

New study finds that school street closures means more active travel

A study by Edinburgh Napier University says that school street closures could increase the number of children walking, cycling and wheeling to school – all without creating road safety problems.

The findings show that the closure of certain streets near schools would not mean traffic would not simply move to neighbouring streets.

Dr Adrian Davis, Professor of Transport and Health, at Edinburgh Napier University led the research into the impact of school street closures designed to create safer spaces for walking, cycling or street play. The new study used findings from 16 studies including three from Scottish authorities including Edinburgh, as evidence for the new report.

The report says that the measures increase active travel, and that the number of vehicles in streets near schools is reduced.

This does not of itself cause any road safety measures of any significance, and local authorities have applied mitigating measures where needed.

Most parents and residents living on these streets were found to support the measures, particularly after any trial periods.

The project is funded by Road Safety Trust and is a collaboration between Edinburgh Napier and Sustrans.

The literature review is the first to provide an assessment of the impacts of school street closures published in the English language. The Road Safety Trust, a charity dedicated to making the UK's roads the safest in the world, awarded funding to Sustrans to evaluate the impact of school streets on the safety of surrounding roads. The literature review is part of this ongoing wider project to investigate the impact of school streets – streets that are open to pedestrians and people on cycles but closed to cars at drop-off and pick-up times – for children's safety.

Dr Adrian Davis, professor of transport and health at Edinburgh Napier University, said: "It is noteworthy that such a simple intervention can have really positive impacts in terms of increasing children physical activity levels and with this the associated improvements in wellbeing. School street closures looks to be a win-win for residents, schools and children and their families."

John Lauder, deputy CEO Sustrans, said: "With the growth in numbers of family groups discovering the joy of cycling, walking, and scootering during lockdown, and with many parents and guardians continuing to work at home, the return to school is a crucial moment. We want it to be easy and sensible for as many children as possible to get to and from school actively.

"This research shows clearly how school street closures make the streets around schools safer, cleaner and healthier. It also shows that school streets help increase active travel to school, making it easier for children to start the school day awake and alert. We call on local authorities to give this consideration."

Sally Lines, chief executive of Road Safety Trust, said: "We want to make the roads safer for all users in particular vulnerable road users which includes children, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, and the results from the

literature review are a welcome step towards this. It's great to see the funding we provided to Sustrans showing these early results in the form of the literature review and that the results can inform best practice across the UK."

The City of Edinburgh Council has already trialled a number of school street closures within the city, including around Leith Primary, St Mary's in Leith and Gilmerton Primary earlier this year.

A host of other measures, including street widening and traffic limits, have also been implemented across the city to help people socially distance while travelling and exercising.

The full literature review relating to school street closures can be found [here](#)