



# Perceptions of London's streets among children and their parents

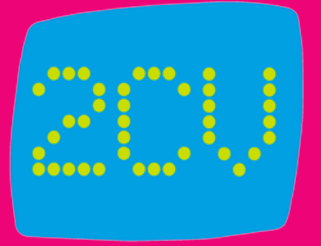
Debrief

April 2016

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# 1. Background and objectives

# Background



- TfL are developing a new strategic approach to walking and as part of this they would like to improve their understanding of the pedestrian experience, particularly among children aged 5-11 years old and their parents
- TfL are keen to understand more about parents and children's perceptions of London's streets, be that walking or playing on them
  - To explore the barriers and pain points of the walking and play experience and what can be done to encourage more time to be spent enjoying them



# Objectives



Business  
question

How do younger children (aged 5-11) and their parents perceive London's streets, for walking or playing and what are the barriers to more time being spent on them?

Research  
Objectives

## Children aged 5-11 / Parents

- To explore perceptions of the streets where they currently walk and play, or could potentially walk and play
- To explore barriers to children wanting to walk, or play on streets, which need to be overcome
- To explore barriers to parents wanting / allowing / encouraging their children to walk which need to be overcome
- To explore perceived pain points on accompanied walked trips
- To understand why walkable trips are driven

## Opportunities

- To identify opportunities for increasing children's levels of walking or playing on streets
- To inform strategies aimed at increasing the number of children walking and playing on streets, and / or the amount of time spent walking and playing
- To inform strategies aimed at increasing the number of families walking

# Our approach



## What:

- **Landscape scoping**

- **Qualitative** understanding of target audiences – deep dive perceptions/ barriers and opportunities

## How:

- **Desk research**/consolidation of existing knowledge
- **2 x Expert interviews**
  - Tim Gill – *Rethinking Childhood*
  - Ben Shaw - *Director Policy Studies Institute*

- **Pre-tasking** children and parents to think about their environment and how walking fits into it
- **14 x In-home family sessions** with parents and children that included **accompanied walking** trips

# Sample considerations



## FAMILY TYPE

A representative range of family types (inc single/dual parent family; actively engaged grandparents, with / without family dog)

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Age of children:** 5-11 split into two broad bands (5-7; 8-11). Some families had children in both age groups
- **SEG:** BC1 - C2D
- **BME:** ethnically diverse inclusive sample to be recruited

## LOCATION

- Families living in Inner and Outer London boroughs
- Good mix of street types / street dynamics

## MAIN MODAL USE

Mix of families using different modes as their primary mode of transport (car, bus, Tube, walking)

## TYPE OF SCHOOL

Skew towards state primaries, but also includes private / independent schools

## MIX OF ATTITUDES (PARENTS) TO WALKING AND PLAYING

Attitudes: spectrum of acceptability of walking and outdoor playing

## MIX OF BEHAVIOURS

- Mix of leisure / play / walking
- Behaviours: Distance to school / local shops / playgrounds. Can walk and do walk / Can walk but do NOT walk / Cannot walk and do not walk)

# What we know from previous research

- Previous research\* established that the role of walking is unique. While some walks are seen to be an active choice, many walks are 'invisible', particularly those that do not feel a 'considered' modal choice (familiar, utility journeys). These walks go unnoticed and the quality of the pedestrian experience (and what influences that) exists at a low conscious level
- There is an inherent duality within the walking experience. Walking evokes positive emotions and associations while simultaneously engendering less positive feelings (it is effortful, risky) and all on the pedestrian to 'deliver the experience', and these emotions can be amplified when applied to young children
- We have learnt that as walking is a low conscious behaviour and a mode that is self-determined, benchmarks for satisfaction can be less considered and lower than they are for other modes. As a result, frustrations (pain points) and delighters can be experienced less acutely than they are for other modes
- With parents of young children, safety and risk\*\* are the key factors that impact on satisfaction benchmarks and their needs and evaluation are less nuanced and sophisticated than other pedestrians and road users



\*Exploring TLRN CSS among pedestrians and influence of the urban realm – 2CV Dec 2014

\*\*Increasing cycling among children – 2CV July 2014





## 2. Headlines

# Research headlines



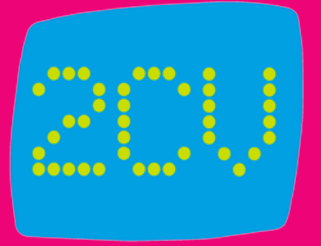
Most family walks are **local utility walks**. Compared to other activities **walking is quite a low conscious behaviour** and perceived to lack excitement. Although, when families with children aged 5-11yrs do walk, they enjoy the experience - parents for the quality time with their children and children for the fun and play incorporated into walking.

## **A range of factors can influence attitudes and behaviours to walking and outdoor play**

- Pleasant local living environments and positive parental attitudes to health encourage children's walking/outside play.
- Also, the growing consciousness around the importance of independent mobility for children's growth and development is starting to have a positive impact on walking behaviour.
- For older children aged 8-11 walking can be a way for them to gain freedom
- But in less pleasant areas, and crucially, when parents don't feel safe in their local environment, walking and outside play can be discounted
- Walking can be easily substituted for an alternative mode when time is tight or there is a more appealing option (taking the car; doing a 'more fun' and purposeful leisure activity like swimming or football)

There are **opportunities that can encourage** family walking

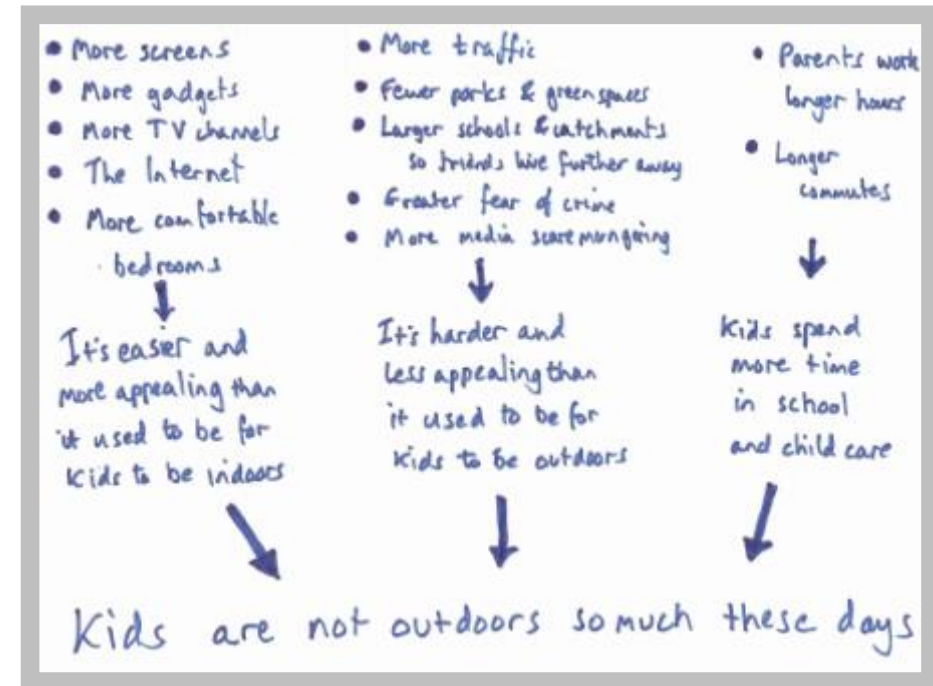
- Make families aware of the health and wellbeing benefits of walking
- Raise awareness of existing walking/play initiatives
- Work with Local Authorities / schools, to encourage walking to school and after school outside play
- Reframe walking – for children so they link it to fun, freedom and play; for parents – so giving leisure walks a 'purpose'
- Consider a targeted strategy and approach – different areas require different levels of support; target summer months



### 3. Children being outdoors: the broad context

# A range of factors have contributed to a decline in children being outdoors

- Many **environmental, economical and societal factors\*** have contributed to walking being a less regular (and pertinent) activity for families and children in London
  - **Overcrowding has placed pressure on the built environment** making outdoor spaces less appealing
  - **Increased property prices** has forced people from where they grew up resulting in less established neighbourhoods and communities
  - **Greater dependency on car use** resulting in less walking but also increased traffic
  - **Development of and adoption of digital technologies** that discourage a culture of outside play (*Baxandroll, David and Dutzik, 2012*)
  - **Changes to working culture** - both parents working, less time with children → parents at home less
  - **Larger school catchment areas** means less opportunity to walk to school
  
- These factors are underpinned by a perception that our built environments are generally less safe (more polluted, more traffic etc)



Tim Gill:  
Rethinking  
Childhood –  
Two stories  
about why  
kids are not  
outdoors so  
much  
these days

*It is clear from PSI's work that children's mobility has been declining. There are wider societal changes: both parents working more and fewer parents around during the day. A retreat from the outdoors is a side effect of modern capitalist structure. Tim Gill, Rethinking Childhood*

*Modernity has resulted in a "reduction of social cohesion and public engagement" and "a tendency to privilege private ties at the detriment of public ones" (Broadbent, 2012: 129-130). 2CV Desk research*

\*Factors identified and cited by expert interviews unless referenced


# Decline in outdoors play coexists with rise in positive influences of walking

- There has been, however, an increase in influences that can have a positive impact on perceptions of walking and the behaviour of parents and families
  - **Health and well-being focus** from government (local and national) as well as a proliferation of brands, comms, and policies (Change4Life; Sports Relief) drawing attention to the positive impact of greater activity
  - **Media focus on children's obesity** crisis and activity as a solution
  - **Fitness and exercise as an aspirational** lifestyle choice
  - A growing discussion (as seen on Facebook and Netmums) that **independent mobility is important** for the development of kids
  - **Positive impact of technology** (self-tracking apps, social media connecting communities) on healthy behaviours
  - Awareness of **the environmental impact** of greater car use

*There is growing interest from both parents and policy makers in favour of walking and cycling and this is speculative but in the last 5 years parents (individually and collectively) are saying 'I'm not happy with my kids being driven everywhere and I'm not happy with them not being able to play outside more.'*  
**Tim Gill, Rethinking Childhood**

*Independent mobility is an important indicator of child well-being. It provides autonomy as well as learning and development skills. That said, it's a paradoxical issue for most parents. On the one hand, parents know it's good for their children to experience greater independence yet there are many concerns on a pragmatic level.*  
**Ben Shaw, Director Policy Studies Institute**

05-03-15, 14:50
#5



**Lanabelle M** Member

Join Date: Jan 2015  
 Location: Rannoch  
 Posts: 853

free range parenting is teaching them to stand on their own two feet, mollycoddling on the otherhand is why we have 5 foot tall babies in the world incapable of doing anything by themselves. a mile isn't a long way away and im sure the parents made an educated judgement on letting them come home alone. some 6 year olds are mature than some 21 year olds I know.

Netmums forum discussion

# A desire to return to the idyll of the past

- Parents in the research often reference their own childhoods and how they played when discussing their children's experiences
- This sits alongside a somewhat romanticised view of the past when there was....
  - Less reliance on cars
  - Children playing unsupervised
  - Children getting 'exercise and fresh air'
- It is clear that there is an appetite for a return to this way of life and the autonomy it delivered but with paradoxical fear of the inherent risks associated with it



*I loved being outdoors when I was a kid. I got to know my area. Enjoyed mini adventures, I'd like the same thing for Faith too to be honest. But it feels that was a different time*  
**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 6, Central/Inner**

*Whereas at the level of parent and child autonomy may be desired, at the level of society we are reminded of the unique tension that exists between parent and child, dependence and independence. In the context of outdoor play, societal fears emerge from car accidents and abduction, two factors that have contributed to spending too little time playing outside (Gill, 2012a) 2CV Desk Research*



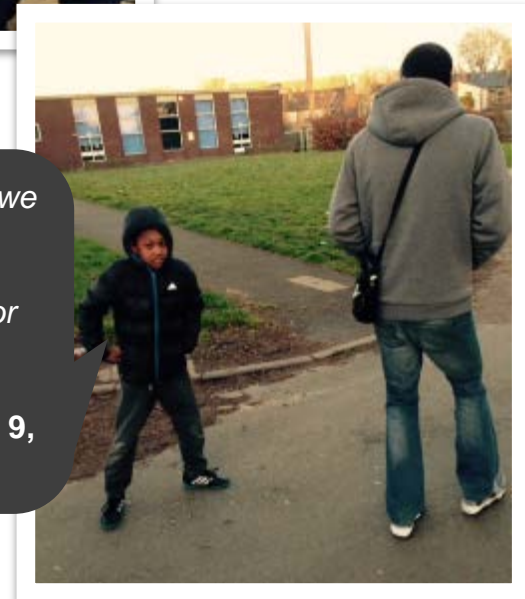
## 4. Our audience and the factors impacting on their attitudes and behaviours

# Parents of children aged 5-11 years are focused on teaching their children important life skills

- The parents interviewed want to instil positive values, habits and behaviours in their children
  - Prioritise raising their children well and dedicate time and effort to this
  - Giving them the skills they need to develop and grow
- There is a spectrum of attitudes and approaches to parenting across the sample
  - Some parents are more risk taking vs risk averse
  - Some parents want to be more in control vs allowing their children more freedom
  - There is an emerging focus on the importance of children's independent mobility in their growth and development
- Children learn from their parents and reflect their opinions, values and attitudes
  - They tend to have the same positive or negative attitudes as their parents towards walking



*I don't think I'll let her go out on her own till she's in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year at secondary school*  
**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 7, Central /Inner**



*Son: I like walking, it's why we have legs! It's natural.*  
*Dad: I walked a lot when I was young, I was an outdoor kid, I want him to be the same, to see the world.*  
**Father and Yr 4 boy aged 9, Central/ Inner**

Parents are the decision makers and heads of household, and therefore promoting the benefits of walking and outside play to them is key. This will filter down to the children



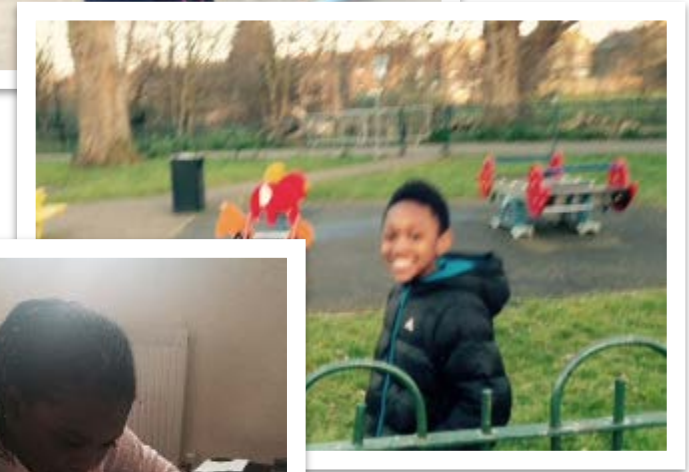
# Children are at different stages of development

- While they are all primary school aged children, it is apparent that children in this research are at different stages of development across the 5-11 age range, with...
- 5-7 yr olds are still very much young children, focusing on play and fun, using their imaginations etc.
- 8-11 yr olds – while clearly still children they have started to develop more of a sense of self, including wanting ...
  - A bit more freedom, using zip card to get around
  - To have friends and socialise with less parental involvement and supervision
- Parental control can lessen as children mature, but many parents are still anxious about relinquishing responsibility
- Gender also plays a role on behaviour with some parents treating boys and girls differently, irrespective of age

*I'll let Richard go and buy me some milk from the shops on his own. He wants to be a bit more independent now and I let him. He's nearly 11.*

**Mother of Yr 6 boy aged 10, Outer**

*Because Angel is a girl, I'm not going to let her go out without an older friend. Even then I'll also go*  
**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 7, Central/Inner**



A targeted approach will be needed for children with varying priorities and needs

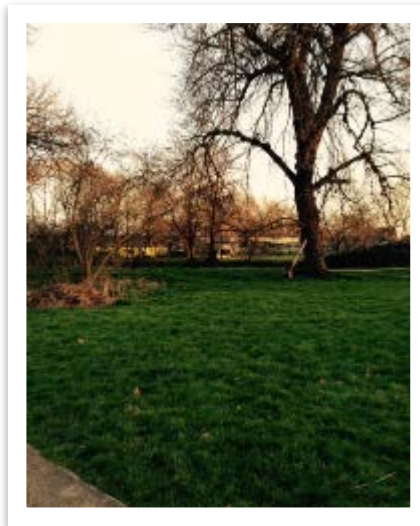
# The biggest differentiator across our audience is their living environments

- Unsurprisingly, families across London have very different living environments and experiences
  - Particularly stark in this research
- A significant differentiator is how pleasant and well maintained areas are perceived to be, which has direct impact on their desire to be outside
  - They spend a lot of time in and around the area they live, so the state of their immediate environment has a big impact on their lives

**Some families live in leafy, clean neighbourhoods in big houses and flats**



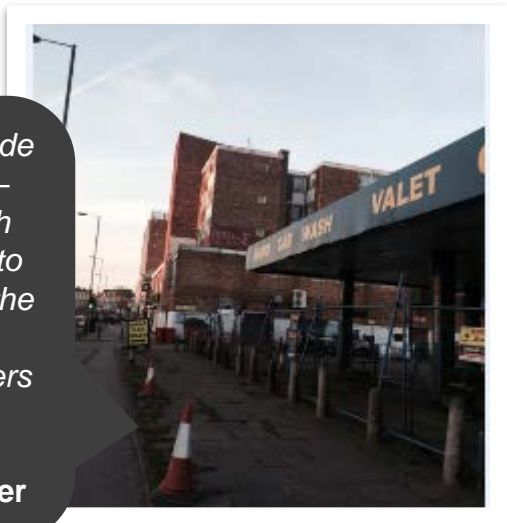
*We moved here because it feels quiet and safe. It is quiet and safe*  
**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6, Outer**



**Some are in smaller properties in more disadvantaged areas, but in neighbourhoods with a strong community feel**

**Some are in urban tower blocks with no obvious pleasant outdoor spaces, and social issues like gangs/drug dealing**

*The local kids are rude and confrontational – they give you the fish eye if you ask them to let me through with the push chair. I know which road the dealers live in around here*  
**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 6, Central/Inner**



Families adapt their lifestyles and behaviours accordingly and can have different propensities to walk/be outside based on this

# Parents' attitudes to healthy living also divides our audience



- Most parents talk about the importance of living in a healthy and active way
  - Eating well, taking lots of exercise, getting out in the fresh air
  - These values around health and wellness permeate different social groups
- But there is still a knowing/doing gap – people find it hard to stick to these healthy ideals
  - Lapse out of healthy behaviours in the moment
  - Day to day time pressures and stress can take over
  - Easier to use the car at the last moment
- There is, therefore, a gap between families who tend to prioritise health and fitness and those who don't



*We're an outdoorsy family. We try and go out and about every weekend. Fresh air and being outdoors is important for us all.*  
**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6, Outer**

*I'm trying to lose weight at the moment. Being as active as I can and being out doors is a big part of that*  
**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 7, Central/Inner**

A more positive attitude to healthy living clearly has an impact on their attitudes to walking and outside play – how can we bring to life the health and wellbeing benefits for families?



## 5. Painting a picture of our families' walking and playing behaviours



**SIMONE and J**

**About me:**

I am a married mother of two kids aged 2 and 7 years old. My husband and I both work full time and share childcare. Although I'm originally from South London we've only lived in Lee for a couple of years and still feel new to the area. My husband's family are from North London and my family don't live that close by. We don't particularly like where we are and plan to move when we can.

I think walking around here for kids isn't great I don't feel the area lends itself to it. It doesn't feel that safe. I don't know my neighbours and I don't know who's around



**FOR ME, WALKING WITH THE CHILDREN...**

It's not something I particularly enjoy and something I have to do. We walk J to school most days but if we're under time pressure I'll take the car and leave it outside school for the pick up.

When we do walk to and from school I enjoy the walk home more. It offers me the chance to chat and bond with J - find out about his day; what he's learnt. It's bit of one to one time without the distractions of his little sister. Other than the school trip and occasional walks to the small local park, we don't walk much locally.

The local amenities here aren't brilliant so we drive to get to most places (J's football; club; soft play). We could walk to Blackheath but the roads are busy and with my daughter still in a push chair, the car's easier

**WHAT MOTIVATES ME TO WALK AND BE OUTDOORS...**

I know being outside is good for J but at this time of year it's not that appealing. We're probably out more in the summer months when it's warmer. That said, we haven't got that many places near by to go to. There's a small park we visit occasionally but that's it.

There is a communal space for the flats here but anyone can access it. There's no way I'd let him out there alone



**WHAT PREVENTS US FROM BEING OUT MORE OFTEN**

While the neighbouring streets where we live are nice we live in a tower block on an estate which is less pleasant. Drug dealing and use happens on the estate as well as some anti-social behaviours. As we've only been here for 2 years we don't feel as comfortably settled in the area As relative new comers to the area we are more sensitised to the risks of the estate compared to other parents who let their kids play in the communal area unsupervised



**KEMY and VILLIAN**

### About me:

I am a single mother of 2 kids, 6 and 9 years old. We live in a nice part of Twickenham, with lots of green spaces. I work as a PE teacher, and like the children to stay active and healthy. I have a childminder that comes in to help twice a week with the school run. My children go to visit their father in another part of London once a week, and we go and see friends frequently, which is a walk away from our house.

We are lucky that we live in an area that is suited to being outside. The people around here are nice and it's good to be amongst the community when you can.



### FOR ME, WALKING WITH THE CHILDREN...

Is an essential part of our lives. We walk to school every day in the spring and summer, less in the winter when we get the bus as well.

Sometimes on the school commute I push Villian in the buggy and run, and Asha takes her bike. It's a great way to get a bit of exercise. But it can be frustrating at the school when they are funny about bikes being allowed on school property.

We'll often go to the park on the way home from school, to be amongst other families which feels like a safe environment for my kids to be in.

We feed the squirrels in the park at the weekends which the kids love. We also go to Saturday cinema club which gives me a chance to get some sleep!

### WHAT MOTIVATES ME TO WALK AND BE OUTDOORS...

It's really important for children to be outside, get fresh air and get some exercise. It's also a big part of their development, getting out into the world and navigating their surroundings. I would hate to keep the kids in all the time and not expose them to all the outside world and nature has to offer.

We take nuts and feed the squirrels in the park ... it's really great quality family time

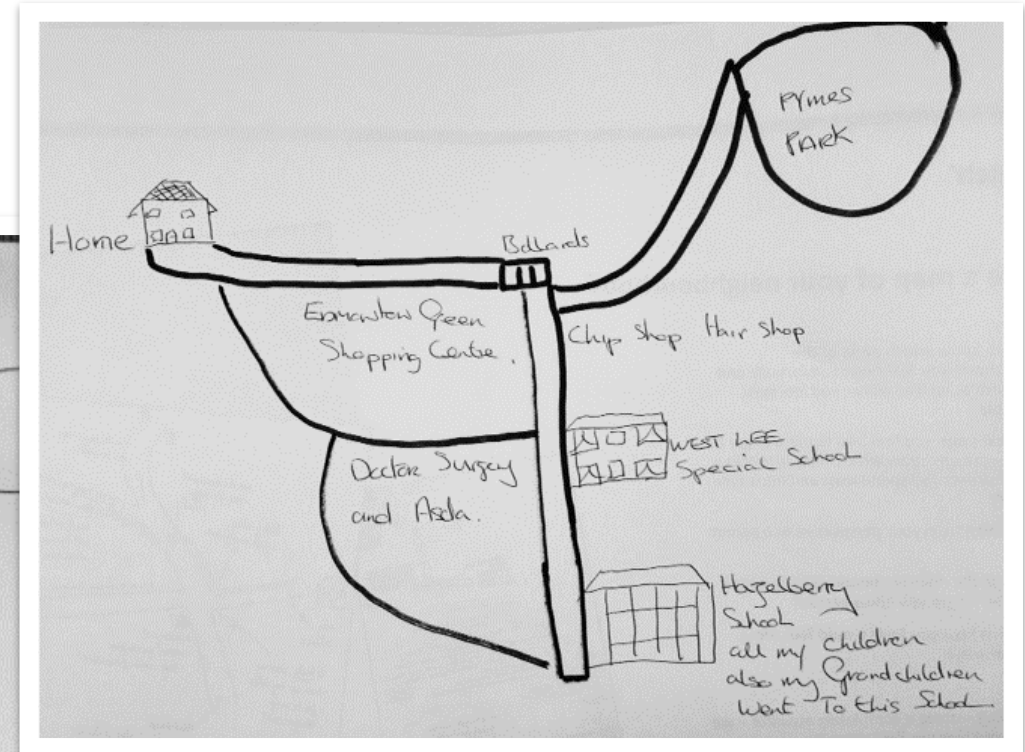
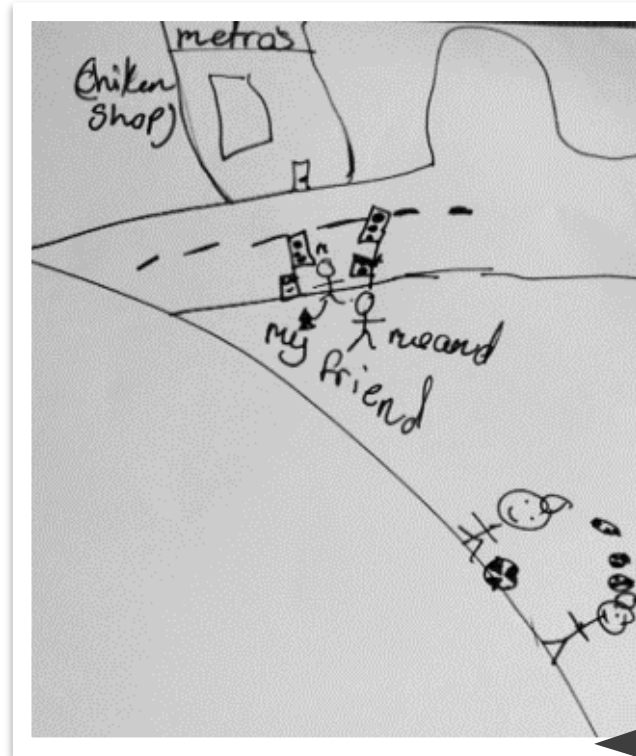


### WHAT PREVENTS US FROM BEING OUT MORE OFTEN

There isn't much that stops us from walking – we live in a nice area so I'm happy for the kids to be outside. I do sometimes worry a bit about the traffic as the main road is busy during rush hour, but we do our best to avoid the main roads, and take back streets to school and to the park.

# Most of the walking journeys made by families are local

- Most family walks are in the area close to their homes
- Utility walks are generally no more than 15/20 mins from their house
  - Distance and time is worked out when deciding which mode to take
  - Children tend to/claim to get tired walking much further than this
- Leisure walks, for families that walk for leisure and not solely utility, are usually done in and around the area they live
  - Wandering out from their house (some examples of families travelling elsewhere to walk, but out of London)



*We walk to school and to the local shops but nowhere else, there isn't time*

**Grandmother of Yr 5 girl aged 9, Central/Inner**

*I don't make her walk too far. It can make her legs hurt*

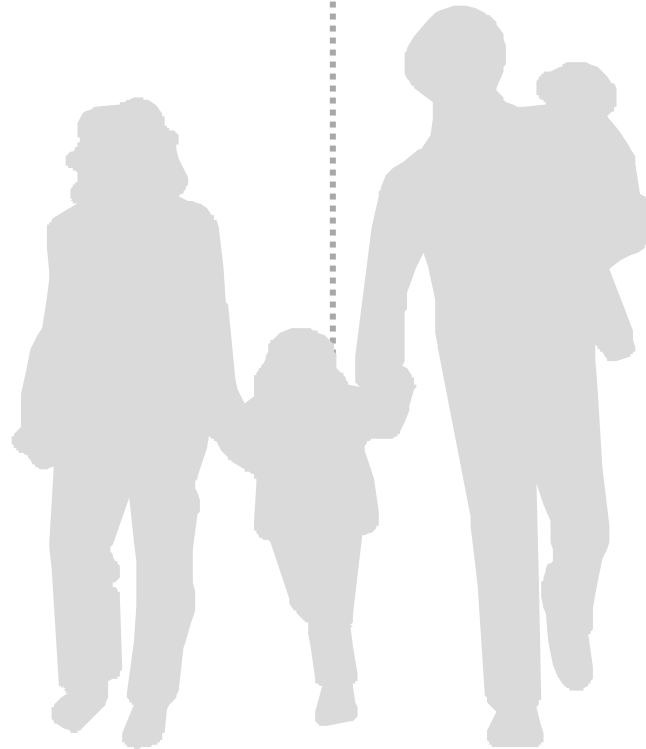
**Mother of Yr 4 girl aged 8, Central/Inner**

Focusing infrastructural improvements or initiatives around the local, residential environment will be key to encouraging families to walk more

# Families go on more utility walks than they do leisure walks as these journeys are more habitual

## UTILITY WALKS

- Regular journeys, eg school commute, going to after school clubs, going to the shops
- Parents have weighed up options and walking is considered the best mode in terms of convenience
- Behaviour often becomes routine / an embedded habit, although they can easily lapse
- Parents find sticking to a routine is a good way to manage their children



## LEISURE WALKS

- Often more ad hoc journeys eg going to the park, walking along the river
- Behaviour doesn't become ingrained; more sporadic
  - Can become more ingrained if walk has a purpose eg taking the dog
- Easier for behaviour to be dropped or to lapse out of less regular routine
  - Eg if it is raining, if time is tight

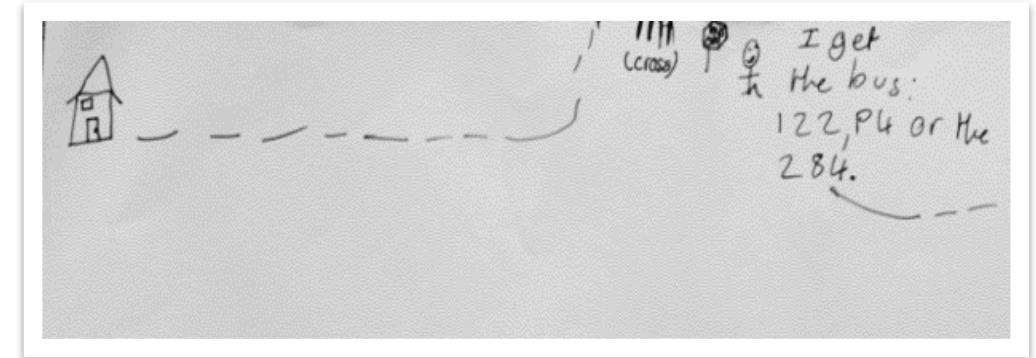
To encourage walking for purpose and for pleasure, we need to communicate the benefits to motivate families to choose walking over other options and to establish habits



# The main utility walking journey for families is the school commute

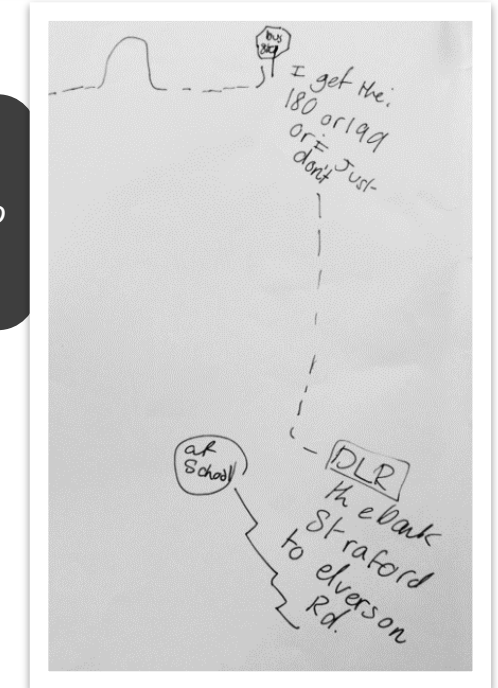


- There is a variety of ways in which this commute to school is made
  - Some families walk the whole distance to school, some take the car, bus or train, and some are multi-modal (these behaviours are dependent on the distance from home to school)
  - Some children ride scooters, bikes or roller-skate to school (this can be to speed journey up)
  - Some try and avoid busy roads and take routes that incorporate more pleasant surroundings
- Most parents take their children, but some use a childminder on some /all of the days
  - Some of the older children (8-11 year olds) we met walk on their own
  - Some meet friends on the way and travel with them
- The morning trip to school is usually more time pressured and stressful than the trip home after school, which is more relaxed
  - The walk to school is more likely to be replaced by another mode compared to the walk home



*I walk from home, go across the crossing and then get a bus and the DLR from there before I get to school*  
**Yr 9 boy aged 9, Central/Inner**

*It's really stressful in the morning getting ready – everyone is rushing around, it's more chilled after school*  
**Mother of Yr2 girl aged 6, Outer**



The time after school is an opportune moment for initiatives to encourage walking and outdoor play

# School policies can be quite influential on walking behaviours, and can have a positive or negative impact



## POSITIVE IMPACT ON WALKING BEHAVIOURS

Schools promoting walking initiatives such as Walk On Wednesday

Teachers championing walking

School affiliated with Sport Relief



## NEGATIVE IMPACT ON WALKING BEHAVIOURS

Financial penalties for children being late

Not allowing bikes on school property

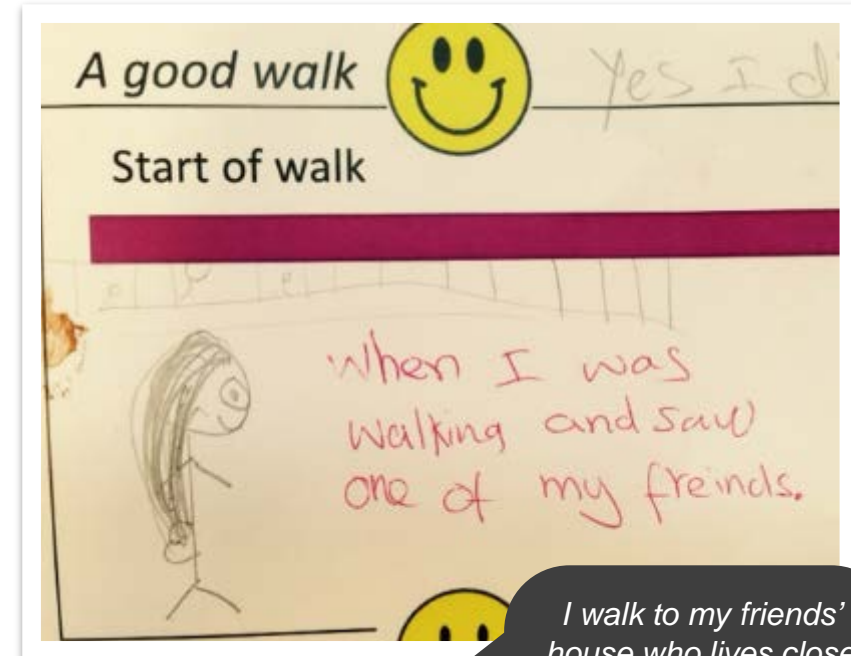
Not supporting walking initiatives

Not allowing children under a certain age to walk alone

Important for TfL to work closely with schools to help to encourage walking behaviours

# For the older children (8-11 years old) walking is starting to be a way for them to gain some independence and freedom

- Some older children starting to without their parents
  - Walking to friends' houses or local amenities
  
- This can be one of their first steps towards a greater level of independence
  - Within the parameters / under the rules set by their parents, but travelling on their own and starting to make some of their own decisions
  - Can be supported by parents who see the importance of independent mobility
  
- However, this does not give walking a positive image for children
  - It is often an 'invisible' part of their lives and journeys - a facilitator of other behaviours rather than a behaviour in itself

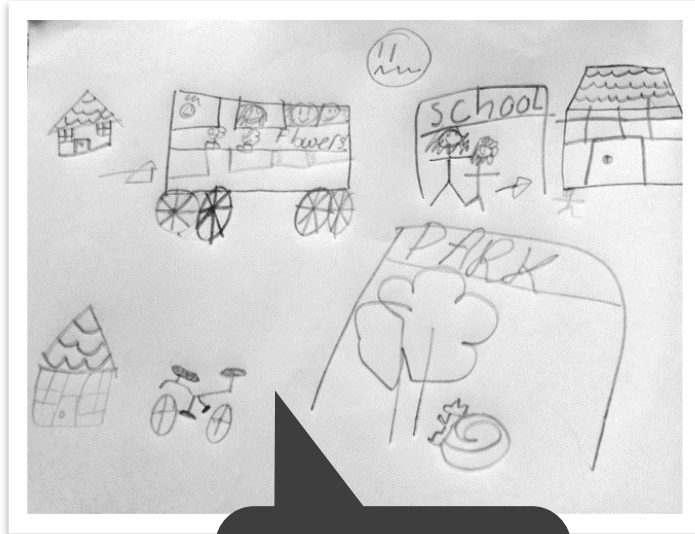


*I walk to my friends' house who lives close by us. I've got lots of friends near by – people I go to school with and some of my cousins*  
**Yr 5 girl aged 9, Outer**

How can TfL bring these positive associations of walking to life for children and parents?

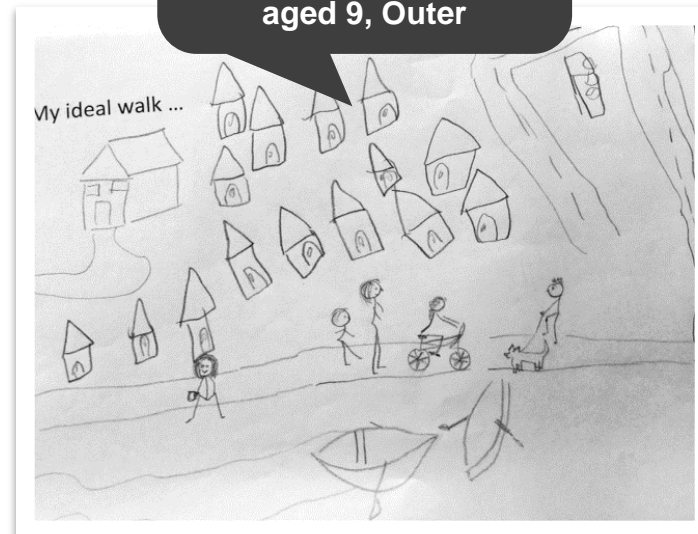
# Walking for leisure is felt to be an enjoyable activity, but it is a less common behaviour, and can be seen to lack purpose

Walks around the park...



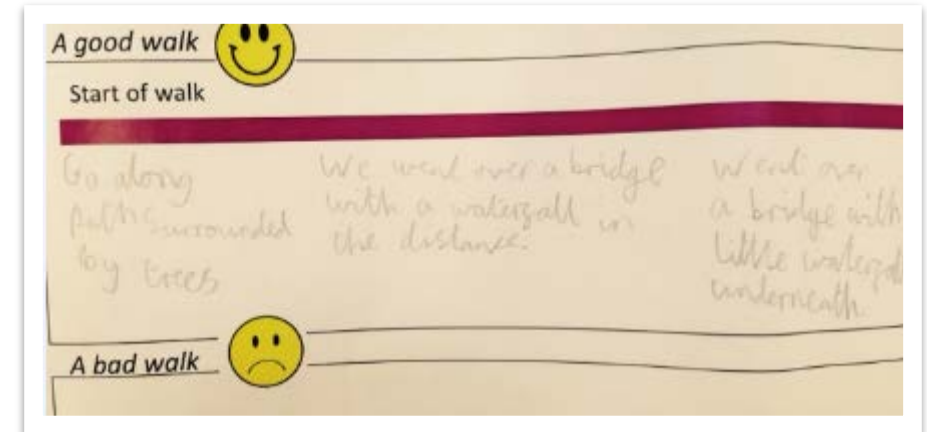
*I love feeding the ducks and enjoying the open spaces*  
**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6, Outer**

*There is a nice walk on the other side of the river from Walton bridge*  
**Mother of Yr 4 boy aged 9, Outer**



... or to the river

...or to other local attractions



*There are lots of green spaces to enjoy like Richmond and Bushy park, the river and Fairfield recreation ground*  
**Mother of Yr 4 boy aged 8, Outer**

Other leisure activities are seen to be more 'purposeful' eg swimming or football so how can walking for leisure be given more of a purpose?

# A life change can trigger a change in family walking behaviours



Families moving to a new area



- Don't know the area or people, which can discourage being out on streets/walking
- Walking routes/distances not yet familiar, can feel easier to take the car or public transport

Children starting a new school



- Route to school not yet known, can feel less effortful to take the car or bus at the start
  - Habits forming – and car can become default

Parents starting new jobs

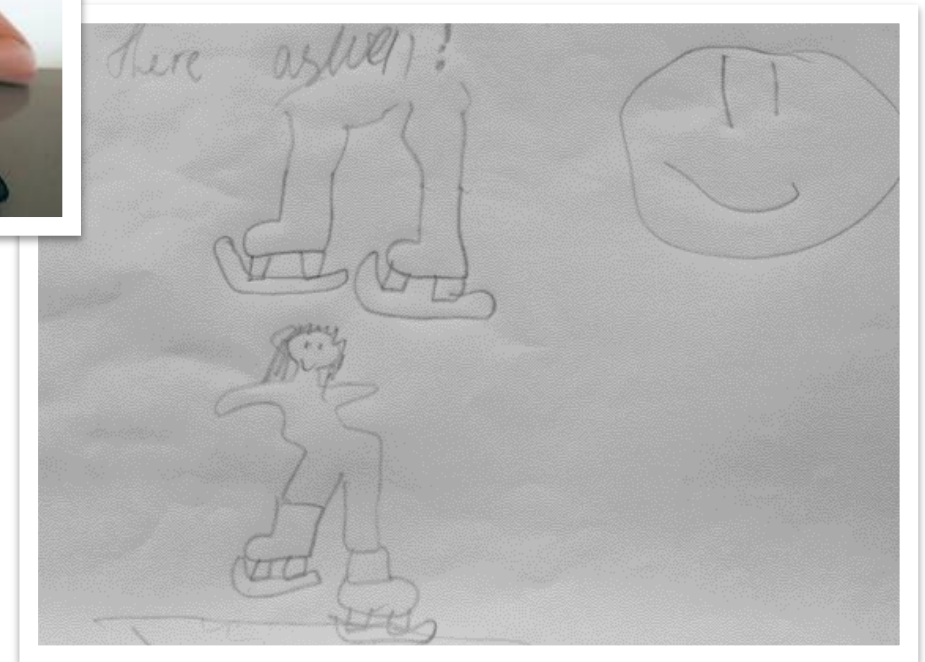


- Daily timings change
- Disrupts morning and evening routines
  - Can break walking habits

Habits are broken and re-formed when there is a change in daily routine – it is important to try and intercept this moment to establish walking habits

# There is no established culture of playing outside

- Some children play outside their homes or on local streets, cul de sacs or green patches near their houses
  - Often within earshot of or visible to parents
  
- Some playing ball games, other group games or using skates
  
- But for many, outside street play has now been replaced with
  - Indoor gaming, on computers, phones and tablets
  - Play destinations such as adventure playgrounds, skate parks, zip lines etc.
  - Other hobbies and interests

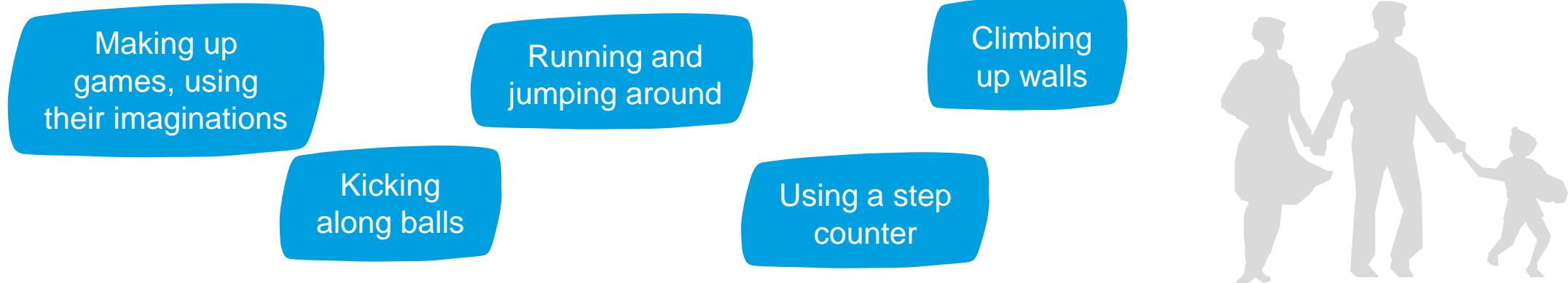


*After school, especially in winter, we'll just come in and he'll go on his tablet or watch telly if he hasn't got football club*  
**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6, Central/Inner**

How can we help to re-establish outside play in children's lives? How can local authorities and TfL help children get to play spaces safely?

## For this age group (5-11 years old), play is integrated into many activities, including travel

- Children aged 5-11yrs old will try and bring an element of play and fun into lots of things they do
  - During our accompanied walks, despite a lack of enthusiasm beforehand, they instantly found ways to make it enjoyable
  - Walking journeys - to school, to the shops, to their friends' houses - often incorporate play



- There is no clear distinction between utility and leisure journeys and outside play
  - Eg children incorporate play into their walk to school
  - For parents, this can reflect the growing trend around active living and the desire to maximise time by incorporating fitness into daily tasks
    - Eg mum running to school with young son in push chair and daughter on bike

The lines between utility and leisure walking and play, are blurred. How can we help children to enjoy walking by tapping into their desire for fun and play?



## 6. Attitudes towards walking and playing outside



# Families who recognise the health and wellbeing benefits of walking, and live in a more pleasant area, tend to walk more

## PERSONAL

*Walking is good for me and my children*

- Health and wellbeing benefits
- The natural way to get around

## SOCIAL

*The people I am surrounded by encourage me to walk*

- Sense of community
- Friends who walk – social norming

## ENVIRONMENTAL

*My local area is suited to walking with my family*

- Open green spaces
- Less traffic
- Infrastructure that supports pedestrians

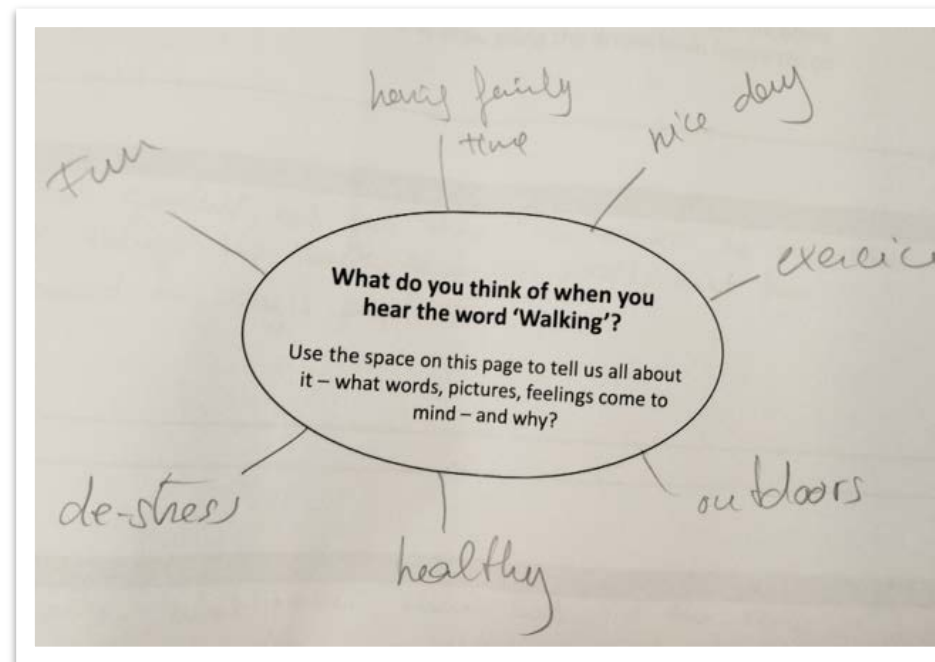
When some/all of these boxes are ticked, walking can be seen as more aspirational and attainable

# The health and wellbeing benefits of walking can be a big pull factor for some families

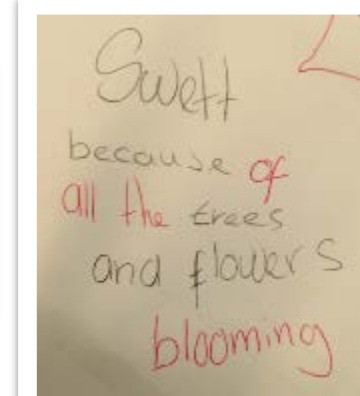
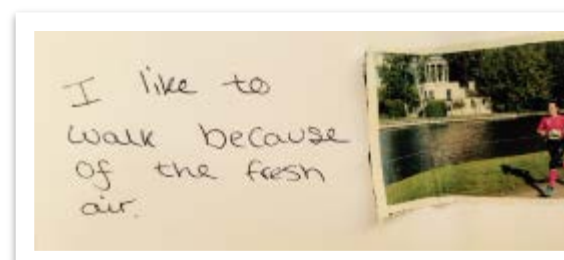


## MOTIVATORS

- Walking is increasingly recognised as a good way to get exercise
  - Helping children to stay fit and healthy
  - A good way for parents to fit exercise into their day
- Walking is also starting to be seen as having a positive impact on a child's wellbeing
  - Helping them to gain the skills needed to be independently mobile and grow and develop into an adult
  - Good for mental health – a way to see the world, get fresh air
  - Quality family time together
- It is also seen as the natural way to get around
  - Parents think back to their childhoods and romanticise walking behaviours

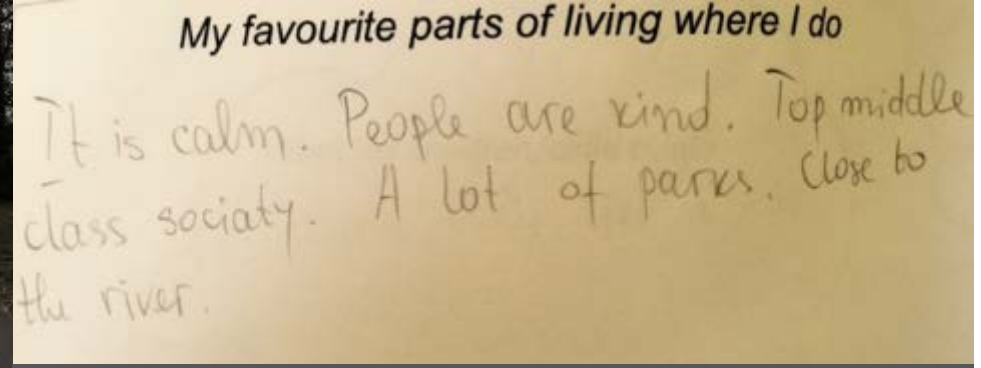
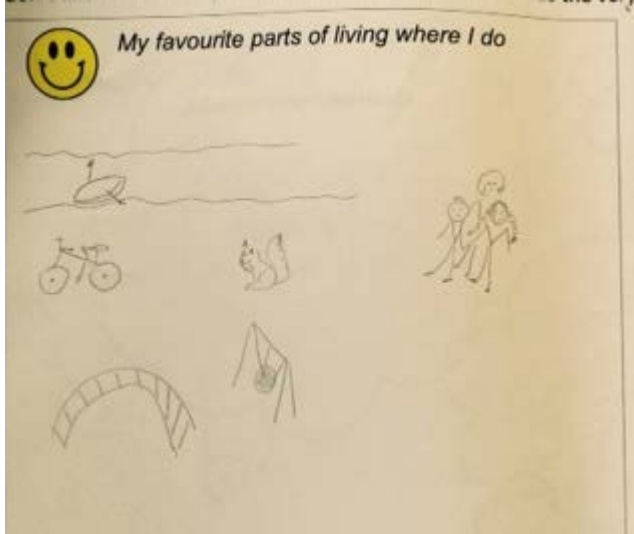


*We blew giant bubbles in the park on the way home from school – it was so much fun*  
 Yr 4 boy aged 9,  
 Central/ Inner



Increasingly, walking is linked with these positive benefits; starting to be a more commonplace mindset

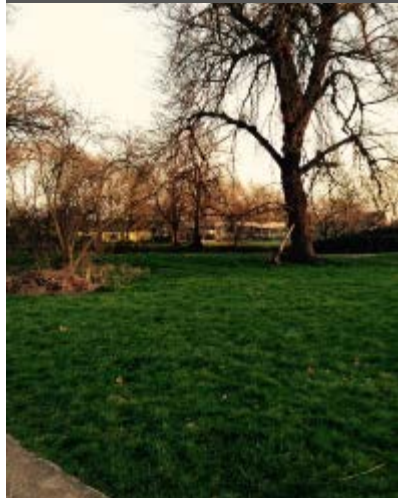
# More pleasant local environments are more conducive to walking



Green and open spaces – leafy, visually stimulating

Better infrastructure – eg crossings, traffic calming measures

Local people – know my neighbours, sense of community, social norming of friends walking



Kids play areas and parks

Less traffic and pedestrianised areas

# Families who live in more disadvantaged areas, and who do not see the benefits of walking, tend to walk less

## PERSONAL

*walking is stressful and time consuming*

- Walking is not linked to health and wellbeing benefits
- Walking is seen as slow, effortful and unexciting

## ENVIRONMENTAL

*my local area is not made for families to walk*

- Deprived areas
- Poor street maintenance
- Lack of infrastructure that supports walking
- Lots of traffic
- Issues accentuated in winter or bad weather

## SOCIAL

*I do not want to be around local people*

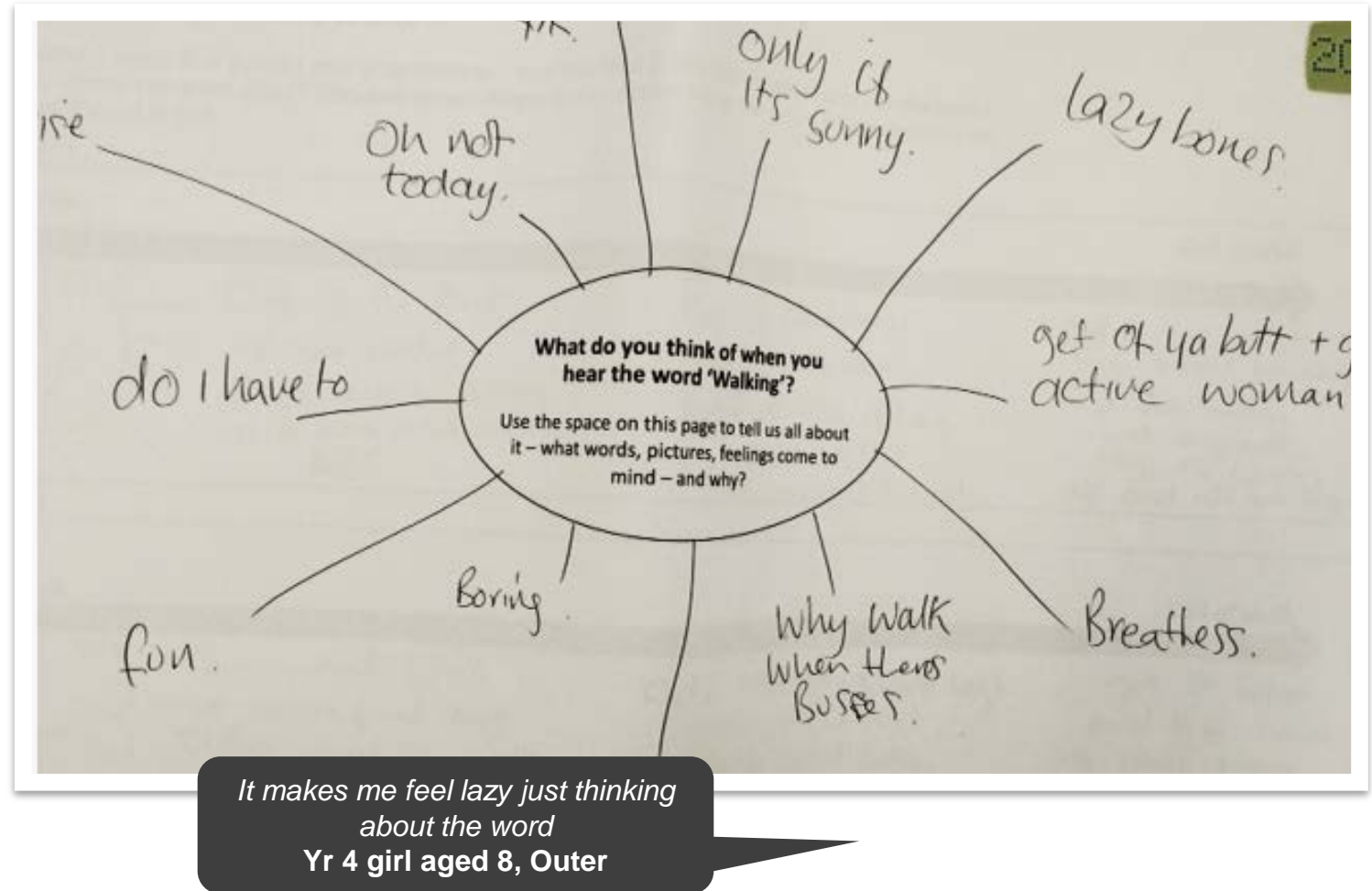
- Fear of other people they don't know
- No sense of community

Many barriers to address before some families would consider walking in their local areas. Environmental barriers particularly important to address for families who see the benefits but live in areas that do not suit walking.

# Families who do not see the personal benefits of walking can easily find reasons to not walk



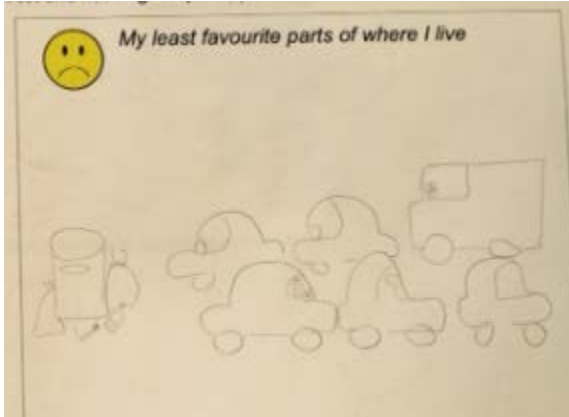
- For some families, walking is not overtly linked to health and wellbeing benefits
- They find reasons or excuses not to walk
  - Walking is slower than taking the car
  - It takes more effort, eg lots to carry and tiring
  - It can be stressful – have to watch children constantly
- Some parents are also more risk averse than others
  - Can prefer the safety of the car



*It makes me feel lazy just thinking about the word*  
**Yr 4 girl aged 8, Outer**

If families have not emotionally bought into walking, they will look for reasons to not do it

# Some local environments are less suited to family walks



Issues accentuated in winter or bad weather – dark and rainy



*I don't know any kids in my neighbourhood as everyone minds their own business*

Traffic, pollution and noise



- Alleyways.
- old looking buildings
- pollution
- condemned buildings

Disadvantaged areas: poor condition of streets, graffiti



Narrow pavements, cars parked on pavements

Poor street maintenance: litter



Fear of other people they do not know – gangs, groups of youths, 'dodgy' men, people with dogs

No crossings or traffic calming

*What other parents in the neighbourhood think*  
*most of them like it but the gun crime and stabbing are getting worst I know a people that there kids have been killed in Edmonton*

# How safe they feel in their local area is fundamental to their decision to walk



- Parents prioritise safety when it comes to their families
- They put rules in place to protect their families when out on the streets
  - Correct behaviour around busy roads: teaching children to stop at roads, use crossings and how to cross the road safely
  - Avoiding certain areas/people: eg avoiding alleyways, not talking to strangers
  - Establishing boundaries when out alone: staying within earshot/where they can be seen, back by x time, stay with friends the parents know
  - Staying in touch via their mobile phones
- However, environmental and social barriers can make parents feel that their family will not be safe on the streets, and this will put them off walking
  - Eg unsavoury people, lots of traffic, lack of crossings
  - Eg deprived areas - no visual cues that there is an authoritative presence in the area

Parents who really had not seen the point of giving mobile phones to their children discovered a reason: continual contact (*Turkle, 2011: 247*). 2CV Desk research

*I live in a tower block and the area is just really closed, with lots of kids hanging around – I don't want my child to be around that*

**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6,  
Central/Inner**

*There's a couple of people with nasty looking dogs near us, I don't think it's safe to be out and about*

**Mother of Yr 4 girl aged 8,  
Outer**

*Our area just isn't an area you would walk in – it's really run down and there's loads of crap everywhere*

**Mother of Yr 1 girl aged 6,  
Central /Inner**

*Walking is potentially dangerous – crossing roads can be hazardous, cars travelling too fast and drivers taking risks*

**Mother of Yr 2 girl aged 6,  
Outer**

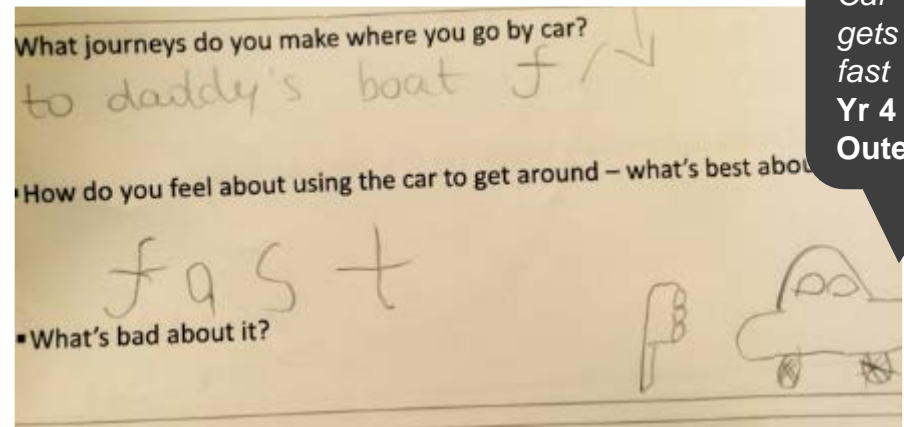
Making local areas feel safe is a base need and should be the focus of strategic development

# Both utility and leisure walks can easily be substituted with alternative options



UTILITY WALKS are easily replaced in the moment

- In the moment barriers such as bad weather, tired children, or being late, can have a big impact on utility journeys like the school commute
- Walking can be replaced with travelling via another mode
  - Eg car – can be quicker, more comfortable, don't have to carry children's things, less stressful
  - Eg bus – can be quicker and appealing for the children



*Car – I love it. It gets you places fast*  
Yr 4 girl aged 8, Outer

LEISURE WALKS have a lot of competition from other leisure activities

- There are many leisure activities that compete with walking and often these are more appealing to children
  - Eg swimming, playing football, going to the cinema, ice-skating, adventure playground
- These activities are highly marketed, and are, therefore, a big draw – walking does not currently compete
- Enables families to get away from less pleasant surroundings if they live in more disadvantaged areas
- Children participating in other leisure activities can also make parents' lives easier
  - Someone else looks after children eg steward or instructor



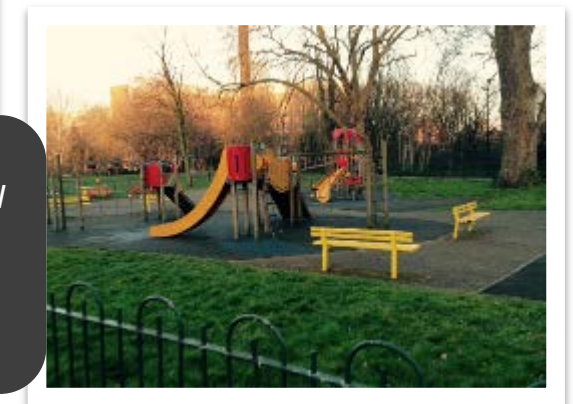
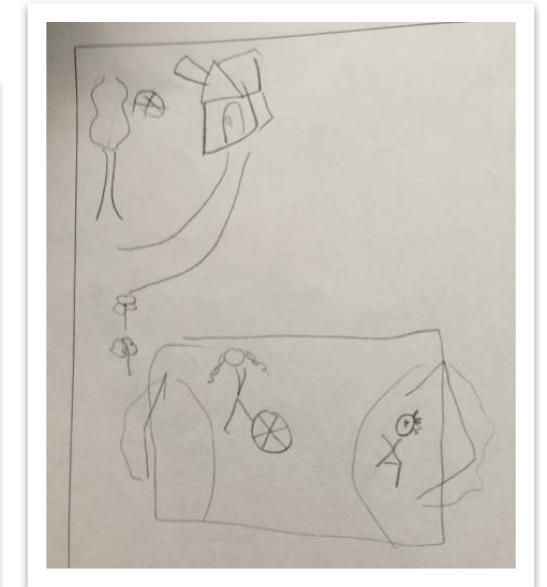
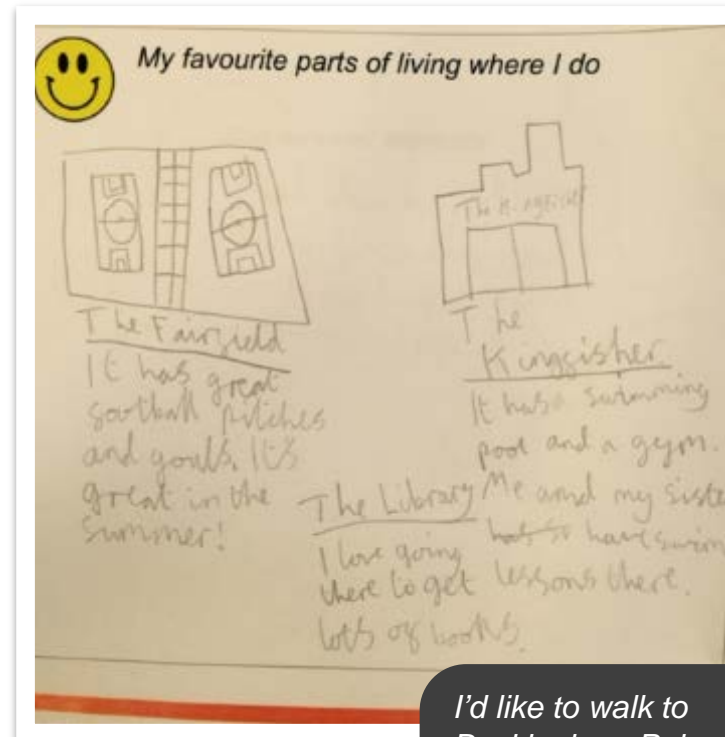
Walking needs to be repositioned to make it appealing to families and encourage them to choose it over other options



# Compared to other activities, walking is quite low-conscious and lacks excitement



- Whilst there is some emotional pull towards walking due to the health benefits, it is often seen as quite functional or even fails to be acknowledged at all
  - Getting from A to B, largely utility journeys
  - Often an 'invisible' activity
- Children in particular can be quite destination focused, rather than focusing on the walk itself
  - Lacks an identity as an activity in its own right
  - Thinking about the more exciting part of the journey eg getting to their friend's house
  - Walking also linked to more habitual, and often more boring utility journeys, like the school commute
- Leisure walks are less common/frequent for families, so walking is less related to fun and relaxation
  - Other leisure activities are felt to be more exciting



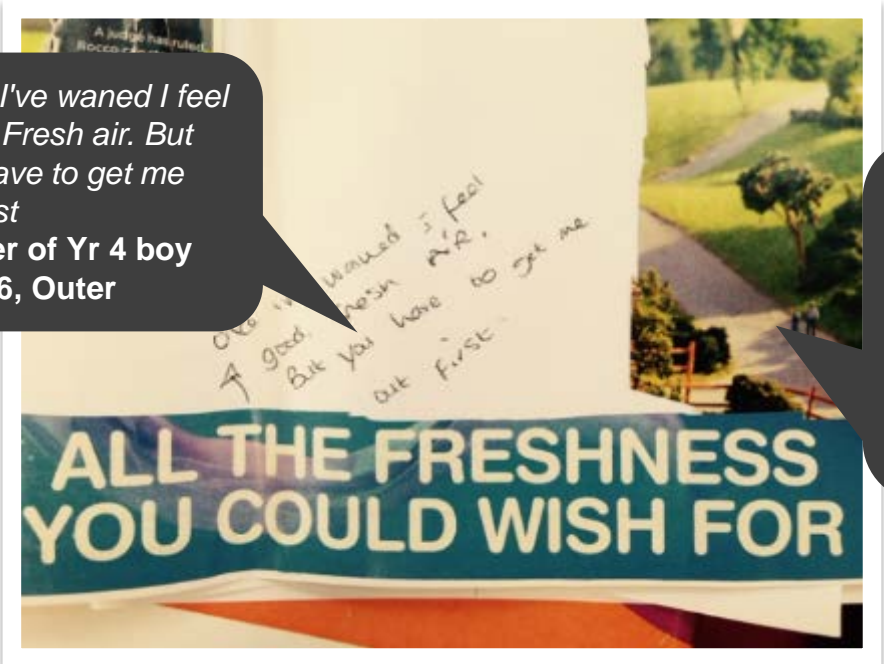
*I'd like to walk to Buckingham Palace. I had a lot of fun when we went there*  
**Yr 1 girl aged 7, Central/ Inner**

A need to give walking an identity that associates it with fun and freedom for children

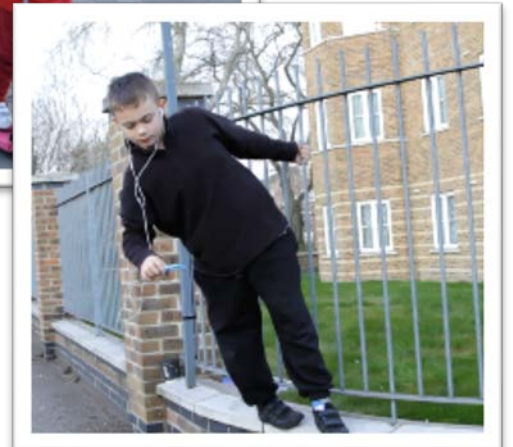
# However, there is a disconnect between families' perceptions of walking as unexciting, and their actual experiences of doing it

- Once families are out walking, they often really enjoy the experience
  - Children run around, make up games, laugh and shout, jump and climb
  - Parents appreciate the quality time with the children and play games with them

Once I've waned I feel good. Fresh air. But you have to get me out first  
**Mother of Yr 4 boy aged 6, Outer**



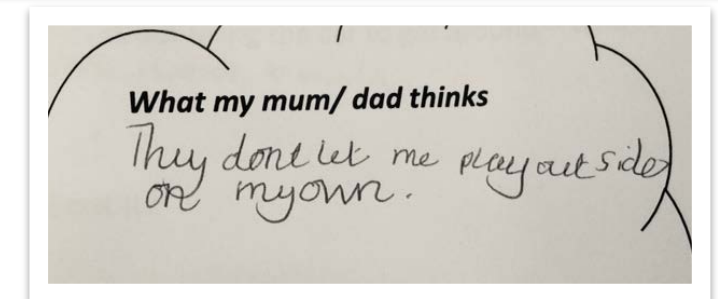
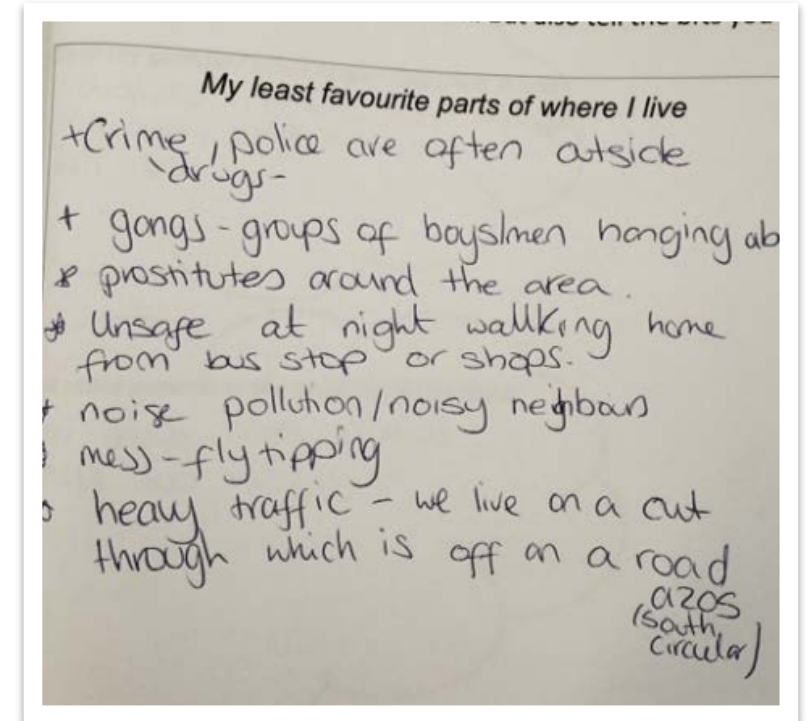
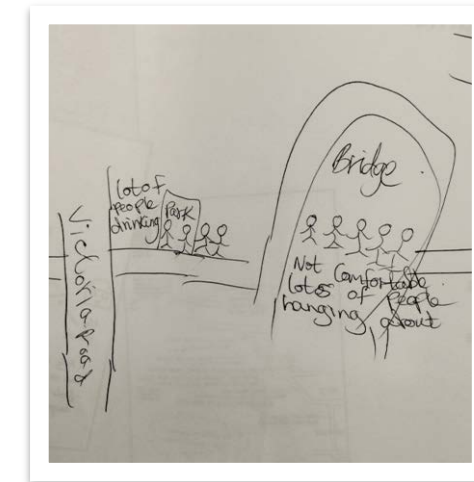
It's a chance for me to catch up . For me to find out about his day, what he's learned at school. I suppose it's a bit of 'me and him' time  
**Mother of Yr 1 boy aged 6, Central /Inner**



How can we bring to life these positive experiences out of the moment?

# The same motivations and barriers apply around street play, and parents similarly assess how safe they feel it is for their children

- Some parents see the benefits of letting their children play outside
  - Good for their physical health
  - Positive impact on their wellbeing – socialising, getting exposure to the world and gaining some independence
- But barriers can often mean children are not allowed to play outside
  - The area does not feel safe
  - The environment is not conducive to child play – eg too close to the road, fear of influences of other people
- And a lack of culture of outside play means it is often not even a consideration
  - Children are doing other things to fulfil this need
  - And play is incorporated into other things, including walking



Addressing environmental barriers and reframing walking will help to encourage more outside play



## 7. Opportunities for TfL to encourage walking and outside play

# A range of strategies are needed to encourage family walking and outside play i

Make families feel safe in their local environment through visual cues

- Focus on areas most in need - visual cues that there is an authority present
- Eg clearing litter, bins collected on time, more lighting
- Eg more infrastructure that indicates safety such as crossings and traffic calming measures
- Eg off main road walking routes

Communicate the health and wellbeing benefits of walking/playing to create a 'pull'

- Promote benefits of independent mobility, as well as health and wellness benefits
  - Encouraging families to choose walking in the moment when stressed and time-pressured

Raise awareness of existing walking/play initiatives

- Eg Play Streets and creative spaces like Windus walk
- Support councils to help them implement schemes
- Support enthusiastic parents who are pro-walking and want to encourage this in their community

# A range of strategies are needed to encourage family walking and outside play ii

## Work with schools/boroughs to encourage walking to school and after school play

- Promote STARS, Walk on Wednesdays and other school walking schemes
- Support a more holistic school-wide promotion of walking
- Target the after school moment with walking or play initiatives
- Target new joiners to establish habits
- Use as a channel to promote other initiatives/maps/walking routes/events, signage near schools to local park etc.

## Reframe walking for children and parents

- For children, link walking to freedom, fun and play
  - Remind them of the fun they have, and leverage this sense of fun eg games they can play on way home from school
  - Compete with other leisure activities
- For parents, give leisure walks a purpose eg something to see on the walk

## Take a targeted approach

- Based on areas of London
  - Eg celebrating green spaces and promoting the things families can do, eg picnics, links with other families
  - Eg in areas with fewer walking champions, using local groups to build awareness and traction
- Target summer months to establish habits.

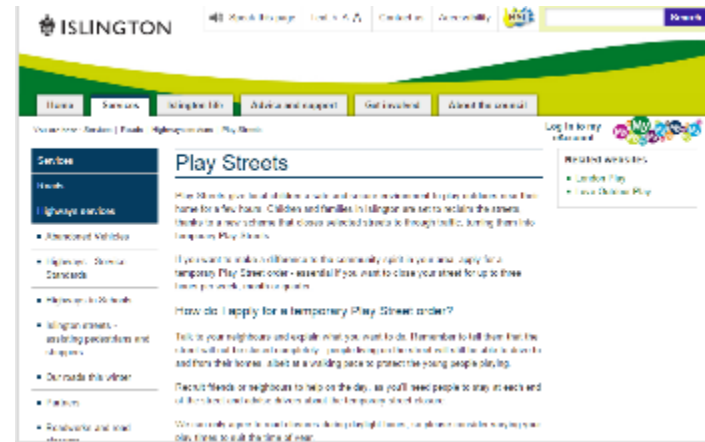


# Appendix

# Initiatives shown as stimulus in the research

## Play streets

Streets for People project,  
Windus Walk, London, N16



## Rotterdam



## London play

