

02 Personal Travel Planning

Key Principle

Personal travel planning provides people with information, at an individual and personalised level, about opportunities for them to make journeys by means of travel other than the car. PTP does not rely on the introduction of new infrastructure, and participants are often surprised at the range of existing opportunities for them to ride a bike. Nevertheless, practitioners generally agree that PTP tends to be most effective where it follows on from some tangible physical improvements, such as completion of a new cycle route.

Personal Travel Planning

What is personal travel planning?

Personal travel planning is a targeted marketing technique providing travel advice to individuals, based upon their personal trips, which seeks to induce behaviour changes in favour of more sustainable modes of transport. It aims to overcome habitual use of the car, enabling more journeys to be made on foot, bike, bus, train or in shared cars. It also seeks to discourage unnecessary travel, for example, by promoting the use of local goods and services. PTP draws upon psychology and social science (or 'social marketing') techniques to engage in one-to-one dialogue with participants.

Where does it take place?

PTP techniques can be applied in many places, including schools, workplaces and residential areas. Although it is a relatively new transport planning tool, there is a growing evidence base of PTP projects across the UK, with residential-based projects to date covering over 300,000 households, including initiatives in Brighton, Bristol, Darlington, Lancaster, London, Peterborough, Worcester and York.

Whilst evidence suggests that PTP can be applied to any community (as reductions in car use are generally consistent across all project areas), it is generally agreed that the greatest success is likely to be delivered where PTP is based in a self-contained community with plentiful availability of local services (health, education, retail etc), and good levels of accessibility by all sustainable transport modes. The extent to which cycling, specifically, can be encouraged will clearly be dependent on: how well the site is served by cycle-friendly routes which link to the wider cycle route network; the availability of trip-end facilities, particularly secure cycle parking; and the nature of the information, gifts and incentives offered by the PTP intervention.

What is involved in a typical PTP project?

PTP is typically delivered across large residential areas (about 10,000 households). Each person within the targeted area is encouraged to think about how they currently travel for each of the trips they make, and to consider how they might make those trips in more sustainable ways. The tools and techniques to encourage people to travel sustainably differ from project to project, and include:

- One to one conversations, either at the door step or by telephone, between individuals and trained travel advisors to encourage and motivate a change in behaviour;

- The provision of information on how to travel sustainably (for example local bus network maps, travel guides, walking and cycling routes);
- The offer of gifts and incentives to encourage the use of sustainable modes (for example pedometers, water bottles, free bus tickets).

How effective is it?

Within the UK, PTP has been reported to typically reduce car driver trips by 10% (amongst the targeted population) and reduce the distance travelled by car by 11%, with average increases in walking of 15%, in cycling of 27% and bus use of 23%.

Although it can be resource intensive, typically costing between £20 - £40 per household targeted, proven techniques do consistently demonstrate reduced use of the car.

The effectiveness of PTP is enhanced where the project is led by a strong advocate with commitment and enthusiasm for PTP. This, accompanied by effective project management and staff who are committed and motivated to achieve the objectives of the PTP project further improves performance. Increasing the scale of the project has a positive impact upon its cost effectiveness.

PTP and cycling investment

PTP programmes involve promotion of the range of sustainable travel options – walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing. Because of the level of resources required for PTP, it will tend to occur in one location only once, or very infrequently. However, investment in sustainable transport tends to be spread across a geographical area, and over time. This presents a dilemma in deciding on the most appropriate time to deliver a PTP programme in any particular area. Small-scale physical improvements for cycling in isolation, are unlikely to be the key trigger for a PTP initiative. However, where there are significant physical improvements such as a regeneration programme or extensive bus priority measures available also for use by cyclists, then a follow-on PTP programme might well be appropriate. In situations where there have been recent improvements for cyclists, but a full-scale PTP initiative is not justified, or has already taken place, providing targeted information about the improvements to existing and potential cyclists in the scheme's area of influence is worth considering.

How can it help promote cycling?

As a result of, and in addition to, reduced car use successful PTP projects also deliver the following benefits for cycling:

- Increased levels of cycling, which consequently becomes a more acceptable means of local travel;
- Increased levels of walking, corresponding with lower levels of car travel, contributing to a more attractive environment for cycling;
- Increased public transport use, helping to reduce the volume of private cars on local roads used by cyclists;
- Increased viability of local shops and businesses, which are more accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport than remote car-orientated retail and business parks;

- More sociable and 'liveable' neighbourhoods, again adding to the conviviality of the environment for cycling;
- Improved local air quality.

How can the benefits be sustained?

The limited evidence that exists suggests that PTP interventions can provide long-term changes in travel behaviour. However, practitioners generally agree that it is wise to establish plans for 'top-up' PTP in future years, not least because business, educational and residential communities do not remain static. PTP programmes could, for example, include provision to identify and encompass all newcomers to the area at periodic intervals. In addition, PTP participants could be made aware, via a PTP programme newsletter, mail-out, or web site, of all relevant developments (e.g. improved cycling infrastructure, new cycle training opportunities, etc) as they come on-stream.

Case studies

Worcester

Worcester is one of the three Sustainable Travel Towns, chosen by the Department for Transport to demonstrate what combination of 'hard' and 'soft' measures are effective in encouraging a modal shift away from car use. Additional funding has been made available to the three towns to implement a programme of 'soft' measures, e.g. marketing and promotions, which includes a significant element allocated to PTP, to support complementary physical improvements funded primarily through the Local Transport Plan process. Sixty per cent of Worcester's population (i.e. 23,500 households) have been invited to take part in a PTP programme. Those who express an interest in finding out how they can travel more sustainably are provided with a personalised package of information tailored to their specific journey requirements. This is underpinned, for households with the greatest willingness and potential for change, by motivational support and advice delivered through a home visit. The following promotional tools have been distributed free of charge to those who have expressed an interest, through the Worcester PTP programme, in increasing their level of cycling:

- Maps depicting cycle routes in and around the city;
- Advice on adult cycle training opportunities locally;
- Cycle information leaflets covering, for example, choosing a bike, route finding, security issues, clothing and accessories;
- Leaflets providing details about individual cycling schemes;
- Cycle lights.

In the areas of Worcester where PTP has taken place cycling has increased by 36% compared to those areas without exposure to PTP. Comparable figures for other modes were: walking up 17% in the PTP areas, public transport use up 22%, and car use (as a driver) down 12%.

Darlington

Darlington is also a Sustainable Travel Town (STT), but also a Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT), one of six in England that are receiving additional funds over three years from the DfT to encourage cycling through a combination

of 'hard' (infrastructure) and 'soft' (promotional) measures. Darlington's STT status is funding delivery of a PTP programme to all 39,000 households in the town. A similar approach to that in Worcester is being employed. Individuals willing to explore more sustainable travel choices are identified, provided with a package of information tailored to their specific journey needs, with further advice and motivational rewards for the more enthusiastic participants.

All modes of sustainable transport are being endorsed through the PTP programme in Darlington, with no one mode being favoured in terms of the level of investment in its promotion. Nevertheless, there is a perception that cycling is being given a particular boost. The reasons for this are likely to be:

- In addition to securing STT status in 2004, in 2005 Darlington was also chosen as one of the six national Cycling Demonstration Towns, which brought with it additional resources for investment in this mode;
- The local media seem particularly interested in picking up novel cycling-related stories;
- As cycling is both the most under-utilised mode and the one with the greatest potential for modal shift, there is the most ground to cover in realising its potential;
- Of the sustainable travel modes, increases in cycling are the most visible.

In relation to encouraging cycling in Darlington, the following promotion tools have been developed and distributed (largely) free of charge to those who have expressed an interest in increasing use of this mode (many of these support, and are at least part-funded from, the CDT budget):

- A personal journey planner, i.e. assistance finding the best cycling route between two locations, given certain parameters (e.g. distance, attractiveness, safety);
- A cycle computer to help measure distance travelled, among other things;
- An MP3 player;
- A drinks bottle;
- Free tailored cycle training for adults and families, with tokens to put towards discounted cycle accessories for those who complete a training course;
- Free bike loan for one month, for those who don't own a roadworthy bike;
- Advice on bike, and associated equipment, purchase;
- Discounts at Darlington bike shops (10% off repairs, 5% off new bikes and free bike checks for PTP participants);
- A programme of organised bike rides, from April through to September, to suit a wide range of tastes and abilities, including those billed as suitable for families and women only rides;

- Organised cycling festivals that includes, in addition to guided bike rides, cycling-related films.

PTP is being introduced in phases across Darlington, with each completed phase followed by an impact assessment. The most recent assessment shows that, with external 'town-wide' influences (e.g. the impact of the Cycle Demonstration Town project) taken into account, car driver trips in the area receiving PTP decreased relatively by 5%, public transport use increased by 2%, walking by 14% and cycling by 14%, while car passenger trips decreased relatively by 12%.

Publications and references

In 2002, the Department for Transport awarded grants to 14 local authorities to pilot personalised travel planning. An independent evaluation of the final reports from these pilots is available from the [DfT website](#). Search for 'Personalised travel planning: evaluation of fourteen pilots part funded by DfT' under the 'Policy, guidance and research' section.

An entire chapter of Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel, published in 2005, is devoted to personalised travel planning. This is available from the [DfT website](#). Search for [Chapter 5 – Personalised travel planning](#) under the 'Policy, guidance and research' section.

[Making Personal Travel Planning Work Final Research Report](#), forthcoming from the DfT.

[Making Personal Travel Planning Work Case Study Summaries](#), forthcoming from the DfT.

[Making Personal Travel Planning Work Summary Report](#), forthcoming from the DfT.

[Making Personal Travel Planning Work Best Practice Guide](#), forthcoming from the DfT.

Sustrans, in collaboration with Socialdata, has been involved in delivering a number of PTP projects in England in recent years, under the TravelSmart brand. Information about its work in this area is available via the organisation's [website](#), under [Sustrans Projects](#)

Consultants Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) have also been managing delivery of a number of PTP programmes in England during the early roll-out of this travel planning tool. Information about some of the projects SDG has been involved in is available from their [website](#).