Application of the photovoice qualitative research method among young school children

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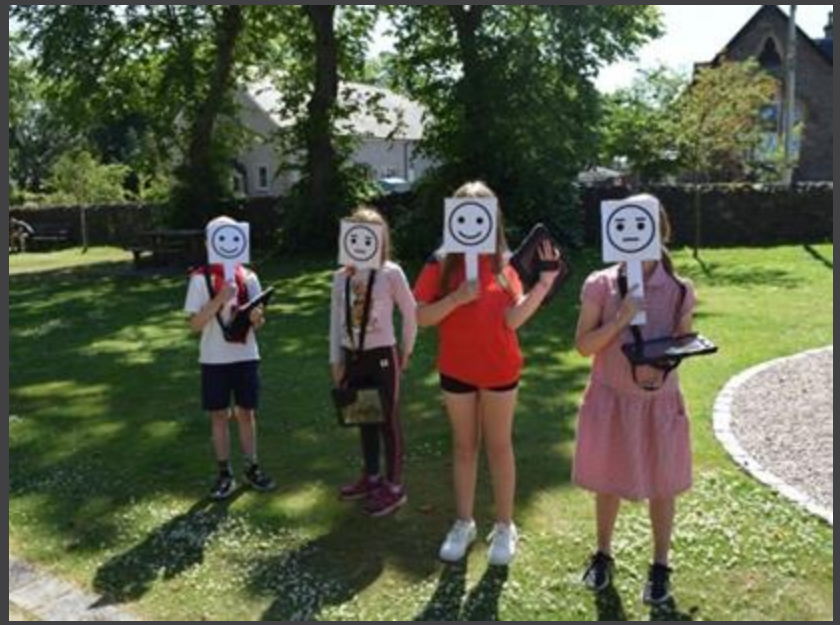

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Background

- Over the last few years, there has been increasing interest in the application of community-based participatory research (CBPR) in transport and environmental-related studies
- The number of young children walking, wheeling, or cycling to school has increased slightly over the last few years in the UK.

Introduction

- There are currently challenges in evaluating active travel interventions/infrastructures from children's perspective
- This presentation aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of a method based on Photovoice in facilitating young children's participation/inclusion in active travel project assessment

Why are we interested in children's views?

- Children's views are usually excluded from the evaluation of schemes, even though projects are often built to meet children's needs
- Help Sustrans to act in line with its 'For Everyone' principle and make the research inclusive
- Create more evidence of the infrastructure requirements of young people from their perspective

Definition of Photovoice

- One accepted definition of the Photovoice approach is Wang's (1999) which says: Photovoice involves participants sharing photographs in a group setting through a facilitator-guided focus group discussion about:
  - the key photographs selected by individuals in the group and
  - how to share information with policy-makers

Wang C. Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. Journal of Women's Health. 1999; 8:185–192.

Why are we interested in photovoice in capturing children's views

Most of our methods currently are not suitable for collecting the views of children, for example, children cannot be surveyed by route user survey, and children do not respond to postal surveys

The main quantitative methods wecurrently use to collect data fromchildren are Hands Up SurveyScotland (HUSS) and I Bike (Both ofwhich collect data on how children get to school)

Methods that had already been used in Sustrans

- Led Bike Rides: Space by the Water evaluation to assess how well the park meet the needs of children
- Photovoice: Perth People Place to perceive issues and positives of a space from children's perspective

Walking focus group with Photovoice methodology

- Semi-structured walking focus group to obtain children's perspectives on key features but to enable the children to highlight what is most important to them
- Children encouraged to explore the area and take picture whilst providing an explanation of why they are taking the pictures
- Children asked to display an emoji reaction to pre determined features
- Analyse of feedback/discussion as well as the pictures taken

Case study – Cycle Friendly Kingussie

- We conducted **3 semi-structured focus groups** with children from **P5 (8-9 years old), P6 (9-10 years old), and P7 (10-12 years old) with 3-4 children**
- The focus groups all involved a **led walk but i**n addition to asking questions of the children, **the children themselves were encouraged to photograph and give feedback on things they liked/ did not like** in **Gynack Gardens**
- The children were asked to rate the main features in the gardens by holding a **smiley, neutral, or sad face**
- Safety and Quality were evaluated - in this context has been taken to refer to the standard of the garden according to the children



Example of pictures children took







Example of pictures children took







Walking focus group photovoice SWOT analysis

Strength
- The method has been shown to be engaging for children
- Less abstract than traditional focus groups
- Deliverable in less than an hour
- Blends child led activity whilst ensuring research questions answered

Weakness
- Would need small group sizes (3-7) as otherwise it would be difficult to record interactions
- Good weather conditions are required

Opportunity
- It provides good feedback for active travel evaluations
- Could be used in different context

Threat
- Need clear communication of what will happen to feedback given during the focus groups i.e. if it will influence designs or if only used for evaluation
- GDPR – children taking photos of each other

Lessons learn/conclusion

Young children involved in the method enjoyed being part of the research

The method was straightforward and collected good data for use in active travel research

Any questions?