Joint APPG for Transport Safety and APPG for Cycling and Walking meeting

Child Road Safety – Meeting Follow-up Briefing – 19/10/2026

Background

On Monday 19 October 2026, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Transport Safety and the APPG for Cycling and Walking held a joint meeting to examine how child road deaths and serious injuries can be prevented, with a particular focus on walking, cycling and scooting.

The meeting followed the publication of the Government's Road Safety Strategy in January 2026, which established a target to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Britain's roads by 70% by 2035, compared with the 2022–2024 baseline.

The meeting brought together parliamentarians, road safety professionals and researchers to consider recent casualty statistics, research into child road deaths, safer street design and the role of road safety education.

Four speakers presented evidence:

- **Sean Longman**, Department for Transport (DfT) – *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: Child Casualties*.
- **Dr Sarah O'Toole**, RAC Foundation – *Maximising Learning from Child Road Death: Evidence for Action*.
- **Tanya Braun**, Living Streets – *Making Streets Safer for Children*.
- **Emily Cherry MBE**, Bikeability Trust – *Reducing Child KSIs by 70%: How Do We Deliver the Government's Target?*

Summary of Presentations

1. Department for Transport – Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: Child Casualties

Sean Longman presented findings from the DfT's latest child road casualty statistics, highlighting the scale of the challenge in achieving the Government's 2035 target.

In 2025, 2,432 children under the age of 16 were killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads, an increase of 3% compared with 2024. Although child casualties declined substantially between 2005 and approximately 2015, progress has since slowed.

The statistics identified several important patterns:

- Child KSI casualties increase with age, peaking at 15 years old, with boys accounting for 68% of child KSIs in 2025.
- Pedestrians represented the largest proportion of child KSIs across all age groups, while the proportion involving cyclists increased among older children.
- Approximately three-quarters of child KSIs occurred on urban roads, with weekday casualties concentrated around school travel times.

- The highest proportion of child KSIs occurred between 250 and 500 metres from an age-appropriate school, although these casualties were not necessarily associated with school journeys.

Differences were also identified between more and less deprived areas. In the most deprived 20% of areas in England, 55% of child KSIs occurred within 500 metres of an age-appropriate school, compared with 41% in the least deprived areas.

Questions following the presentation raised concerns about collision data quality and the attribution of road safety factors, which can be assigned based on police officers' professional judgement without a completed investigation.

2. RAC Foundation – Maximising Learning from Child Road Death: Evidence for Action

Dr Sarah O'Toole presented findings from research undertaken at University College London, funded by the Road Safety Trust, examining 217 child road deaths in England between 2019 and 2024 using National Child Mortality Database records.

Unlike the DfT statistics, the research included children under the age of 18. Just under half of the children studied had died while walking, cycling or scooting.

The research highlighted several important findings:

- Among 73 pedestrian deaths, almost half occurred while crossing roads, while approximately 16% involved vehicles mounting the pavement.
- More than a quarter of pedestrian deaths involved a driver exceeding the speed limit, rising to 43% among children aged 11–15.
- Among 32 cycling and scooting deaths, most involved children being struck by another vehicle, with 80% occurring on single carriageway roads.
- Environmental factors, including inadequate crossings, restricted visibility and unsafe road layouts, were identified as important risks.

The research also examined wider social and family circumstances. For example, 41% of children killed as pedestrians had current or previous social care involvement. Sarah emphasised that such associations did not establish causation but could help identify opportunities for earlier intervention.

Three priorities emerged from the research: protecting children's entire journeys, designing roads to support their growing independence, and ensuring that learning from child death reviews informs preventative action.

The subsequent discussion emphasised the importance of a Safe System approach, recognising that roads should be designed to protect children even when mistakes occur.

3. Living Streets – Making Streets Safer for Children

Tanya Braun discussed the relationship between street design, traffic conditions and children's ability to travel independently.

She highlighted the decline in children's independent mobility, noting that the proportion of primary school children walking to school has fallen from approximately 70% in the 1970s to 47% today.

A Living Streets survey of approximately 1,600 parents identified pavement parking, traffic volumes, inadequate crossings and vehicle speeds as major barriers to walking to school.

Tanya emphasised that measures such as School Streets can improve safety around school entrances but must be complemented by safer routes throughout surrounding neighbourhoods.

She highlighted the benefits of lower speeds and traffic reduction, including research reporting a 37% reduction in KSIs within low traffic neighbourhoods.

A case study from St Luke & St Philip's Church of England Primary School in Blackburn demonstrated how targeted improvements to street design, alongside other measures, increased active travel to school from 60% to 71% between 2024 and 2025, while car use fell from 36% to 22%.

Living Streets called for a consistent national approach to pavement parking restrictions and default 20mph speed limits in residential areas and around schools.

4. Bikeability Trust – Reducing Child KSIs by 70%: How Do We Deliver the Government's Target?

Emily Cherry discussed the importance of cycle training in improving children's road safety and supporting independent travel.

More than six million children have participated in Bikeability training. Independent research by TRL identified a statistical association between higher levels of Bikeability Level 2 training and fewer road casualties at local authority level.

Emily also highlighted the benefits of training for children's confidence and independence. Bikeability research found that 92% of participants felt more confident cycling on roads following training, while 91% reported feeling safer.

However, access remains inconsistent. Approximately 58% of children outside London receive cycle training before leaving school, compared with fewer than one-third in London.

Emily emphasised that cycle training should complement safer infrastructure, equipping children with the skills needed to navigate existing roads while improvements to the road network continue. She also highlighted the important influence of parents and carers on children's cycling habits.

The presentation called for greater recognition of cycle training within local cycling and walking infrastructure planning, alongside more consistent funding and improved driver awareness. Emily highlighted the DfT-funded *Cycle Savvy Driving* programme, which improved how approved driving instructors taught cyclist awareness but no longer receives funding.

Wider Discussion and Key Issues Raised

Following the presentations, parliamentarians and attendees discussed several wider issues relevant to reducing child road casualties.

Safer routes and infrastructure

A recurring theme was the need to consider children's entire journeys rather than focusing exclusively on safety outside schools. Questions were raised about existing school route assessment guidance and whether it adequately reflected the risks identified in the research, particularly where assessments determine eligibility for free school transport.

Participants also discussed the importance of road design standards, including Local Transport Note 1/20, and the challenges associated with guidance that is not mandatory.

Traffic speeds and driver behaviour

The discussion considered the effectiveness of lower speed limits, pavement parking restrictions and low traffic neighbourhoods. Questions were raised about whether casualty reductions within low traffic neighbourhoods might be offset by increased risks on surrounding roads.

The importance of addressing unsafe driver behaviour was also emphasised, alongside infrastructure improvements and wider consideration of graduated driving licences for new drivers.

Road safety education and awareness

Participants expressed concern about limited awareness of the Highway Code changes introduced in 2022, particularly the hierarchy of road users.

The discussion highlighted opportunities to improve driver training, strengthen public awareness campaigns and provide more consistent access to cycle training.

Data collection and casualty investigation

Attendees raised concerns about the limitations of STATS19 collision data, particularly where contributing factors are assigned before a full investigation.

The proposed Road Safety Investigation Branch was discussed, alongside the importance of collecting more consistent information about how children travel to school to inform local interventions.

Potential Next Steps

The meeting highlighted several areas for further consideration by the APPGs, including:

- **APPG inquiry into preventing child road deaths:** The APPG for Transport Safety is exploring a parliamentary inquiry examining the measures needed to achieve the Government's target of reducing child KSIs by 70% by 2035.
- **Safer routes and infrastructure:** Consider how existing guidance and local authority practices can better account for children's safety across entire journeys.
- **Driver behaviour and road safety education:** Explore opportunities to improve Highway Code awareness, strengthen driver training and support wider access to cycle training.
- **Data collection and casualty investigation:** Consider how improvements to collision reporting, casualty investigation and school travel data could support more effective interventions.
- **Further parliamentary engagement:** Use the evidence and issues raised to inform future discussions with ministers, parliamentarians and relevant organisations.