

# Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy – Draft

2025-2026

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# 1: Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy 2025/26 – Service Policy

## 1.1 Foreword

At both national and local level there is a growing policy shift to encourage use of more sustainable transport modes, reduce or make more efficient use of the car, and to reduce motor vehicles' impact on congestion, the environment and the economy. The provision of travel choice is key to securing improved access to jobs, healthcare, training and education.

BCP Council is committed to the promotion of sustainable travel to school. This Sustainable Modes of Travel to School (SMOTS) strategy is designed to support the council's climate goals, improve public health, and ensure safe and accessible travel options for all pupils across the BCP Council area.

This strategy is a broad documentation of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council's sustainable travel planning activities, showcasing initiatives and actions which are taking place across the local area which support and encourage sustainable school travel.

It brings together a range of existing relevant policies and strategies relating to school travel and transport, making it easier to find the information whilst providing an opportunity to both celebrate achievements over the previous academic year, and to set goals for the coming year.

This document is intended to provide information for parents, schools, Council Members and the wider public about sustainable school travel and its benefits and what BCP Council is currently doing within this area. The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis ahead of the start of each new academic year.

## 1.2 Introduction to BCP Council

The area administered by BCP Council has a population of just over 400,000 residents. Comprising of the towns of Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP), the local authority has areas of natural beauty, scientific interest, and opportunities for all residents. However, the region does suffer from significant traffic congestion – Bournemouth is the third most congested place in the UK<sup>1</sup>. The area's unique geography and historic lack of joined up sustainable travel infrastructure has led to an over-reliance on cars, slower journey times and variable air quality.

Transforming Travel is the council's overarching sustainable travel programme promoting changes in the way people travel in the area. Reflecting the government's [Gear](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [The most congested UK cities | fuelGenie](#)

[Change](#) vision, there is an emphasis on sustainability, tackling air quality and a focus on walking and cycling.

### 1.3 Alignment with Corporate Strategy

As set out in the BCP Corporate Strategy - [A shared vision for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole | BCP](#), people are at the centre of the council's vision and ambitions.

The Council's priorities include:

- Our place and environment
  - Vibrant places, where people and nature flourish, with a thriving economy in a healthy, natural environment.
  - People and places are connected by sustainable and modern infrastructure.
  - Provide a safe, accessible, sustainable and convenient transport network that meets the needs of all residents.
  - Climate change is tackled through sustainable policies and practices.
- Our place and environment
  - Reduce the tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions emitted from our vehicles and buildings.
  - Increase the total number of sustainable passenger trips in the BCP area per year.
  - Increase the percentage of physically active adults, children and young people.
- Our people and communities
  - Everyone leads a fulfilled life, maximising opportunity for all.
  - High quality of life for all, where people can be active, healthy and independent.
  - Increase physical activity in communities through access to leisure centres, parks, and encouraging active travel.

### 1.4 Education and Inspections Act 2006

The publication of a SMOTS strategy is a statutory requirement as set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This places a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable transport modes on journeys to, from, and between schools and other institutions where education or training is delivered. SMOTS applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority area. It also applies to further education institutions and 16-19 academies.

Additionally (and separately), the Act improved and extended the right to free home-to-school transport to pupils from low-income families. This is part of the Government's aim of ensuring that every child in every school in every community gets the education they need to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Sustainable modes of transport are defined in the Act as walking, cycling, using public transport or car sharing. However, BCP Council also includes scooting and wheeling in this

definition and adds that cycling includes all kinds of cycles including adapted cycles for disabled people and family/cargo bikes.

In accordance with Department for Education (DfE) [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), a strategy to promote sustainable school travel has five key aspects:

- **Assessment of Needs:** The Authority must assess the travel needs of its area, considering factors like distance, accessibility, and available infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure Audit:** An audit of the existing sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the BCP Council area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions.
- **Strategy Development:** A strategy to develop the sustainable travel infrastructure within the BCP Council area, so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for.
- **Sustainable Travel Promotion:** The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from and between schools and other institutions.
- **SMOTS Publication:** The publication of a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School (SMOTS) Strategy.

The purpose of this BCP SMOTS strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework which references all relevant existing strategies and policies in one document. It helps BCP Council develop a more integrated approach across all areas of work for promoting sustainable travel to school and Further Education (FE) colleges, as well as helping improve the outcomes for children and young people, by enabling safe and equitable access to education establishments across the BCP Council region.

The BCP SMOTS strategy is also intended to provide a relevant source of information for parents and carers on travel options when they are considering preferences for schools. It aligns national and local policies and aims to create a safer, healthier, and more sustainable environment for school pupils.

This strategy will be published on the BCP Council website and reviewed annually.

## 1.5 The Vision

Vision for school travel in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

The vision is for sustainable travel to school to become the preferred option for all pupils in the BCP Council area. Children and young people will be able to travel to school safely and independently, fostering their confidence, health and wellbeing. The school run will no longer be synonymous with private car use, but instead will contribute to a healthier, happier and more sustainable community.

## 1.6 Aims and Objectives

To achieve the above vision, the council aims to increase the use and promotion of sustainable travel modes, reduce the number of private car journeys to schools, and improve the street environment, air quality and road safety around all schools and colleges.

The primary purpose of the SMOTS strategy is to demonstrate the different policies and initiatives employed by BCP Council and partners to facilitate these aims.

Objectives are to:

- Increase the number of pupils and students using sustainable modes to travel to and from schools and colleges.
- Raise awareness of the sustainable travel options available to pupils and parents/carers on their journeys to and from schools and colleges.
- Reduce the number and negative impact of motorised traffic journeys on the local environment near schools and colleges.
- Improve wellbeing and physical health through increased walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling to school or college for those who live near enough and can travel this way.
- Promote and increase the use of buses and car sharing as an alternative to individual car journeys to school.
- Enable safer school journeys and reduce road collision casualties.
- Support the development of children and young people's life skills, including road safety awareness and independence.
- Provide children and young people with opportunities to make a positive contribution through participation in the school travel planning process.

## 1.7 National and local policy context

The BCP Council SMOTS strategy aligns with national policies such as:

- [Gear Change Department for Transport \(DfT\)](#) – A bold vision for cycling and walking, July 2020
- [The second cycling and walking investment strategy \(CWIS2\) - DfT Active Travel England](#) – Updated March 2023
- [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age \(Department for Education \(DfE\)\)](#) - Statutory guidance for local authorities - January 2024
- [Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems - DfE](#) - DfE policy paper in December 2023

It also incorporates existing and future relevant local policies and strategies, including:

- Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

- Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)
- BCP Corporate Strategy – a shared vision 2024-28
- BCP Council’s Climate Action Strategy
- [Physical activity guidelines: children and young people \(5 to 18 years\)](#)
- [Climate Change and Action Plans in Education settings](#)
- Emerging BCP Parking Strategy
- School and workplace travel plans

## 1.8 Schools in the BCP Council area

There are 98 state-funded schools within the BCP area including 66 primaries (comprising infant, first and junior schools), 22 secondary schools (including four grammar schools and one middle school), and three all-through schools. There are additionally five independent schools.

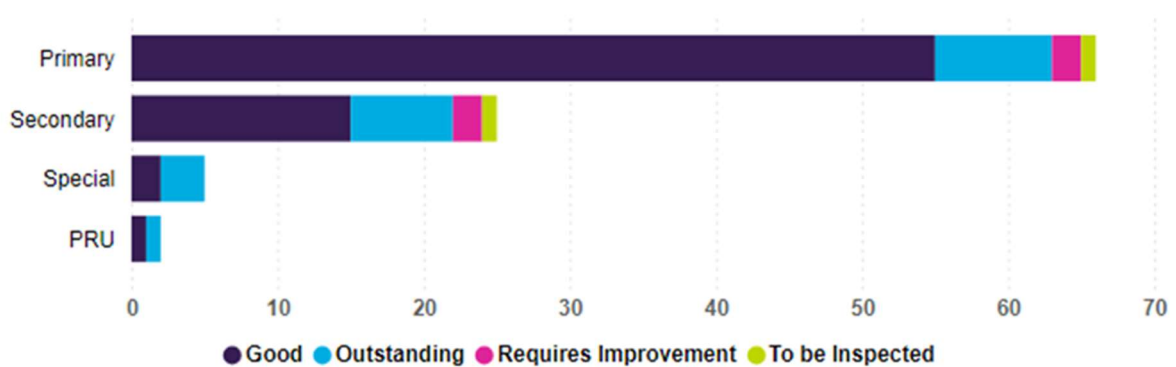
There are five schools for special educational needs (SEN), one alternative provision and one pupil referral unit (PRU).

The total number of pupils is 52,449 (Number on Roll - January 2025).

Almost a fifth (19.7%) of the overall BCP population are school children or full-time students (England 20.4%).

95.5% of primary and secondary schools in the BCP Council area were rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted (April 2024). Children have good educational achievement, with attainment for all key stages being above the national average.

Number of schools in each Ofsted phase by Ofsted rating in BCP a...



## 1.9 Attendance

The pupil absence rate in 2023/24 for the BCP area at 6.5% was slightly better than the national average (6.7% in England). Persistent absentee rates (pupils with 10% or more sessions missed) were 18.5% in the BCP area (19.4% in England).

## 1.10 Deprivation

Deprivation is a measure of the extent to which individuals or communities lack the resources, opportunities, and conditions considered necessary for an adequate standard of living and well-being. This includes income, employment, quality of environment, health, education, and housing.

The BCP region is an area of significant disparity, with areas considered to be amongst the most and least deprived in the country. Understanding where these areas are, and the types of deprivation that affects them most, is important for service planning and delivery by BCP Council and its partners.

- Just over 1 in 10 residents (45,500) live in areas considered amongst the 20% most deprived in England
- In contrast, 1 in 5 (83,768) residents live in areas considered amongst the 20% least deprived nationally
- 51.7% of households are considered to be deprived as they met one of the four [Census Deprivation Dimensions](#). 48.3% are classified as not deprived.

## 1.11 Key Public Health Considerations

From a Public Health perspective, promoting sustainable travel to school strongly aligns with goals to improve population health, reduce health inequalities, and support healthier environments.

### Physical Activity Benefits

- Active travel (walking, cycling, scooting) contributes significantly to children's physical and mental health. Embedding this into daily routines helps establish lifelong healthy habits.

### Air Quality and Respiratory Health

- Reducing car use around schools can significantly improve local air quality, which is particularly important for children's lung development and for those with asthma or other respiratory conditions.

### Health Inequalities

- Children from lower-income families are more likely to walk or cycle to school but may face greater barriers (e.g. unsafe routes, lack of infrastructure).

### Mental Health and Social Connection

- Active travel can support mental wellbeing through increased physical activity, social interaction, and reduced stress from traffic congestion.

### Safety and Perceptions of Risk

- Parental concerns about road safety are a major barrier to active travel. It is appropriate for Council strategies relating to transport and travel to highlight how decisions and projects such as infrastructure improvements and educational campaigns will address these concerns.

## 1.12 Mode of travel data for BCP schools

The collection of Mode of Travel (MoT) data is currently underway for all pupils across BCP schools. This will enable comparisons of BCP schools against the national average.

This data will inform both the individual schools and BCP Council of how pupils are currently travelling to school, split between the main modes of travel. Using this information, it is also possible to produce a postcode plot for each school, which identifies where pupils are travelling from and what modes they are using.

The school travel planning process provides the opportunity to work in more depth with a school. Online travel surveys are provided for parents/carers, pupils and staff when they are developing a school travel plan (STP). This provides more qualitative and quantitative data which will inform the aims and objectives of the STP.

The tables below compare the proportion of children travelling by various modes, in the BCP area and nationally. Whilst BCP compares favourably with the national picture at primary school stage, BCP secondary school pupils are less likely to walk to school and more likely to be driven. The government's (unmet) target was for 55% of primary school pupils to walk to school by 2025, and this target was reflected in BCP Council's LCWIP published in 2022.

### BCP schools mode of travel data 2024/25 academic year (all distances)

Age Range / Mode of Travel	Walk	Car	Bus	Cycle	Other
5-10 years	50 %	43 %	3 %	3 %	1 %
11-16 years	40 %	31 %	21 %	5 %	3 %

**Note:** Data collected in 2024/25 academic year with a sample size of 5,926 primary pupils and 4,490 secondary pupils. It is intended to increase the sample size in the academic year 2025/2026.

## 1.13 National Travel Survey 2023

National Travel Survey 2023: travel to and from school (all distances)

Age Range / Mode of Travel	Walk	Car	Bus	Cycle	Other
5-10 years	47 %	45 %	4 %	2 %	2 %
11-16 years	44 %	28 %	19 %	3 %	6 %

## 1.14 BCP Council's Road Safety function

BCP Council is a partner in the Dorset Strategic Road Safety Partnership (DSRSP) which aims to prevent deaths and serious injuries on Dorset's roads. In 2023, there were 136 Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties recorded in the BCP Council area, down from 146 in 2021. The 2030 target is 88 or less per annum.

The [BCP Council Road Safety Report 2020](#) details the work undertaken to keep road users safe.

BCP Council has a statutory duty under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to promote road safety, investigate the causes of injury collisions on the public highway and to take measures to prevent future collisions. The council carries out these duties through a variety of means. An annual collision analysis and investigation is used to identify areas of concern. Measures are then proposed and implemented to prevent future collisions at these locations. Those measures include a mix of engineering schemes, education and enforcement.

Members of the public and Councillors are able to request safety measures including traffic calming, speed limit reductions, pedestrian crossings, dropped kerbs as well as safer routes to school measures.

## 1.15 20 mph limits and zones outside schools

The implementation of 20 mph limits and zones outside schools has shown significant benefits in improving safety and encouraging walking and cycling. An audit is currently being undertaken of all BCP schools to identify areas immediately outside and close to the school entrance where speed limit changes, traffic calming or other physical improvements could be made with a view to improving road safety and encouraging more children to walk, cycle and wheel.

At the [BCP Council meeting](#) on 23 April 2024 it was resolved that a dedicated budget be included in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital programme to commence delivery of 20mph speed limits on a neighbourhood basis with a focus on residential roads (which will often include the roads around schools) and this will be continued into future years subject to the availability of capital funding.

## 1.16 BCP Council's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy

BCP Council provides transport assistance for eligible children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Assistance is provided for children who meet the eligibility criteria as described in the home to school transport policy. If eligible, the council will decide the most appropriate means of supporting children and young people to travel to and from school linked to the aim of promoting independence, while ensuring cost efficiency. The majority of children and young people who are eligible for home to school transport assistance will be provided with a bus pass or a place in a shared vehicle.

The [Home to School policy document](#) sets out those likely to be eligible for support. Applications for school transport assistance can be made online or by downloading an application form available here: [Apply for or renew school transport | BCP](#).

## 1.17 Post-16 home to school transport assistance

Local authorities are not required to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual [post-16 transport statement](#) specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

Young people aged 16 to 25 years old with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may be eligible for transport assistance if they are accessing education at a school, further education institution or an establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency. Further information on who is eligible for support can be found both in the council's home to school transport policy and the [post-16 transport statement](#). For young people aged 16 to 18 years old, families are required to contribute towards the cost of the transport assistance offered. Applications for transport assistance can be made online or by downloading an application form available at [bcpcouncil.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://bcpcouncil.gov.uk/schooltransport).

## 1.18 Independent travel training

BCP Council does not currently provide travel training for individual young people to support travelling from home to school. Some schools and colleges provide this, and parents/carers are advised to make enquiries with the young person's education establishment.

Information about cycle training offered by BCP Council is available on the council's [travel and transport](#) web pages.

## 1.19 Schools Admissions arrangements for BCP Schools

### Advice and guidance for parents and carers applying for a school place

Families who are seeking school places can find out how to apply via the council's [admissions information](#) on the website. All parents and carers are encouraged to read through the [Parents' Guide to School Admissions](#) before submitting their application. Parents and carers are advised to think carefully about the school preferences they select for their application and are encouraged to include their nearest or catchment school to give their child the best chance of being offered a local school place, should a more preferred school not be able to offer a place. The parents' guide also includes information about travel to school including that children are not normally eligible for free school transport assistance. It encourages families to consider scooting, cycling, walking and wheeling as frequently as possible because the benefits of an active start to the day include enhanced learning in the classroom alongside improved wellbeing and mood.

Advice and guidance on applying for a school place or applying for home to school transport assistance is available from the school admissions and transport team:

Service	Contact number	Contact email
School admissions	01202 123222 or 01202 127963	<a href="mailto:cis@bcpcouncil.gov.uk">cis@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:school.admissions@bcpcouncil.gov.uk">school.admissions@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</a>
Home to school transport	01202 127963	<a href="mailto:htst@bcpcouncil.gov.uk">htst@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</a>

## 2: BCP Council initiatives to enable sustainable travel



### 2.1 School travel plans

BCP Council works with schools on school travel plans to promote safer, healthier, and more sustainable ways for students to travel to and from school. These plans are part of a broader local transport plan to encourage walking, cycling, and public transport use, reducing reliance on cars and improving air quality and safety through various programmes.

A school travel plan (STP) demonstrates a commitment to sustainable and active travel and helps to increase the safety of the school community. The council's [school travel plan template](#) helps schools document travel behaviours and patterns so that concerns and goals can be highlighted.

Schools are encouraged to develop and implement their own travel plans to address specific concerns and goals related to student travel, promoting sustainable and active travel habits.

It is also important to address climate and health concerns in the community. Many short journeys to school are made by car which could be made more sustainably. The Department for Education (DfE) has asked schools to encourage and impact the way that pupils travel to school to provide both health and educational benefits.

[Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems - GOV.UK](#)

Schools are encouraged to develop and implement their own travel plans to address specific concerns and goals related to student travel, promoting sustainable and active travel habits.

The council keeps track of every school's progress with several sustainable travel initiatives offered. There are currently 20 BCP schools with a completed STP in place, of which eight are currently due for review. A further 12 schools are currently being supported with their draft travel plans.

## 2.2 BCP School Streets programme

A School Street is a road outside a school with a temporary restriction on motorised traffic and parking. Restrictions are limited to short periods at peak school drop-off and pick-up times only. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic, but there can be exemptions for residents of the street, blue badge holders and for other essential purposes.

By closing the road directly outside a school, we can help to reduce road danger and improve air quality locally. Having a designated space for people to use can help to encourage more people to choose to walk, cycle, wheel or scoot for at least part of the school run.

School Streets can reduce congestion at peak times and improve the health and wellbeing of young people. They also provide a safer and more accessible space for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility.

In BCP, as at September 2025 there are seven established School Streets in operation and another that is running on a trial basis, with further School Streets being planned.

### Permanent School Streets:

- St Michael's CE Primary School, Bournemouth
- Hamworthy Park Junior School, Poole
- St Clement's and St John's CE Infant School, Bournemouth
- Livingstone Road Infant School, Poole
- Pokesdown Community Primary School, Bournemouth
- Oakdale Junior School, Poole
- Poole High School

### Current School Streets trials:

- The Bourne Academy and Kingsleigh Primary School

All schools in the BCP council area have been audited and ranked according to a number of criteria including number of pupils and deliverability in order to understand which schools are most likely to benefit from a School Street. Whilst the most important factor is that there is

support for the initiative from the school and community, the long-term aim is that all appropriate sites will have a School Street.



*Livingstone Road School Street*

## 2.3 Bikeability cycle training

[Bikeability](#) is the national cycle training scheme supported by the Department for Transport (DfT). It is the modern version of cycling proficiency and gives children the practical skills and understanding they need to cycle on today's roads.

BCP Council currently offers four Bikeability courses for children from Learn to Ride to levels 1, 2 and 3.

**Learn to Ride** is for those children who are unable to ride independently. During a one-hour course, children receive an introduction to riding a bike with pedals, which includes:

- getting on and off the cycle holding their brakes
- how to set their pedal correctly with their preferred starting foot
- how to start by pushing down on their pedal hard enough to gain momentum, place their other foot on the other pedal and keep pedalling
- travelling in a straight line
- stopping by using both brakes then putting a foot down
- maintaining balance by turning their handlebar in the direction of intended movement
- changing direction turning left and right in gentle arcs with tighter turns as they gain control

**Level 1 playground bike skills course** is designed to teach children the skills they will need when riding on the road, but in a playground setting. It's particularly ideal for younger children to learn bike control.

During the course, children learn to:

- maintain their cycle: make sure their ride is in roadworthy condition and make simple repairs
- control their bike: including setting off, cruising, slowing down, braking and stopping, how to cycle one handed
- pedal without feeling wobbly or out of control
- be aware of their surroundings - looking behind and turning around obstacles

**Level 2 residential road cycling course** is for children aged nine and over to help build the skills and confidence to ride a bike safely on the road.

This course is designed to teach children how to cycle safely on the roads. Children are taken out onto the local residential roads surrounding their school or training location. This gives them a real cycling experience that equips them with skills to deal with traffic on short local journeys, such as cycling to school or the local shops. The level 2 course encourages and develops safe cycling skills, develops positive attitudes towards road use, increases knowledge and understanding of the road and traffic environment and gives riders the confidence to use their bicycles on local roads.

**Level 3 independent cycling course** is usually for children in year six and above. It teaches the skills to tackle a wider variety of traffic conditions than level 2 and most children will need time to practice and consolidate their level 2 skills before they are ready for level 3.

The aims of the level 3 course are:

- To encourage and develop safe cycling skills.
- To develop positive attitudes towards road use.
- To increase knowledge and understanding of the road and traffic environment.
- To give trainees the confidence to use their bikes on longer journeys.

To achieve these aims, the course covers:

- independent journey planning. This can include routes that are relevant to where the children want to travel e.g. school commutes and routes to friends' houses which could then be ridden as part of the level 3 course
- responding to hazards
- making 'on-the-move' risk assessments
- passing queuing traffic
- understanding road positioning
- hazard perception and strategies to deal with them
- understanding driver blind spots, particularly for large vehicles
- reacting to hazardous road surfaces route planning for safer cycling

Free Bikeability courses are offered to all BCP Council primary and secondary schools in year four and above. The council's aim is for every child in primary school to have achieved their Bikeability level 2 (residential road cycle training) before they leave for secondary school.

The Bikeability scheme is funded by Active Travel England (ATE) via [The Bikeability Trust](#).

## 2.4 Sustrans Bike It Plus Programme

Bike It Plus is delivered by Sustrans and funded by BCP Council through the government's ATE Capability Fund. Sustrans has worked with BCP on this project since March 2021, and it is currently funded up to September 2026.

### BCP Bike It Plus & School Streets

Annual report - September 2023 to August 2024



Christchurch Infants on their Public Health Dorset funded balance bikes



### Bike It Plus Project Aims

1. To increase levels of pupils and their families actively traveling to and from school. As a result, reducing the number that travel by car.
2. To raise awareness of the benefits of active travel.
3. To create a culture of active travel within project schools that can be sustained once the project Officer has departed.

The project aims to increase levels of walking, cycling, wheeling and scooting to school, and thereby reduce car journeys. It also aims to increase awareness of the benefits of active travel and to foster a culture of active travel within the school. The School Streets project aims to increase levels of active travel for all or part of the school journey, as well as improving air quality and feeling of safety and to create more accessible and pleasant environment for the wider school community.

The project engaged with 30 schools in 2023/2024 to identify opportunities, barriers and challenges to active travel. The officers then worked to address these by devising and delivering a bespoke planned programme of activities for each school, designed to bring about long-term behaviour change.

The officers support staff champions within their schools to take the lead on active travel, as well as helping them access local authority resources and services available, such as Bikeability training, improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, and to make links between schools and the wider walking and cycling community. A mix of activities including Dr Bike and scooter skills are delivered at each school to raise awareness, enable active travel and motivate, enthuse and reward positive behaviour change. Schools are also encouraged to take part in national competitions and events such as the Big Walk and Wheel and Cycle to School Week, as well as themed days and weeks such as Road Safety Week, Leg it to Lapland, Clean Air Day and The Euros Challenge.

The project also includes promoting the 'parents parking promise' which is a commitment by schools to encourage parents and carers to park considerately outside and around schools.

Key outcomes from the Bike It Plus project so far have included:

- An increase in children travelling actively to school
- A reduction in car use on the school run.
- Schools staff say that the project has raised awareness of air quality, environmental and health benefits of active travel and increased enthusiasm

A short video about the local **Sustrans Bike It project**: [Bike It Plus: helping children and young people learn to cycle](#)

## 2.5 Living Streets – the walk to school outreach project

[WOW – the walk to school challenge](#) is a pupil-led initiative run by UK charity, Living Streets. Children self-report how they get to school every day, with those who walk, wheel, cycle, scoot or park and stride at least once a week awarded collectible WOW badges.

The national walk to school outreach (WTSO) project (24-25) was funded through a £3 million grant from Active Travel England and delivered by Living Streets in partnership with 33 combined authority, local authority and county council partners. This was year two of a two-year funding agreement for WTSO, which began in April 2023.

The project's aim is to overcome barriers to walking and help the government reach its target of 55 per cent of primary school aged children walking to school by 2025. WOW has been helping to reduce congestion and pollution at thousands of schools for 20 years. On average, WOW schools benefit from **59 per cent** fewer car journeys to the school gates and **43 per cent** more active journeys.

BCP Council has been part of the WTSO project with Living Streets since January 2021.

There are currently nineteen BCP schools taking part in WOW, with 193,600 Active journeys logged in the Spring 2025 term. Two schools have worked with Living Streets to carry out School Route Audits. Children also enjoy taking part in the annual WOW Badge Design Competition. and other online competitions throughout the year.

## 2.6 Clean air schools air quality project - June 2023 to March 2025

In March 2023 the council was successful in bidding for a Defra air quality (AQ) grant. Using this funding an AQ project officer was engaged for two years to build on a previous anti-idling project which was delivered in partnership with Public Health Dorset and Sustrans.

In 2023/2024, the AQ Project Officer worked intensively with five BCP primary schools in the first year and in the second year, 2024/2025, the project was extended to work with two secondary schools and a further three primary schools.

Our aim was to raise awareness and understanding of air quality, the causes of air pollution and its impact, to the wider school community. The toolkits provide resources and activities for teachers and parents/carers which generate positive behaviour change to reduce the number of car journeys and a reduction in the numbers of cars idling.

A clean air schools primary school AQ toolkit was produced - [The Clean Air Toolkit](#) followed by a [toolkit for secondary schools](#).

This new secondary school toolkit provides teachers with everything they need to deliver sessions on air pollution and are designed to be flexible. Some or all the resources can be used depending on the aim and time constraints (see suggestions below). There is a [scheme of work](#) consisting of five sessions (each of which is supported by a PowerPoint).

The project is linked with [CREST](#) to provide the opportunity for schools to support their students to gain an accredited award. The resources for this are in two sets – one for bronze level ([Teacher guide](#); [student brief](#); [student booklet](#); [appendix](#)) and another set for 'any level' ([Teacher guide](#); [student brief](#); [appendix](#)).



A clean air schools [video](#) was produced by children in BCP primary schools explaining about how we can reduce air pollution in our conurbation. This was a collaboration between Public Health Dorset, Sustrans and BCP Council.



An [animation](#) was produced in March 2025 to engage school children and their families across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, highlighting the dangers of air pollution and encouraging positive changes in travel behaviour.

The animation, part of BCP Council's Clean Air Schools project, was created by local animator Rowena Sheehan in collaboration with BCP Council's sustainable travel team and Sustrans and was designed to raise awareness of how air pollution affects young people, particularly the 1 in 11 children in the UK who have asthma. Air pollution is an invisible but

serious problem, especially for children. The animation aims to help children and their families understand the impact of air quality and how small changes, like switching off car engines or choosing active travel, can make a big difference.

## 2.7 Road safety education

Road safety education includes bike maintenance courses and the council's current road safety campaigns.

1. [Bicycle maintenance course](#)
2. [Child car seat safety](#)
3. [Minibus driving competence assessments](#)
4. [Motorcycle \(motorbike\) CBT training](#)
5. [Road Safety Campaigns](#)
6. [STEPS Child Pedestrian Safety Training](#)

## 2.8 STEPS child pedestrian safety training

Nearly 40,000 children are killed or injured each year as a result of road collisions. Most of these collisions happen close to home, on journeys to and from school. STEPS training helps children learn the skills they need to keep safe when crossing the road.

STEPS training is currently offered to primary schools in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch and is delivered by specialised trainers using a combination of roadside skills training and classroom-based road safety activities.

The roadside training takes place on the local roads close to the individual school where the training is being delivered, and is tailored to the surroundings, traffic conditions and road infrastructure in place at each location.

The classroom sessions are adapted according to the age of the children. Children learn through role play in reception utilising road safety equipment such as mini traffic lights, zebra crossing mat and tabards to allow the children to play at being a lollipop person, police officer, van, bus, car etc. They also learn through road safety story books and films with question and answer sessions, gradually enhancing the skills through to year 5 and year 6.

### Pre-school road safety

The council can lend road safety equipment to pre-school groups to help them teach road safety. The Council's STEPS coordinators are also available to deliver a road safety session on request. The road safety equipment consists of mini traffic lights, Belisha beacons, zebra crossing mat, tabards for role play sessions, story books and resources. This is a free service.

## 2.9 Safer routes to school (SRTS) meetings and highway schemes

The SRTS working group meets once a month where officers across different disciplines discuss, prioritise and plan localised infrastructure schemes around schools.

The group's aim is to improve road safety outside schools as well as making improvements to help enable more sustainable and healthy ways of getting to and from school, with particular emphasis on walking, wheeling and cycling.

To achieve this, there is a need to improve conditions on the main walking and cycling routes to school. Schemes can include physical measures such as safer crossing points and may also involve work within the school grounds.

Projects involve the investigation of pupils' travel patterns usually carried out with the school's commitment to a [School Travel Plan](#). This often identifies engineering and educational measures to improve safety and reduce car use on the school run.

Interventions may include:

- pedestrian crossings
- improved footways
- better signage and road markings around the school
- 20mph zones, traffic calming, parking restrictions, new TROs
- cycle routes and cycle parking
- road safety education, training and publicity
- health information
- school travel plans

## 2.10 School crossing patrol service

The School Crossing Patrol service is a non-statutory function delivered by BCP Council. As at September 2025 there were 29 school crossing patrol sites across the area, each operated by a regular School Crossing Patroller (SCP) or "lollipop person", supplemented by a small number of relief SCPs who cover in the event of absence. SCPs promote road safety, helping both children and adults to cross the road more safely during short periods at the start and end of the school day, during term time only.

The service is an important part of the daily route to school for many children accompanied by adults, as well as children who are crossing independently. SCPs provide a friendly, trustworthy presence for school children, helping to build their confidence as a pedestrian. They are deployed at busy crossing locations where there is significant road traffic but no formal pedestrian crossing in place, and in some cases the SCPs manage several crossing points simultaneously.

With the advent of more families needing to use breakfast clubs and after school clubs for their children, there is a need in some locations to provide safe crossing facilities over a longer period of time. In some areas there is significant pedestrian footfall, and busy traffic, at all times of day and night, and therefore a permanent signalised or zebra crossing may be more appropriate.

There are currently five SCP sites which are awaiting imminent installation of zebra crossings as a permanent replacement for the SCP service at those sites.

## 2.11 Park and Stride schemes

There are currently two Park and Stride<sup>2</sup> schemes in operation. At Livingstone Academy a restricted parking permit is offered for Madeira Road multi-storey car park for primary school parents and carers to park and walk, as the school occupies a town centre site with very restricted car parking or drop off space.

The other site is at Pokesdown Primary, where a permanent School Street operates. Here, a restricted parking permit is available for Woodside Road car park which is a short walk away from the school.

The benefit of Park and Stride is that parents and carers who do need or want to drive their children to school can do so, but they are discouraged from parking directly outside the school where the roads and pavements tend to be busiest. This helps ease localised congestion, air pollution and road danger. Another advantage of Park and Stride is that children benefit from that small additional physical activity.

## 2.12 School buses and bus travel

Morebus operate a number of dedicated [school and college bus routes](#) and offer a range of point-to-point term tickets via their mobile app for those not entitled to transport assistance under the council's [Home to School Transport Policy](#). These can be purchased via the [Morebus fares and tickets page](#). The site also provides excellent [journey-planning](#) information.



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<sup>2</sup> [Living Streets - Park and Stride](#)

BCP Council has developed a [bus service improvement plan \(BSIP\)](#). The BSIP outlines the vision, objectives, and delivery plans for the local transport authority and bus operator partners to improve bus services in line with the National Bus Strategy.

This plan builds on the progress made since the first BSIP was published in October 2021.

The BSIP includes a [Delivery plan for the 2025 to 2026 financial year](#) developed in partnership with the bus operators which sets out the proposed measures and bus service enhancements planned for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to support the aims of the BSIP. As a result of government funding to deliver the BSIP, school travel by bus should benefit from increased bus priority measures providing faster and more reliable journey times. There's also improved information for bus passengers as well as frequency enhancements on some routes and improved safety and security.

## 2.13 Train travel

South Western Railway (SWR)'s [student's guide to train travel](#) offers several options for pupils travelling by train, including railcards, group travel discounts, and child-rate tickets.



Pupils aged 16-17 can get a 16-17 Saver Railcard for 50 per cent off most fares. Younger children (5-15) can travel with child tickets, and those under 5 traveling with an adult travel for free.

Network Rail provides resources aimed at children and young people about safety around railway lines and level crossings: [Safety education - Network Rail](#).

## 2.14 Behaviour change delivery partnerships

BCP Council works with delivery partners Sustrans; Living Streets; Public Health Dorset; and Public Health BCP, to deliver sustainable travel and behaviour change initiatives whilst supporting health and wellbeing. Increasing physical activity is known to have real health benefits, and to make daily activity as accessible as possible it is important to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient, and to provide more access to green space.

## 2.15 Community involvement

Community involvement and volunteers play an enormous role in supporting BCP Council in delivery of services for residents, including some elements of the SMOTS strategy. For example, parent and resident volunteers support school staff in managing some of the School Streets, whilst local campaign group BH Active Travel organise a regular [“bike bus” to Christchurch Infants and Junior schools](#) which was recognised by Active Travel England.



## 3: Processes

### 3.1 Infrastructure improvements

The council recognises that safe infrastructure is required to enable more children to walk, wheel, scoot or cycle to school. Children cannot be expected to mix safely with busy motor traffic, so protected paths, crossings and cycle lanes are needed to keep them safe on their journeys and enable them to travel independently as they get older.

The following are examples of physical infrastructure which was delivered in recent years to help children and families on their sustainable journeys to school:

Examples of physical infrastructure delivered in recent years
A protected cycle route along Wimborne Road in Poole, linking directly to Poole High School, which has 2,000 pupils. Several new crossings were also provided, along with improvements to side road junctions to make crossing them easier.
New crossings and segregated cycling and walking routes to and through Kings Park linking to Avonbourne Boys' and Girls' Academies, Avonwood Primary School, and Kings Park Academy.
Segregated cycling and walking routes through Baiter and Whitecliff, along with reducing traffic flows in Poole Park to create safer journeys to Baden Powell St Peters School, Lilliput Infants School, Longfleet Primary School, Bournemouth and Poole College, and Poole High School.
Segregated cycle tracks and improved pedestrian facilities along Wallisdown Road and Ringwood Road which, when the current works are fully complete, will link to Talbot Primary School, St Mark's Primary School, the Lion Works specialist school, Ocean Academy, Bournemouth University and St Mary's Primary School.
New crossings outside or close to multiple schools including St James' Primary School, Baden Powell St Peters School, St Clements and St Johns Infants School, Longfleet Primary School, Kings Park Academy, Moordown St John's Primary School, Oak Academy, St Peter's Primary School and others.
Provision of 'Trip End Facilities' at twenty schools, such as cycle and scooter parking.
School Streets – closing the road directly outside schools at drop-off and pick-up times, in order to reduce the danger from motor traffic and to encourage and enable active travel. So

far 10 schools across the BCP area have benefitted from this initiative and more are being planned.

Bus stop improvements across the BCP Council area – improvements include modern bright and airy shelters, accessible raised bus boarding kerbs, real time passenger information displays and live-streaming CCTV at bus stops and in Poole Bus Station.

Infrastructure projects such as the examples listed above are generally funded by the DfT's Transforming Cities Fund, BSIP grant, integrated transport block funding, or by Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund.

### 3.2 Delivery Plan - September 2025 to August 2026

The focus for the coming year includes programmed behaviour change and educational initiatives, delivering approved capital projects and enhancing the sustainable travel infrastructure. The delivery plan initiatives are funded by several different sources of revenue and capital spending as detailed below.

#### **Local Transport Grant**

The government provides an annual funding allocation to BCP Council through the Local Transport Grant (LTG). Budgets for different projects and workstreams are then agreed according to the priorities set out in our Local Transport Plan.

#### **Other external grants**

To support national transport policies, further capital and revenue funding can be provided to councils from central government through grants for specific initiatives or transport modes. Funding can be one-off amounts, or incremental over several years to deliver a programme of improvements but usually covering a limited time period.

In recent years this has included Active Travel England (ATE), Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant (TSOG) and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding.

#### **Developer Contributions & CIL funding**

Financial contributions from developers are sought by the Council to mitigate the impact of developments on the transport network. General funding is secured through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and site specific funding by Section 106 (S106) or Section 278 (S278) agreements – legal agreements between the developer and the local authority. S106 funding is directly linked to planning permission and is used for mitigation of unacceptable impacts of development on the highway network. S278 agreements are legal agreements between the developer and the local authority which allow the developer to make amendments to the public highway as part of planning approval to facilitate the development. CIL contributions are collected from developers for general infrastructure and can be ring fenced for highways and transport infrastructure.

## SMOT's Delivery Plan – September 2025 to August 2026

Deliver approved 2025/26 capital programme, which includes several projects related to school journeys, and agree 2026/27 capital programme.

Complete audit of all school locations to inform future investment

Continue roll out of the School Street programme.

Increase numbers of schools with a current School Travel Plan over the 2025/26 academic year from 20 signed off/completed STPs to 30 STPs.

Continue to increase the levels of Bikeability, with a particular focus on Level 2. Aim to increase from 50% Year 6s trained to Level 2, to 65% over the next year. Longer term target is 80% in line with government objectives.

Plan more active travel and general transport information for parents/ carers and year 6 pupils in preparation for moving up to secondary school to be ready for early June 2026.

Ensure that the Sustainable Travel team continues to work closely with the Planning Team on any applications related to school sites ensuring that sustainable travel is fully considered from an early stage.

Seek to increase the BCP Council ATE Capability rating from Level 2 to Level 3.

Work in partnership with Sustrans and Living Streets to deliver the Bike It Plus project and WoW outreach project respectively, promoting active travel to schools and increase participation across BCP schools in the 25/26 academic year.

Develop a set of Key Performance Indicators to be included in future versions of the SMOTs document and updated annually.

## 4: Administrative

### 4.1 Decision Impact Assessment (DIA)

A DIA has been carried out for this SMOTS Strategy, and the Impact Summary is included in the appendix. It is summarised below.

#### **Climate change and energy:**

The BCP SMOTS strategy is intended to provide a relevant source of information for parents and carers on travel options when they are considering preferences for schools. It aligns national and local policies and aims to create a safer, healthier, and more sustainable environment for school pupils. The vision is for sustainable travel to school to become the default option for all pupils in the BCP Council area. Children will be able to travel to school safely and independently, fostering their confidence, health and wellbeing. The school run will no longer be synonymous with private car use, but instead will contribute to a healthier, happier and more sustainable community.

The SMOTS strategy promotes sustainable modes of transportation, such as walking, wheeling and cycling, which directly contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. These eco-friendly travel options reduce reliance on fossil-fuel powered vehicles, therefore decreasing carbon footprints and air pollution.

#### **Communities & culture:**

BCP Council works with schools on school travel plans to promote safer, healthier, and more sustainable ways for students to travel to and from school. These plans are part of a broader local transport plan to encourage walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport use, reducing reliance on cars and improving air quality and safety through various programmes. Schools are encouraged to develop and implement their own travel plans to address specific concerns and goals related to student travel, promoting sustainable and active travel habits. It is also important to address climate and health concerns in the community. Many short journeys to school are made by car which could be made more sustainably. The Department for Education (DfE) have asked schools to encourage and impact the way that pupils travel to school which can provide both health and educational benefits.

Incorporating access for all school children to walking, wheeling and cycling routes encourages more outdoor activity, resulting in lively streets and public spaces. This not only supports local businesses by increasing foot traffic but also inspires community events and initiatives that take advantage of these active zones, thereby invigorating local culture and economic activity.

#### **Waste & resource use:**

BCP Council is committed to the promotion of sustainable travel to school. This Sustainable Modes of Travel to School (SMOTS) strategy is designed to support the council's climate goals, improve public health, and ensure safe and accessible travel options for all pupils across the BCP Council area.

By encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling to school, the strategy directly decreases reliance on fossil fuels used by motor vehicles. The demand for bicycles and pedestrian

infrastructure typically requires fewer raw materials and energy compared to the production and maintenance of motor vehicles.

### **Economy:**

BCP Council works with delivery partners Sustrans; Living Streets; Public Health Dorset; and Public Health BCP, to deliver sustainable travel and behaviour change initiatives whilst supporting health and wellbeing. Increasing physical activity is known to have real health benefits, and to make daily activity as accessible as possible it is important to make walking wheeling and cycling safer and more convenient, and to provide more access to green space.

More generally as people opt to walk, wheel or cycle, they are more likely to explore and engage with shops, cafes, and services along their routes, boosting sales and fostering economic vitality. Additionally, improved infrastructure encourages active commuting among school staff, contributing to a healthier and more content workforce. This active lifestyle translates into reduced absenteeism and fewer sick days, leading to increased productivity and cost savings for businesses. Furthermore, a healthier community alleviates pressure on the NHS, ultimately resulting in lower healthcare costs and further economic benefits.

### **Health & wellbeing:**

The purpose of this BCP SMOTS strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework which references all relevant existing strategies and policies in one document. It helps BCP Council develop a more integrated approach across all areas of work for promoting sustainable travel to school and Further Education (FE) colleges, as well as helping improve the outcomes for children and young people, by enabling safe and equitable access to education establishments across the BCP Council region.

BCP Council works with delivery partners Sustrans; Living Streets; Public Health Dorset; and Public Health BCP, to deliver sustainable travel and behaviour change initiatives whilst supporting health and wellbeing. Increasing physical activity is known to have real health benefits, and to make daily activity as accessible as possible it is important to make walking, wheeling and cycling safer and more convenient, and to provide more access to green space.

Regular walking, wheeling and cycling contribute to cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and overall physical health, reducing the prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Evidence has shown the positive impact of walking, wheeling and cycling on mental health and wellbeing too. The inclusive design of these infrastructures ensures accessibility for all members of the community. This supports mental well-being by reducing social isolation, providing opportunities for community engagement, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

### **Learning & skills:**

Two direct examples of learning and developing new skills are.

Bikeability is the national cycle training scheme supported by the Department for Transport (DfT). It is the modern version of cycling proficiency and gives children the practical skills and understanding they need to cycle on today's roads.

BCP Council currently offers four Bikeability courses for children from Learn to Ride to levels 1, 2 and 3.

STEPS child pedestrian safety training is currently offered to primary schools in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch and is delivered by specialised trainers using a combination of roadside skills training and classroom-based road safety activities.

Participation in walking, wheeling and cycling within the community offers informal but experiential lessons on the benefits of active travel for both mental and physical well-being. It reinforces the understanding of how active travel contributes to a healthier and happier lifestyle, serving as a catalyst for lifelong healthy habits.

#### **Natural environment:**

Promoting sustainable travel helps to reduce the reliance on motor vehicles, leading to improved air quality and a reduction in pollutants that contribute to smog and respiratory issues. Decreased traffic congestion leads to less runoff pollution entering waterways, ultimately safeguarding aquatic ecosystems and improving the quality of water resources. Vehicle emissions can change the nutrient quality of soil, thus affecting the types of flora and fauna that thrive in the area, thus altering the ecological balance. By having inclusive walking, wheeling and cycling networks, harmful emissions will be reduced, and healthier soil conditions will be supported.

The SMOTS strategy recognises the importance of safeguarding biodiversity and requires that any proposed changes carefully weigh the needs of environmental protection against the imperative of inclusive access.

#### **Sustainable procurement:**

This strategy is a broad documentation of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council's sustainable travel planning activities, showcasing initiatives and actions which are taking place across the local area which support and encourage sustainable school travel.

It brings together a range of existing relevant policies and strategies relating to school travel and transport, making it easier to find the information whilst providing an opportunity to both celebrate achievements over the previous academic year, and to set goals for the coming year.

This document is intended to provide information for parents, schools, Council Members and the wider public about sustainable school travel and its benefits and what BCP Council is currently doing within this area. The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis ahead of the start of each new academic year.

#### **Transport & accessibility:**

The publication of a SMOTS strategy is a statutory requirement as set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This places a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable transport modes on journeys to, from, and between schools and other institutions where education or training is delivered. SMOTS applies to children and young

people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority area. It also applies to further education institutions and 16-19 academies.

**Sustainable transport:** This SMOTS strategy supports sustainable transportation options that have minimal environmental impact. These modes of transport drastically reduce reliance on fossil fuels, thereby lowering carbon emissions and urban pollution levels.

**Affordable transport:** Walking, wheeling and cycling are among the most cost-effective modes of travel. This low-cost alternative to motorised travel, alleviates transportation expenses for families and individuals, making it an economically viable option for everyday commuting.

**Accessibility:** By ensuring infrastructures are well-designed, and accessible to all, this SMOTS strategy promotes safe and convenient options for journeys to school, which enhances urban mobility for those who may not have access to a car.

## 4.2 Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A formal EIA conversation screening tool has been carried out in September 2025. A copy of the EIA screening is included in the appendix.

The SMOTS strategy is simply a compilation of various existing policies and workstreams. Each individual policy or project would, where applicable, have been subject to its own individual EIA which would explore and assess how specific proposals could affect people from different protected characteristic groups.

However, looking at the provision of sustainable transport options for school travel as a general concept:

- **Age** – children and young people are less likely/unable to drive, and therefore improving other options such as public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling will benefit them. Children’s health is also more likely to be adversely affected by air pollution. Most children and young people do not meet the government’s recommendations for physical activity, which can adversely affect physical and mental wellbeing. Improving opportunities for people to walk, wheel and cycle as part of their daily routine could help address this. Making it safer for children to travel to/from school independently can mean that they are less reliant on their parents having work flexibility, which can help make extra-curricular clubs more accessible.
- **Disability** – Disabled people are less likely to have access to a car than non-disabled people. Improving transport options for people that can’t drive will be a benefit to those people whose disability does not preclude them from walking or wheeling (including with a mobility aid), cycling (including with a non-standard cycle) or using public transport.
- **Race** – Ethnicity is a factor in car use, with all people from all ethnicities far less likely to have access to a car than white people. Therefore, public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling can be a good option for these communities, if safe

and direct infrastructure is provided. Better access to free/cheap transport is likely to improve access to education and other opportunities.

- **Sexual Orientation** – people who identify as one of ‘All other sexual orientations’ are less likely to drive compared to heterosexual people. LGBT+ people are more likely to suffer with mental ill health, loneliness and inactivity than the general population. Therefore, improving opportunities for people to walk and cycle as part of their daily routine could help address this.
- **Deprivation** – People living in the most deprived areas are significantly less likely to drive than less-deprived areas. However, they are more likely to suffer the effects of car use – for example through air pollution, noise pollution and road danger. By improving conditions for walking, wheeling and cycling, and providing better access to public transport, residents – and particularly children – living in more deprived areas will benefit from more choice over how they travel, and more equalised access to education, employment, leisure and social opportunities.

### 4.3 Accountability

The responsibility for successful delivery of this service policy includes all officers within the Transportation service unit, the Sustainable Travel Team Leader and all the relevant officers within this team.

### 4.4 References

### 4.5 Resources

### 4.6 Appendices

Decision Impact Assessment (DIA)

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

This draft SMOT’s strategy has been written by Planning and Transport, Sustainable Travel Team, BCP Council – Draft version 19 September 2025.

This strategy will be reviewed annually and made available on the BCP Council website.