

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

## **Paving the way for everyday walking: Living Streets' interventions and public health**

### **Background to Living Streets and key interventions**

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We work with professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

In addition to our policy, campaigning and consultancy work, we coordinate direct interventions in three main categories:

- Walking to school
  - Primary schools – Walk Once a Week scheme; Walk to School Week in May (part of National Walking Month); International Walk to School Month in October
  - Secondary schools – Free your Feet whole school walking challenge; Campaign in a Box citizenship challenge that helps secondary school students to improve local streets
- Walking to work
  - Direct support for workplaces to encourage walking through establishing walking champions, running challenges and promotions
  - Walk to Work Week in May (part of National Walking Month)
  - My Living Streets online tool for logging miles, taking challenges and competing with friends and colleagues to walk the most
- Walking in the community
  - Fitter for Walking – working with community groups to identify and secure improvements to local walking environments and link this to walking promotion
  - Step Out in London – promoting walking in areas where new public realm improvements have been implemented

All of these interventions have been successful in promoting increased physical activity through walking. This paper illustrates how Living Streets' interventions have worked to increase walking levels and suggests key approaches to be integrated into local public health policy and practice.

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Living Streets (The Pedestrians Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland), Company Limited by Guarantee (England & Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409



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## Living Streets' approach

Living Streets' main walking promotion interventions have four key elements in common:

- They promote everyday, 'transport' walking, used as a means of reaching key destinations such as schools, workplaces or local shops – as contrasted with interventions which promote additional walking purely for health reasons. This helps to embed physical activity into participants' regular routines, as recommended by Chief Medical Officers<sup>1</sup>, increasing the likelihood that the behaviour and benefits will be sustained. With 39 per cent of all shorter trips (under two miles) in Great Britain currently undertaken by car<sup>2</sup>, there is clear potential for a focus on transport walking to achieve significant modal shift.
- They anchor the walking behaviour within a specific community of interest and / or geography, such as a school (or, more widely, a local community of school-aged children and their parents); a workplace or a small geographical neighbourhood. This allows interventions to be genuinely community-led, gives participants a source of support, competition or collaboration and makes it easy to link the intervention to other activities taking place in that community, increasing its reach and longevity and making it a potential springboard for other positive activity.
- They address, to varying extents, the need for improvements to physical walking environments to go hand in hand with behavioural change. This helps encourage communities to address some of the key actual and perceived barriers to walking, increases awareness of useful walking routes, helps communities form and strengthen social links which increase resilience and boost wellbeing, and, crucially, lead to increased walking.
- They are simple, easy for participants and communities to understand and are conducted on a human scale and at low cost, keeping barriers to participation low and offering a high ratio of benefits to costs. The Walk Once a Week scheme for primary schools, for example, costs an average of £2.32 per child per year to run<sup>3</sup>; a typical benefit to cost ratio for congestion reduction alone resulting from modal shift to walking on school journeys is estimated at 4.6:1, while the value of an additional child walking to school has been estimated at £768<sup>4</sup>.

## Walking to school

### Background

- Walk to School (WtS) is a national campaign which has existed since 1995 and aims to encourage all parents and children to make walking to school part of their daily routine, emphasising the benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing, the social aspects and the potential to address congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. WtS reaches over 1.6 million children at over 6000 schools throughout the UK.
- The best known element of the campaign, and the element around which much of Living Streets' evidence gathering has focused, is the Walk Once a Week (WoW) programme, which has nearly 2000 primary schools and 250,000 children now taking part across the UK. WoW sees children record how they travel to school, on a class wall chart or individual postcards. If they walk at least four times a month, they receive a collectable badge for that month, designed in a national art competition which receives thousands of entries from children

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across the UK each year. These resources are obtained either by the local authority or directly by the school.

- The health benefits of walking to school are a key driver for the project: for example, children who travel by walking use twice as many calories as those who travel by car<sup>5</sup>. The success of WoW has led to Living Streets receiving funding from the Department of Health to roll out WoW in areas which experience both deprivation across a range of indicators and high rates of child obesity.
- In 2011/12, Living Streets received funding from the Department for Transport to pilot an intensive Walk to School Outreach programme in 12 schools in Hertfordshire. Staff work closely with each school community, including teachers, pupils and parents, to identify local barriers to walking and local solutions to overcome those issues. WoW has also been launched at each primary school to encourage more families to walk to school more often.
- Living Streets has used learning from its work in primary schools to inform a programme of walking promotion work in secondary schools, notably including Free Your Feet, a week-long, whole school walking challenge run by Living Streets, which saw over 300,000 students aged 11-16 take part in 2011. Alongside branded publicity in assemblies and around schools, students are each given a postcard on which to record any minutes they spent walking, on their school journeys. At the end of the week, any students who had walked (on at least one day, for at least part of their journey) can enter their card into a prize draw.

#### Context – barriers

- The Walk to School schemes are operating in the context of a gradual decline in the proportion of children walking to school over two decades, and against a backdrop of significant barriers to walking, as shown by a Living Streets-commissioned national survey<sup>6</sup>:
  - Over a third of children are scared of cars travelling too fast, with a fifth concerned about a lack of safe crossing points.
  - Over a third of girls were concerned about walking in the dark.
  - Many children reported being scared of walking to school alone, with nearly one in five secondary school pupils worried about being bullied on the walk to school and 39% scared by the risk of ‘stranger danger’.
- Notably, 62% of primary school children claim to be unable to walk to school as it is too far away, yet the majority of primary school pupils live within a 20 minute walk of the school gates, clearly demonstrating the way in which perceived barriers to walking can be as significant as actual barriers. Such perceptions can become self-perpetuating, as the idea that a journey on foot is ‘too far’ makes it less likely that the journey will be undertaken on foot and thus reinforces the ‘too far’ perception, and travel by other means such as the car, as the norm. Living Streets’ Walk to School activities have significant potential to confront and reduce these perceived barriers to walking by aiming to create a culture where walking to school, at least once a week, becomes a prominent social norm within the target community.

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### Effect of interventions on walking levels

- An independent evaluation of WoW<sup>7</sup>, based on analysis of responses from over 20,000 UK school pupils and a range of interviews with relevant stakeholders, found that:
  - there was a strong appetite for walking to school among children surveyed;
  - 19 per cent of children surveyed reported that they started walking to school because of WoW;
  - the proportion of children walking to school in schools running WoW was over nine per cent higher than the national average as determined by the National Travel Survey
  - there were indications of an associated positive effect on the number of walking trips made by adults.
- These positive results were reinforced by baseline and follow-up surveys in 2010 and 2011, again conducted by Wavehill Consulting, across 121 schools and nearly 19,000 children across infant and junior age groups. Across the schools, after WoW had been running for one school year, 59 per cent of children surveyed walked to school, compared to 43 per cent at baseline – an increase of 16 per cent. Modal shift from the car is demonstrated by the fall in the proportion of children travelling to school as a passenger in a car or taxi from 42 per cent to 36 per cent. Children's preferences have also changed, with the proportion preferring to walk to school increasing, by 8 per cent, and the proportion preferring to travel to school by car falling, also by 8 per cent, between 2010 and 2011. A third survey will be conducted and a final report published in 2012.
- In Hertfordshire, initial results from the DfT outreach programme are very promising, with some schools seeing up to 89 per cent of children walking once a week and up to two thirds walking every day. This is an increase of at least 20 per cent compared to baseline walking rates of only 40-44 per cent. A full evaluation of the programme will be completed in all 12 schools in March 2012. Living Streets has applied for further funding to roll out this successful localised approach to schools across the UK.
- In secondary schools, 324 schools and 304,000 UK students aged 11-16 took part in Free Your Feet in 2011. The initiative was measured using online hands-up surveys administered by school staff during registration. A baseline survey one month before the challenge week was compared to a post-challenge survey, completed one week after the end of the challenge, where students were asked if they had walked 'all', 'part' or 'none' of their journeys to and from school on the previous day. The use of a post-challenge survey helped exclude any reporting inaccuracies in data from participants' challenge cards that may have been prompted by the prospect of winning a prize. Analysis of the hands-up surveys<sup>8</sup> showed an average sustained modal shift to walking, after the end of the challenge week, of 4.9%. The greatest increases were seen in students shifting from walking 'none of the way' to walking 'part of the way'.

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### Success factors

- The 2009 evaluation of WoW identified a number of factors contributing to its success in increasing walking levels:
  - Simplicity and low time commitment: schools and teachers do not find it difficult to find the time and resources to commission and administrate WoW, whilst children are simply asked to walk to school and log their walk, or in some cases get involved in administrating the scheme as WoW Monitors
  - Administration: schemes are run at the closest possible level to the participants – within their class at school – whilst being supported by an independent, trusted national charity which can help spread best practice
  - Incentives: WoW badges are highly sought after and eagerly collected by children, whilst not being so large an incentive as to be unaffordable to local authorities or schools, or to mask the behavioural change objectives of the scheme
  - Participation: the art competition to design the badges attracts thousands of entries each year and raises awareness of the aims of WoW
  - Norming: rolling out WoW within a school can create a culture where walking to school, at least sometimes, becomes the norm, creating a pattern of positive behaviour that is not easily broken.

## **Walking to work**

### Background

- Living Streets' Walking Works project engages with adults in employment to encourage more walking to, from and at work. Funded by BIG Lottery's Health and Wellbeing Fund as part of the Travel Actively consortium, the campaign has raised awareness of the benefits of walking more to over 28,000 individuals so far, through walking pledges, regular digital campaigns and the annual Walk to Work Week challenge, which grew from the Walk to Work Days run in London in 2007 and 2008. Walking Works includes a programme of more in-depth support for workplaces, including helping establish 'walking champions', running bespoke walking challenges and activities and helping workplaces to integrate walking activity with their workplace travel plan. Funding has also been received from Transport for London and London Councils to work with London workplaces.

### Effect of interventions on walking levels

- Walk to Work Week is the aspect of the Walk to Work programme with the widest participation and the most significant evaluation data. Walk to Work Week was evaluated in both 2010 and 2011 through follow-up surveys of participants, analysed by the Sustrans Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.
- The 2011 Walk to Work Week evaluation<sup>9</sup> found that:
  - Since participating in Walk to Work Week, 57% of respondents felt that their overall level of walking had increased.
  - The percentage of respondents walking for some or all of their journey to work 5 days per week increased from 27% to 49%, and the proportion walking for at least some of their journey from work increased from 26% to 45%.

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- All respondents were asked how they felt after taking part in the project. The top three responses were 'I feel fitter' (45%), 'I feel more healthy' (41%) and 'I am more active' (39%).
  - Of respondents who had pledged to walk more to, from or at work, 64% said they meet their pledge regularly, and a further 22% said they meet their pledge occasionally.
  - Individuals achieving 30 minutes or more physical activity on five or more days per week increased from 29% at registration to 50% at follow up.
  - The percentage of pledge respondents travelling on foot for part of the journey, on foot for all of the journey and by bicycle all increased at follow up, compared to registration. The mode that showed the largest increase was 'Walking for all of the journey', which increased from 19% to 25%.
- Other aspects of the Walking Works project have also proven effective. Informal follow-up surveys run with London employers found that 55% of employees who had pledged as part of the scheme being run at their workplace reported that the amount of walking that they did either to, from or during work and during their lunchtimes had increased.

#### Success factor: online engagement / My Living Streets

- A key aspect of Walk to Work Week since 2009 has been an online tool allowing participants to log their walking miles and compete with others. In 2011 Living Streets introduced My Living Streets, which featured an improved range of functionality and for the first time was made available all year round. My Living Streets enables participants to sign up as an individual and / or as part of a team representing their employer or their immediate group of colleagues, and then to log the amount of walking they were achieving each day by time, distance or a combination. The My Living Streets website could then calculate additional information, rank individuals and teams by how far they walked and display encouraging messages, such as displaying the quantity of food for which the participant had burnt off the equivalent number of calories or showing the participant's total distance walked as equivalent to a certain number of circuits of a well-known landmark. Through My Living Streets, participants could also engage in challenges such as uploading photos of particular features or problems on their route to work, or inviting friends to walk.
- The availability of My Living Streets, and the way in which information was displayed within the tool, stimulated the competitive element of Walk to Work Week, between individuals, teams within workplaces and whole workplaces (including a hard-fought competition between Living Streets and the Ramblers). Making My Living Streets available all year round provides a platform for continued engagement of participants with walking promotion following the end of the event. Living Streets plans to build on this by expanding and improving the functionality of My Living Streets and linking it more closely to participants' localities and walking routes.

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## Walking in the community

### Background

- Living Streets' key neighbourhood-based interventions, Living Streets Fitter for Walking and Living Streets Step Out in London, both aim to link improvements to local streets and public spaces with increased levels of walking.
- Living Streets' Fitter for Walking programme involved approximately 150 communities, across 12 local authority areas and 5 regions of England, selected based on low reported levels of physical activity and high levels of obesity. Each region had a Living Streets project coordinator who recruited local community groups to drive projects forward. Working with the community group, the local authority and other local stakeholders, the coordinator helped identify barriers to walking in the area. This was often done through a Community Street Audit – one of Living Streets' key approaches to community engagement and street assessment, where small groups of local residents, traders, councillors and council officers, including vulnerable street users, are involved to assess a route on foot and identify problems and potential improvements.
- Improvement activity varied widely between projects according to the key needs identified by communities, and fell into three main categories: community-led improvements such as litter picking, clean ups and planting; more in-depth improvements such as resurfacing or lighting improvements led by the local authority, and awareness-raising activities such as led walks, the design of maps and street parties.
- At the same time as participating in identifying and bringing about improvements, local communities were engaged in increasing their levels of walking through activities such as led walks and community, family and individual pledging. A Living Streets Fitter for Walking Neighbourhood Award scheme was developed to recognise the work of individuals, community groups or neighbourhoods in engaging local people, carrying out physical improvements, increasing walking and putting a framework in place to ensure sustained progress over time.
- Living Streets' Step Out in London project, funded by London Councils, involved Living Streets in working with local authorities in London to draw attention to recent public realm improvements and encourage local walking through events, activities and engagement. A shortlist of possible schemes around which to base the project was drawn up from nominations received from boroughs and communities, and final schemes selected by a panel of London Living Streets campaigners. Three schemes were selected in 2010: Wanstead High Street, London Borough of Redbridge, The Cut in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, and Ladywell Fields and Cornmill Gardens in the London Borough of Lewisham. Improvements ranged from lighting improvements, crossing improvements, CCTV and resurfaced paths (Wanstead) to the introduction of landscaping, seating and public art (Lewisham). Baseline surveys were conducted with street users in the area to assess their awareness of the recent street improvements, their propensity to walk and their attitudes to walking.
- Activities were then carried out, coordinated by Living Streets, to encourage people to use the improved streets and promote the enjoyment of walking in the area. These ranged from

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themed led walks to interactive games, treasure hunts and mapmaking activities with local schools.

### Effect of interventions on walking levels

- An analysis of 'pledge cards' from across the various Living Streets Fitter for Walking projects was undertaken in 2011<sup>10</sup>. 82% of those responding to follow-up surveys, carried out at least 3 months after the original pledge was made, stated that they met their pledge to walk more either regularly (64%) or occasionally (18%). 78% of those responding reported that the amount of walking they did, for any reason, had increased since they made their pledge. Of these, 73% reported walking to the shops more, 37% reported walking to or from work more and 31% reported walking children to / from school more often.
- The Living Streets Fitter for Walking programme as a whole underwent a comprehensive independent evaluation in 2011<sup>11</sup>. Route user counts and route user surveys were conducted for a representative sample of projects. Additionally, qualitative data was obtained from interviews and focus groups, coded and analysed, and an economic evaluation was undertaken using the World Health Organisation's HEAT for walking tool.
- More route users surveyed across the projects were walking regularly, for a wider variety of journey purposes, after the interventions. After 12-18 months, with some projects having suffered a temporary dip in pedestrian numbers as physical improvements took place, pedestrian movements on the improved routes increased in five of the seven projects for which counts were conducted:

	Baseline	Follow-up 1 (12 months)		Follow-up 2 (14-20 months)		Proportion of route users perceiving an increase or decrease in route use in last 12-18 months	
	n	n	% change from baseline	n	% change from baseline	% perceiving an increase	% perceiving a decrease
A. Marks Gate, London	856	736	↓14.0	964	↑12.6	15.8	8.8
B. Byker Link, Newcastle	129	147	↑14.0	205	↑58.9	15.1	9.4
C. Bensham, Gateshead	4702	5566	↑18.4	ND	ND	ND	ND
D. Taylor Street, Blackburn	621	367	↓40.9	732	↑17.9	5.9	3.9
E. Our back field, Bolton	174	140*	↓19.5	ND	ND	21.4*	11.9*
F. Weddell Wynd, Wolverhampton	280	134	↓52.1	378	↑35.0	ND	ND
G. Cliff Hills, Rotherham	1197	1072	↓10.4	1262	↑5.4	24.0	2.0

ND= no data \*follow-up data collection took place after 5 months

- Where residents were surveyed, almost two thirds (64 per cent) reported having walked more in their local area in the last 18 months for a variety of reasons including to get fitter or healthier, in response to a change in income or increasing transport costs, or because of

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improved knowledge of the local area. More than half agreed that they had seen more people walking locally in the last 18 months.

- The evaluation 'recommended that the Living Streets Fitter for Walking model is expanded to other communities in the UK as an approach to community engagement, increasing social interaction and improving the environment to promote walking'.
- Living Streets Step Out in London was evaluated in November 2010<sup>12</sup>, with 300 'after' interviews carried out. 82% of those interviewed who took part in Living Streets activities felt that these activities had encouraged them to walk more. 68% of participants noticed improvements to the built environment, compared to 29% of non-participants, and 57% of participants were encouraged to walk more due to these improvements, compared to 14% of non-participants. On the strength of this success three more sites were selected for the delivery of interventions in 2011-12.

#### Success factor: community effectiveness and cohesion

Personal feedback from community members has shown individuals becoming more engaged in improving their communities as a result of involvement in Living Streets Fitter for Walking, and the Living Streets Fitter for Walking evaluation concluded that the projects often helped communities to address many of the social factors forming barriers to walking – such as personal safety fears, antisocial behaviour and people parking cars on the pavement, forcing people with buggies or in wheelchairs into the road – as well as the physical barriers such as environmental incivilities, poor maintenance, lack of paths, poor lighting etc. In addition, 'route users, residents and communities all reported perceptions of improvements in community cohesion and social interaction in most of the projects and some community members reported an overwhelming impact of the project on the daily lives of people living in their local area.' In addition to the positive impact on broader health and wellbeing, 'in many cases the social changes were seen to be more important for increasing the number of people who walk in the local area than the environmental changes'<sup>13</sup>.

#### **Lessons learnt and implications for local public health coordination and delivery**

The experience of delivering these interventions has varied to a great extent across projects and locations. However, some common threads have emerged.

- A key strength of Living Streets' interventions is their ease of implementation and consequent wide reach and appeal, leading to interventions becoming embedded in the culture of the target community, with informal competition, parental involvement and efforts to bring about local improvements, such as with a school in Stevenage that identified an issue with a key walking route to the school and installed a new gate to cut journey times. The scheme's simplicity and ability to fit within the school's culture and the children's expectations in this way makes the scheme more resilient, ensuring that involvement is ongoing rather than being dependent on the presence of particularly enthusiastic members of staff and reinforcing walking to school as a social norm. This can also be seen with Walking Works' partnership programme with employers, who have found that Living Streets' interventions provide 'structure and something simple to implement that is well received by staff and helps to get them to walk more'<sup>14</sup>.

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- Similarly, the use of the Living Streets Fitter for Walking Award to recognise a community's success in and commitment to local improvements has rewarded community members whose achievements are often overlooked, and given them the confidence to continue taking ownership of local walking conditions. On a more individual level, the use of pledge cards – used both in Living Streets Fitter for Walking and in Living Streets' Walking Works programme – is recognised as a way of encouraging participants to take conscious ownership of their patterns of behaviour. The use of My Living Streets and the previous online tools for Walk to Work Week added a more social dimension to this idea of eliciting commitment, making it easy for workplaces to enjoy internal or external competitions and challenges and using this competitive element to motivate participants to walk.
- Importantly, interventions need to recognise that the characteristics of the local walking environment, including destinations, is a key source of the barriers to walking or reasons to walk identified by individuals, whether real or perceived, and that engaging with this directly can help to drive behavioural change. Linking improvements to the environment with the promotion of walking, as Living Streets' neighbourhood-based interventions do, can address physical barriers to walking directly, but also help overcome psychological and social barriers to walking by demonstrating tangibly that physical barriers are being seriously addressed. Living Streets has taken this forward in plans to build challenges based on geolocation and photo uploading into My Living Streets, cross-promoting increased walking and the development of a sense of ownership of the quality of the walking environment.
- The link between the physical and built walking environment and people's propensity to walk is consistently demonstrated by research. For example, an English study quoted in Living Streets' *Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment* (2011) found that women were 28% more likely to report not walking regularly if they felt that the local shops were of low convenience<sup>15</sup>.
- Similarly, two Scottish studies found a significant correlation between the perceived safety of local neighbourhoods for walking after dark and the propensity of neighbourhood residents to engage in regular walking<sup>16</sup>; conversely, an Australian study found that there was a 40-64% reduction in the likelihood of being fearful in neighbourhoods with increasing levels of walking-friendliness<sup>17</sup>.
- These findings have clear implications for local delivery of public health interventions and for the composition and work of Local Health and Wellbeing Boards.
  - In order to reflect the links between the quality of the built environment and levels of transport-related physical activity, planning, transport, urban design and street management professionals need to be properly represented on Local Health and Wellbeing Boards, be involved in the scoping and review of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and play a central role in developing interventions and monitoring frameworks in joint health and wellbeing strategies. Among other things, an effective partnership can and should 'encourage "designing for health" where new developments incorporate open space to encourage recreation and play, create accessibility to services, promote the benefits of active travel, minimise road traffic accidents and discourage crime and anti-social behaviour'<sup>18</sup>. This should be reflected in national guidance.

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- Needs (and assets) relating to the physical environment, including planning, transport, urban design and street management and maintenance, will need to be recognised when developing Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and addressed through joint health and wellbeing strategies. Again, this should be prominently reflected in national guidance; currently, planning, transport and streets are not mentioned at all in either the Government's 'Liberating the NHS: legislative framework and next steps' document (December 2010) nor in the Government response to the NHS Future Forum report (June 2011). Guidance should promote existing examples of good practice in joint commissioning and integrated provision. For example, the identification of the need to mitigate road danger and the acknowledgement that this should be recognised as a public health driver led Liverpool Primary Care Trust to collaborate with the City Council and police to introduce 20 mph speed limits in several areas, which will prevent an estimated 140 deaths and injuries to children per year.<sup>19</sup>
- An emphasis on implementing proven interventions, as well as encouraging innovation, will help to encourage effective working across silos. In a new system of public health commissioning and delivery, stakeholders will look to guidance such as that being produced by NICE to orient them. Behavioural change interventions that have been shown to increase levels of routine physical activity, such as the Living Streets interventions discussed above, will need to be embedded into public health practice at a useful level of detail, where previously this may have been the domain of sustainable travel, highways and education practitioners.

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**February 2012**

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Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

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