

SEFTON LABOUR GROUP

NOTICE OF MOTION

TO BE PUT TO THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Moved by: Councillor Diane Roscoe

Seconded by: Councillor Paulette Lappin

Air Quality Around Schools

This Council notes

Poor air quality affects people's health and damages the environment. In Sefton, there are two main pollutants of concern: nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter. The main source of these pollutants is road traffic, in particular diesel engines.

Sefton Council is committed to improving Air Quality in the Borough and is working on a number of initiatives to ensure that Sefton will be a place where improved health and wellbeing is experienced by all. This includes, but is not limited to, junction improvement works, measures to reduce congestion, a DEFRA funded Schools behaviour change project and Development of an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the consideration of a Sefton Based Clean Air Zone (CAZ), initiating a "school streets" scheme for some schools in Southport and plans to extend this programme into Bootle.. This work directly supports Sefton's 2030 vision of a cleaner, greener and healthier Borough

Poor air quality has a negative impact on public health, with potentially serious consequences for individuals, families and communities. Identifying problem areas, prioritising vulnerable residents and ensuring that actions are taken to improve air quality forms an important element in protecting the health and wellbeing of Sefton's residents.

Studies have shown that children's lungs are disproportionately vulnerable to air pollution as their lungs are still growing and that children who are exposed to severe air pollution are up to four times more likely to have poor lung development. Children are also more susceptible to respiratory infections and daily exposure to pollution has been shown to contribute to increased inflammation of the airways in healthy children and children with asthma. Children's height means they tend to be exposed to more roadside pollution than adults⁽¹⁾

Asthma + Lung UK have commissioned research that found that more than 25% of all British schools and colleges are surrounded by 'dangerously high' levels of air pollution. This is impacted by idling vehicles and unnecessary car trips to school instead of walking or cycling.⁽²⁾

Recent national research by Living Streets ⁽³⁾ found the following:-

1. Over a third (36%) are scared about walking to school because of speeding traffic.

2. One in five children and young people are concerned about the lack of safe crossing points on their journey to school.
3. Over a third of primary school children surveyed reported being scared about walking to school because of speeding traffic. COVID Risk management restrictions have meant that classroom windows have to be left open increasing the risk of pollution to children, particularly in those buildings close to roads. Children and their families have to wait outside schools, making them more exposed to air pollution.

Recently, in a landmark decision, a nine-year-old girl Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, who died in 2013 following an asthma attack has become the first person in the UK to have air pollution listed as a cause of death and that air pollution “made a material contribution” to her death after she was exposed to “excessive” levels of pollution.⁽⁴⁾

There are no safe levels for air pollution.

This Council resolves to:

Measure air quality around a sample of schools in the borough at child-head height to identify the level of air pollution children are being exposed to at school drop-off and pick-up.

Work with schools and local partners to swiftly identify and prioritise those schools in the borough that could put a “school streets” scheme in place where maximum benefit and impact could be achieved.

Work with schools and local partners to enable all schools that wish to take part in the “school streets” scheme to do so – taking advantage of experimental traffic orders and new statutory guidance over fast-tracked Traffic Regulation Orders where necessary.

Work with Southport Eco Centre to promote their clean air resources to local schools throughout the borough.

Introduce a ‘healthier air around our school’ award initiative that is linked to use of the resources and evidence of activity tackling parking around the school and encouraging active travel or sustainable transport to school.

Add ‘anti idling’ clauses to contracts that Sefton Council agrees with transport providers such as coach companies.

Continue to identify and pilot additional measures to improve air quality particularly near schools such as ‘living green walls’ and tree planting.

Continue to work alongside Steve Rotherham, the Liverpool City Region and all other local authorities who face similar air quality issues and to campaign nationally to improve air quality for all our residents, but particularly children.

(1) <https://www.blf.org.uk/sites/default/files/DEFRA%20consultation%20-%20draft%20UK%20air%20quality%20plan%20-%20May%202017.pdf>

(2) <https://www.asthma.org.uk/about/media/news/schools-surrounded-by-pollution/>

(3) <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1398/breakingdownthebarriers.pdf>

(4) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-55330945>

