

Langwathby school transport consultation feedback report

This report summarises the feedback received by the Council in relation to the consultation proposing the removal of passenger assistants (PAs) from Langwathby primary school transport routes. It also sets out the Council response to mitigations in relation to risks identified.

When this consultation was initiated, the Council made a commitment to share a summary of the feedback received.

Consultation responses

118 consultation responses were received via the online survey, in person drop-in meeting and emails, representing the views of 127 people.

Stance

The stance of respondents is:

- five respondents are neutral or unclear about the removal of the PAs (4% of the total respondents)
- three respondents support the removal of the PAs (2% of the total respondents)
- 119 respondents oppose the removal of the PAs (94% of the total respondents)

Summary of respondent types and stance

Respondent types	Oppose removal	Neutral/ unclear	Support removal	Total per respondent type
Parent/carer of a child at Langwathby C of E Primary	60	4	0	64 (50%)
Both Parent/carer of a child at Langwathby C of E Primary and a Member of staff of the school	2	0	0	2 (2%)

Respondent types	Oppose removal	Neutral/unclear	Support removal	Total per respondent type
Both Parent/carer of a child at Langwathby C of E Primary and a Governor of the school	2	0	0	2 (2%)
Other family member	20	0	0	20 (16%)
Local community member	8	0	2	10 (8%)
Other/unknown	10	0	0	10 (8%)
Parent of future/former pupil	7	0	0	7 (6%)
Governing Board at Langwathby C of E Primary	7	0	0	7 (6%)
Transport Provider	0	1	1	2 (2%)
Passenger Assistant	2	0	0	2 (2%)
Year 6 child	1	0	0	1 (1%)
Grand Total	119 (94%)	5 (4%)	3 (2%)	127 (100%)

Analysis of responses

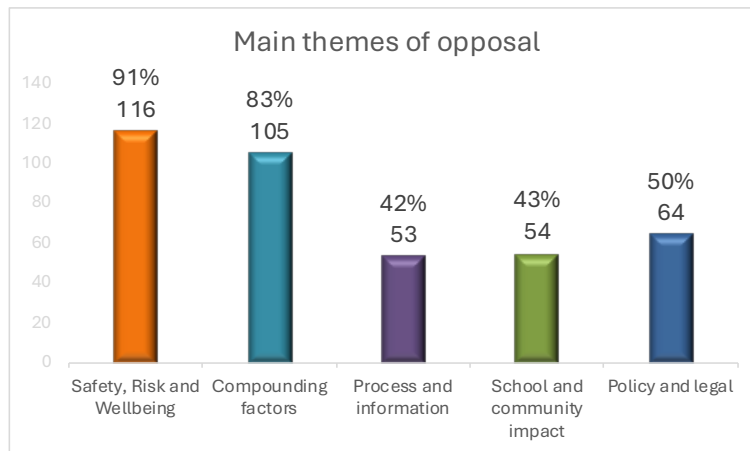
During the analysis of the responses, it was found that:

- the vast majority (94%) of responses oppose removal of the PAs
- the school governing body unanimously opposed the proposal, considering it was their duty as a key stakeholder, to raise the concerns of their school community and to advocate for the safety and wellbeing of their pupils
- the Transport Provider indicate supportive/neutral stance

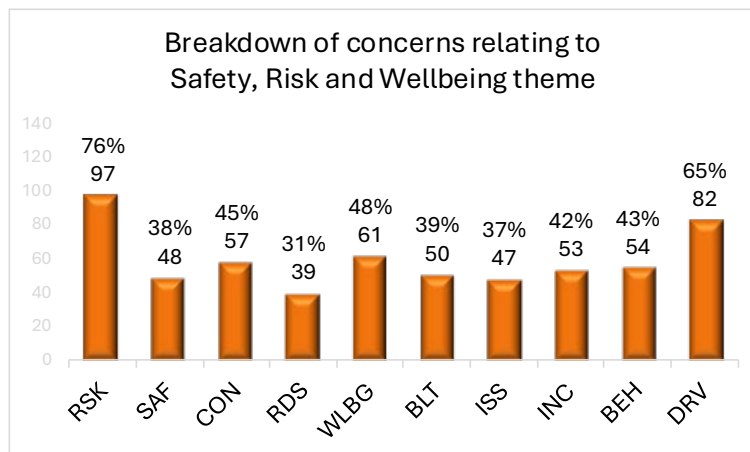
Themes raised during the consultation

The main themes of opposition in the responses are:

- safety, risk and wellbeing in 91% of opposed responses
- compounding factors in 83% of opposed responses
- process and information in 42% of opposed responses
- school and community impact in 43% of opposed responses
- policy and legal in 50% of opposed responses



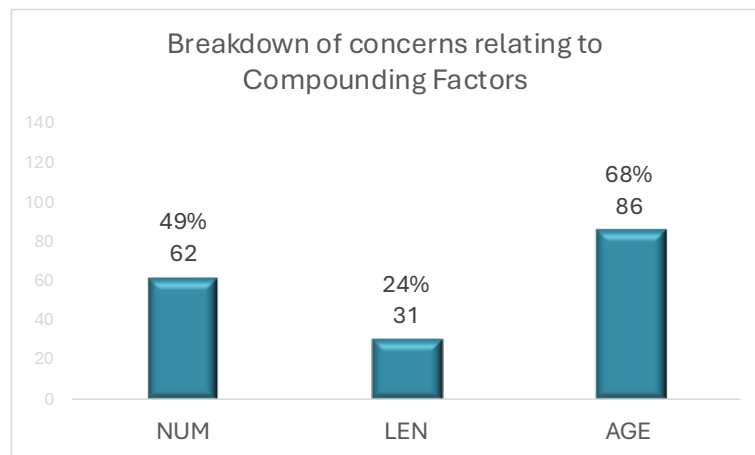
Safety, Risk and Wellbeing



Concern	Safety, Risk, and Wellbeing
RSK	Concern/comments over general risk/danger/safety and/or specific mentions of risk assessment/liability.

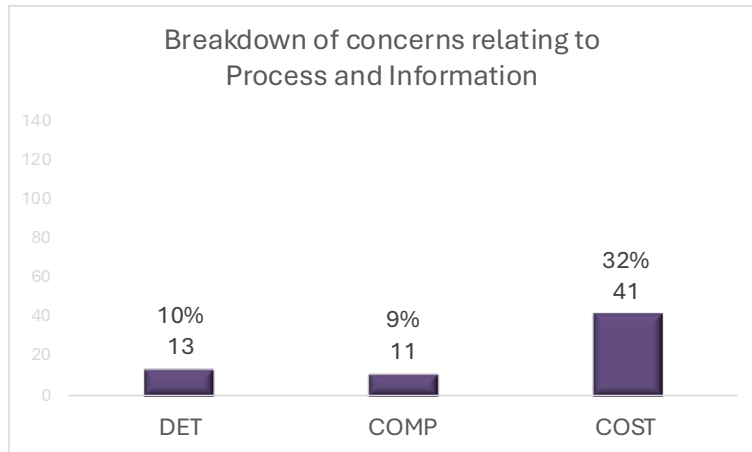
Concern	Safety, Risk, and Wellbeing
SAF	Specific mentions of safeguarding, concerns over handing children over into care of appropriate adult and/or 1:1/lone journeys with driver.
CON	Concern over route/road conditions including narrow, winding lanes, lighting, weather, ice, lack of gritting on route, rural/isolated nature of route, and/or poor mobile phone signal.
RDS	Concerns over road safety near stops and/or boarding/alighting the bus safely.
WLBG	Concerns over children's emotional wellbeing/welfare, including bullying, and/or being anxious/upset/distressed.
BLT	Concern specifically over children remaining seated and/or managing their seatbelts.
ISS	Concern over other issues/scenarios - children falling asleep, getting off at right stop, helping with bags, lost property, dealing with 'any problems'.
INC	Concern over potential dealing with medical needs, illnesses, emergencies, and/or accidents that may occur.
BEH	Concerns over behaviour on the bus and managing this.
DRV	Concerns over the driver's ability to focus due to distractions, their ability to cope, and/or the extra responsibility their role may entail should the PAs be removed.

Compounding Factors



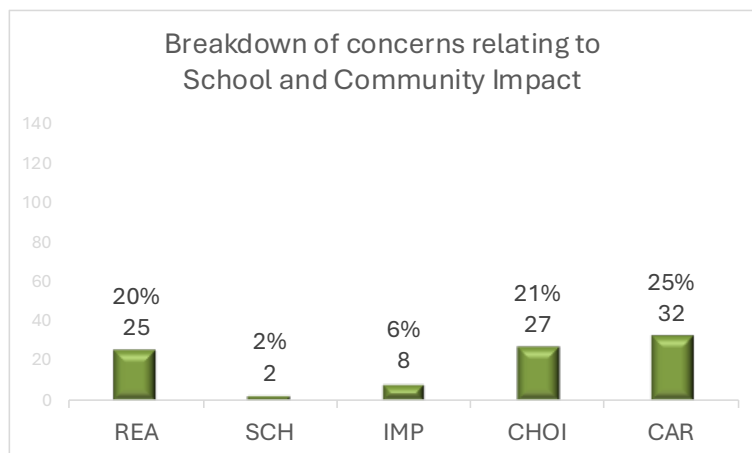
Concern	Compounding Factors
AGE	References to the young age of the pupils being a concerning factor.
LEN	References to the length/time of journey (being long) being a concerning factor.
NUM	References to the large size of the bus, and/or large number of children being a concerning factor.

Process and Information



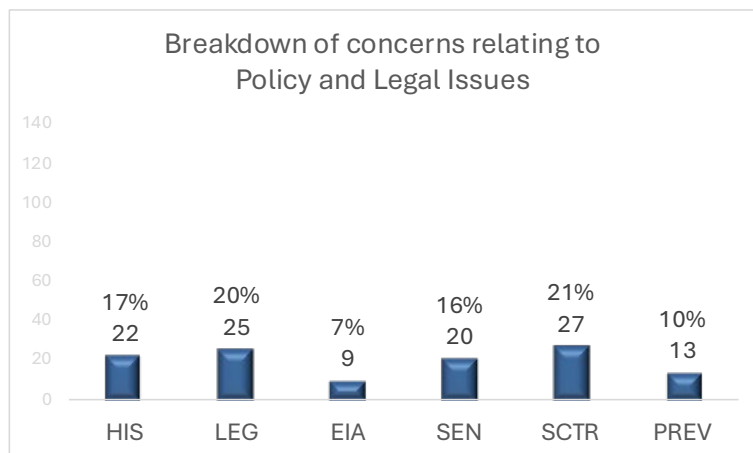
Concern	Process and Information
DET	Concern over lack of detail/information provided on the proposal, the management of the consultation process itself, and/or decision-making processes being followed.
COMP	Concern over unfair/unequitable comparison with other routes without PAs.
COST	Comments/scepticism that the proposal to remove PAs is about cost, that removal is not worth the financial saving and/or counterarguments that removal of PAs will actually cost more indirectly.

School and Community Impact



Concern	School and Community Impact
REA	Comments about the reassurance parents get from the PA
SCH	Concerns about the negative impact removal of PAs could have on the school's future (attracting/retaining pupils)
IMP	Concerns about potential impact removal of PAs may have on teacher time, attendance/punctuality, and/or before/after school provision.
CHOI	Comments that removal of PAs may result in parents choosing to drive their children to school independently.
CAR	Concerns that car traffic will increase around the school – with implications for safety, convenience, the environment, congestion and/or parking.

Policy and Legal Issues



Concern	Policy and Legal Issues
HIS	Reference to the historical agreement for the bus to have an escort.
PREV	Mention of previous proposals by the Council to remove PAs.
LEG	Mention of legal/statutory duties, Health and Safety, DFE recommendations, references to liability/litigation.
EIA	References to equality, and/or Equality Impact Assessments/assurance.
SEN	References to concerns for SEND / additional needs pupils (including pre-diagnosis).
SCTR	Comparison with school trip protocols/ratios and perceived discrepancy in guidance.

Other points raised

16 people (all of whom were opposed to the proposal to remove PAs) expressed a view/suggestion that all school buses should have a PA and/or that the Council should extend PA provision to other routes.

10 people provided other suggestions. These included:

- splitting the route to shorten the journey time, lessen the number of children or reduce the size of the bus if there was no PA
- to merge the two routes so only one PA is required
- parents/carers could volunteer to act as a PA on a rota basis
- parents/carers could pay towards the cost of transport
- managing the transition should the proposal to remove PAs go ahead:
 - to manage expectations – provide literature about what to expect
 - to “...work sensitively with [parents/children] to help them understand the benefits of independent travel and to build their confidence.”
 - to “...provide emergency drills to the children about what to do should an accident occur, similar to school fire drills.”
 - any changes “...should be done incrementally and with sensitivity. This is not what is currently being proposed.”
- to conduct a trial period, with the option to reinstate should there be issues
- that parents could board to assist with seatbelts
- that teachers/parents would supervise disembarkation/boarding

Support for removal

There were three responses in support of removal of PAs. One from a transport provider and two from local community members. The response from the transport provider noted that support from PAs is not common practice on other mainstream routes and expressed concern that they represent an inefficient use of resources and funding.

The two responses from local community members recognise parents’ concerns about the removal of passenger assistants but take the view that the Council must apply its transport policy consistently, including limiting PA provision to eligible cases. They note that parents with concerns about having to drive their children to school should be assured that the service will continue as usual, and whilst they are free to make their own arrangements, this would be a through personal choice rather than necessity.

The responses also noted that concerns about congestion and safety (linking to issues covered by the CARS tag in the data) would be addressed separately if raised. The

responses stated that 'the petition' should not be supported, emphasising the importance of balancing resources and encouraging independence.

Council Response to concerns raised

Below we have set out the risks and issues identified, and an assessment of each issue, including mitigations and actions to manage the risks.

Exceptional nature of geography relating to the routes

Westmorland and Furness as an area has many remote and isolated settlements with journeys involving single track roads, and blind corners, some of which are ungritted in winter. The routes serving Langwathby school are rural but are not exceptionally different to other routes served by home to school transport across our area.

The routes have been driven and assessed by members of the Council's in house transport team CTOT, who provide transport across Westmorland and Furness. We are unable to identify any specific issues that would justify these routes been classed as exceptional. We have also confirmed with our Highways team there is nothing that would suggest from their data, these routes are any more unsafe than others.

Behaviour of pupils, including bullying and supporting children with seatbelts

We have sought feedback from other primary schools across Westmorland and Furness with primary school children on transport routes (without PAs) to assess how these issues are managed elsewhere. No issues have been reported that indicate this is not manageable. Schools have mechanisms to deal with issues and strategies employed will be shared as part of transition arrangements.

Safety in the event of an accident or incident involving the driver and ability of driver to manage generally on the route without a PA

We have been unable to find any reported instance of any of our drivers in Westmorland and Furness or historically Cumbria being incapacitated. This risk would equally apply to a parent driving their children. Bus drivers have to go through enhanced health and safety checks.

The presence of a PA would not prevent a road traffic accident (RTA), in the event of an RTA, the driver will follow required protocols.

We have no evidence of any other routes operating where drivers have been unable to manage incidents.

Safety and safeguarding relating to drop off

Good practice has been identified in the procedures other schools have in place where there are not PAs on the bus, and these will be shared with the school and liaison between schools facilitated to ensure transition planning for the new arrangements.

Risk assessment fully accounting for removal of PAs and ensuring a robust risk assessment

We will work with the transport operator to develop an updated risk assessment that takes into account the removal of passenger assistants.

We will work with the school to share learning from other schools running primary transport routes without PAs and the mitigations they have in place to manage risks.

Four year olds being unaccompanied

Provision of free transport for four year olds is discretionary and not a statutory requirement (until a child reaches compulsory school age) Parents are expected to ensure child boards the bus safely and behaviour expectations are reinforced.

At the end of the morning journey, school make arrangements to ensure pupils are supported off the bus. Parents will need to make individual decisions, as is the case with other schools, regarding whether they feel their four year old is capable of travelling unaccompanied.

Managing the transition to the new arrangements

The consultation has been timed to ensure that if this progresses, there is sufficient lead in time to allow for effective transition arrangements.

We will work with the school and transport operators to support this process.

Safety in the event of a medical incident involving a pupil

There are no known medical issues pertaining to pupils on the bus which would present a risk on the journey. The Council has a 999 policy for all pupils, with the exception of SEND pupils where a passenger assistant and driver receive bespoke training, relating to specific pupils, for administration of emergency medication. These situations are rare and only agreed in conjunction with health colleagues.