

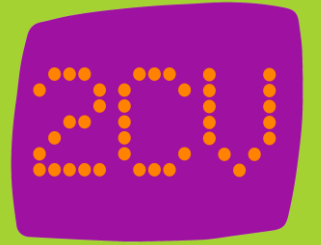


# TfL Walking Strategy for Secondary Schools

Debrief

January 2016

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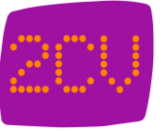


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# Background, Objectives and Methodology

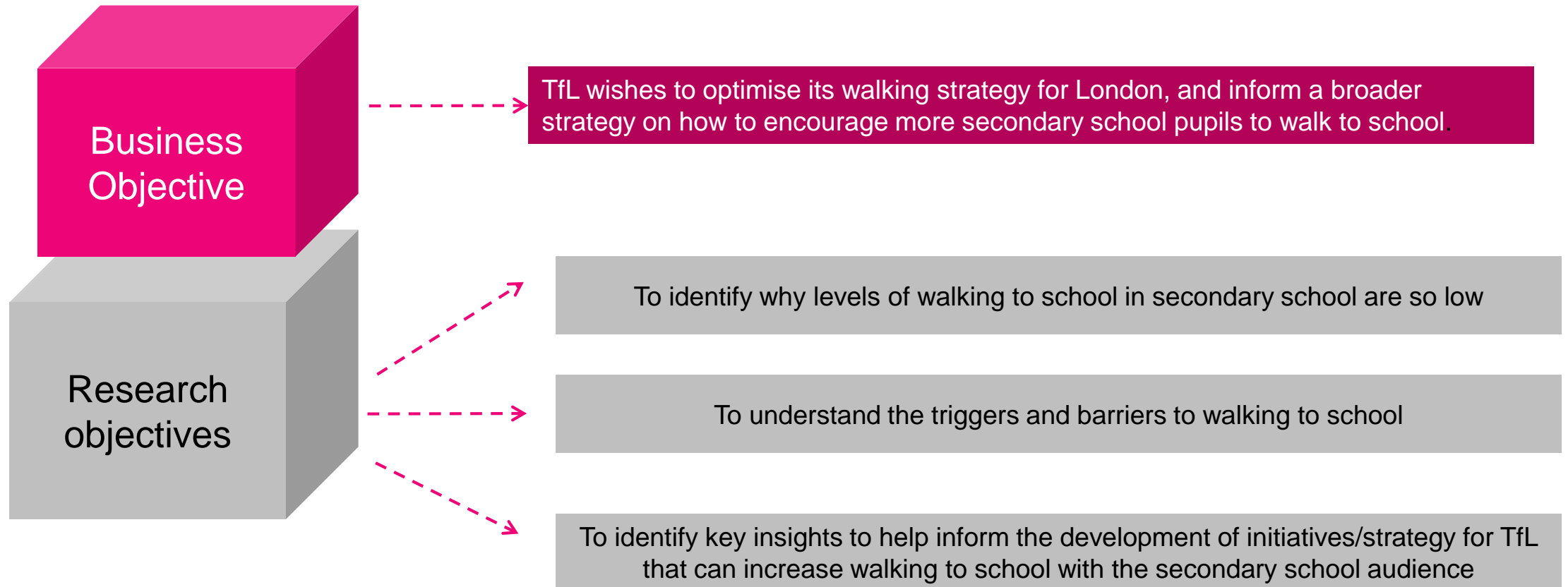
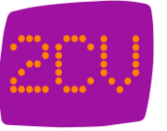
# Background



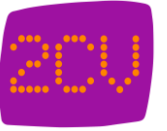
- TfL's Walking Strategy for schools is focused on increasing the number of walking journeys to school by 2016 through a number of initiatives. (inc. STARS accreditation, TfL's Legible London Walking Maps and other related engagement tools; 'Walk This Way' Guidance/toolkit for STARS engaged schools).
- While there has been success in engaging primary schools across London in walking initiatives, mirroring this success within secondary schools has proved far more challenging.
- Research was required to understand the issues **behind why secondary school pupils are harder to reach and what types of initiatives** might engage and motivate them to walk to school more.



# Objectives



# 2CV Research Approach



## **Desk Research**

*A review of TfL's walking research conducted to date*

## **Youth Travel Coordinator Depths**

*4 Phone depths with YTCs to uncover what is working well/less well and what can be done to optimise walking to school*

## **Focus Groups**

*Exploring perceptions of walking among secondary school walkers and non walkers to delve into barriers and motivations and identify ideas for walking strategies*

## **Youth Travel Ambassador mini group**

*Speaking to 4 YTAs about existing walking initiatives, what is working well vs less well and what more can be done to engage their peers*

# Sample



## GROUP SAMPLE

6 x focus groups:

### **Age 11 – 12**

Boys, inner London, Walkers  
Girls, outer London, Non-walkers

### **Age 13-14**

Boys, outer London, Non-walkers  
Girls, inner London, Walkers

### **Age 15 -16**

Boys, outer London, Walkers  
Girls, inner London, Non-walkers

## YOUTH TRAVEL AMBASSADOR SAMPLE

4 YTAs from St Catherine's girls school in  
Bexleyheath

## YOUTH TRAVEL COORDINATOR SAMPLE

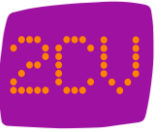
4 X Phone depths with YTC coordinators



# Headline Findings



# Headlines



Young people at secondary schools share three key motivations to walk to school

**Social:** Catching up with friends

**Wellness:** Getting fit and healthy (physically and psychologically)

**Independence:** Having greater ownership of how they get to school and what activities they get involved in

Important ingredients of any future TfL strategy must offer the following in order to motivate more young people to walk to school

- **Flexibility:** An initiative that allows young people to interact and participate on their own terms (when, how and how often)
- **Competition:** Within schools and across local schools (step challenges, quickest time walked, photo challenges)
- **Support:** Leadership from schools and encouragement from parents, neither of whom encourage walking. Support from borough officers will also help to drive uptake within the schools

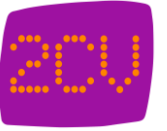
All young people imagine that any future programme would utilise **digital technology** (apps) and **social media** platforms

- They want to be able to **personalise** their participation through digital tools
- They want to be able to **socialise and discuss** their **achievements (Facebook and Instagram)**



# Understanding motivations and barriers to walking to school

# Young people are experiencing profound changes, both physically and emotionally during secondary school



## PERSONAL

- Academic pressure
- Independence
- Individuality

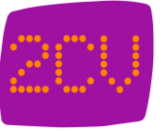
## SOCIAL

- New friendship groups
- Changing social norms
- Peer pressure

## ENVIRONMENTAL

- New (longer) routes to school
- More access to technology

# Technology is playing a key role in their lives



## Smartphones/laptops/ipads/tablets



We often get in trouble for using our phones in class, most teachers have just accepted it though

Always on and always available

Facilitating independence and social lives

Most kids at our school have a smartphone and are always using it

## Social media platforms



Almost everyone has an Instagram and Facebook account

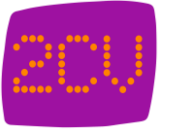


Social media is so important and it really matters how many likes you get

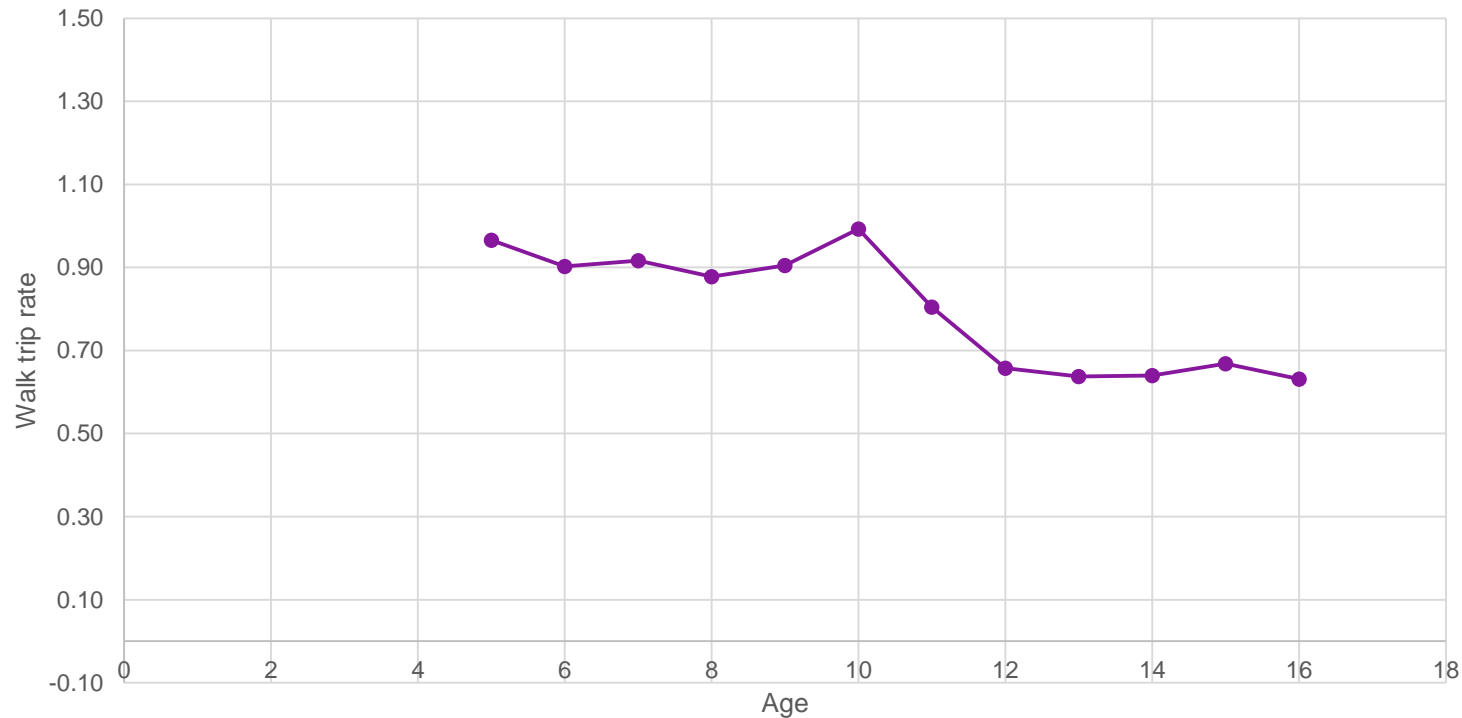
Establishing and building relationships

Engaging in conversations

# It is at this period in life when there is a significant drop in secondary pupils walking to school



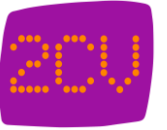
Proportion of young people walking to school by age



I walked much more at primary school – now I worry about being late and mum's happy to take me in the car or I just get the bus

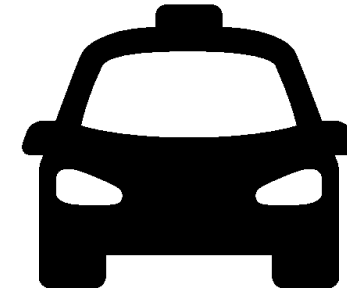
\*For the years 2012/13-2014/15 combined

# Walking to school is simply not a priority for parents or teachers



## Mum and dad taxi service

- Parents are instrumental in establishing walking habits during children's formative years
  - If they do not encourage these behaviours or lead by example, children are less likely to walk\*
- Readily on hand to take children to school (especially in the morning or when the weather is bad) – this is the 'default' option for many parents
- They too are worried about their children being late for school
- As well as safety (particularly year 7 children)



My dad leaves for work around the same time as me anyway so he just drops me on the way

I feel very tired in the mornings so I sleep until the very last second and then my mum has to take me to school or I'll be late

## Schools / teachers

- Not felt to encourage / promote walking to school
- More concerned with them arriving on time (no matter how they got there)
- Put in place strict penalties for being late (detentions etc)

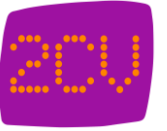


School gives us detentions for being late so often my mum takes me to ensure that doesn't happen

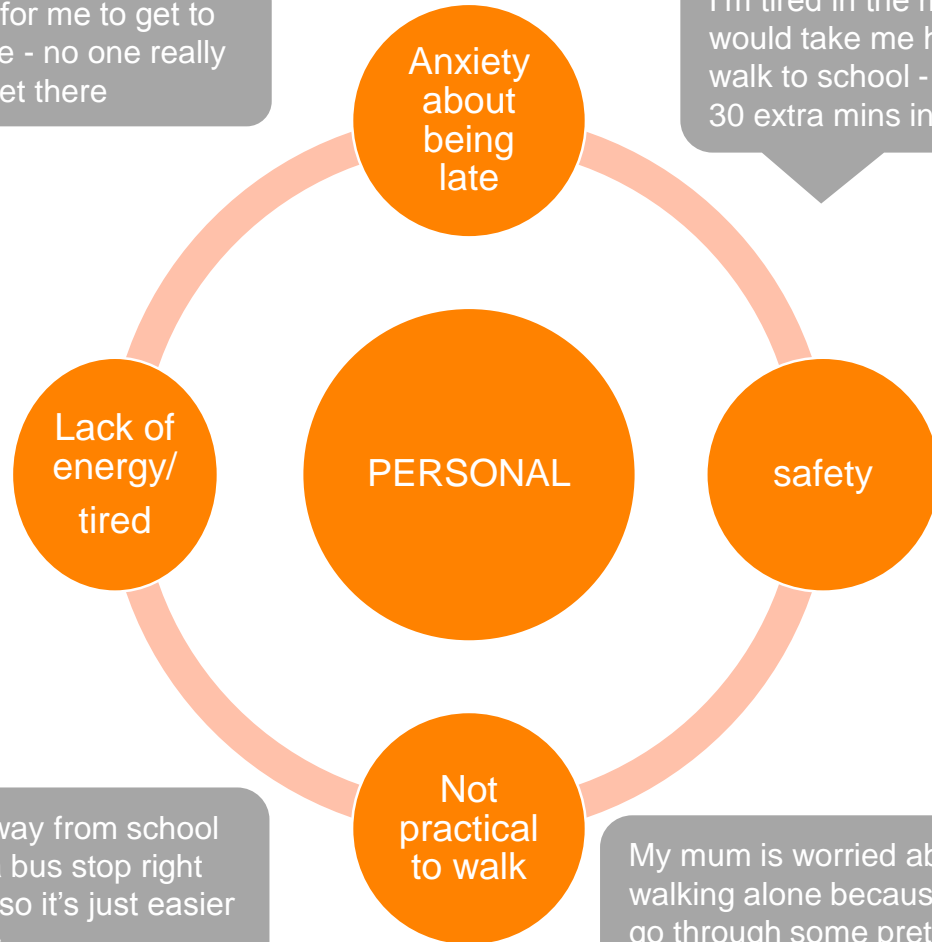
\*Synovate 2008

Very few felt that their parents or teachers were encouraging them to walk

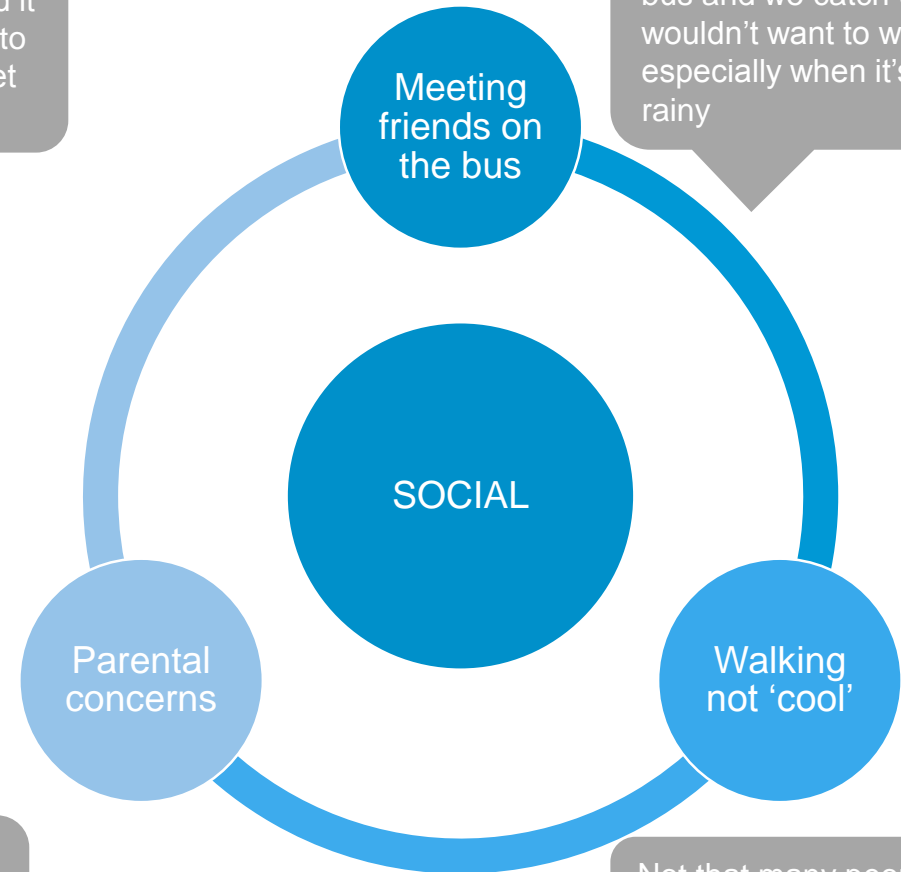
# Young people felt there were a number of personal and social barriers to walking to school



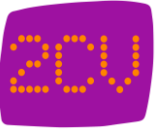
## PERSONAL



## SOCIAL



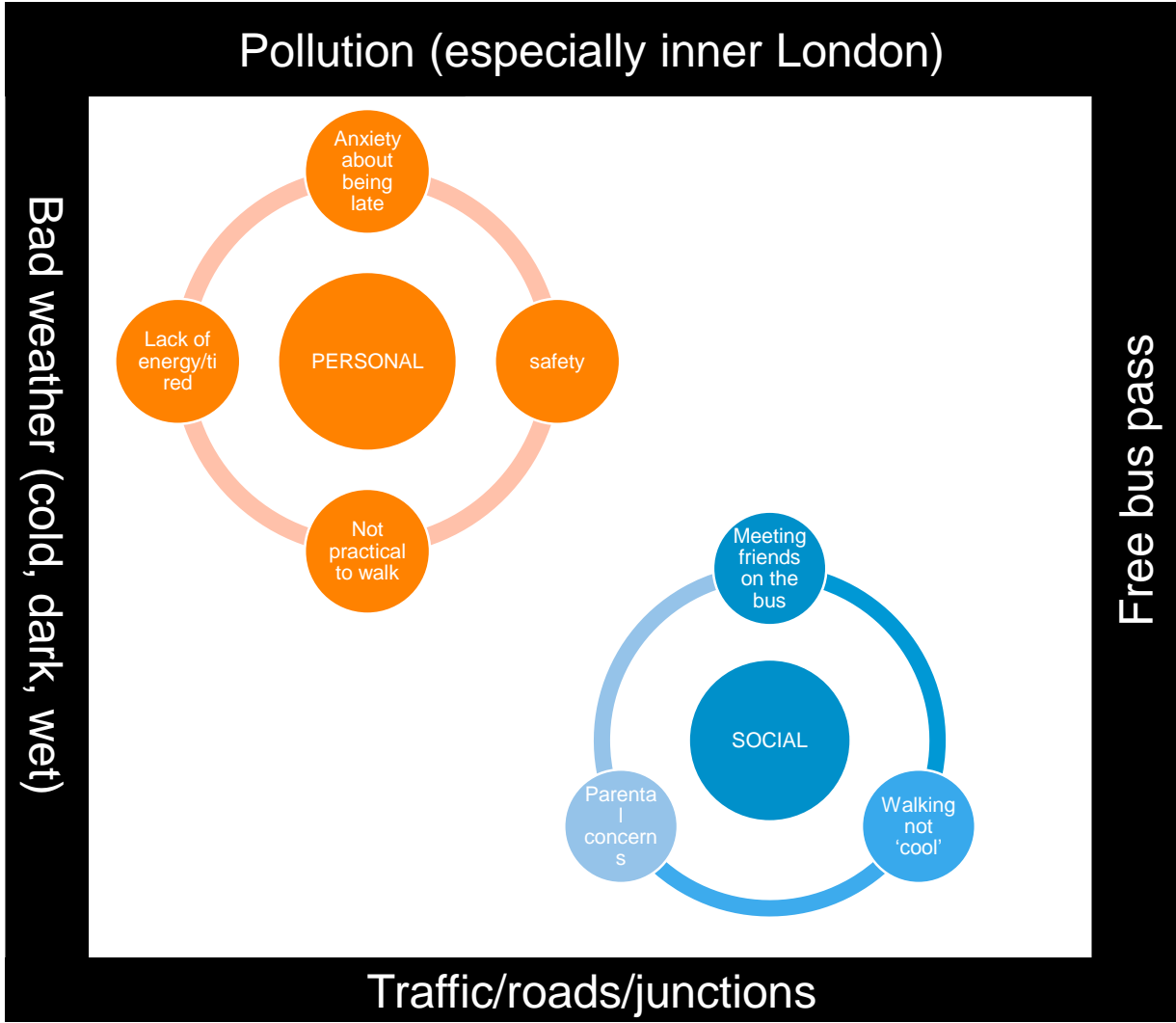
# Environmental barriers also influence young peoples motivation to walk to school



Sometimes in the summer I will walk to school when my parents aren't around to take me- when it's raining or dark I always take the bus

I hate walking in the cold and rain - you don't want to be soaking and cold and miserable before you even get to school!

Inner London is so crowded and polluted my mum says it's not even good for me to walk



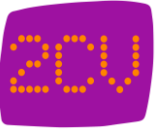
We get a free bus pass so it makes no sense for us not to get the bus!

Maybe I would walk if I didn't get free travel...when I'm older I think I might walk.

My walk to school wouldn't be very pleasant. There are many big junctions to cross and it would not be very safe



# Importantly there are key motivations that are shared across gender and age groups



## SOCIAL



- Walking to school with friends / having a catch up / gossip / talk on the phone
- Going to shops or parks on the way to or from school

## WELLNESS



- Time alone to reflect\*
- Relieving stress
- Keeping fit and active (although walking is not seen as high energy/impact)
- Listening to music\*

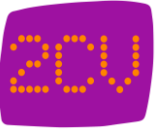
## INDEPENDENCE



- Feeling in charge of how you get to school- being flexible
- Not having to rely on others for transport
- A space to do what you want (choose your route, go to shops, be alone or with friends etc)

\*Motivations that are particularly relevant for years 8 and 9

# In their words...



## SOCIAL



I walk to school with one of my close friends who lives nearby - it's nice to catch up with her before school

I always walk to and from school with a couple of friends and we stop at the shops to get some snacks

## WELLNESS



I quite like walking as it gives me some time to be with myself and think and listen to music - I feel I need that time now

Walking is a good way to wake up in the morning and get you energised for the day ahead - it keeps you fit and alert

## INDEPENDENCE



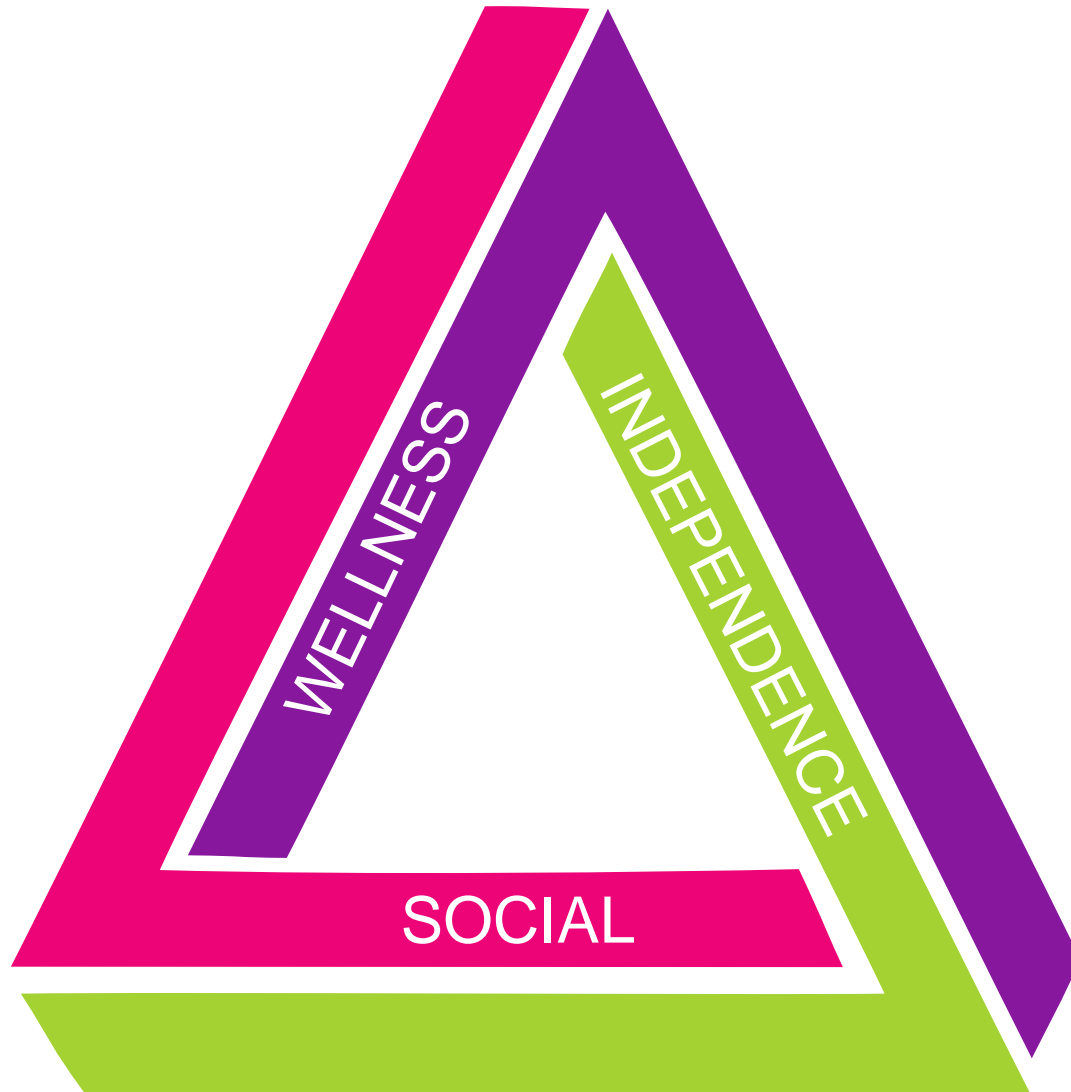
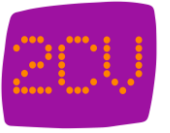
It's nice to walk - you can choose what you do with that time: you could listen to music, chat on the phone, get a snack- it's totally up to you

I don't really like having to depend on someone or something else to take me home- I want to rely on myself



# The ingredients for a successful walking strategy

# Any walking initiatives aimed at secondary schools needs to tap into three broad motivations

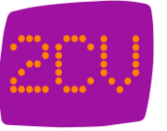


**Social:** Interactive and competitive

**Wellness:** Physical and psychological benefits

**Independence:** Flexibility and control

# The following ingredients need to work together to deliver successful walking initiatives



## SOCIAL



A digital tool that allows them to **participate**, **compete** and **socialise** their involvement

## WELLNESS



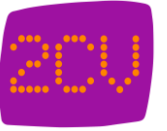
The opportunity to track their progress and see the impact walking has on health and well-being

## INDEPENDENCE



A 'programme' that is **flexible**, available all year long and allows them the opportunity to opt in and opt out

# Social: Essential that walking initiatives are fun, interactive and competitive



- Fun – delivered through gamification eg
  - School competitions (girls vs boys, different sports teams competing)
  - Local schools competing against each

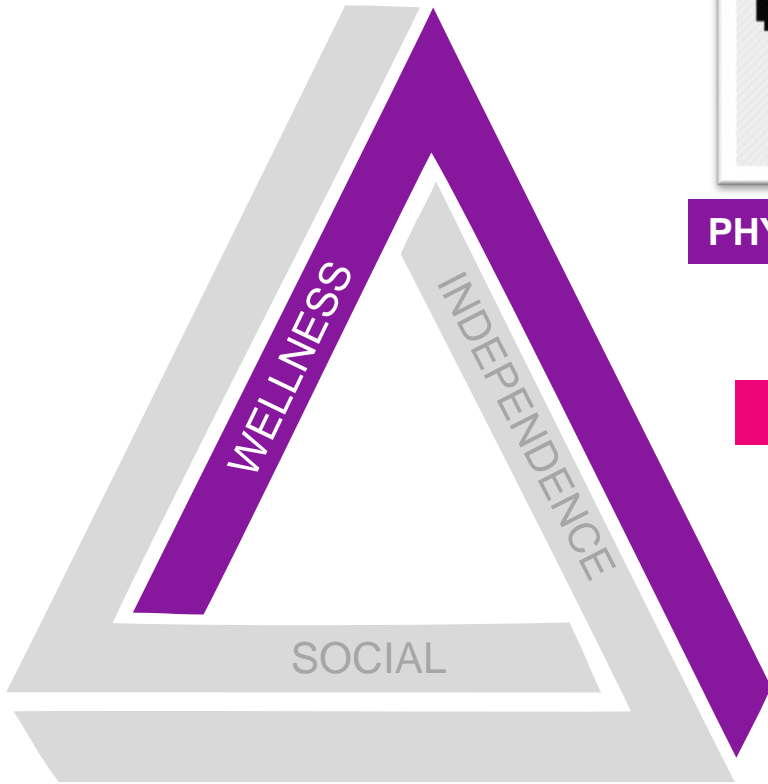
We do quite a lot of competitions at our school for all sorts of things and everyone gets really excited about them



- Buddy up with friends
- Compete with friends
- Discuss / share on social media

Friends are really important to me and we tend to like the same things like music and TV shows.

# Wellness: Young people want to improve their physical and psychological health



PHYSICAL

- Initiative needs to demonstrate how walking can help with fitness
  - Pedometer challenges
  - Step counter
  - Heart rate

I never really think of walking as something that helps with fitness - I suppose it is good for you though

There is a real opportunity to challenge perceptions that walking is low impact



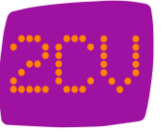
PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Communicate the psychological benefits explicitly
  - Stress relief (relax and unwind)
  - Enhanced concentration

Secondary school is extremely stressful and tiring - walking gives you the space you need to collect your thoughts and relax a little bit

This can be promoted in the months leading up to exams/stressful periods at school

# Independence: A flexible tool that young people can opt in and out of



- Young people want to feel that they are in charge of their own lives and decisions
- Unlike in primary school, they want to feel they are **choosing to participate and no longer want to be told to participate**
- They want **flexibility and ease** to sit at the core of how any walk to school initiative is implemented
- They want something that is available **throughout** the year so they can choose when/how to participate - it should be tailored to them.

If the school forces me to participate in something I don't do it, I want it to be my decision when and how I take part

We want it to be something that goes on all year so that we can choose how much and when we take part



## In their words...



It's important to make it clear that walking is good for your mental state - as you get older it's very important to get that personal time

get a prize  
a new type of social media  
by making it fun  
because you can be social  
making a competition  
talk to new people

Maybe there could be a competition of who makes the best playlist or who walks more out of the boys and girls

My mum uses one of those step counter apps and I think it would be good for us to do it too - so we can see that walking actually makes a difference

Walking with a friend was fun because we got lots of time to chat about important things

We think it is really important to make it fun and have competitions between boys and girls or different years at school

We don't want to be forced into anything - it should be very flexible and fun

someone, did this make a difference to you, how? (Did you enjoy it more? Less?)

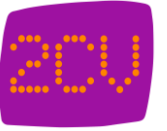
I enjoyed it more, spoke about the future and our aspirations

UP TO YOU



# How to deliver the walking strategy

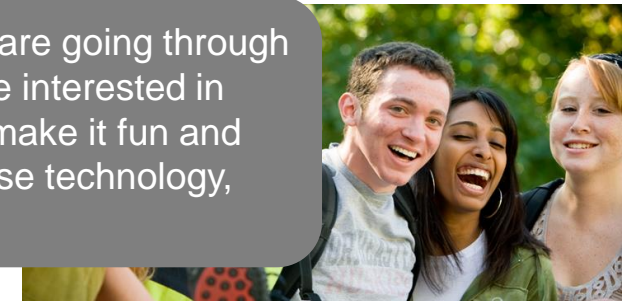
# A secondary school initiative needs to look and feel more 'grown up' than traditional walking to school programmes



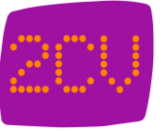
- Current frame of reference are initiatives that they took part in at primary school
  - For example, walk to school week, walk on Wednesdays etc
- They want something that feels more **exciting and different, tailored to secondary school years**
- That is why:
  - They want it to incorporate digital / tech / social / video / music
  - Be available throughout the year (not dictate when and where)
  - Not 'traditional teaching resources' (assembly plans etc)
- YTAs and YTCs support this view – they want something cool, fun, exciting (a tool) they can sell in easily



Secondary school pupils are going through so many changes and are interested in new things - we need to make it fun and easy and allow them to use technology, YTC

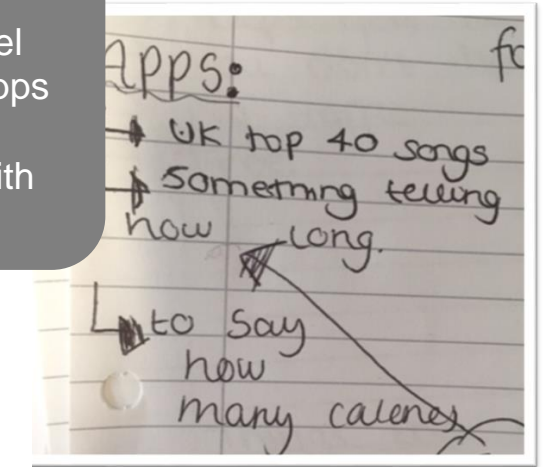


# Future initiatives could benefit from taking advantage of the latest app technology to make walking more fun and competitive



- Digital plays a crucial role in the everyday life of secondary school pupils
  - Almost everyone has a smartphone
  - They feel comfortable in the world of **apps**
- A walking app that allows them to track their steps and compare with their friends has appeal
  - Pedometer challenge / Step counter
  - Existing apps such as Strava/Runtastic / Map my walk were all cited as good examples

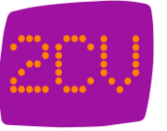
Most of them have smartphones and feel comfortable using apps - I think our strategy needs to catch up with this trend, YTC



I think anything for our age group needs to involve technology - otherwise no one wants to do it

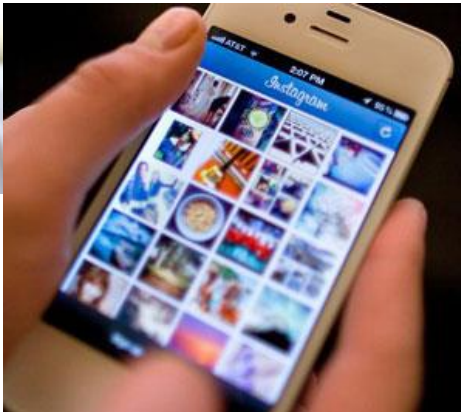
Most people I know have a smartphone - it's very rare not to have one

# Young people expect any initiative to have a social media element baked into it



- Almost all secondary school pupils participate in some form of **social media**
  - Particularly Instagram, Twitter and Facebook
  - **Shareable content** plays an important role in their social life
- Sharing achievements with friends is important and getting social validation counts
- Visual content has great appeal - **creating videos, vlogging, selfies** are all part of their world

I know from experience with YTAs that the things that work best to get them engaged are videos or other visual content - like the YTAs at Bexleyheath did - YTC



Everyone is always taking pictures just to share them and get likes

Everyone is on Facebook and Instagram- some people are obsessed with getting likes

Teachers often get annoyed with us because we are checking Facebook and Instagram in class

Being able to socialise their involvement is a core part of any initiative appeal

# Secondary school pupils feel they might benefit from an approach that feels more integrated with the rest of the curriculum

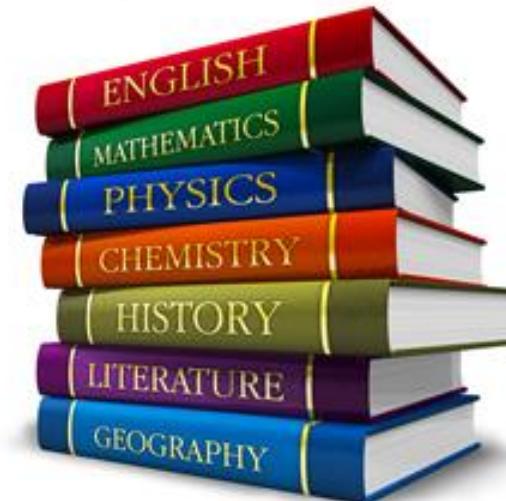


- Getting good grades is a priority for secondary school and anything extracurricular often feels like an **effort**
- Making walking a core part of the school curriculum could help embed this behaviour in pupils' minds on a more permanent basis
- - Tying it in not only with **PHSE lessons** but also **geography, history** and other academic subjects on a regular basis (eg monthly) rather than as a one off 'event'

When we used to have those walk to school weeks everyone would get really excited but then that quickly wears off - we should be reminded of it more



For those events that were created about cycling and walking they would talk about it in different lessons, which made it more interesting



Making walking top of mind throughout the year rather than on special occasions can make walking feel more natural

# YTAs want something that is cool, exciting and easy to sell to their peers



- YTAs are already passionate about sustainable travel and are champions within the school
- They feel their time can be optimised by:
  - Making them champions for a fun and exciting new tool within the school
  - Allowing them to 'get the word out' by making videos, posters etc
- However, take up of the scheme should not be 'pushed' onto pupils
  - Once the tool is out there it should be **easy** to opt in and out



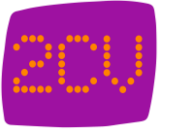
I like being a YTA but it does take up a lot of time and sometimes it feels we don't get enough support, YTA

We really enjoyed promoting walking through videos and posters, YTA

It would be cool if we could get more creative with technology - I think that would get more people interested , YTA

I would like it if we were encouraged to work together with other schools and learn from the things they have done , YTA

# Buy-in and support from senior leadership at the school, parents and Borough Officers is crucial



## SCHOOLS

- Without internal support and leadership from the school it is hard to keep up momentum of walking initiatives
- The senior leadership team in particular need to be behind any initiative by:
  - Providing resources to them
  - Supporting the YTAs
  - Selling into parents

Providing schools with a tool that is flexible and easy to use could make it easier for senior leadership teams to get on board

## PARENTS

- Parents worry about the safety aspect of walking to school
  - Concerns about road safety
  - Concerns about stranger danger (especially for girls)
- They also worry about getting their child to school on time and often 'give in' to the school run when they are running late

Emphasising the social aspect (they aren't alone) can help ease some of their safety concerns  
Emphasising the wellness aspect can tap into parents' motivations to 'want what is best' for their child

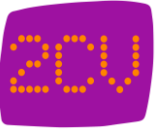
## BOROUGH OFFICERS

- Feel they do not have exciting resources or tools to sell into schools
- Main focus is primary school rather than secondary school

Borough Officers could benefit from having an exciting and easy tool to sell into schools



# Years 8 and 9 feel like the most appropriate primary target for any walking initiatives



- The **16-18 age bracket** is harder to engage in walking initiatives
  - Learning to drive, going to college and starting work has priority
  - Individualisation is important and transport is seen more as a means to an end rather than a journey\*
- Years **8 and 9 (12-14 years)** have transitioned from primary school
- However, they are still young enough to not have the same pressure as older secondary schoolers - walking can be more of a priority
  - They are still relishing their newfound independence
  - Increasingly enjoying 'private time' and wanting more personal space
  - They are starting to care more about their wellness - particularly looking good



It's good to get some fresh air and have a bit of peace and quiet - it helps me to relax

The thing I enjoy most about walking to school is having a bit of time to myself in the morning before the busy day starts

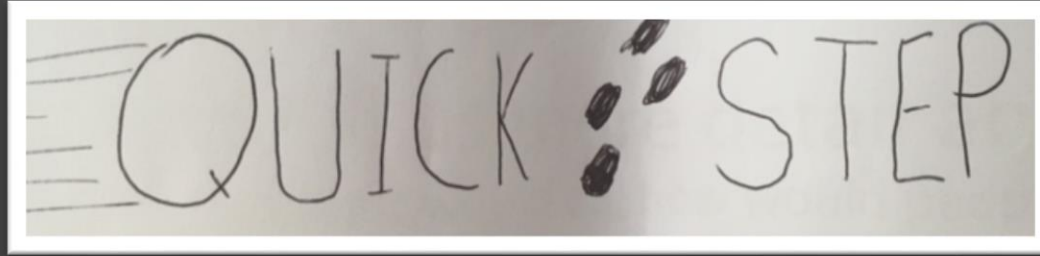
Synovate, 2008

Walking initiatives could benefit from targeting years 8 and 9 who are increasingly feeling the need for independence and time alone



# Initiative ideas

# Initiative Ideas

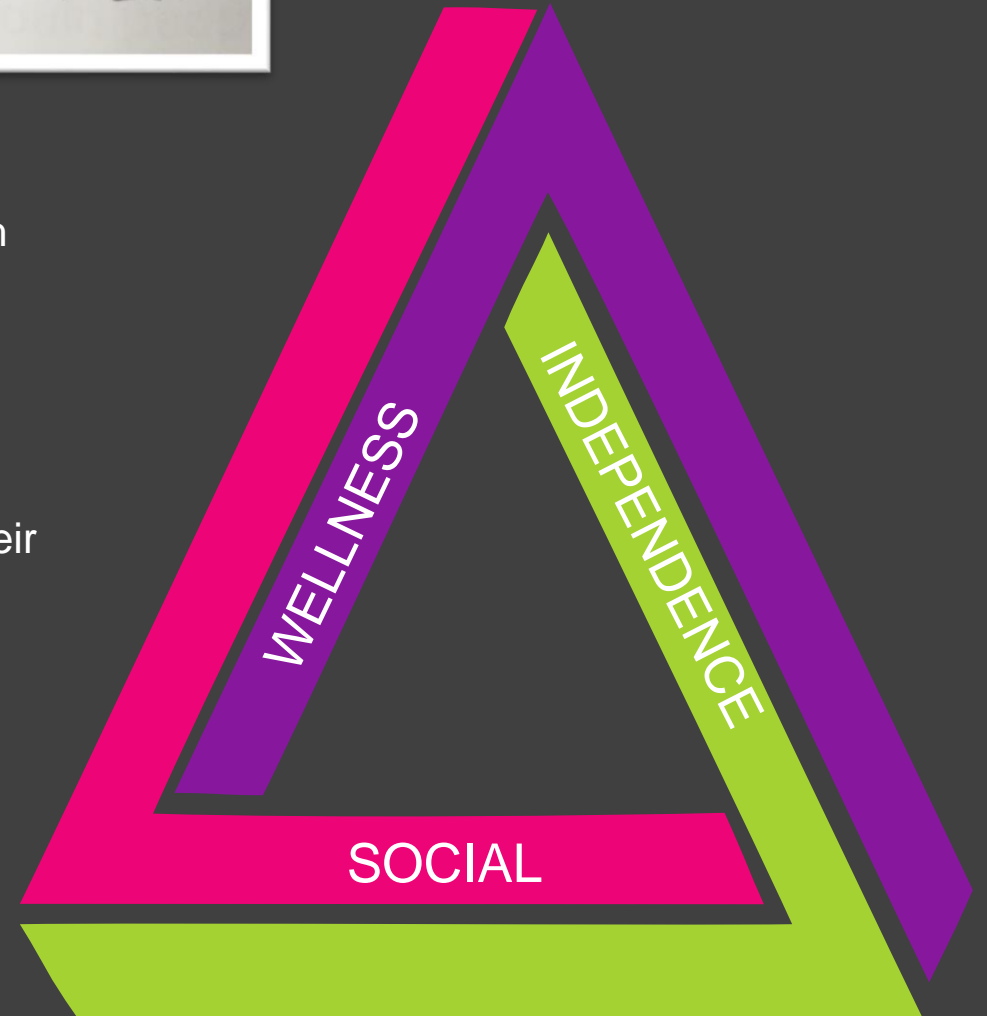


## How would it work?

- ✓ All the sports teams would have an app where they can track how much they walk to school (these apps already exist)
- ✓ At the end of each month we see which sports team walked the most
- ✓ They get the award of a sport social night with free pizza
- ✓ The competition goes on all year round and rewards are given monthly
- ✓ Sport teams can decide which months of the year they want to focus their participation

## How would you communicate the benefits?

- ✓ We would talk about the health benefits of walking and talk about how many calories you can burn
- ✓ We would say it is an opportunity to get to know your friends and have more team spirit for your sport



# Initiative Ideas

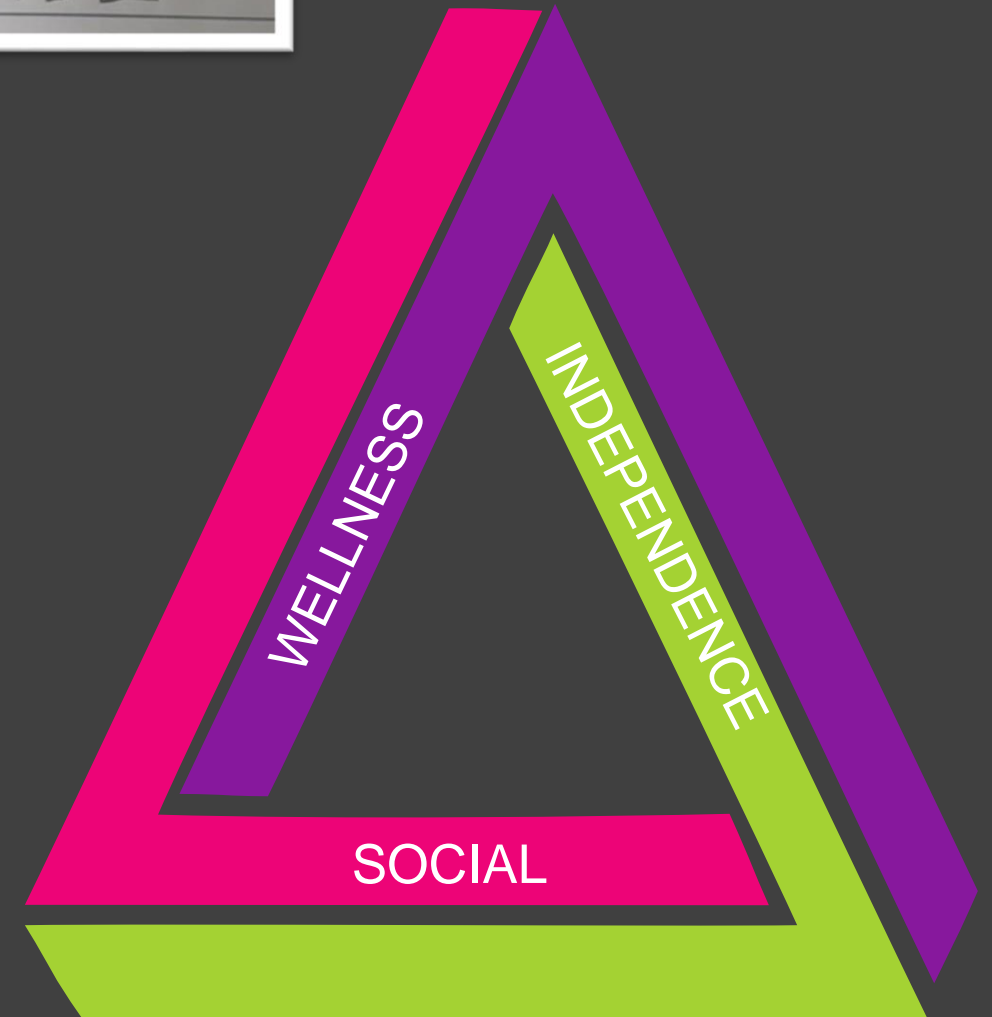


## How would it work?

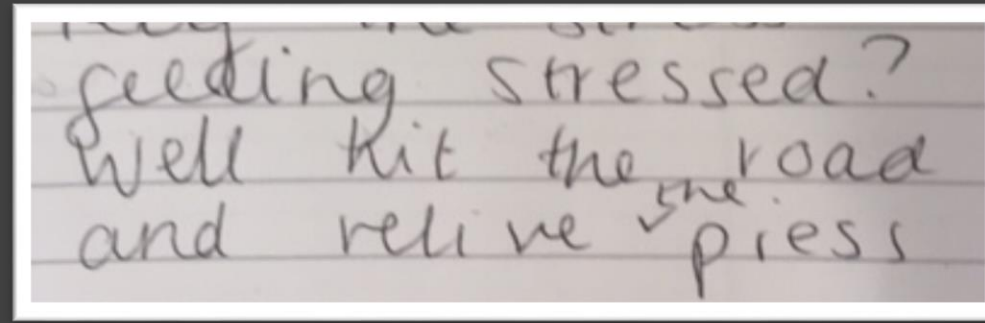
- ✓ We would have a challenge each week where someone has to create a walking playlist for that specific week on Spotify
- ✓ Everyone who walks to school listens to that playlist and rates it on a scale of 1-10
- ✓ We have a vote and whoever makes the best playlist that week gets some sort of award like jumping the lunch queue
- ✓ This competition can go on all year and have different music themes depending on the season (eg reggae summer, best Christmas songs, etc)

## How would you communicate the benefits?

- ✓ It is fun and good for your health
- ✓ It can help you relax and put you in a good mood on your morning walk
- ✓ **You could discover cool new music**
- ✓ **We would tell people this by making a cool video**



# Initiative Ideas

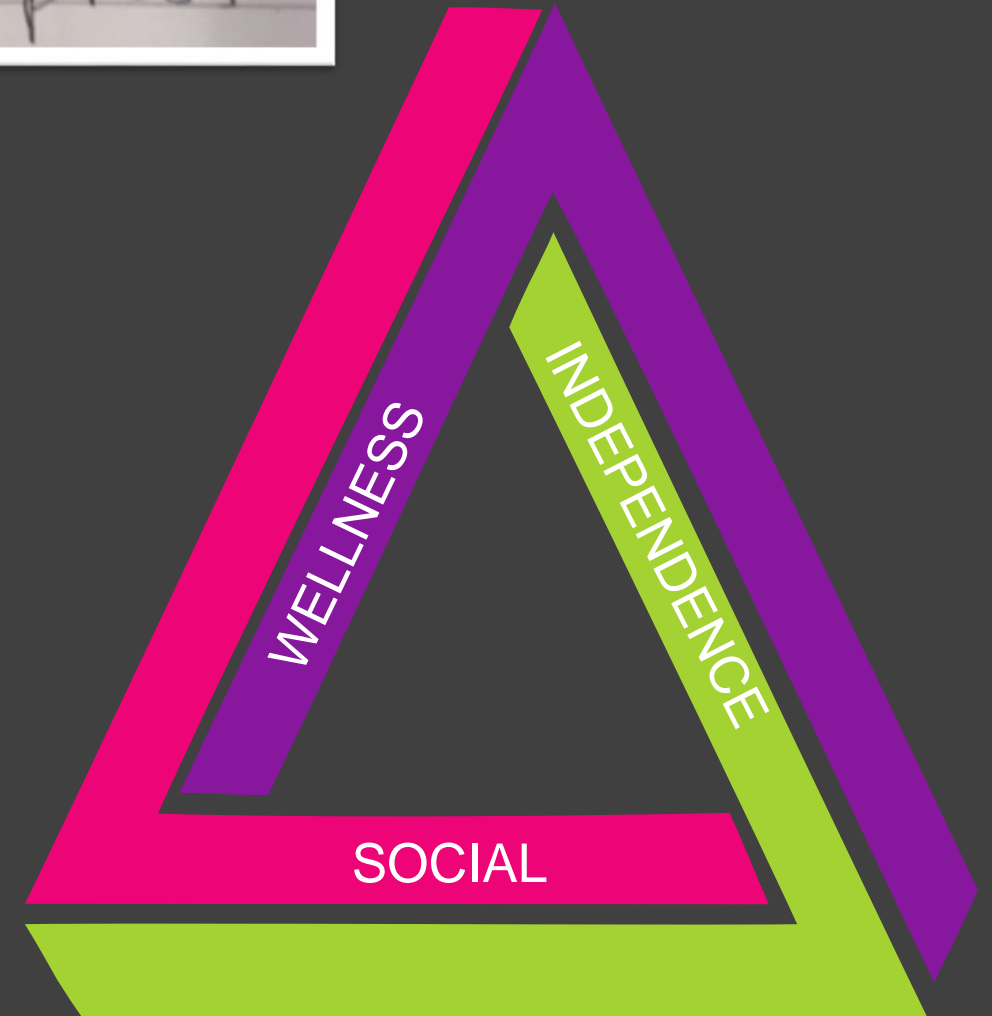


## How would it work?

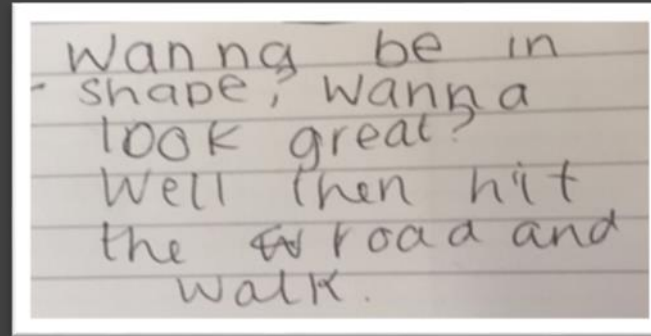
- ✓ We would encourage people to walk and organise things like “walk to school before exams” week
- ✓ We would encourage people to walk with friends and tell them they can only talk about fun things and have to get their mind off exams when walking to school
- ✓ It's important not to push our peers around exams because they are already stressed so it should be optional for them to participate

## How would you communicate the benefits?

- ✓ We are all very stressed at school about GCSEs and we all feel a lot of pressure to do well
- ✓ We would talk about how walking is good to relieve stress and good for your mental health



# Initiative Ideas

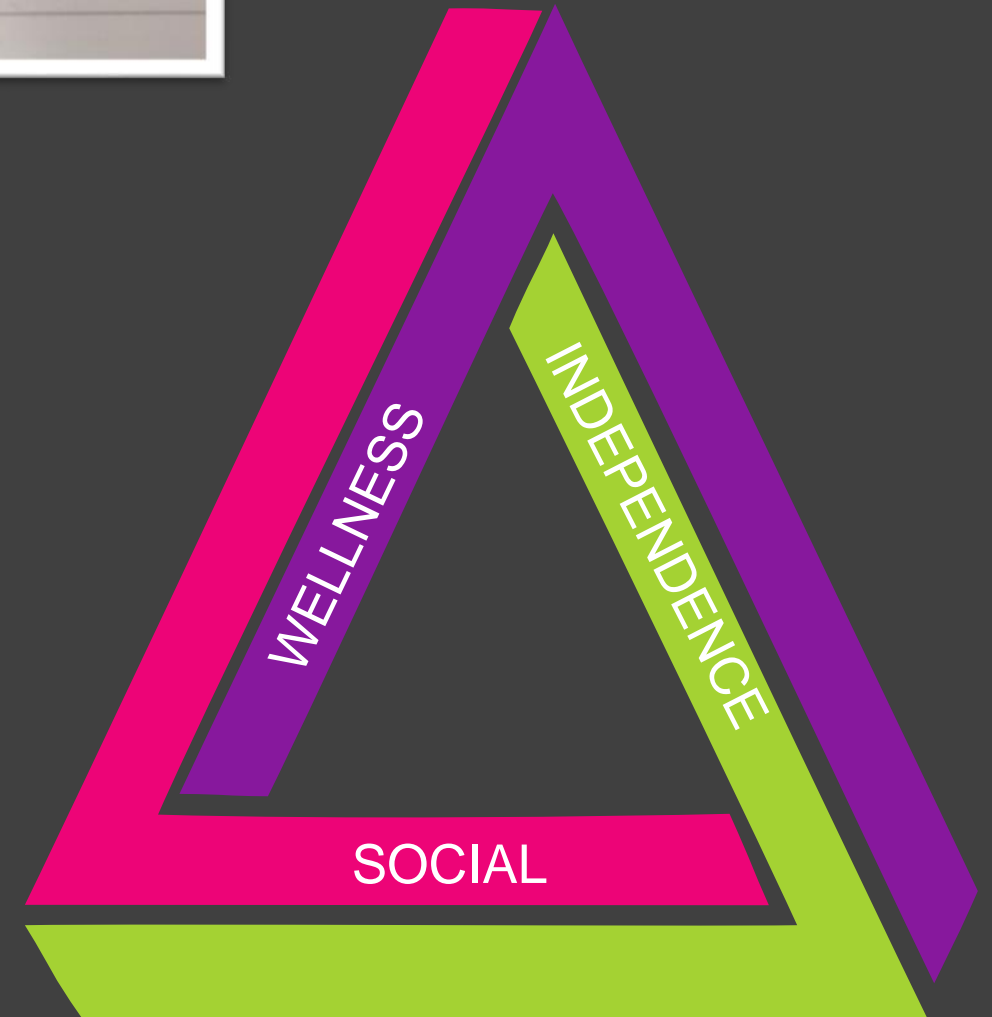


## How would it work?

- ✓ We would make sure everyone has a walking app and can track how far they walk and how many calories they burn
- ✓ We would tell them to take selfies as they walk and share them on Instagram
- ✓ We would have competitions of who walks most/who gets the most likes
- ✓ We wouldn't have any events or special celebrations but we would have this all year because health is important

## How would you communicate the benefits?

- ✓ Kids our age don't see walking as exercise so we would tell them about how healthy walking is for both your body and your mind
- ✓ We would show them how many calories a 20 min walk can burn by making a fun and engaging video





**Thank you**

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