



# Mobility Trikes for Children with Disabilities Impact Report 2022

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Variety – the Children's Charity of Ireland (CHY5739)  
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# Summary

Variety Ireland’s “Recycle Mobility Programme” provide tricycles to children with disabilities so that they can be included in most outdoor every day family activities.

Once the child has outgrown the trike it is then upcycled and passed to another child for use. The aim of the programme is to improve the health and wellbeing of the child and the family unit, in a way that benefits the environment.

This study was commissioned to measure the impact that the trikes would have on the child and family unit. It was conducted by Dr Jolanta Bourke of The Royal College of Surgeons to explore the impact of that Variety Ireland’s “Recycle Mobility Programme” has on the well-being of children with disabilities who have been given special mobility tricycles.

Dr Jolanta’s findings show that the programme has had a very positive effect on children’s mental and physical health, along with the entire family’s wellbeing.

Some of the main contributions of the programme included helping young people with a disability gain an increased feeling of inclusion within their family and community. In addition to this, an enhanced sense of accomplishment and joy was experienced, both of which are integral components of psychological wellbeing (Burke, 2021).

Given that wellbeing is now one of the Department of Education’s national priorities (DOE, 2021), providing children with disability with tricycles can significantly contribute to the wellbeing of both students and their parents, who are part of the school community.

Future research will be carried out with a larger sample of participants which Variety Ireland will continue to carry out as part of their Recycle Mobility Programme as it expands.

However, this research provides preliminary evidence to suggest that the tricycle scheme can improve family’s wellbeing and should be considered as partial fulfilment of the government strategy for enhancing wellbeing.





(L-R) Dr Jolanta Burke from the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland pictured here presenting her report to Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister Anne Rabbitte

## About Dr Jolanta Burke

Dr Jolanta Burke is a chartered psychologist specialising in positive psychology and a senior lecturer at the Centre for Positive Psychology and Health, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

She has authored eight books and was invited to speak at events worldwide. She regularly contributed to the media and wrote for newspapers, such as the Guardian and Irish Independent.

She writes a regular blog for Psychology Today and was acknowledged by the Irish Times as one of 30 people who make Ireland a better place.

For more information go to [www.jolantaburke.com](http://www.jolantaburke.com).



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## Background

Variety - the Children’s Charity of Ireland provided a range of adaptive tricycles to children with both physical and mental disabilities, which include Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and all children from across the disability spectrum. The current research is aimed to assess the impact of using tricycles on the family’s quality of life.



## About the Recycle Mobility Programme

On Friday 2nd July 2021, Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland ambassador Saoirse Ruane in conjunction with Minister Anne Rabbitte from the Department of Children, Equality Disability, Integration Youth and Minister for Transport, Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan launched the Recycle Mobility Programme for Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland.

This programme which is spearheaded by Saoirse Ruane is designed to supply special mobility trikes to children with disabilities across Ireland.

The Recycle Mobility Programme, which was co funded by both Minister Rabbitte and Minister Ryan’s Departments, is designed to provide funding for 120 special

trikes to families with children with disabilities to help improve both their physical and mental well-being.

Up to the 1st February 2022, Variety – the Children’s Charity are delighted to report that 40 of the 120 special trikes have successfully been delivered to families with children with various mental and physical disabilities across Ireland.

As part of this programme, Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland appointed one of Ireland’s leading Chartered Children’s Psychologists from the Royal College of Surgeons, Doctor Jolanta Burke, to conduct an impact study to determine the outcome of the first stage of this programme.

## About Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland

Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland, also known as Variety Ireland, is a registered children’s charity founded in 1951. Its core objective is to address the needs of children with both mental and physical disabilities, living on the island of Ireland. Reg Charity No. CHY5739.

Variety Ireland is a charity that helps children with disabilities from across the whole disability spectrum. Today, Variety Ireland’s core focus is to supply items and services that will directly impact and help children, families, schools and communities who cater for children with disabilities.

Specialised tools such as mobility aids (not supported or supplied by the HSE), educational devices and also our well-being services, are designed to educate, promote inclusion, equality and as well as equal access to children living with disabilities in Ireland. All these services are supported through our Assistance Programmes.

Our environmental sustainability policy ensures we do this in the most sustainable way possible, whilst ensuring our programmes are evidence lead by way of impact research reporting.



# About Campaign Ambassador - Saoirse Ruane

Saoirse Ruane from Kiltullagh, Co Galway is Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland first ever child ambassador. Since being diagnosed with a life-threatening tumour, Saoirse continues to prove and act as an inspirational 10-year-old girl who having overcome a year of intense chemo along with having her right leg amputated, a beacon of hope to lots of children and adults not only here in Ireland but across the world.

Most people in Ireland recognise Saoirse from her appearance on the Late Late Toy Show (Ireland) in 2020 where she showed everyone how she has learned to overcome the loss of her leg and walk again. Thanks to her own grit and determination Saoirse is now back cycling, playing camogie and learning how to swim.

Saoirse is also very proud to be the inspiration behind the first ever Toy Show Appeal on the Late Late Show, where an incredible €6.6m euro was raised for various charities around Ireland.

Saoirse and her family are known for their amazing fundraising efforts and giving back to the charities and hospitals that have helped Saoirse on her forward journey.

As a very determined young lady, Saoirse through her planned fundraising efforts here at Variety Ireland is not only dedicated to helping children with various disabilities but also act as a role model and inspire children showing them that anything is possible when you set your mind to it. Today, Saoirse continues to work with Variety – the Children’s Charity on various projects that help to promote inclusion, equality and equal access to mobility and well-being with children with both mental and physical disabilities.



Variety Ireland Ambassador Saoirse Ruane holding report



# Environmental Impact

The Variety – Children’s Charity of Ireland “Recycle Mobility Campaign” is designed to have many sustainable and environmental benefits.

The most important being that all special bicycles (trikes) we give to children with mental or physical disabilities are handed onto another child, once it has been outgrown by the user. This not only offers substantial financial savings to the charity from having to pay for a new bicycle each time, but also extends the lifetime of each item.

This stops them reaching harmful landfill sites across the land which are an environmental risk (see chart below of Co2 emission savings)

Mode of Transit	CO2 released (per km driven per person)	CO2 released during production of vehicle
Car	271 g	313 g
Bus	101 g	---
Bicycle	16 g (This is from the fuel of the rider - food)	16 g





# Current Research

This pilot research was co-designed by Dr Jolanta Burke and the Variety Ireland charity in conjunction with The Department of Children, Equality, Disabilities, Integration and Youth and the Department of Transport in Ireland with the main aim being to identify the impact of providing young people with Tricycles on their own quality of life and their family's well-being.

All parents whose children received a tricycle were invited to participate in this once-off online survey. They responded to a range of demographic questions relating to their gender, age, relationship to the child and the length of time their child had a tricycle.

The main questionnaire comprised close and open-ended questions. There were five close-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The aim was to identify the impact of the wellbeing improvements associated with the receipt of a tricycle.

Sample question: My family's wellbeing has improved since she has received a tricycle. There were three open-ended questions asking participants to describe the impact of tricycles on their children's and family's wellbeing.

Data was analysed using SPSS and MAXQDA

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# Profile of the Respondents

A total of eight respondents participated in this pilot survey. The response rate was 61%, which is adequate. All the respondents were children's parents, 87.5% (n=7) were female and the remainder were male (n=1, 12.5%). Most participants were aged 40-49 (n=5, 62.5%) followed by 50-59 (n=2, 25%) and one parent was aged 30-39. Therefore, most parents were middle-aged.

## The Impact of Tricycles

Most of the respondents reported that their children used their tricycles donated by Variety Ireland for at least 3 months (n=5, 62.5%), with three participants (37.5%) receiving their tricycles one or two months ago. This means that all the participants had ample time to use their tricycles and observe the impact it had on their quality of life.

## On Children

### Impact in numbers

All the participants agreed that their children's wellbeing has improved considerably since they have received a tricycle, with 50% of participants reporting considerable improvement.

Furthermore, 62.5% (n=5) of participants saw a considerable improvement in their physical health, 25% (n=2) of participants saw an improvement in their physical health whereas one participant reported was unsure if the saw physical wellbeing improvement.

Similarly, in relation to mental health, the vast majority of participants (n=7, 87.5%) saw an improvement in their children's mental health since receiving a tricycle with four participants (50%) reporting considerable improvement; whereas one participant was uncertain whether or not their child experienced mental health improvement since receiving a bike. Figure 1 provides a summary of numerical findings.

*Figure 1 Summary of numerical findings relating to the impact of tricycles on children.*

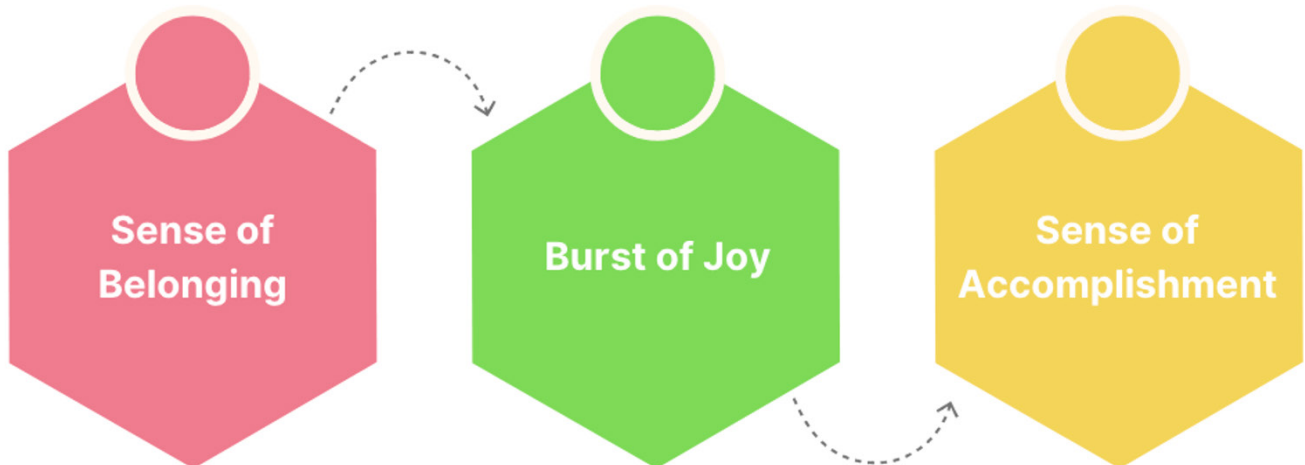




## Impact in parents' words

Three themes emerged from parents' description of the impact of tricycles on their children. Firstly, they acknowledged how their children's sense of belonging has increased as a result of riding a tricycle. Secondly, they mentioned the joy their children experienced from their tricycles. Finally, they talked about the sense of accomplishment that riding a bike gave their children (Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Themes emerging from the impact of tricycles on children.*



## Sense of Belonging

Most parents highlighted how tricycles helped their children feel they belonged with their family and friends. Children no longer watch their siblings and friends enjoy themselves while they stay outside and watch. Instead, the tricycle allows them to join in and enjoy all that other, fully-abled children enjoy.

### *Here are some quotes that illustrate this:*

“It has allowed my child to have a tricycle like all other children her age (...) It allows her to be inclusive with her peers.” **Participant A**

“He is no longer watching my other children enjoying themselves / this has given him the opportunity to partake in an outdoor activity and experience the speed, air in his face, the simple pleasures we all get from cycling.” **Participant C**

“It has enabled her to cycle alongside her friend. Hearing them laugh and race each other is the best feeling in the world.” **Participant D**

“To get her outside and not be stuck in a buggy while she watches her friends cycle their bikes” **Participant B**

## Burst of Joy

Some parents mentioned that children were frustrated as their freedoms were limited. Receiving a tricycle allowed them to let go of negative feelings and feel the joy of cycling.

*Here are some of the quotes that illustrate this:*

“(It has) allow her to experience the joy the tricycle brings to her everyday life.” **Participant A**

“My child would have been in a buggy getting frustrated as his siblings were able to cycle. You could tell he would have loved it. He got frustrated by it.” **Participant F**

“The joy this brings him is untold. Plus he is more inclined to talk when he is on the bike. My son loves the tricycle it is a change from wheelchair... he is always happy in tricycle” **Participant G**

“It has given him a new outlook and something to enjoy with the rest of the family” **Participant C**

## Sense of Accomplishment

Some participants mentioned the impact that tricycles had on their children's sense of accomplishment. What they thought they could not do, they have now accomplished with a tricycle.

*Here are some of the quotes that illustrate this:*

“It is difficult to put in words the impact of having a tricycle has on my daughter's life. She cannot walk independently but has cycled up to 40km in one day. The tricycle gives her independence she would not otherwise have.” **Participant D**

“It gets her leg's moving” **Participant C**

“Our daughter can't cycle a bicycle. Tricycles to suit a teenager with her requirements are so expensive. Having a tricycle means the world to her, to do what she never could, she has watched other children in the past always wishing she could do the same. Now she can.” **Participant H**

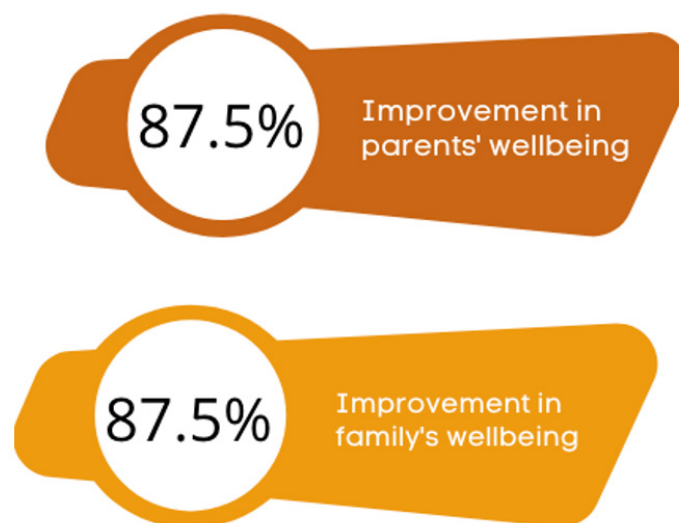


# On Family

## Impact in numbers

A total of 87.5% (n=7) of parents acknowledged that the tricycle their child has received improved not only their wellbeing but also the parents' wellbeing. Of them, 62.5% (n=5) of them reported that the improvement was considerable. Only one participant was unsure of the impact of a tricycle on their wellbeing. Moreover, seven participants (87.5%) found that a tricycle improved their family's quality of life, and half of them considered the improvement considerable. Only one person was unsure of the impact it had on their family. Overall, data indicated that tricycles have impacted both children's and their family's wellbeing. Figure 3 provides a summary of these findings.

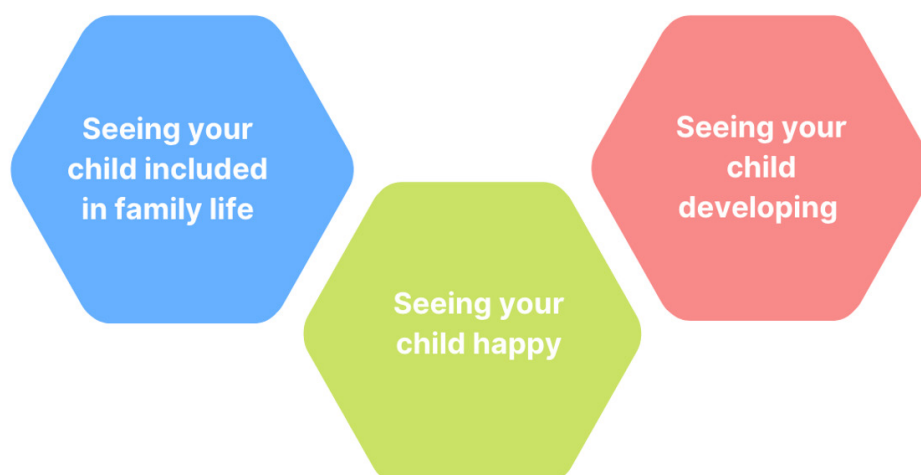
*Figure 3. Summary of the numerical findings relating to the impact of tricycles on family's wellbeing*



## Impact in parents' words

Three themes have emerged relating to the impact of tricycles on family's wellbeing. Firstly, for many what made them happy was seeing their child being more included in the family life; secondly, seeing their child happy; and thirdly, seeing their child developing skills and growing independent. Figure 4 illustrates these themes.

*Figure 4. Themes illustrating the impact of tricycles on family's wellbeing*



## Seeing your Child Included in Family Life

Their child felt more integrated into the family, as they were able to join their parents and siblings in physical activity, all of which made them happy.

*Here are some of the quotes that illustrate this:*

“It has been fantastic as younger son can cycle the wheelchair bike and it’s just himself and his brother together - gives my son a little break from mum and dad too - we can walk behind and watch as our younger son cycles with him.” **Participant C**

“We could never go cycling together as she would have been left out, on holidays etc, we’re so grateful. The tricycle has had a positive impact on all of us, her brother is delighted he has someone to cycle with.” **Participant H**

“The tricycle enables us go on outings and holidays together, for example, the Waterford and Blessington Greenways.” **Participant E**

## Seeing your Child Happy

Respondents highlighted how happy they are to see their children happy.

*Here are some of the quotes that illustrate this:*

“It’s all for the child” **Participant D**

“For us to see him engaging with people as he is out and about is amazing and to feel he is no different to his siblings. He is actually the envy of them now.” **Participant F**

## Seeing your Child Develop

Parents mentioned how seeing their children being independent and developing skills made them happy.

*Here are some of the quotes that illustrate this:*

“To bring her outdoors not in a buggy and her independence to grow.” **Participant A**

“Hugely beneficial for all of our mental health to have the extra tool to be able to help our child learn how to cycle and be outdoors more” **Participant B**

“The ease of use on country roads is massive.. knowing how hard he is strengthening legs makes me proud. So so grateful for our tricycle.” **Participant G**



# Final Word

“When you have a child with both a physical and intellectual disability activities are very limited as everything requires support. This tricycle has had a huge impact on our son as he sits in the chair at the front of the bike while either myself, my husband or one of our children cycle with him - he is safe and can enjoy the experience while also giving him a sense of belonging and confidence. It’s life changing for all of us!” **Participant C**

“An issue for us was figuring out how to transport the tricycle as it is too big to fit in the boot of the car. We managed to find a carrier after a lot of searching. Other families might need some support with this issue. Please pass on our thanks to Variety for their support in purchasing the tricycle.” **Participant E**

“We are so grateful to all involved in making this happen. Our daughter is truly so happy when on her tricycle and this would never been feasible without the support from everyone in loved.” **Participant A**

## Conclusion

The current pilot study was carried out to explore the impact of Variety Ireland’s “Recycle Mobility Programme” on the wellbeing of children who have been given tricycles and their families.

Findings have shown that to date; the programme had a very positive effect on children’s mental and physical health and the entire family’s wellbeing.

Some of the main contributions of the programme included helping young people with disability belong to their family and community, as well as enhancing their sense of accomplishment and joy, both of which are integral components of psychological wellbeing (Burke, 2021).

Given that wellbeing is now one of the Department of Education’s national priorities (DOE, 2021), providing children with disability with tricycles can significantly contribute to the wellbeing of both students and their parents, who are part of the school community.

More research needs to be carried out with a larger sample of participants which Variety Ireland will continue to carry out as their Recycle Mobility Programme expands to help more children.

However, this research provides preliminary evidence to suggest that the tricycle scheme can improve family’s wellbeing and should be considered as partial fulfilment of the government strategy for enhancing wellbeing.



Miss Ireland 2021 Pamela Uba and Minister of State for Disabilities Anne Rabbitte presenting an upcycled Recycle Mobility Trike to Ábalta Special School, Galway

## References

- Burke, J. (2022). The ultimate guide to implementing wellbeing programmes for school. London, New York: Routledge.
- DOE (2021). Update to the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme – Prioritisation of Funding. Circular
- 0015/2021. Dublin. Department of Education.



# Supporting Testimonials

*Here are just some samples of testimonials received so far from families who have benefited from the Recycle Mobility Programme in Ireland.*

## Saoirse C

*“Dear Variety the Children’s Charity,*

*A huge thanks and appreciation to everyone in Variety Ireland, Ann Rabbitte ,Eamon Ryan that helped contribute for this to happen for our daughter Saoirse after such a tough fight at the start of her life. It’s means so much to see Saoirse been able to get out and about in her community spreading her wonderful smile and personality .*

*Being able to be amongst her peers but mostly to give her the life skills and confidence to believe she can achieve anything she sets out to do!*

*From the bottom of our hearts this means so so much and we would be lost without this crucial support. Thank you so much to you all.*

**Saoirse’s mum”**



## Faith B

*"Dear Variety Ireland,*

*Faith's trike has been a blessing for her it has Made her good and strong for her upcoming hip surgery in two week's time. She loves being outside in it cycling like everyone else, showingoff her beautiful trike. She has a big smile on herface every time we put her into it, it gives hera sense of freedom and independence. Thank you to all at Variety Ireland, both Minister Rabbitte and Minister Ryan for her wonderful gift whichhas made a huge difference to her own mental and physical well-being but all being able to participate in family activities outside of the home.*

**Faith's Mum & Dad"**



## Kathleen M

*"Dear Variety Ireland,*

*This is me on the bike I was very nervous at first but I'm better on it now. I will look after this bike and some day we will exchange again.*

*Thank you very much you made me very happy It means I can go outside and have lots of fun, I love it.*

*Thank you!*

**Love from Kathleen"**





## Tadhg K

*"Dear Variety Ireland,*

*We would like to express our deepest thanks to all the people at Variety Ireland, Minister Anne Rabbitte and Minister Eamonn Ryan for helping us to get this special bike for our son Tadhg.*

*This has had a major effect on his development Since Tadhg got his bike, he loves when we talk about going out on it and when I ask him would he like to go for a cycle he is understanding what I'm asking and responding to me -it's little things like this that is just amazing to see and brilliant progress.*

*He just loves it - we all do! We've had so many people stop and ask us about his bike and how fantastic it is! Your help and the help of both Ministers through this vital Recycle Mobility Programme is going to change the lives of so many children with disabilities and their families.*

*It's a life changer for us all as he can now go out for trips on his big with his younger brother. A big thank you for all your efforts in helping improve the mental and physical well-being of both Tadgh and our family.*

**Tadhg's mum and dad"**



# Acknowledgments

Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland would like to thank Dr Jolanta Burke from the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland for conducting this report on behalf of The Department of Transport and The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

We would also like to thank our child ambassador Saoirse Ruane for her continued support in helping us help children with disabilities living in Ireland.

Variety – the Children’s Charity of Ireland would also like to acknowledge and thank musician Ed Sheeran and his team along with all associated writers and authors of the song “Galway Girl” which they granted free use as part of our launch of this programme.







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