

**REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE
TO QUESTIONS POSED BY DEPUTY ROSS LE BRUN PURSUANT TO RULE 14 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Question 1

In view of the Guernsey Child Measurement Programme 2026 identifying increasing evidence that excess weight amongst Year 1 children is rising, with 21.2% of Year 1 children already having unhealthy levels of excess weight and almost one in three Year 5 children (29.7%) living with unhealthy excess weight, and noting that Public Health has recognised that differences in children's health outcomes are influenced by the broader environments and conditions in which they grow up, does the Committee acknowledge that inadequate provision for active travel, including road designs and traffic conditions that discourage walking and cycling, contributes to increased reliance on motor vehicle travel and is therefore a contributory factor in rising obesity levels in Guernsey?

Answer

The Committee *for* Health & Social Care acknowledges that the environments in which people live, travel and work does influence the choices available to individuals and families in their day-to-day lives, and these wider determinants of health can affect health outcomes.

Specifically, the Committee recognises that transport infrastructure, road design and traffic conditions that discourage walking and cycling can contribute to greater reliance on motor vehicle travel and may therefore reduce opportunities for routine physical activity. Physical inactivity is one of a range of factors associated with overweight and obesity, alongside diet, genetics, socioeconomic circumstances and other environmental influences. Obesity arises from a complex interaction of factors, and no single element should be considered in isolation.

Question 2

Bearing in mind that the Health Improvement Commission's Active Travel Officer has publicly stated in the Guernsey Press on 19/08/26 that in her qualified opinion "Every student should have a safe, car-free route to actively travel to school" and identified traffic and safety concerns as significant barriers to children walking and cycling to school, does the Committee acknowledge that many people are deterred from walking, cycling and other forms of active travel because current road design, traffic volumes and traffic conditions cause them to feel vulnerable, unsafe and at risk when travelling outside of a motor vehicle, and that this acts as a significant barrier to active travel?

Answer

The Committee notes that the quote referred to in the question appears to have been attributed in error to the Health Improvement Commission's Active Travel Officer, although it is correct that the Officer highlighted road safety as an important facilitator of active travel in a feature published in the *Guernsey Press* in July. The quote itself reflects the aims of the Sixth Form Active Travel Group, which presented its proposals for improving active travel to Deputies, fellow students and members of the public in July this year. During that event, students from a range of primary and secondary schools identified several barriers to active travel, including feeling unsafe on roads and a lack of bicycle storage facilities at schools.

Concerns about road infrastructure were also identified by young people living in the Bailiwick who expressed their views as part of the [118th Medical Officer of Health Report](#). Together with the feedback gathered through the Sixth Form Active Travel initiative, these perspectives together provide valuable evidence on the factors that may influence participation in active a travel and help inform the development of local policy and future initiatives

There is also some local quantitative data available on children and young people's views on safety from the [2022 Young People's Survey](#). This survey reported pupils' perceptions of safety for active travel to school and what they thought their parents' perceptions were. The results were as follows:

For secondary school age:

- *83% of pupils said their parents/carers think it is 'quite' or 'very' safe for them to walk or cycle to school, while 5% said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' unsafe.*
- *83% of pupils said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' safe for them to walk or cycle to school, while 5% said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' unsafe.*

For Primary school age:

- *69% of pupils said their parents/carers think it is 'quite' or 'very' safe for them to walk to cycle to school, while 9% said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' unsafe.*
- *78% of pupils said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' safe for them to walk to cycle to school, while 6% said they think it is 'quite' or 'very' unsafe.*

Public Health Services will be conducting a Young People's Wellbeing Survey in October this year where students in Years 8, 10 and 12 will be asked about factors that would encourage them to do more physical activity. Analysis of the responses to this question will provide us with further information on whether safety is a barrier to young people being more active.

Taking all of the above into account, the Committee acknowledges that concerns relating to road design, traffic volumes and traffic conditions may act as a barrier to active travel for some individuals. While local survey data indicates that most children and young people perceive active travel to be safe, qualitative evidence from young people in the Bailiwick demonstrates that safety concerns remain an important consideration for others. Enhancing existing infrastructure to support safe and convenient active travel would therefore be supported by the CfHSC as part of a wider programme of initiatives to promote physical and mental wellbeing across the population.

Question 3

Given that the Associate Director of Public Health has stated that physical activity plays an important role in reducing childhood overweight and obesity, that active travel contributes towards the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity for children, that the current Healthier Weight Strategy includes an action to promote and enable active travel and planning strategies that support physical activity, and noting the findings of the peer-reviewed longitudinal study "Associations of Active Travel with Adiposity among Children and Socioeconomic Differentials: a Longitudinal Study" (Lavery et al., BMJ Open, 2021), which found that children who switched from private motorised transport to active travel had lower body mass index and lower body fat and concluded that increasing active travel delivers health benefits whilst helping to reduce health inequalities, does the Committee accept that, as a principal committee with responsibility for public health, it should work as a matter of urgency with the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure to review and, where necessary, adapt the Island's road network in order to deliver a safe, accessible and connected active travel infrastructure network, including continuous safe vehicle-free pavements, protected footpaths and dedicated cycle routes, that enables and encourages children to travel safely and independently outside of vehicles and gives parents the confidence to choose walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys, particularly to and from school?

Answer

Members of the Committee *for* Health & Social Care are strongly supportive of safe, accessible and connected active travel infrastructure across the islands, as this aligns with our mandate to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of islanders. The Committee recognises the important contribution that active travel can make to increasing physical activity levels and supporting wider public health outcomes, including healthier weight.

The Committee also supports continued cross-Committee working to improve infrastructure that encourages and enables walking, cycling and wheeling. Decisions

relating to the design, development and management of the Island's transport infrastructure are, however, primarily matters for the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure, and the CfHSC's role is to provide public health expertise and evidence to support policy development and decision-making.

This collaborative approach is reflected in the ongoing review of the current Healthier Weight Strategy, which is due for completion in 2027. The current strategy's focus on healthier weight will be broadened to include Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity, recognising the interrelationship between these factors in supporting population health. Active travel will form an important part of this work.

The Committee was also encouraged by the publication of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure's Work Plan, which includes a commitment to:

"Sustainable transport and mobility - prioritising safer roads and reliable public transport; helping people get to work, school and appointments; and over time supporting healthier and more sustainable travel choices."

The Committee welcomes this commitment from the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure in supporting the implementation of initiatives that encourage safe, accessible and connected active travel as part of a broader approach to improving the health and wellbeing of Islanders.

Date of Request: 4th September 2026

Date of Response: 18th September 2026