

So You Want ...Children to Go Out?

20's Plenty for Us Briefing Aug 2020

http://www.20splenty.org/children_out

Children used to roam further than now. There's COVID yes, but they still need go places alone. Traffic fear is key. Wide 20mph limits enable kids to get out - to relatives, friends, parks, shops, play, walk, scoot and cycle. Confident, sociable, independent, healthy, active travel habits form on safer streets. Obesity, anxiety and loneliness reduce. Families lead better lives. They say "it takes a village to raise a child" – and that's so much better with a 20mph limit.

20's Plenty for Us

...making your place a better place to be

It's August - school holiday time. Our children will be bored and unhappy if they can't get out. Child surveys show far more want to use their legs than parents let them. Carers may aim to reduce Covid infection, road trauma and stranger danger and keep kids inside, take public transport or drive. Yet, child obesity is rising as few kids get an hour of daily activity. Inactivity (insufficient active play, walking or cycling) is unhealthy and lonely! Child anxiety is up. Attachment scientists say we need others to learn language, relationship and resilience skills. Families need other people to interact with outside of school - else they burn out from cossetting or there's too much screen time, especially with online classes in the pandemic.

Speeds over 20mph are risky to children due to their inability to make accurate crossing decisions. Vision research scientists proved children can't reliably assess how fast traffic goes over 20mph (looming rates) until over 12 years. Sight and road crossing decision making are not mature enough, even if taught road safety. 30mph+ limits or heavily traffic roads sever independent child travel. 30mph is not fit for purpose especially for mothers who do most childcare and escort trips.

20mph is a once off, cost-effective environmental change to help all ages. Slower speeds set conditions for better safety, healthier habits, independent travel and sociability. 20mph means actual, and perceived fear of, harm to kids reduces. Stopping distances halve from 30mph to 20mph and survival rates rise by 7-10 with 20+% fewer casualties. Street life returns. Research in Edinburgh found permission to play out doubled, cycling to school tripled, all aged cycling and walking rose and car use fell in its 20mph trial.

The UK accepted being part of the Stockholm Declaration mandating "**a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h (20mph) in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner**, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries"¹.

The Playing Out organisation helps parents close roads in a planned way for play space. Whilst we support this, what 20's Plenty for Us says is that it should be safe for children to 'go out' by themselves without adults organising it. They need to learn to ride their bikes and scooters for green travel habits now and in future. Wales has many best practice policies on children's human rights. It has committed to a default 20mph limit, the Future Generations Act, Active Travel Act and has a Children's Commissioner. The rights of children to safe play and to a sustainable future are recognised by policy.

Anna Semlyen 20's Plenty for Us National Campaign Manager said

"Our children want to go out, exercise and see friends. They have a right to enjoy public space and freedom. It shouldn't just be kids who have gardens or who live in cul-de-sacs that can go or play out. We want streets where every child who is sensible enough is permitted to roam without constant adult supervision. Our society can choose to protect them from the menace of fast traffic by setting 20mph limits. Our politicians can give every child the gift of 20mph and healthy freedom."

¹ http://www.20splenty.org/global_ministers_mandate_20mph

20's Plenty for Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.

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