

How School Safety Zones are not a priority when children need a community wide 20mph speed limit!!



Briefing sheet on why 20mph School Safety Zones can have minimum impact on child road safety and will encourage inactive travel to school.

On the face of it, having a 20mph speed limits around a school entrance seems an sensible idea. However, a closer inspection may lead us to a very different conclusion

First some background and key facts :-

- Only a small minority of child road casualties occur on the way to or from school (Just 20%).¹
- Very few casualties occur outside the school itself.
- The mean radius of school safety zones is just 300m, yet the mean distance travelled to school is 1.8km. Hence the school safety zones apply to only 17% of the journey.²
- At exit gateways to school safety zones drivers are reminded of an increase in speed limit to 30mph.

So why are we so pre-occupied with school safety zones if children are most likely to be casualties on the rest of the road network where there are higher speed limits, and when they are not on the way to or from school?

Well the answer is for most of us when looking at the issue we see most children around schools and presume that this is where the danger is. And of course for parents driving their children to school it is the part of the journey when they feel most out of control when their children get out of the car. For them a school safety zone improves safety for 100% of their child's pedestrian journey from the car to the school. Hence it is seen as desirable by school-run parents.

But what of the child who walks or cycles all the way from their home to school. The school safety zone now only works for 17% of their journey. For drivers isolated 20mph school safety zones reinforce and legitimise driving at faster speeds outside of the immediate school location, hence increasing the risk to pedestrian and cycling children.

Whilst school safety zones do minimally increase safety around schools it has a negative effect on safety for children walking or cycling to school outside of those zones. Their biggest disadvantage is that they can lead parents and highway authorities to believe that they have "fixed the problem" of child road safety.

Instead of focussing on school safety zones we should be ensuring that children are given better conditions for walking and cycling for the whole route from their home to school. That can best be achieved by deploying a low-cost Total 20 policy which makes 20mph the default for residential and urban roads including those around schools. For the same cost as a school safety zone you can cover 50 times the number of surrounding streets with a wide area 20mph limit.

It's time to recognise that we need community-wide safety for children and not just in the last 100m of their school journey.

Feedback We welcome your response on this press release. We provide more information on our site www.20splentyforus.org.uk and can provide advice on technical issues.

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

¹ The AA Motoring Trust: The facts about road accidents and children

² Transport for London: Safety of Schoolchildren on London Roads