

# Obesity and Active Travel - 20mph limits is the Answer

A 20's Plenty for Us Press Release Dec 2013 [www.20splentyforus.org.uk/Press\\_Releases/Obesity\\_answer\\_is\\_20mph\\_limits\\_PR.pdf](http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/Press_Releases/Obesity_answer_is_20mph_limits_PR.pdf)

**Public Health England (PHE) in cooperation with the Local Government Association (LGA) recommend that Local Authorities implement wide area 20mph limits to stimulate active travel and tackle obesity. 20mph limits is the top evidenced based policy to raise British people's regular exercise levels.**



On 13 November 2013 an important 13 page report was released entitled "**Obesity and the environment: increasing physical activity and active travel**" - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/obesity-and-the-environment-briefing-increasing-physical-activity-and-active-travel>. Dr Nick Cavill and Professor Harry Rutter are its authors.

Public Health England is the UK's executive agency of the Department for Health. It aims to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities. This 'healthy people, healthy places' briefing summarises the urgency of action on obesity with a focus on active travel. To raise the nation's exercise levels the PHE report says :-

***"20mph speed limits for streets where people live, work and shop may be the most effective approach available at present."***

PHE says "*20mph: saves lives while creating space for cycling walking and play*". More than four-fifths of child casualties occur on 30mph speed limited roads. The North West Public Health Observatory modelled the impact of implementing 20mph traffic speed zones in residential areas (other than main roads) across the North West. It showed that 140 killed or serious injuries to children could have been prevented in the region each year between 2004 and 2008.

The public health exercise benefits of 20mph limits are crucial since avoidable deaths from inactivity are at least 12 times that of road casualties. Local Councils have public health responsibility and must urgently get people to exercise more. Less road danger and fear from slower speeds underpins exercise and active travel promotion since public space is overwhelmingly roads and pavements. There was over 20% more walking and cycling in 20mph limit areas in Bristol<sup>1</sup>, making 20mph limits the single most effective and cost effective way to raise fitness levels. The 'inactivity time bomb' is where harmful effects of inactivity on obesity, chronic heart disease, diabetes, stroke and mental health is storing up avoidable future health and welfare costs. Prevention is better than cure. Prevention means greater levels of participation in daily exercise.. Wide 20mph limits is a form of herd immunisation against the negatives of excessive traffic speeds (like injuries and inactivity), benefiting the many. The cumulative benefits of 20mph limits are massive.

Anna Semlyen, 20's Plenty for Us Campaign Manager, who is also an exercise professional<sup>2</sup> commented "*Exercise is key to physical and mental health. Whilst adults are advised to do about 30 mins exercise most days and children an hour, few manage to. Wide area 20mph limits raise cycling and walking levels. Walking and cycling is an affordable exercise that happens as we go about our daily lives. We can find time for it and it saves money. Repetition creates good habits for a successful exercise routine. Then we have fun whilst also burning calories and keeping fit.*"

The '[Time for 20](#)' conference on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014 in Camden recognises that the UK is transitioning to a national limit of 20mph for roads in built up areas. More than 12m people live in authorities with this policy. 20's Plenty for Us is calling on the DfT to allow signing exceptions to 20mph as it will cover over 90% of e.g. Birmingham's roads. Updating signage rules would halve implementation costs. **Public Health professionals, Local Authority representatives, Transport Officers, Police and others can book into Time for 20 via <http://tinyurl.com/BookTime420>**

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2012/ua/ua000/0726\\_7.pdf](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2012/ua/ua000/0726_7.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Anna Semlyen has [taught Yoga for 17 years](#), is the British Wheel of Yoga Specialist Advisor on Back Care, is author of '[Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs](#)' and '[Cutting Your Car Use](#)' (140,000+ copies sold). She holds an MSc Health Economics and has published health research.

**20's Plenty For Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming.**

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