transferring some of these car trips to public transport is a key element of UK transport policy, but there are considerable obstacles in achieving this including the complexity of current child fare structures, rules about entitlement to free or concessionary travel and attitudes by transport staff (at all levels) to children.

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Table 2: Bus day travel ticket prices for children
Children and Train Travel fares

Generally across the UK train system, children aged 0-4 travel free, and those aged 5-15 pay half the adult price across the majority of ticket options. In addition, some train companies, such as Merseyrail, have recently extended the standard age limit for half fares from 15 to include all up to 18 years. The Young Persons Railcard (for an initial fee) offers a third off adult fares for 16-25 year olds and full-time students.

A Family and Friends Railcard is also available for people travelling with children aged 5-15 (allows up to four adults and four children to travel on one card) with 1/3 off adult fares and 60% off for children on most rail fares.

A major part of train travel these days is the option of buying Advanced Tickets at a reduced price. However, these can be difficult to work out when travelling in a group especially when breaking the journey into separate single ticket stages can sometimes save more money. The purchase of a family railcard can also complicate travel decisions where the child travels with a grandparent or other relative rather than parents. Even the process of having to name the two travellers on the card in these days of divorce and step-families can lead to complications.

Examples of complexity

- Scot Rail offer - two kids go free off peak but note: Kids Go Free tickets are no longer valid on ANY Cross Country services or on East Coast services on Sundays between Edinburgh and Dundee after 15:45, but allowed for longer East Coast journeys from Edinburgh to Montrose and beyond.

- A typical example is a journey from Liverpool to Southport rail trip off peak return (2 adults and 3 children). Booking for off peak travel times on the National Rail journey planner: the journey cost £22.65 (anytime ticket – cheapest ticket offered). With the addition of the Family and Friends Railcard the cost reduced to £12.25. On further investigation within National Rail journey planner in the Promotions and Railcards links show that a family area ticket would cost £10 for the above trip (tickets have to be purchased at the station no railcards required).

- On planning the same off peak trip above with the Merseyside Travel journey planner, the cheapest ticket cost £17.50 (Day saver). The Family area ticket (£10) is not offered as an option, and furthermore the Family and Friends Railcard is not valid for this ticket type.

- In regards to international travel, within the majority of countries the age of a child is 4-11 (tickets are ½ adult price). Exceptions to the rule include the Netherlands (a €2.50 Railrunner ticket rather than ½ adult price) covering all of the Netherlands for the whole day. There are a few other countries within the European Union, which classify the child age as 6-15, with exceptions again. For example, in Denmark two children up to 11 years of age travel free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult.
Another area of great debate and complexity relates to the rules about school transport entitlement. The national rules on entitlement are clear.

Entitlement to school transport

The UK Government guidance on entitlement to school transport states that all children between 5 and 16 qualify for free school transport if they go to their nearest suitable school and live at least 2 miles from the school if they're under 8 or 3 miles from the school if they’re 8 or older. Additionally, if there is no safe walking route, they must be given free transport, however far from school they live. For transport arrangements to be suitable, they must be reasonably safe and stress free, to enable the child to arrive at school in a state that is conducive to study.

The entitlements are slightly different for children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities, who receive free transport regardless of how far they live from school, provided they have a statement of SEN that says the local council will pay transport costs, or if they cannot walk because of their SEN, a disability or mobility problem.

There are additional guidelines for children from families on low incomes, that states they are entitled to free school transport if they are between ages 8 and 11 and the school is at least 2 miles away, or for ages 11 to 16 if their school is 2-6 miles away (up to 15 miles if it is their nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief).

However, there is flexibility within these guidelines and the reality is that local authorities across the UK have policies that vary depending on settlement size, school age group, spare seat availability and income. In addition, the growing number of Academies have their own policies so it is not surprising that parents and children are confused.

“First he got free school travel for a year and then when we came off income support in the December we had to pay but his brother on the same bus carried on with a free pass. We ended up buying a car – at least we know where we are with that.”

One of the problems arising from rules about entitlement to school travel is the need to attend the nearest school. A study of GCSE, A-Level choices in Leicestershire showed that subject options (and ultimately career choices) were curtailed due to the restrictions of travel entitlement for some children, especially from lower income families. Another issue is the effect on the ability to take part in extra-curricular activities when there is only one school bus scheduled for the end of the formal school day. Disabled children who rely on local authorities or the NHS for transport that is generally provided to set schedules are particularly disadvantaged. The recent Government funding of the Total Transport project to encourage better services and coordination of social transport is to be welcomed in this context.
Reasons for the variation and complexity of child fares
When asked about the variation and complexity of child travel fares, discussions with senior public transport operators produced the following explanatory list.

- An awful lot of this goes back many years – simply historic tradition which has not been reassessed.
- Differing ownerships – local authority owned companies tended to be more generous in their age thresholds.
- School leaving age – some companies are not moving up the child fare level as school age increased.
- Local policies on local authority funding for school passes – the funding that some authorities provided to keep children's fares low and often increased the eligibility age. In contrast, on a commercial footing, a huge number of bus companies have improved the offer over recent years and in many cases have stepped in to replace the funding withdrawn from a local authority subsidised scheme.
- In this deregulated bus structure outside London, there is clearly no guiding mind.

Another deterrent is customer care and staff attitudes towards children
Research for this paper and earlier work for the Department for Transport (DfT) show a gap in customer care training for staff, and for child travellers in particular. This applied particularly to senior managers, and even those (usually front line staff) often received ambiguous messages such as “don't get into arguments about fares” but in contrast “don't let people on without paying”.
There was also a lot of misunderstanding about the revenue contribution of some children who were perceived by drivers as travelling ‘free’ on school bus passes and (like older people) were perceived as a drain on company profits.

Even with senior staff, children and their travel needs were largely absent from company marketing and planning and much of what did exist was of poor quality and conception. Few managers emphasised the link between childhood experiences of public transport and future attitudes to modal choice.

Discussions with child bus travellers produced further evidence of conflict and poor perceptions.

“The driver ignored it when the big lads started fighting.”

“He said I was a lazy bugger not to walk.”

“She said it couldn’t be my bus pass because I looked too old.”

“I shouldn’t be ordered to give up my seat. Old people don’t pay like I have to.”

“I lost my money and I wasn’t allowed on. My Dad had to come and get me.”
The opportunities
At the same time, not every experience is negative and many children describe how they enjoy independent travel by bus or train. Indeed for some, interacting with friends on journeys such as to and from school is a good part of their day, and this was reiterated by older people when looking back on their own experiences of independent childhood travel.

There is also good news from the introduction of targeted marketing especially based on flat, simple and consistent new tickets – such as when Nexus introduced a Child all-day ticket resulting in a 15% increase in journeys by under-16s, or when Merseytravel's £2 all-day ticket for under 16s sold a million in the first year. Similarly, market research carried out by First Group in South Yorkshire is being used to improve knowledge by parents and children in relation to opportunities for independent travel outside school hours.

Suggestions
• Transport companies need to understand more about the attitudes and needs of child passengers.
• Target marketing to children and their parents especially at ‘tipping points’ such as moves from Junior to Secondary School and Further Education.
• Plan strategically and evaluate pilots – no point in increasing ridership where there is no capacity.
• New child friendly apps.
Chapter 4: Conclusion and Summary

- Independent travel is falling and often actively discouraged.
- Children seem to be largely ‘invisible’ as passengers in their own right.
- Messages and marketing are generally addressed to parents and there is a lack of knowledge about child views and priorities.
- There is a need for more training and marketing for both staff and child passengers.
- There are issues about conduct on public transport such as the question of priority for seating/buggies and tackling rowdy behaviour and encouraging good manners.
- Is there a case for rethinking hours for schools? – physiological evidence and advantages to traffic and transport capacity.
- There is a need for better data on child travel and evidence-based road safety programmes with integral evaluation.
- There are design challenges to meet child needs such as new trains, toilets, heights, family carriages.
- There is also a broader debate about the public realm including housing and neighbourhood design which prioritises children’s play and safety needs.

The overall message from this paper is that children are neglected in transport policy and provision. Another key finding is that there is an absence of holistic approaches to children’s transport needs and a consequential lack of evidence or awareness of how this impacts on their subsequent attitudes to travel as adults.

The perspective of providers

It is clear that there are many initiatives relevant to child travel especially in relation to road safety, urban and vehicle design, and more recently health. There are also extensive policies in local authority transport plans to encourage walking, especially to school.

Bus and train operators are more variable in the extent to which they target child travel with many relying on relatively out-dated marketing tools and publicity.

When projects are designed to encourage child travel, they are frequently not evaluated or fed into broader strategies.

Throughout the transport system there is little evidence of using technology or dynamic pricing data to target and provide for child travellers. The relative lack of Apps designed for children to understand travel options is in contrast to interest in making technology more user-friendly for older people.
The perspective of parents
Parents need better advice about child travel from professionals. There is a lack of confidence in knowledge about whether and when children should be allowed or encouraged to travel independently. As a result many parents adopt a very restrictive approach, in part due to a perceived view that they could be otherwise criticised by others including statutory authorities. Interestingly, many airlines have well developed policy for caring for unaccompanied children and perhaps train companies could learn from this.

The perspective of children
All the research shows that children would like more freedom to travel independently, whether that means playing in the immediate neighbourhood or further afield. When given the choice of playing outdoors compared to indoor pursuits, most children choose to play outside.

Similarly there are strong indications that today's children have different attitudes to transport choices especially in relation to less affinity with car travel compared to previous generations, and that this is an opportunity to influence future travel intentions to more sustainable patterns of travel.

The perspective of policy makers
There is a need to raise awareness of child travel needs, especially on a joined-up policy basis. The Children’s Commission is a welcome cross-governmental initiative but they have yet to highlight transport as an issue. Similarly, the Transport Select Committee has yet to carry out a holistic investigation. Examples of issues to consider could be the representation of child transport interests in the regular Passenger Transport surveys or the particular needs of disabled children. Another debate concerns the pros and cons of British Summer Time – almost twice as many children are killed or seriously injured in July as in December largely because they spend more time outside in summer, once again challenging the emphasis on the journey to school for road safety intervention.
Recommendations

Collect better data about children’s travel
There is a need for better data on children’s independent travel beyond the journey to school or trips with parents, which are relatively well recorded. There is a growing body of data and analysis of child casualties that is to be welcomed and enables better targeting of preventative programmes; but the assessment of risk is still difficult due to a lack of knowledge of where and how far children travel especially when making independent journeys.

Improvements in analysis are also needed in order to serve child casualty reduction projects. In the past, the majority of studies linking family factors and accident risk have investigated the individual at the household level with few studies exploring at the area level. But this is changing and new approaches have been developed using a national analysis of child risk disparity between highway authorities that utilises the Mosaic socio-demographic segmentation. Another initiative is that of data built into the PACTS Parliamentary Dashboard which indexes risk to children by Parliamentary Constituency.

Joined up organisational approaches
There have always been different views between the relative priority of road safety education and engineering. Although most people would advocate the need for both, it is still common for them to be in different departments in local authority structures with a consequent lack of joined-up approaches that are so essential to make best use of these new data techniques. In contrast, there are approaches such as Sweden’s Vision Zero or the concept of ‘safe systems’ whereby political commitment, public support and interagency commitment are combined to eradicate deaths and serious injuries.

Another debate relates to urban design and the impact of shared use streets. People with disabilities have opposed these developments, but the needs of children have received less publicity. Yet the evidence is that children up to age nine do not have the cognitive skills to recognise dangerous situations, including judging speed. Concern about children’s safety is a key influence on their travel and there are hard choices to be made. A move to area-wide 20mph is likely to result in an increase in slight injuries but a decrease in killed and seriously injured (KSIs) casualties. With higher area speeds the situation is reversed with fewer slight casualties but more KSIs.

To some extent these difficulties have been recognised by new guidance issued by the CIHT establishing three types of shared space in the light of criticism of designs based on unstructured streets, which some have argued needs to supersede the DfT Local Transport Note 1/11 released in 2011.
Revisit transport policies, infrastructure and services from the perspective of children
There is a noticeable lack of direct consultation with children throughout the transport world. Far too much policy is developed based on the views of parents and teachers, yet when children are engaged, different perspectives often emerge, which would lead to better decision making especially in terms of priorities and trade-offs. A good example is the difference between where parents think their children go when outside by themselves and where they actually go.

Other examples of a lack of concern for children’s travel needs relate to the design of vehicles and infrastructure (bells too high to reach, seat belts too complex to use, information systems too complex to understand and public realm arrangements geared to adult capabilities).

Provide more travel training for children as bus and train users including behavioural issues
Most travel training is linked to schools and the journey to school. There is a need to take a wider perspective in order to address key tipping points in children’s lives and provide better advice on when children can safely travel independently. Such training should also incorporate ways of safeguarding personal security including coping with bullying and other potential threats. There are some good examples of child based ‘travel friends’ or Ambassador programmes such as that run by DLR which provides child-centred training including ideas about places beyond the neighbourhood to travel to.

Evaluate projects designed to influence children’s travel or improve child safety
Finally it is important to be realistic about child travel. As well as successful schemes, there are many examples of initiatives that failed, including child tickets, projects designed to increase cycling or unused playgrounds. To add to cumulative experience it is important to build in evaluation which is an element often missing from many of the schemes – both successful and unsuccessful that we have heard about whilst writing this paper.

Key reading

Shaw, B et al with Mayer Hillman, Children’s Independent Mobility: A comparative study in England and Germany 1971-2010, PSI 2013

Endnotes

2 The ITC will be publishing an update of the earlier ‘On the Move’ study later this year which will include detailed information about travel changes including children’s travel and I am indebted to Peter Headicar for advance information used here.


4 ‘The contribution of active play to the physical activity of primary school children’, Rowan Brockman, Russell Jago, Kenneth R. Fox *Preventative Medicine* 51 (2010) p 144-147. Department of Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences, University of Bristol, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol, BS8 1TP, UK

5 ‘This Girl Can’ is a national campaign developed by Sport England and a wide range of partnership organisations [http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/](http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/).

6 Hannaford, C (2005) “Smart Moves: why learning is not all in your head” 2nd edition, Great River Books which is in the tradition of the philosophy of education such as the Woodland School Movement and Rudolf Steiner to name but a few.


8 Health Survey for England - 2012


13 The ITC project “Why Travel?” raises this need on a broader basis (see [www.whytravel.org](http://www.whytravel.org) and forthcoming book)


15 Snowden, C (2014) *The Fat Lie*, IEA Briefing Paper


For example the STARS programme which promotes active travel in schools. [https://stars.tfl.gov.uk/Public Pages/Home.aspx](https://stars.tfl.gov.uk/Public Pages/Home.aspx)


Social Research Associates (2010) *Oldham Parks Regeneration project*


Social Research Associates (2006) for DfT: *Customer Care “It’s not the poor old driver’s fault”*


