



# SCANDI HEALTH LESSONS

# Living the Swede life

Expat says northern neighbours could teach us how to end our obesity crisis



**FIT** Alan, Matilda and Theo. They play outside each day, no matter the weather. Left, last week's Mail



Scotland's record in tackling the national weight crisis has hardly been the envy of the world.

Two-thirds of adults and more than a quarter of children are overweight or obese as doctors, politicians and academics carry out a seemingly never-ending debate on the problem.

Chris Oliver, professor of physical activity at Edinburgh University last week warned the crisis may be at tipping point.

In contrast, Sweden ranks just two from the bottom of a global obesity league table.

And Scots expat Alan Paterson, 37, believes Scotland can learn from his new homeland. Alan – dad to Matilda, six, and two-year-old Theo – lives in Stockholm.

**“I couldn't have known the impact the move would have on the family after leaving for Stockholm more than five years ago.**

However, life changed when we moved to Sweden. Here, all children sit down to a hot meal in school, there are no packed lunches and fast food rarely features in a weekly menu.

It is normal for children in Sweden only to have sweets on a Saturday and fizzy drinks are far more difficult to come by. Nursery, or förskola, is a healthy environment from so many perspectives – healthy food, an emphasis on outdoor play every day regardless of weather, regular trips to the forest.

Snacks and lunches are fruit or yoghurt, veg, gurg and veg, healthy bread, and so on.

My partner Theresa and I pay £150 a month for our two children though this figure varies depending on the hours and area where children attend nursery.

At lunch, the emphasis is on trying different things. My daughter gets a salad buffet every day and they are encouraged to pick three things from it.

Every child eats school meals. There are no packed lunches and no stigma attached to a free meal when everyone has them.

It's quite clear Scotland has a dreadful obesity record. Even for adults, lifestyles are often in stark

contrast. There are far fewer obese adults in Sweden, not to mention children.

I'm always a little shocked when I go back home. There are deep cultural differences. Food habits are deeply ingrained as are alcohol habits.

Alcohol is sold here in

**“There are far fewer obese adults in Sweden, not to mention children**

# Sunday Mail

## OPINION

# We must not let motorists on mobiles off the hook

**Nobody in their right mind would want to be caught drink-driving.**

It's reckless, selfish and shows a complete disregard for the safety of other people.

It comes with huge penalties, potential loss of livelihood, a serious criminal record and a degree of personal shame.

Given all of that, it's difficult to now imagine anyone arguing that drink-driving is actually OK.

Or to imagine a government reducing the criminal penalties around it.

The stigma around the offence didn't always exist.

In past decades, it was broadly socially acceptable and those who campaigned to tighten up legislation and increase penalties were cast as meddlers.

A similar journey must now take place on the issue of texting and using mobile phones while driving.

An investigation in the Sunday Mail today demonstrates that drivers just aren't getting the dangers of this practice.

This isn't just a quick text at the traffic lights. Our pictures show drivers texting and talking on Scotland's busiest stretch of motorway.

**They are putting not just their own lives at risk but those of other road users**

That's despite the horrific fatal accident last year when a mum and three children were killed on the A34 by a lorry driver who had been texting at the wheel.

On its own, it should have been enough to change national attitudes on the issue.

The sight of drivers travelling at speed while texting or holding a smartphone to their ear is appalling and concerning.

They are putting not just themselves at risk but their passengers and other road users.

Or, as police officers' representative Calum Steele puts it, “dicing with death”.

Current sentencing is clearly not acting as a deterrent and needs to be updated.

The suggestion that convictions are dropping because of a lack of police officers is also enormously concerning.

But the motoring public also have their part to play in changing the culture of drivers.

Most people wouldn't get in a car with someone they suspect of having had too much to drink.

They should adopt the same attitude when drivers opt to lift a handset while on the move.

Drivers themselves also need to learn the harsh lessons of the A34 tragedy more quickly.

There's no text or call that can't wait until you've come to a halt.

Particularly at 70mph.  
**Put the phones down.**



**OUTDOOR LIFE** Getting out and exercising is key to Swedish way of life **Pic** Andreas Ulvdell/Folio Images