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Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

Contents

Contents.....	2
Disclaimer	3
Introduction	4
Assessment	5
Conclusion.....	8
Post Assessment Review and sign-off.....	10

Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for 'Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: A Renewed Policy Statement'

Disclaimer

This document is a point in time assessment of the likely effects of 'Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: A Renewed Policy Statement' on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. This impact assessment should be read in conjunction with the other impact assessments prepared for this proposal.

Scottish Government acknowledge the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of strategic decisions and legislation on children's rights and wellbeing. Any information gathered during implementation of the legislation or strategic decision to which the impact assessment relates, will be used to inform future determinations of impact. Any new strategic decision or new legislation (including amending legislation) would be subject to a new CRWIA in line with the legislative requirements.

Introduction

Scotland wants to help people use cars less, in a fair and helpful way. The Scottish Government and COSLA are working together to make this happen.

We believe that using cars less can help everyone by:

- Making the air cleaner and quieter;
- Making roads safer;
- Helping people be more active and healthy; and
- Making towns and cities nicer places to live.

This is also important because Scotland wants reach net zero by 2045. The Scottish Government and COSLA know that not everyone can stop using cars easily. For example:

- People in the countryside;
- Disabled people who need cars to get around; and
- Parents with children or people with certain jobs may need to drive more.

That's why the plan is for the whole country to work together, but not everyone has to reduce car use in the same way. We want to make sure that streets and public spaces are fair for everyone — not just for people who drive cars.

Type of proposal:

Decision of a strategic nature relating to the right and wellbeing of children

Name the proposal and describe its overall aims and intended purpose:

Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland: A Renewed Policy Statement

Research into how to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by transport in Scotland has shown that a reduction in car use – alongside a move to electric vehicles – is needed to meet Scotland's net zero target. This document sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to achieving this reduction.

The policy statement uses behaviour change tools to inform our approach to helping people to shift to four key travelling habits, according to their circumstances and needs:

- Reducing the need to travel by making use of sustainable online options;
- Living well locally, by choosing local destinations or reducing the distances driven;
- Switching modes to walk, wheel, cycle or public transport where feasible; and
- Combining trips or sharing journeys with another person if car use remains the only feasible option..

To support these four behaviours, the policy statement sets out four key next steps which we will take to progress this ambition:

- Setting a new target for car use reduction in Scotland, making use of the most up-to-date evidence;
- Working with key partners to identify how we can best reduce car use in Scotland in a way that is fair for everyone;
- Working with key partners to develop a national engagement campaign on car use reduction; and
- Working with key partners to fully provide local authorities the power to charge road users.

These are policies that the Scottish Government has committed to introducing, which when taken together, will encourage people to change their behaviour towards the four above travelling habits. These will require their own separate impact assessments.

Key Terms

Reduction/ Reduce: to make smaller or less in amount.

Carbon Emissions: Carbon emissions are made when we burn things like coal, oil, or gas to make electricity, drive cars, or run factories. The most common gas is carbon dioxide (CO₂), but there are others such as Methane (CH₄) which comes from animals like cows when they burp, and from places like landfills and gas leaks, nitrous oxide (N₂O) which comes from farming and using certain fertilizers, and other greenhouse gases which are made by people in factories and can be even stronger than CO₂, even though there's less of them. All of these gases trap heat in the air, which can change the weather, melt ice, and make it harder for animals and people to live comfortably.

Net Zero: Putting no extra greenhouse gases into the air. We can still make some pollution, but we also remove the same amount as we make, so the total stays balanced.

Start date of proposal's development: November 2022

Start date of CRWIA process: 01/09/2025

With reference given to the requirements of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which aspects of the proposal are relevant to children's rights?

Article 6 Life, survival and development - A positive impact has been identified as reducing car use will in turn reduce air pollution and road accidents, leading to a reduction in the number of deaths due to these causes.

Article 24 Health and health services – The policy is expected to have a positive effect on the health of children in Scotland in several ways including the fact that it is

likely to diminish infant and child mortality for the reasons set out above, as well as improving health outcomes by reducing environmental pollution caused by cars.

Article 31 Leisure, play and culture – The policy is expected to have a positive impact as reducing car use including parked vehicles and traffic, is intended to have the effect of improving the provision of spaces and opportunities for children's participation in recreational and leisure activities.

Please provide a summary of the evidence gathered which will be used to inform your decision-making and the content of the proposal.

- 1) Tan, Z; Berry, A; Charalambides, M; Mijic, A; Pearse, W; Porter, A; Ryan, M; Shorten, R; Stettler, M; Tetley, T; Wright, S; and Masen, M. (2023). '[Tyre wear particles are toxic for us and the environment](#)', Imperial College London.
- 2) Emissions Analytics. (2020). '[Pollution from tyre wear 1000 times worse than exhaust emissions](#)'.
- 3) Scottish Government. (2021). '[Cleaner Air for Scotland 2: Towards a better place for everyone](#)'.
- 4) Transport Scotland. (2024). '[Key reported road casualties Scotland 2023](#)'.
- 5) Scottish Government. (2018). '[Active Scotland Delivery Plan](#)'.
- 6) Zegeer, C; and Bushell, M. (2012). '[Pedestrian crash trends and potential countermeasures from around the world](#)'.
- 7) Teuton, J; Sloan, P; Whyte, B; Cope, A; Macdonald, A; Cozzolino, N; Davis, A; and Douglas, M. (2020). '[Transport use, health and health inequalities: The impact of measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19](#)', Public Health Scotland.
- 8) Children's Parliament. (2021). '[It's up to you, me, and all of us](#)'.
- 9) Scottish Youth Parliament. (2022). '[What's your take: Reducing car use survey](#)'.
- 10) World Health Organization. (2024). '[Ambient \(outdoor\) air pollution](#)'.
- 11) Boogaard, H; Patton, A; Atkinson, R; Brook, J; Chang, H; Crouse, D; Fussell, J; Hoek, G; Hoffmann, B; Kappeler, R; Kutlar Joss, M; Ondras, M; Sagiv, S; Samoli, E; Shaikh, R; Smargiassi, A; Szpiro, A; Van Vliet, E; Vienneau, D; Weuve, J; Lurmann, F; and Forastiere, F. (2022). '[Long-term exposure to traffic-related air pollution and selected health outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#)', *Environment International*, 164.
- 12) Miner, P; Smith, B; Jani, A; McNeill, G; and Gathorne-Hardy, A. (2024). '[Car harm: A global review of automobility's harm to people and the environment](#)', *Journal of Transport Geography*, 115.

Further to the evidence described at '3' have you identified any 'gaps' in evidence which may prevent determination of impact? If yes, please provide an explanation of how they will be addressed

No gaps identified – evidence of impact of transport options on health and wellbeing is well researched and documented.

Analysis of Evidence

Sources 1, 2, & 3: There is a body of evidence which suggests that car use impacts negatively on the health and wellbeing of both car users and non-car users. Pollution from tyre and brake wear, which also occurs from electric vehicles, is a significant

contributor to poor air quality, which causes an estimated 1,700 premature deaths in Scotland each year.

Source 4: Car use contributes to thousands of road casualties each year as well as pedestrian casualties, 7% of all car user casualties were child casualties (defined as under 16 years of age), and 28% of all pedestrian casualties were child casualties.

Sources 5 & 6: Car use reduces people's opportunities for active travel, with physical inactivity known to lead to nearly 2,500 deaths in Scotland annually. Children, people with disabilities, and the elderly are more likely to be killed or injured by motor vehicles despite lower levels of car access and higher levels of public transport use.

Source 7: The negative impacts of car use including from poor air quality and injury have been found to disproportionately affect more vulnerable members of society, including children and older people, as well as those living in more deprived areas.

Source 8: As a part of Scotland's Climate Assembly, the Children's Parliament worked with children across Scotland in a concurrent process to learn about the issues and provide recommendations to inform the work of the citizen's assembly. Their recommendations for travel had a strong focus on incentivising public transport and active travel, aligned with the interventions set out in the route map.

Source 9: A draft route map was published for public consultation in January 2022. As part of the consultation, we engaged with members of Scotland's Youth Parliament, who showed a desire for change from current patterns of travel, with 17% of survey respondents saying that in the future they would like to study or work online rather than travelling (compared to 6% who say this is what they currently do); and 26% saying that in the future they would like to cycle for the trips that they make regularly (compared with 7% who said that this was the way they currently travel for the trips that they make regularly). A significant proportion however said that in the future they would like to travel by electric car. This is likely to be a reflection of the fact that cost, convenience and journey time were cited as being most influential in shaping their travel choices, and the fact that car is currently seen as being disproportionately cheap, convenient and quick when compared to other travel behavioursⁱ.

Sources 10 & 11: Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental risks to child health. Over 90% of people are exposed to unsafe vehicle pollution levels of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone. This has been linked to heart disease, lung cancer, cognitive impairment, developmental issues and higher risks of conditions like asthma in children. All citizens must inhale this air, whether they own a car or not. While regulatory improvements have been made to reduce these emissions, they have been offset by an ever-increasing number of vehicles being purchased and driven.

Source 12: Automobility contributes to air, land, and water pollution. These forms of pollution are harmful to human health and contribute to low birth weights and premature births. In children, it contributes to reduced lung volumes and increased risk of diseases, e.g. asthma and leukaemia, and mental health issues. Over the past few decades, children have become increasingly sedentary in their travel,

particularly in the most car dependent countries. Children who are driven to destinations are less likely to meet the 60-min daily physical activity recommendation from the World Health Organization. Car dependence has shifted social constructions of childhood and especially concepts of independence and safety. Compared to children who walk or cycle, children who travel in cars have less knowledge about their neighbourhoods, have fewer opportunities for outdoor play and exploration, and gain less experience in assessing risk and becoming independent.

What changes (if any) have been made to the proposal as a result of this assessment?

A number of changes have been made to the car use reduction renewed policy statement to reflect feedback we have received, including from children and young people, and from additional contemporary evidence which has been gathered in the intervening period. A key change has been to stress the importance of the approach to reducing car use being inclusive and flexible. The policy statement is clear that the target is a national ambition, not a requirement for all individuals to reduce their car use at the same rate.

Conclusion

As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all UNCRC requirements, what is the potential overall impact of this proposal on children's rights?
Positive.

If you have identified a positive impact on children's rights, please describe below how the proposal will protect, respect, and fulfil children's rights in Scotland.

Article 6 Life, survival and development

Article 6 states that we should 'ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child'. Each year, thousands of deaths are attributed to pollution, physical activity and road traffic collisions. Evidence in response to question 5 could therefore be used to argue that car use has a negative effect on the probability of survival of children. By reducing the use of cars in Scotland, there is therefore an increase in the probability of survival for children in Scotland. When including consideration of development, the evidence further details the correlation between pollution and developmental and physical disorders. The overall contribution of the policy to Article 6 is therefore positive.

Article 24 Health and health services

Sections 2(a) (requiring state actors to take steps to 'diminish infant and child mortality') and (c) (indicating states actors should be 'taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution') of Article 24 are of particular relevance to this policy. As set out when discussing implications for Article 6, evidence discussed in response to question 5 indicates that the policy will have positive implications for the health of children in Scotland.

Article 31 Leisure, play and culture

Car use contributes to community severance, which is the negative impact that transport infrastructure and traffic has on the wellbeing of the people who need to make trips using that infrastructure. Traffic and parked vehicles can act as a barrier to community interaction and have a negative impact on the quality of public spaces and the wellbeing of people using them. If there is less traffic or parked vehicles, people are more likely to walk, wheel or cycle in their local areas, which could have positive impacts on the wellbeing of individuals and the community in general.

By reducing car use, the intention is that the effects of community severance will also be reduced, leading to improved 'provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity' as set out in Article 31.

If a negative impact has been identified please describe below. Is there a risk this could potentially amount to an incompatibility?

N/A.

As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all wellbeing indicators, will the proposal contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland?

Yes, the proposal contributes positively to the 'Safe', 'Healthy', and 'Active' indicators.

If yes, please provide an explanation below:

Evidence set out in response to previous responses demonstrates the impact that car use can have on safety as a result of road traffic collisions, health through cars contributing to pollution and physical inactivity, and to being active through encouraging increased use of active travel modes such as walking, wheeling, and cycling.

How will you communicate to children and young people the impact that the proposal will have on their rights?

No child friendly or accessible versions of the CRWIA are planned however, this CRWIA will be published online so those wishing to access it should be able to. Additionally, in so far as possible, care has been taken to write the CRWIA in accessible language so children and young people who may be reading it can understand its content and the potential impact on their rights. We have engaged with young people throughout the consultation and revision process as detailed earlier in this document. For the wider policy, communications are issued through Scottish Government marketing campaigns, which are shown on television, social media, and radio. This messaging should therefore reach young people, as well as other demographic groups. Specific policy interventions as set out in the route map will be accompanied by their own communications and impact assessments.

Post Assessment Review and sign-off

Planning for the review of impact on children's rights and wellbeing

As part of the decision-making process, plans for reviewing the impact on children's rights and wellbeing need to be developed.

- **How will the impact of the proposal on children's rights and wellbeing be monitored?**
- **When will you review and update the CRWIA if required?**

A monitoring and evaluation framework will be included as a part of the development of delivery plans. Specific impacts of individual policy interventions will be monitored at a policy level. Plans to review and update the CRWIA will be built into the monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

Sign off

Policy Lead Signature & Date of Sign Off: Heather Cowan, 11/06/2025

Deputy Director Signature & Date of Sign Off: Fiona Brown 11/06/2025

Date CRWIA team first contacted: 01/11/2024



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ⁱ Scottish Youth Parliament. [What's your take: Reducing car use survey](#). 2022.