

CYCLE-COMMUTING WITH KIDS

Want to use a bike for every-day travel, and need to transport small children too?

Introduction

For many people, getting to work is complicated by the need to also deliver and collect children from nurseries and schools, often with various different locations involved. Jumping in the car might seem initially like the only way to solve the who-where-when equation, but with a little bit of planning, cycling can become a solution for the whole family on an every-day basis. Using a bike is practical, economic and fun, and can also help teach your children about road safety and independence from an early age. As cycling is about three times faster than walking, it is perfect for journeys to and from school which are too far to walk, and is an easy way to keep fit. Cycling can also save you money: with regular use, equipment soon pays for itself when you add up the cost-savings from spending less on petrol and parking or on bus fares.

This fact-sheet aims to provide you with some ideas on how you might transport your family by bike. **In particular it is aimed at parents needing to get to work or study whilst also delivering children who are too young to cycle independently to their own destinations.** Maybe you're returning to a job after maternity leave, with a baby to ferry to nursery, or maybe you have one child starting school and a younger sibling who needs to travel with you too.

New equipment options to make this possible are constantly becoming available as the market for child-carrying equipment and bikes develops. Rather than attempting to give a comprehensive technical list, this fact-sheet aims to inspire you to think about the various options which might suit different circumstances, especially as children grow. Some suppliers will be listed on the Spokes website at the address below.

In this fact-sheet we cover:

1. Child-carrying equipment for adult bikes:
 - 1.1 Child seats;
 - 1.2 'Tag-along' or trailer bikes;
 - 1.3 Tow-bars for child bikes
 - 1.4 Child-carrying trailers
2. Specialised People / Load-carrying bikes:
 - 2.1 Cargo-bikes
 - 2.2 Tandems
3. Practical next steps
4. Further information

For extra inspiration, at the end of the factsheet you'll find some real-life case studies of family cycle-commuting, based on the actual experiences of people living and working in Edinburgh.



Circe Helios [see section 2]

Chris Hill

1. Child-Carrying Equipment for Adult Bikes

As every parent knows, children pose challenges for many aspects of life, and cycle-commuting is no exception. However, there's lots of potential to include children in every-day bike-based travel. Many of the practical solutions are pretty straight-forward, particularly the various options that use your existing bike.

1.1. Child Seats

Child-seats that fit on a conventional bike are probably the most common way of getting babies and pre-schoolers around. As well as being easy to use and store, it's possible to chat with your child as you ride. Most seats are suitable for children from around 8 months: the important criterion is whether a child can sit comfortably by themselves (with a helmet on). Depending on the model and how comfortable you are with the additional weight on your bike, you may be able to use the seat until the child is 4 years old or so. Seats will be marked with a weight limit (often around 18kg/40lb). Always follow the manufacturer's instructions, and make sure the seat has a good child harness. It's also very important that feet are secured so there's no risk of them getting caught in the rear wheel. Look for the British safety standard - BS EN 14344. Some seats can recline to allow more comfort for sleeping infants – young children are often lulled to sleep while moving; however, always limit your journey length to what your child is comfortable doing.



Child seat *K Ivory*

As with anything new, get some practice in first before doing it for real. If you haven't cycled with a child on board before, try it out with a dummy load to get used to the weight, then start on quiet roads. Remember that the centre of gravity of your bike will be higher, as the child is carried quite high from the ground, potentially altering its handling. An active child can also affect the handling if their body weight is constantly moving. Always make sure your bike is well-supported when you're not actually cycling, and that the front wheel won't slip when loading the child. Make sure your brakes are working well too. Children in bike seats will need waterproof and warm clothing in less clement weather; obviously they won't be keeping warm by pedalling as you will be. A thin fleece hat or balaclava which fits under a helmet is worth investing in, as well as mittens with strings attached!

Many seats attach **to a rear luggage rack**. These are fairly rigid when riding. Others attach **to the frame itself or the seat stem**, though these can be a bit 'bouncy' with a larger child in the seat. Most child-seats will restrict your ability to use rear-panniers at the same time as carrying the seat (though of course you can do so when it's removed). If you want to move the seat between bikes, you can usually buy an extra fixing set (fairly inexpensive). Smaller adults on smaller bikes in particular may also find that as children grow it gets harder to carry a rucksack while the child is in the seat; a front basket or front-panniers could be used instead (but not with suspension forks on mountain bikes). Some seats are **mounted in front of the adult cyclist** (e.g., the Safe-T-Seat, www.safe-t-seat.co.uk): great for conversation with your child but bear in mind the reduction in cycling comfort and bike manoeuvre-ability, especially as the child grows.

Costs are typically £80-100 for a new child-seat. Rear pannier racks, if required, are around £20-£30.

1.2. Child Trailers

Trailers make great kiddie taxis! The two-wheeled canvas-covered trailer is towed behind the adult bike. There's typically space for up to 2 kids in the back (and /or some luggage), protected from the elements (even if you aren't!) and carried in comfort. They ride low to the ground, which is good for balance, and you can wrap kids up snug. It's pretty difficult to carry on a conversation while cycling but they can always take a book!

Many trailers can carry children from newborn upwards (additional fittings may be needed for very small babies). Depending on the fixing, it may be possible to also use a rear-mounted child seat on the adult bike, allowing up to three children to be carried, one on the seat and two in the trailer. Costing typically a couple of hundred pounds, the investment is higher than for a child-seat, but you will be able to use the trailer for a longer period, as well as for carrying other loads.



Bike trailer *Geoff Husband*
www.bretonbikes.com/children.htm



Bike trailer *S Dorman*

There are many trailers on the market, some of which even convert into buggies. Some fold to make storage easier; more robust ones can be left outside (get a waterproof bike cover). Beware of heavy steel frames; it may well be worth paying more for something lighter that you can use for longer as your children grow heavier. If you are cycling at night, make sure the trailer has lights and reflectors. You can also attach a tall flag for greater visibility to cars. Riding with the trailer calls for special cornering skills - a little like driving an articulated lorry - and there's extra width at the back to remember when negotiating bollards and narrow gaps. The towing bike needs good and well-adjusted brakes (especially for downhill sections), given the extra weight of the trailer and its contents.

1.3. Tag-Alongs (also known as 'Trailer Bikes')

As your child grows, and once he/she can sit on a bike saddle competently, you might want to consider a tag-along bike. This is essentially a one-wheeled 'half bike' that attaches to an adult bike, allowing a child to be towed. Typically tag-alongs are suitable for 4 - 9 year olds. The child has their own seat, pedals and handlebars, and can pedal to help out (some have gears too), or freewheel and enjoy the ride if tired. They're easy to hitch and un-hitch, so can be left at school during the day and removed easily for storage at home (for many models now the attachment folds in half). You can also purchase additional hitches (fairly inexpensively) to swap the tag-along between different bikes. Luggage can be carried in panniers on the lead bike's rear-rack, or you (and / or your child) can wear rucksacks.

As with trailers, remember that you're a longer vehicle with a tag-along attached, and take extra care when turning (especially to avoid cutting corners and bumping kerbs). Make sure your brakes are working well too given the extra momentum you'll have. Some tag-alongs attach to the front bike's seat-post; others attach to a rear-rack. As with other new equipment, practise first to get used to how the bike handles before you add your passenger. You and your child's safety can be improved by wearing bright or reflective clothing, and fitting a tall flag. A rear light and reflector should be fitted for cycling in the dark. Expect to spend around £120-£150; spare hitches for a second bike cost around £15. Hitches usually come with collars for different seat-post widths; make absolutely sure that the hitch is fixed securely to avoid the tag-along moving around sideways when in use.



Tag-along *K Ivory*

Typically, tag-alongs are for one passenger, but you might be able to track down ones for two, such as the Pashley 'U+2' – no longer widely available, but ask around and keep an eye on second-hand websites.

1.4. Tow-bars

Special fittings are available to attach your child's own bike rigidly to yours, hinging where fixed to the adult's seat stem and fastened by a removable bracket to the head tube of the child's bike. The child can pedal or not as he/she chooses and then ride independently when you reach your destination. Such fittings may be more cost-effective than a tag-along as they make use of your child's existing bike. However, only one child can be towed at once, and the tow-bar can't be used at the same time as a child-seat if it attaches to the seat-stem.



Follow-me *Andrew Bird*

Various tow-bars are on the market, e.g., the Trail-gator (www.trail-gator.com) and the FollowMe (www.followme-tandem.com/english/index.htm). The FollowMe joins the adult and child bikes in such a way that you can still use the rack for a second child. The fitting attaches low down, using axle extensions on the lead bike's rear wheel and the child's bike's front wheel. An extending bar connects to the child-bike's down-tube, lifting their front wheel off the road, and keeping it straight. The coupling can then be clamped to the rear bike in a few seconds. You can also attach a rear pannier rack and a child-seat at the same time as using the FollowMe. As with anything towed, care is needed with speed bumps and sharp turns. When the child's bike has been detached, (e.g., to leave it at school), the FollowMe folds up and hangs from either the adult's rack or saddle rails. It's also easily detached from the adult's bike.

2. Specialised People-carrying / Load-carrying Bikes

2.1. Cargo Bikes

In countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, various forms of cargo bikes are commonly used for carrying kids. They often come with 2 wheels at the front and a large open or covered box for a couple of children and luggage. With the children typically in front, you can chat to them while you ride, making travelling more sociable. However, these bikes are obviously a bit bulky, taking up more road space than a standard bike, so think about how one would work on your regular routes. They also need suitable storage space. A big advantage though is that they're pretty visible to traffic. They're generally expensive at well over £1,000 (though keep an eye out for second-hand ones) but could give you a great deal of enjoyable family transport.

Most cargo bikes are trikes, which are more stable but can be more awkward on uneven ground. The 'Bakfiets' bike from Holland avoids this problem. New buggy-conversion bikes are also available – i.e., bikes that accommodate a child-seat but can also convert into a buggy, e.g., the Taga (www.tagabikes.com/Conversions.asp)



Cargo bikes *London Cycling Campaign*



Kangaroo Bike www.kangaroobike.com

There are various brands of cargo bike, including:

- the Danish Christiana - www.christianabikes.com – probably the best known cargo bike
- Bellabike - www.kidsandfamilycycles.co.uk/page4.html
- Kangaroo* - www.kangaroobike.com/pages/features.php

*there's a Scottish blog on using a kangaroo – www.stonehead.wordpress.com/2008/01/29/kangaroo

2.2. Tandems - for 1 or more passengers

Like Trailer-bikes, tandems are good for kids big enough to sit on a saddle and hold onto handlebars. They are more stable than a tag-along, and are good for covering significant distances. Children can participate in pedalling and contribute power, then slacken off as they tire (obviously their feet still need to go round with the pedals though; toe-clips might be useful). Clearly, your child will need to be able to follow your instructions about pedalling. The length of the machine takes a bit of getting used to when manoeuvring, especially round corners (and they're more challenging to store of course). They're not cheap either: expect to spend £600- £1000 for a decent tandem. However, they do provide a sociable way to travel, also giving the potential for years of use. Another advantage of a tandem is that you can of course attach a trailer or tag-along behind too – useful if you have more than one child!



Kiddiecranks Camcycle.org.uk

'Kiddy cranks' can be fitted to enable a full-sized tandem to be pedalled by young children – if they can sit unassisted and still on a saddle, so potentially as young as 4 years. Any good bike shop should be able to order and fit them for you. A kiddy-crank is a separate bottom bracket, chain-set and pedals, attached to the rear down tube at a height suitable for the child. The normal cranks are removed, and the chain re-fitted round the kiddy-crank' chain-wheel (the rear handlebars can also be adjusted). Toe-clips on the pedals can help to ensure that feet don't slip. Crank-adaptors are simpler, and basically shorten the leg-length needed to reach the pedal. These can be removed as your child grows. Other, 'child-back' tandem models (i.e. with lower frame at back, designed to fit children better) are available but these are generally larger machines.

The **Circe Helios** is a tandem designed specifically for child-carrying and load-transporting. The rear of the bike is easily and quickly adaptable to take a variety of loads. It will seat two adults and a child-seat, or two people (two adults or an adult with a child) and a pannier rack, or an adult with two child-seats, or an adult with a child and a child-seat. It is smaller than most, with 20" wheels (like some folding bikes). One benefit is that the child's weight is relatively low to the ground, which makes it easier to hold the bike upright, and to manoeuvre. Crank-shorteners are available to ensure a perfect fit for short legs [not shown in picture].



Circe Helios, fitted with a child-seat

www.circecycles.com/Models/index.php

C Chapman

3. Next Steps

3.1. Give it a go!

See if you can get a test-run if a friend or neighbour has the equipment you're interested in. Practise at weekends when quieter on the roads, to familiarise yourself with using the equipment (maybe use a heavy bag rather than a child to start with) and get your child used to it too. For any intended equipment purchase, check its suitability for your bike with a reputable dealer before buying.

Some degree of adult-cycling competence is of course necessary if you're going to transport your children too, but if you're new to cycling, training is easily available (e.g., see www.bikestation.org.uk/training). See also the information box at the end of this factsheet for some other websites about cycling in Edinburgh.

Safety is the number one concern when it comes to transporting children, and cycling is no exception. Keep equipment well-maintained; make sure helmets are fitted correctly; and choose the right bike seat, trailer or bike for the age and abilities of each child. Make sure that all clothing, and feet / footwear, are secure – you don't want anything getting caught in the rear wheel. See the RoSPA website for safety advice when cycling with children (www.rospa.com/RoadSafety/advice/cycling/carrying_children.htm).

There's safety in numbers too – maybe other local families with the same destinations (especially for going to school) would be interested in meeting up to travel their together. Find out if anyone living close to you might also like to cycle (or perhaps is cycling already).

3.2 Route Planning

A key step in planning family cycle-commuting is of course identifying the best routes – ideally avoiding busy main roads and steep hills. Whether cycling purely for pleasure or to get from point A to point B, take the safety of the route into consideration and choose a path with low vehicle traffic.

The *Spokes Edinburgh Cycle map* is the essential guide to cycling in Edinburgh – over 100,000 of these fantastic maps have been sold since the first edition in 1987! Roads and paths are marked according to suitability for cycling, and the latest edition includes new and planned routes. Cut-throughs etc are marked too which can be very useful. Smaller scale maps on the reverse help you plan journeys further afield. There are also Spokes maps for East, Mid and West Lothian, and Glasgow. Maps are available from good bike shops or direct from Spokes – www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/spokes-maps.



The City of Edinburgh Council produces a range of maps-leaflets useful for families. Their *Explore Edinburgh by Bike* series covers the whole city, area by area, with cycle maps and ideas for things to see. The *Explore Edinburgh Car-free* leaflets include maps of some of Edinburgh's best known cycle routes and ideas for things to see along them. Explore the Braid Burn, Burdiehouse Burn, East Edinburgh, North Edinburgh Path Network, South Queensferry, the Union Canal and the Water of Leith. You can download the leaflets from the Council website www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling; *Explore Edinburgh by Bike* maps are also available from Clarence (0800 232323 / clarence@edinburgh.gov.uk).

3.3. Sources of Equipment

Edinburgh has a number of bike shops that stock child-carrying equipment. Also keep an eye on the various regular Nearly New Sales around Edinburgh (e.g., Polwarth Church and the NCT) and school bike sales (Steiner School, Sciennes etc), as well as e-Bay and Gumtree for tag-alongs, trailers and child bikes. The Bike Station (www.thebikestation.org.uk/) **Edinburgh's bicycle recycling and cycling promotion charity**, sells quality re-conditioned bikes of all types (adult and child).

Storage for bikes and associated gear at home is an issue for many people of course. The Spokes Bike Storage project has produced a fact-sheet which might help you with ideas, particularly if you live in a tenement or flat (available from the Spokes website - www.spokes.org.uk - go to downloads – technical – Spokes storage project). If there isn't already bike parking at your child's school or nursery, ask the management about leaving equipment such as tag-alongs, trailers and child bikes there during the day. The Council's School Travel Coordinator¹ might be able to help too, e.g., through developing a travel plan which shows the need for better bike parking and safer cycling routes to school.

3.4. Developing the Cyclists of the Future

As your child grows up, hopefully they'll become regular cyclists in their own right. Young children who see their parents cycling are more likely to learn to cycle themselves when they are old enough to balance and pedal on their own.

'Balance bikes' without pedals (either sold as such, www.balancebikes.org.uk/best-balance-bikes.htm, or just take the pedals off a small bike of appropriate size for your child) can be a great form of developing balance, as the child scoots along on two wheels whilst sitting on the saddle and steering. Scooters can also help your child develop a good sense of balance.

Speak to your child's school about the Scottish Cycle Training Scheme (www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk/cycling/scottish-cycle-training-scheme/). This is offered by many schools at P6 or 7 and teaches skills necessary for riding on the road. Ready Steady Bike is offered from P4 where control skills are taught through cycling games in the school grounds. 'Go By Cycle' is the third stage of cycle training, aimed at Primary 7 children. It teaches children to navigate more complex junctions and how to plan journeys effectively. To arrange cycle training in state schools, please contact your local Active Schools Co-ordinator via your school. The Bike Station can offer training, and works with various schools (www.thebikestation.org.uk/schools/).



Learning to cycle on a bike with pedals removed K Ivory

See also the London Cycling Campaign's leaflet, *Learning to Ride for School & Leisure* (www.lcc.org.uk/documents/cyclingkids.pdf).

¹ In Edinburgh please contact Mark Symonds (mark.symonds@edinburgh.gov.uk, tel 0131 469 3817) or Lorna Henderson (lorna.henderson@edinburgh.gov.uk, tel 0131 469 3786). In East Lothian contact Iain Reid (ireid@eastlothian.gov.uk, tel 01620 827 143). In Midlothian contact Gillian Bathgate (gillian.bathgate@midlothian.gov.uk, tel 0131 271 3660). In West Lothian contact Grace-Ann Wallace (Grace-Ann.Wallace@westlothian.gov.uk, tel 01503 651 259).

4. Further Information

The Spokes campaign to encourage more families to cycle continues to develop. This factsheet is very much work in progress: Spokes is keen to update the information and case studies as ideas and options develop – so please send us any feedback on your experiences. Email familycycling@spokes.org.uk.

For extra inspiration, you'll find below at the end of this fact-sheet some **real-life case studies of family cycle-commuting**, based on the actual experiences of people living and working in Edinburgh. Keep reading and happy family cycle-commuting!

Other useful sources of information on family cycling/commuting

- ◆ **London Cycling Campaign** leaflet on cycling with children www.lcc.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=380
- ◆ **CTC** webpage on cycling with babies/children www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3595
- ◆ *The CTC Guide to Family Cycling* by Dan Joyce (2008), £9.99. (ISBN no 978-0-9548176-4-0), and “Women on Wheels – 8-page guide to cycling from the CTC”
www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Training_and_Education/CTC_Women_on_Wheels.pdf
- ◆ See **RoSPA** for safety advice: www.rospa.com/RoadSafety/advice/cycling/carrying_children.htm
Carrying Children on Bicycles
- ◆ See also *Cyclecraft – Skilled Cycling Techniques for Adults* – John Franklin, 1997, The Stationery Office, £9.99.
- ◆ **Whycycle** (impartial advice for new and potential cyclists in the UK)
www.whycycle.co.uk/cycling_with_children
- ◆ www.celebratingcycling.org/images/downloads/schoolrun.pdf - *Riding the School Run* article, Velovision 25, March 2007
- ◆ **Sustrans**, *Cycling with Children*
www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/leaflets/sustrans_cyclingwithchildren_March08.pdf
Get Cycling - a Guide to choosing and using your bike
www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/leaflets/sustrans_getcycling_March08.pdf
- ◆ **Cyclorama** [part of Company of Cyclists] - Encyclopaedia of specialised bikes, including for families, load-carrying, etc. www.cyclorama.net/index.php
- ◆ **Get Cycling** [part of Company of Cyclists] - Wide variety of family and load-carrying bikes etc: can be tried out at roadshows, UK group holidays, etc. www.getcycling.org.uk/index.php

Want to cycle more, and looking for information??

- ◆ www.spokes.org.uk – Spokes is a volunteer-led, community-based organisation campaigning since 1977 for better conditions for using a bike for your everyday work and leisure journeys. We produce highly-regarded cycle maps for Edinburgh, the Lothians and Glasgow. We also run Sunday rides, and provide extensive website information.
- ◆ www.thebikestation.org.uk – Edinburgh's bicycle recycling charity. Quality re-conditioned bikes at good prices. Many other exciting initiatives.
- ◆ www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling - Council cycling information, map-leaflets, useful weblinks etc.
- ◆ www.citycyclingedinburgh.org – cycling discussion forums, info

Support us in our many campaigns for safer and more welcoming cycling conditions by joining Spokes! www.spokes.org.uk – membership

Cycle-Commuting with Kids for Real: some Case Studies

Doing the nursery or school run by bike is entirely possible and definitely practical – it can also be highly enjoyable. We've put together a few case studies based on the actual experiences of people living and working in Edinburgh who use bikes on an every-day basis to get to their jobs, schools and nurseries. Read on for more details and inspiration...

1. Riding the Nursery Run: Child-Seats

Sara works in the city centre and lives a mile or so to the west. Her daughter Katharine, 3, attends nursery a mile away from Sara's office so cycling saves a lot of travelling time each day, as well as giving Sara some exercise and a bit of flexibility for travel to meetings and any errands she might need to do. Her daughter sits in a child-seat and just enjoys the ride. When Katharine's not in it, the child-seat also provides a useful container for shopping. Before starting to cycle-commute on a daily basis, Sara spent some time at weekends making sure Katharine was comfortable being on the bike and recce'ing routes. Their various belongings go either in a basket on the front of the bike, or in Sara's rucksack. (A front-pannier rack could be fitted too.) Katharine is starting to grow out of the child-seat, so the next step is to get her ready to go on a tag-along bike. On very wet days, they get the bus part-way and use Katharine's scooter when walking the rest of the way: a useful alternative.

Samuel's parents both normally commute to work by bike, typically one dropping him off and the other picking up from his nursery a little under a mile away. When he was very small, they wheeled bikes along with Samuel in a baby-carrier backpack, leaving it at nursery for the journey home. From about 8 months, once he could sit up well, they started cycling with Samuel in a child seat. The bike seat would be left in the pram shed at nursery so the parents could swap who dropped off and picked up. They also fitted front pannier frames for their own gear, as you can't fit rear panniers with the seat on. From about 18 months, Samuel would often walk some of the way, with the bike-seat as back-up, especially if going on anywhere after nursery.

2. Double Trouble: Two in a Trailer

Jane and Bob both commute by train from Linlithgow to work in Edinburgh and Glasgow. They were keen to continue cycling to the station once Jane returned to work from maternity leave. They use a Croozer bike trailer which comfortably carries their two small children (aged 1 and 3) and their luggage to their child-minder en route to the station. Jane gets the trailer hitched up and the bag organized the night before, which saves a lot of time & stress in the morning. She tows the trailer behind her folding Brompton, quite often with 3-year old Jim cycling alongside on his balance-bike (the family chose a quiet route) while his little sister Becky travels in style. The trailer stays at the childminder's, where Jane quickly puts on the front wheel so it can be used it as a double buggy during the day. In the evening Bob collects the children. He hitches the trailer to his bike (the extra hitch was only about £10) and tows it home. Jim is usually tired by now so his bike is hoisted onto the trailer using a bungee cord, and he rides home in the trailer too.

Neil lives in Leith and cycles each day to work in Newington. His twin 4-year-old boys attend pre-school near the city centre, so he drops them on the way. They travel in a bike trailer, sheltered from the elements all the way. The route takes them on the cycle path up through Holyrood Park, avoiding the busiest roads though Neil has found that vehicles give him adequate space – he's very visible and the trailer has a tall flag too. Neil's lucky in having plenty of storage for his bike and trailer at home, and his employers are very keen for staff to cycle to work, so are happy to accommodate equipment there. He and other parents at pre-school have arranged to leave their trailers in a corner of the garden there before cycling off to work.

3. *Tagging-Along*

Karen works in Leith, and cycles each day from Newington. Her son Andrew, 5, goes to school a mile and a half away and has started using a Tag-Along. Whilst it'll be some time before he'll be cycling to school independently, cycling on a tag-along is definitely helping him improve on his own two wheels. He provides added 'Turbo Power' for his mother when cycling uphill which is a bonus too. They can leave home a bit later than if they were to get the bus. He's easily visible to traffic in his hi-viz vest and vehicles generally give them decent clearance. Andrew has a small rucksack with his school stuff, and Karen has panniers on her rear-rack. There is a bike shelter at school for pupils, and the tag-along can be left there for the day whilst Karen cycles off to her office. Some days Andrew is collected by his father, who has a second bracket fitted to his bike so he can easily pick up the tag-along and connect it to bring Andrew home. On bad-weather days, they walk and bus – it's good to have a change of routine every now and again.

Caroline lives in a small East Lothian town with her sons Ian, 6, and Paul, 4, around a mile and a half from school. They wanted to find bike transport to free Caroline from having to haul their combined weight but also enable her to control the boys - particularly the wee one - on the road. The answer was a second-hand tandem trailer-bike for two. The family found a quiet route through a housing estate and along a shared path: a little longer but much nicer and less stressful than the main road. The boys' rucksacks go in a box at the back and they wear hi-viz vests. Caroline teaches the boys to be considerate cyclists (see Spokes' Polite-Cycling campaign www.politecycling.info) with 'excuse me's and bell-rings on the shared path. Caroline decouples the trailer at her office if she needs to make a longer, faster journey during the day. If one of the boys has a friend to invite home, the elder one brings his own bike and the guest brings a helmet to school for the ride home on the trailer - it's very popular! Safety is paramount and the children are told how important it is to pedal in sync, and only pedal when the 'captain' is pedalling.



Tag-along built for two *Donald Smith*

4. *Follow Me on Your Own Bike*

When Tom, five, started to cycle, Andrew wanted to tow his bike and unhitch it on cycle-paths, rather than use a tag-along. He began using a FollowMe coupling to attach Tom's bike when they cycle across the city to school, so he has peace of mind about Tom on busy road sections. Tom (now aged 7) wears a hi-viz vest and rucksack cover, and cars give them a decent berth. On days when they go the longer way home via quiet roads and cycle paths, Andrew folds up the Follow-Me on his bike and Tom cycles independently.

5. *Three on a Bike – Siblings Come Too*

5-year-old Ben attends school a mile and a half from home, and often his 3-year-old brother Matthew needs to accompany him with their father, John. On such days, they can all travel on the same machine, a tandem with a child-seat. Ben acts as stoker in the second seat (which adjusts easily up and down to fit a child, as do the handlebars) and Matthew enjoys the ride in his seat behind. Belongings go in a rucksack and a basket on the front (front panniers could be fitted too). Having dropped Ben at school, John then cycles off to his next destination with Matthew. It's easy to just hop off and pop into shops compared to taking the car.

This factsheet was written by Katherine Ivory, with lay-out by Dave du Feu. Copyright Spokes, January 2011. Our thanks to the various Spokes members and others who contributed in various ways. While every effort has been made to make this information as accurate as possible, Spokes can accept no responsibility for the consequences of any errors or omissions. Mention of particular suppliers does not imply endorsement.