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Children and the local environment: breaking down the barriers

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The context of the research

Children's
Activities
Perceptions
And
Behaviour in the
Local
Environment



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CAPABLE

- Funded by EPSRC for 2 years from August 2004
- Joint project between CTS, CASA, Bartlett School and Psychology Department at UCL
- Approach:
 - Develop research tools to investigate children's spatial behaviour, perceptions and relationship networks, and parental attitudes
 - Analyse how children use open spaces
 - Develop new models of children's outdoor movement patterns



The research tools

- Monitoring children's travel and activity patterns:
 - Motion sensors
 - GPS monitors
 - Diaries
- Questionnaires surveys of children and their parents, carried out through schools
- Interviews with parents and with children, including mapping exercises
- Children's drawing exercises



Possible barriers to children's unaccompanied use of the local environment

- Parental concerns about safety
- Lack of familiarity with the local area
- Unsuitable local environment
- Lack of suitable transport
- Etc, etc



Possible explanatory factors for differences between children

- Age
- Gender
- Cultural background
- Education level
- Strength of family ties with area
- Length of time in the area
- Child's confidence level
- Nature of the area
- Etc, etc



The number of responses to the children's questionnaire (so far)

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Boys	Girls	Total
New Briars	-	-	27	16	11	27
Holy Family	23	26	-	25	24	49
Kilmorie	44	39	34	57	60	117
Perry-mount	26	19	27	31	41	72
Total	93	84	88	129	136	265

Percentage of children allowed out without an adult

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
New Briars	-	-	82	82
Holy Family	65	65	-	65
Kilmorie	47	79	74	65
Perry-mount	42	74	74	63
Total	50	74	77	66

Percentage of children allowed to travel without an adult

Go out on a bicycle	68
Go out for a walk	66
Cross main roads	57
Travel to friends' houses	55
Travel to organised activities	34
Cycle on main roads	29
Go on buses	23

Percentage of children allowed to travel without an adult

	Boys	Girls
Go out on a bicycle	71	64
Go out for a walk	68	65
Cross main roads	61	53
Travel to friends' houses	62	48
Travel to organised activities	40	28
Cycle on main roads	39	20
Go on buses	22	24

Age at which children were first allowed to travel alone

	Boys	Girls	All
Travel to friends' houses	7.3	8.4	7.8
Cycle on main roads	7.8	8.0	7.9
Cross main roads	7.7	8.6	8.2
Go on buses	8.6	9.2	8.9

Effects of local family ties on being allowed out alone

How many of mother's and father's parents and siblings live locally?	% of children allowed out alone
0	61%
1	65%
2	68%
3	70%
4	91%
Overall	65%

How often do children who own a bicycle use it?

Most days	17%
2 or 3 days a week	11%
Weekly	20%
Monthly	20%
Never or hardly ever	33%
Total	100%

How often do children who own a bicycle use it?

	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Most days	11%	20%
2 or 3 days a week	14%	9%
Weekly	18%	20%
Monthly	14%	23%
Never or hardly ever	44%	28%
Total	100%	100%

Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64
Walk to school	34	63
Car to school	55	27
< 5 minutes to school	28	40
Live in households with 2+ cars	59	37
Have relatives living locally	36	61

Children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham

More children who live in Hertfordshire are allowed out alone than those who live in Lewisham

But, children in Hertfordshire:

- Cycle less
- Walk to school less
- Live in households with higher car ownership
- Have fewer relatives living nearby

So, other factors must be important

Conclusions (1)

- About 2/3 of the children are allowed out alone
- Freedom to go out increases with age
- Boys are allowed out more than girls
- Children in Hertfordshire are allowed out more than those in Lewisham
- The more relatives that children have living locally, the more likely they are to be allowed out alone

Conclusions (2)

- Of the forms of travel children can do alone:
 - Cycling is allowed most
 - Going on the bus is allowed least
- About 1/3 of the children who own bicycles do not use them



For more information:

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Suggestions for further dissemination welcome

