

## Overcoming the barriers to walking for children

Roger Mackett and James Paskins  
Centre for Transport Studies, UCL  
Belinda Brown  
Young Foundation



## The key issues

In Britain, compared with the past,

- children go out less
- fewer children are allowed out without an adult
- fewer children walk to school



## Why does this matter?

- Less physical activity, with consequences for health
- Loss of social interaction with other children and adults
- Loss of opportunities to gain independent decision-making skills



## What has caused these trends?

- Technological change
  - More cars
  - More home entertainment
- Changes in parental perception of risk
- Shift from free play to organised activities and sport for children
- Increasing complexity of life
- Increasing decentralisation of activities
- Increasing parental choice in education



## The context of the research

Children's  
Activities  
Perceptions  
And  
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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 study areas

### Hertfordshire

Located to the north of London

Mainly 'Green Belt' with free standing towns

High levels of commuting to London

Generally prosperous with high levels of car ownership

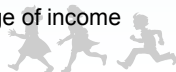
### Lewisham

Located in south-east London

Mixed urban ranging from inner city to suburban

Some areas of deprivation and street crime

Wide range of income levels



## The schools

### Hertfordshire

New Briars in Hatfield

Holy Family in Welwyn Garden City (Roman Catholic)

### Lewisham

Kilmorie in Forest Hill

Perrymount in Forest Hill



### The number of responses to the children's questionnaire

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Boys	Girls	Total
New Briars	-	-	27	16	11	27
Holy Family	23	26	29	37	41	78
Kilmorie	44	39	34	57	60	117
Perry-mount	26	19	27	31	41	72
Total	93	84	117	141	153	294



### Percentage of children allowed out without an adult

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
New Briars	-	-	82	82
Holy Family	65	65	72	68
Kilmorie	47	79	74	65
Perry-mount	42	74	74	63
Total	50	74	75	67



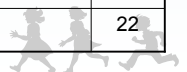
### Percentage of children allowed out without an adult

	Boys	Girls	Total
New Briars	94	64	82
Holy Family	70	66	68
Kilmorie	67	64	65
Perry-mount	71	56	63
Total	72	62	67



### Percentage of children allowed to travel without an adult

Go out on a bicycle	68
Go out for a walk	65
Cross main roads	58
Travel to friends' houses	54
Travel to organised activities	33
Cycle on main roads	28
Go on buses	22



### Percentage of children allowed to travel without an adult

	Boys	Girls
Go out on a bicycle	71	65
Go out for a walk	66	64
Cross main roads	63	53
Travel to friends' houses	63	46
Travel to organised activities	41	26
Cycle on main roads	38	19
Go on buses	20	23



### Age at which children were first allowed to travel alone

	Boys	Girls	All
Travel to friends' houses	7.5	8.6	8.0
Cycle on main roads	7.9	8.1	8.0
Cross main roads	7.9	8.7	8.3
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	63%
1	67%
2	68%
3	70%
4	83%
Overall	66%



### Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham in being allowed out alone

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64



### Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham in travelling to school

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64
Walk to school	28	63
Cycle to school	1	0
Car to school	61	27
< 5 minutes to school	25	40



### Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham in car use

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64
Live in households with 2+ cars	64	37
Never or hardly ever go out by car	11	16
Go out by car most days (excluding trips to school)	58	39



### Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham in cycling

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64
Own a bicycle	96	82
Cycle at least once a month	56	64



### Differences between the children in Hertfordshire and Lewisham in family ties

Percentage:	Hertfordshire	Lewisham
Allowed out alone	71	64
Have relatives living locally	39	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 - possibly the nature of the local area and parental perceptions of it



### Conclusions

- 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
- Of the forms of travel children can do alone:
  - Cycling is allowed most
  - Going on the bus is allowed least



### For more information:

- [www.casa.ucl.ac.uk/capableproject/](http://www.casa.ucl.ac.uk/capableproject/)
- E-mail: [rlm@transport.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:rlm@transport.ucl.ac.uk)
- Phone: 020 7679 1554

Suggestions for further dissemination welcome

