



Sustaining Dunbar

Travel Advice Factsheet 5 - Cycling with Children

There are a number of options for transporting your child by bike if they are too young to cycle independently:

Child Seats



Child seats are the most popular way to transport babies and toddlers by bike. They are easy to use and store, usually rear mounted. Cost around £100. Suitable for children from when they can sit (8 months) to around 4 years, depending on weight. Make sure your bike is well supported when putting child in, don't let the front wheel slip, and always use the safety harness and make sure feet are secure too. Invest in an extra fixing to swap the child seat between other bikes.

Child Trailers



Generally a two-wheeled canvas covered trailer towed behind the adult bike. Great for using in all weathers, your cargo isn't exposed like in a child seat. Trailers come either for 1 or 2 children, but you could also use a child seat on the back of the bike too to increase capacity. Can use for babies, using a child car seat, but will need extra fittings. Although trailers are expensive (£100-£700), you will be able to use them for longer, and for things other than children! (shopping, luggage, compost). Some trailers also convert into buggies. Some fold up for easy storage and are made from lightweight materials. They have an excellent resale value, especially if looked after. Some people use them to go family cycle touring. Sustaining Dunbar has a child trailer available for hire for up to two weeks free of charge, contact dan@sustainingdunbar.org for details.

Tag-Alongs (Trailer Bikes)



A tag-along is a one wheeled "half-bike" consisting of a saddle, handlebars and pedals, and is towed behind an adult bike. They are suitable for children who can sit on a bike saddle safely (usually 4-9 years). The child can pedal to help out, or freewheel if tired. They are easily detachable, and some are designed to be folded up for storage. Costs around £100. Safety - practice without your child first to get used to the extra length, especially when cornering. Fit lights and reflectors, and wear bright clothing to increase visibility. Take care when cornering because of the extra length.

Tow-bars



A fitting to attach your child's bike rigidly to yours. This is a cheaper option to the trailer bike (cost £50), making use of your child's existing bike. Take care when cornering or turning and going over speed humps.

Cargo Bikes



Tricycle type bikes (two wheels at front, one at back), with a large box at the front for children/luggage. Very popular in the Netherlands and Scandinavia. Good fun, but expensive. (£1700).

Safety

If you are thinking of buying one of the options above, see if anyone local has something similar, and ask for their opinion, and possibly a go. You can borrow a child trailer from Sustaining Dunbar, and we can also give you impartial, practical advice. When you buy, make sure your bike is suitable, and once you've made your purchase, practise on quiet roads without your child first. Make sure all equipment is securely fitted and well maintained, and ensure that all safety harnesses are used so that children and clothing are secure.

Family Cycling

Work out the best route for your family group's ability - avoid busy, main roads and steep hills. If there are two adults in the group, have one at the front and one at the back. If there is one, go at the back. Cycling in larger groups is safer, so you could maybe arrange initial outings with other cycling families. Maps such as Cycling in East Lothian (free), Sustaining Dunbar's Dunbar and East Linton Maps and SPOKES East Lothian Cycle Map (£4.95) will help you to plan a route, these are all available from Sustaining Dunbar at 16 West Port. Dunbar Cycling Group often organises family cycles - visit dunbarcycling.org.uk for details.

Useful Websites

www.spokes.org.uk - useful information about all aspects of cycling, including cycling as a family.

www.sustainingdunbar.org.uk - lots of useful information about cycling.

www.dunbarcycling.org.uk - for details about cycling events in Dunbar.