



# YOUR GUIDE TO PUTTING A STOP TO IDLING ENGINES IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD



# IMPROVE THE AIR WE BREATHE

MANY OF US KNOW THAT AIR POLLUTION IS BAD FOR OUR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AND WE NEED TO TAKE STEPS TO ALLEVIATE IT. IN THE UK, IT'S ESTIMATED THAT 36,000 EARLY DEATHS A YEAR CAN BE LINKED TO AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE.



In our towns and cities, road transport makes up a big part of our toxic air pollution. So, the best way to cut air pollution is to use cars less. When we do drive, it's important that engines aren't left running unnecessarily – or 'idling' – as this just adds to the pollutants in the air. It's also antisocial as it makes a lot of noise.

Idling is often a problem outside schools, hospitals and near bus stops, so why not work together with your neighbours to improve air quality for everyone who lives, works or studies nearby? It might just make a difference.

**We've produced this guide with support from British Lung Foundation to show you how you can tackle engine idling in your community.**

Put simply, 'idling' is when a vehicle's engine is left running while parked, stationary, or when waiting at junctions or traffic lights – which contributes to toxic emissions. We often hear

it's an issue outside the school gates and many parents across the country are really concerned about it. This is particularly important given that over 2,000 schools and nurseries are located in areas with illegal levels of pollution.

Many drivers don't realise that idling causes such high levels of air pollution. Some believe that starting and stopping a car engine causes more pollution. Turning off an engine and then restarting it can cause less pollution than letting it run, especially in newer vehicles – and it also uses less fuel. So, it's not just good for your health, it's also good value for money.

While idling isn't strictly illegal, local authorities have the power to issue £20 fixed penalties for emission offences and stationary idling under The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002. However, this is usually imposed only if a motorist refuses to switch off their engine when asked to do so by an authorised person.





# WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE – AND WHY?



The fumes released from idling vehicles contribute to air pollution.

Air pollution in the UK has improved in recent years, but it's still at harmful levels for our health. There are small steps we can take to change this, and according to the World Health Organization, reducing emissions from vehicles could prevent 2.4 million premature deaths from air pollution every year by 2030. Evidence shows that across towns and cities the quickest way to tackle the problem is to put Clean Air Zones in place that restrict polluting vehicles from going into polluted urban areas. We also need politicians to put far more money towards walking and cycling so that it's easier for us all to make cleaner choices.

But everyone can also make a real difference by turning off car engines when stationary for more than 10 seconds. If a vehicle has a 'stop-start' system fitted, it will automatically switch off the engine when stationary and restart it as soon as the accelerator is pressed. Manufacturers allow this feature to be manually switched off, but we encourage drivers to leave it on.

## Reasons to stop idling

» It improves air quality. Breathing in air pollution during our lifetime has been linked to a wide range of health problems, including lung and heart disease, stroke and cancer.

- » It helps the environment by reducing CO2 emissions. A typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.
- » Idling cars can be an obstruction, with families needing to walk around cars with engines running.
- » Recent research shows that 60% of parents are worried about the effect of air pollution on their children's health, while 2,000 schools and nurseries are in areas with dangerous levels of air pollution.
- » Toxic air disproportionately impacts children from the moment they're conceived as their bodies are still growing and going through periods of critical development.
- » Children also tend to spend more time outside, where concentrations of air pollution from traffic are generally higher. When children are walking or in a pushchair, they are often at the height of vehicle exhausts meaning that they breathe in higher concentrations of pollutants.
- » Air pollution can worsen existing health inequalities. People living in the poorest areas are often the most exposed to pollution, so exposure to toxic air can reinforce unequal health outcomes for deprived communities.



# IMPROVE THE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR AREA

**THERE'S POWER IN NUMBERS AND YOU'LL BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH YOU CAN ACHIEVE BY WORKING TOGETHER. GET INSPIRED BY THESE STORIES OF HOW COMMUNITIES TACKLED THE PROBLEM OF IDLING CARS.**

## BATH

Gill Risbridger was fed up with the level of air pollution where she lives in Bath and decided something had to be done.

After talking to her community, Gill established a Living Streets Local Group and set about tackling the problems caused by idling cars. In 2016, Bath became one of the first cities outside of London to roll out a scheme where drivers who had pledged to stop idling stuck 'I'm no idler' stickers on their cars.

Since then, the group has recruited a team of volunteers who talk to drivers about idling and how it contributes to air pollution and affects people's health. Drivers are encouraged to switch off their engines and invited to pledge to stop idling to help reduce vehicle emissions.

In January 2018, Bath Living Streets Group received funding from the local council to run an anti-idling scheme in central Bath. The group hopes it will be able to target other areas within Bath, including schools and hospitals.

**"IDLING YOUR ENGINE WASTES FUEL, IS DETRIMENTAL TO YOUR HEALTH AND UNNECESSARILY ADDS TO POLLUTION LEVELS IN BATH. WE WANT TO PLAY A PART IN IMPROVING BATH'S AIR QUALITY, NOT JUST FOR RESIDENTS, BUT ALSO FOR VISITORS AND BUSINESSES HERE.**

**"NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT AND OUR CAMPAIGN RAISES AWARENESS IN POLLUTION HOTSPOTS. BY ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE, WE HELP TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR AND IMPROVE LOCAL AIR QUALITY."**  
**- GILL RISBRIDGER**



## LIVING STREETS

### LEVENSHULME

Sue Pascoe is part of a community group tackling idling in Levenshulme in Manchester. She and other local families were worried about air pollution as children in the area were suffering from breathing problems.

Parents and grandparents at local schools had raised their concerns with local councillors about engines left idling, which was making air pollution worse. Families were being put off walking and cycling to school because of the levels of toxic air, incorrectly perceiving it to be worse for children's health than driving. In 2017, Sue and her group decided to monitor the levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) in ten locations in Levenshulme to show the extent of the air pollution outside schools and nurseries.

The pollution was monitored for two weeks, with results showing that the levels were at an almost illegally high level.

Now the group is campaigning for the council to reduce road traffic, reregulate buses and create better infrastructure for walking. The group also wants the city to introduce a Clean Air Zone to charge vehicles that emit high levels of carbon dioxide.

**"AS A GRANDMOTHER, I AM CONCERNED FOR ALL CHILDREN WHO HAVE TO NEGOTIATE BUSY ROADS AND UNSAFE PAVEMENTS ON THEIR WAY TO SCHOOL. CARS WHICH PARK ON PAVEMENTS NEAR SCHOOLS ARE PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS AS DRIVERS OFTEN LEAVE ENGINES IDLING.**

**"WE ARE HOPING TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF HEAVY TRAFFIC IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. MAKING PEOPLE AWARE IS THE FIRST STEP, JOINING TOGETHER AND TAKING ACTION IS NECESSARY TO MAKE OUR AIR HEALTHY FOR EVERYONE." - SUE PASCOE**



# WANT TO RUN YOUR OWN ANTI-IDLING CAMPAIGN?

HAVE A READ OF OUR SHORT GUIDE.

**ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO TACKLE IDLING CARS IS TO HOLD A DAY OF ACTION. THIS SHORT GUIDE, BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING STREETS, BRITISH LUNG FOUNDATION AND OUR CAMPAIGNERS, TAKES YOU THROUGH THE KEY STEPS YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE.**

## 1. PICK YOUR IDLING HOTSPOT

It's a good idea to focus your activity on an area where idling cars are a particular problem. This might be outside a school at pick up time. Choose the street, junction or drop off point where you think you can make the biggest impact.

## 2. TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Lots of people in your community will be concerned about air pollution, so find out what they think and ask them to get involved. Knock on doors, hold informal meetings and talk about your plans on social media. Ask people to volunteer to take part in your day of action. Or why not set up a Local Living Streets Group?



## 3. WORK WITH YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

A survey this year found that half of teachers want the government to take urgent action to improve air quality outside schools. If your hotspot is near a school, there will be lots of ways you can get them involved in your day of action. Idling drivers might be more inclined to listen to a child's request.

- » Ask if teachers can hold a special assembly to explain how getting their parents to switch off the car engine can make the air that they breathe cleaner.
- » Once you've got the kids on board, talk to their parents. A lot of them may not realise that idling traffic is a problem, so use your campaign to inform them. Surveys can provide useful evidence and are a good way of finding out about other issues. You could also ask parents to pledge not to idle their engines near the school. You could do this through the PTA, at the school gates, via a newsletter or the school's social media channels.







## 4. TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU'RE DOING AND WHY

- » Get on social media to tell everyone about your campaign.
- » Talk to your local councillor or MP and see if they'll support your campaign – invite them along to your day of action.
- » See if the local press would like to cover your story and invite journalists to attend, too.
- » Create simple factsheets or leaflets to explain why idling is so dangerous.
- » Make 'idle-free zone' posters to display in the local community to tell people about your campaign.

## 7. REMEMBER TO EVALUATE YOUR SUCCESS

Take some time following your day of action to evaluate its success. How many people changed their behaviour? Was there anything you would do differently? You could follow up your day of action by visiting the area again to see if anything has changed.

You might want to hold another day of action at a different hotspot or at a different time or day.

## 5. DAY OF ACTION

It's best to choose a day and time when you know idling cars are a problem for your day of action. You will need a small team of volunteers.

Make sure you have landowner's consent and that the local council or school (if appropriate) are informed. Make sure you undertake a thorough risk assessment and brief volunteers on this, too.

The best way to run the campaign is to approach car drivers who are idling (safely, of course) and ask them politely if they would be happy to turn off their engine. Use facts to explain the problem and how it affects the local community. You might want to ask drivers to pledge to stop idling in the future.

Most drivers that we speak to are happy to turn off their engines.

Tell Living Streets you are running your day of action so we can help you promote the activity. Register your event at [www.livingstreets.org.uk/airpollution](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/airpollution)

## 8. TAKE YOUR CAMPAIGN TO THE NEXT LEVEL

You may want to consider how you could make an even bigger impact in your area. There are lots of ways you can get people out of their cars. Living Streets has lots of materials on campaigning to make our streets fitter for walking. We can support you to set up a Local Group in your area. Please visit

[www.livingstreets.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/localgroups)



## 6. REMEMBER THAT YOU CAN'T WIN THEM ALL

Some people that you talk to simply won't want to listen or change their behaviour. When approaching drivers, be friendly and don't push people if they seem uninterested.



## LIVING STREETS

**WALKING IS GREAT FOR YOUR HEALTH, BUT AIR POLLUTION IS PUTTING THE PUBLIC AT RISK. JOIN PEOPLE ACROSS THE UK WHO ARE CALLING ON LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO CLEAN UP OUR AIR.**



# TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW LIVING STREETS CAN SUPPORT YOU, PLEASE VISIT

**[LIVINGSTREETS.ORG.UK/GETINVOLVED](https://livingstreets.org.uk/getinvolved)**



**[LIVINGSTREETS.ORG.UK](https://livingstreets.org.uk)**

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