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Review of "A Guide to Improving School Transport Safety"

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Executive Summary

Background

"A Guide to Improving School Transport Safety" and an accompanying report were published by Transport Scotland and SCOTS in December 2010. The aim of these documents was to promote road safety on the school journey by raising awareness, identifying responsibilities and by providing recommendations for how casualty risk on the school journey can be reduced.

This review was undertaken to consult with representatives from each of the 32 councils in Scotland in order to gain an understanding of how the guide and report have been used (if at all) since their publication.

Method

Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives from 31 councils, one council did not provide a response. Interviews were undertaken by the same researcher using a standardised structured topic guide to ensure consistency of approach. The interviews were recorded and transcribed prior to analysis. The data were analysed using thematic content analysis, which involved identifying key themes emerging from the data. The aim of the review was to answer the following key research questions:

1. How have the guide and the report been used (if at all) and did they provide useful information for those that had used them?
2. How could the guide and/or report be improved?
3. Which recommendations were most or least useful and what are the barriers to implementation?
4. What sections of the guide/report have been put into practice or policy?
5. What proportion of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year was facilitated or informed by the guide/report?
6. Is there interest in a workshop about school transport safety?
7. How do local authorities ensure that school bus signs meet the minimum requirements (e.g. for size) and do they require their transport operators to remove all school bus signs from vehicles when they are not being used to transport school children?

Results and conclusions

- The experience of recruiting participants highlighted two important issues with regard to the provision and responsibility for school transport safety. First, there is a lack of consistency between councils regarding the set up for school transport provision. Responsibility can be with education, transport or engineering departments and is often shared. Shared responsibility is the second issue as this can lead to a diffusion of responsibility between departments and agencies. There was evidence that this had an impact on participants' responses to the recommendations whereby some recommendations were seen to be the responsibility of others.
- Problems with the dissemination of the guide were highlighted by some council representatives who were not aware of its existence until this review. There was surprise and disappointment that the guide had been available for so long without them being aware of it.

- Some who had seen the guide considered that they were already fulfilling the recommendations; therefore, they have not actively used the guide since reading it. There may be cases of best practice to be found within these councils although it would be surprising if any council is fulfilling all of the recommendations in full.
- For the remainder of respondents, the guide is generally seen as useful and is mainly used as a reference document (e.g. reviewing contracts, responding to queries and assessing priorities), as is the report. Some have used the guide to simply support and verify that what they are doing is the correct approach, while a couple of councils were using the guide to develop policy and practice and track progress.
- Very few changes to the provision of school transport were described as being directly facilitated or informed by the guide. Respondents explained that where changes have occurred, this has typically been as an indirect consequence of the documents.
- Several barriers to implementing the recommendations were identified, these included: financial and resource constraints, no requirement to act, fragmented council departments, concerns relating to parents and schools, and issues specific to geographical locations.
- Suggested improvements to the guide included making it more interactive, such as adding a table to track progress towards the recommendations and sharing experiences within and between councils. It was also suggested that more information on engaging with parents would be useful as this relationship is a key issue. A further suggestion was to have a round table discussion with all local authorities to develop a consistent approach and share experiences.
- In general, respondents were enthusiastic about the prospect of attending workshops, although logistics and cost were potential barriers. They would like to have the opportunity to share best practice and engage with key transport stakeholders.
- Councils that rely on SPT for school transport provision expect them to enforce signage standards with transport providers. Other councils generally attempt to write minimum standards into their contracts and undertake spot checks. However, council specific problems with doing either of these things were highlighted and generally related to geographic and school population variables (e.g. a limited number of transport providers or too many routes to regularly check) . With regard to the removal of signs when the bus is not carrying school children, some indicated that it is difficult to enforce at the council level and a change in legislation should be considered.

1 Background

In 2010, TRL was commissioned by Transport Scotland and SCOTS (through Transport Scotland’s Trunk Road Research Programme) to develop a guide which outlined current policy and good practice procedures relating to school transport safety. The guide was the key output of the project and is a reference document aimed at councils and other stakeholders with a responsibility for school transport safety. The guide includes a measure of relative risk for different transport modes, as well as outlining policy and guidance associated with different transport modes. It also makes recommendations to address areas of risk and improve the safety of pupils travelling to and from school.

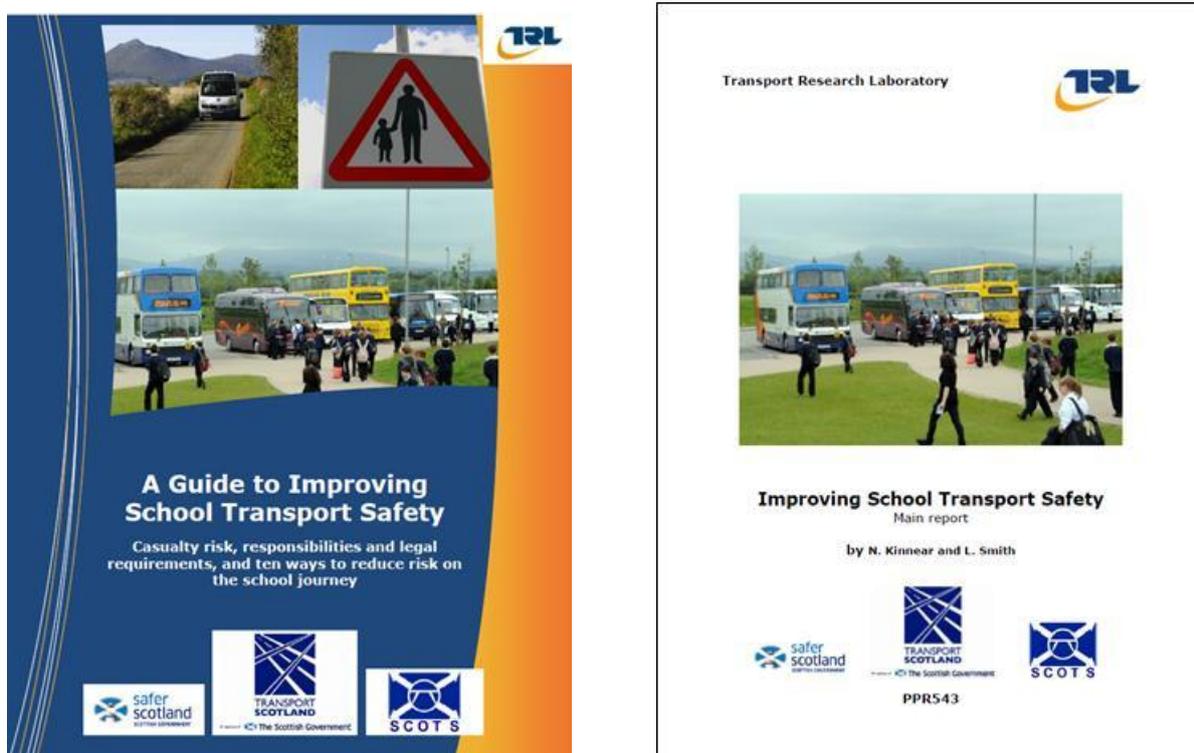


Figure 1: Front page screenshot of the guide and report

The guide was designed to raise awareness, be accessible, highlight key points and promote a consistent approach to school transport safety across Scotland.

During the development of the guide, a lack of accessible information relating to school transport safety was identified; it was therefore decided that it would be valuable to support users of the guide by also publishing a more comprehensive report where further information could be accessed. Both documents complement each other and serve to outline existing legal responsibilities and guidance for authorities regarding school transport safety (i.e. things that councils should be doing), and the key recommendations for improving school transport safety (i.e. what authorities could be doing). Both documents are based on an appraisal of available and supporting scientific evidence and theory.

The [documents](#) were published online in December 2010 and are publically available for download from Transport Scotland’s website at no cost. With the guide and report having been available for a reasonable length of time, Transport Scotland commissioned TRL to

independently review the impact that the documents have had on school transport safety and policy and to establish what improvements can be made to encourage councils and their partners to make full use of the information and recommendations. This report details the findings of a qualitative evaluation of the use of the guide by councils in Scotland.

2 Method

2.1 Approach

Structured telephone interviews were used to gather data from council representatives on a number of topics related to the key research questions.

The key research questions were:

1. How have the guide and the report been used (if at all) and did they provide useful information for those that had used them?
2. How could the guide and/or report be improved?
3. Which recommendations were most or least useful and what are the barriers to implementation?
4. What sections of the guide/report have been put into practice or policy?
5. What proportion of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year was facilitated or informed by the guide/report?
6. Is there interest in a workshop about school transport safety?
7. How do local authorities ensure that school bus signs meet the minimum requirements (e.g. for size) and do they require their transport operators to remove all school bus signs from vehicles when they are not being used to transport school children?

Specifically for those who had not used the guide or the report, we sought to establish:

1. Whether or not they are aware of the guide and the report?
2. If they are aware of the documents, why do they not use them? What is stopping them implementing the recommendations?

The interview data were analysed using qualitative techniques designed to extract central themes and messages, so that conclusions could be drawn.

2.2 Participant recruitment procedure

Participants¹ were recruited through a variety of approaches. Firstly, a contact list was provided by the SCOTS working group for Transportation and Road Safety. This list consisted of 65 contacts across the 32 councils in Scotland. Each person on the list was contacted by email inviting them to participate in a 30 minute telephone interview; the email also contained the key topics that would be discussed so that participants could prepare for the interview if they wanted to (see Appendix A). This initial contact was followed by a reminder email two weeks later. This initial approach yielded 19 interviews

¹ Participants and their councils have been anonymised for the purposes of reporting.

with 18 different councils. The next approach used to recruit participants was through a representative on the Road Safety Strategic Partnership Board at SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers) who contacted the Chief Executives of the remaining 14 Councils requesting that they provided contact details for the most appropriate contact (i.e. someone with responsibility for school transport safety) so that an interview could be arranged. This direct contact with Chief Executives resulted in a representative from another six councils being interviewed. A reminder email resulted in interviews with a representative from a further seven councils. One council did not offer a response, therefore, in total 32 interviews were conducted with representatives from 31 of the 32 councils.

2.3 Interview topic guide

It was made clear to participants that they did not need to have used, or even read, the guide or the report prior to the interview; those who had not used or were unaware of the guide were still of interest for the purpose of this evaluation.

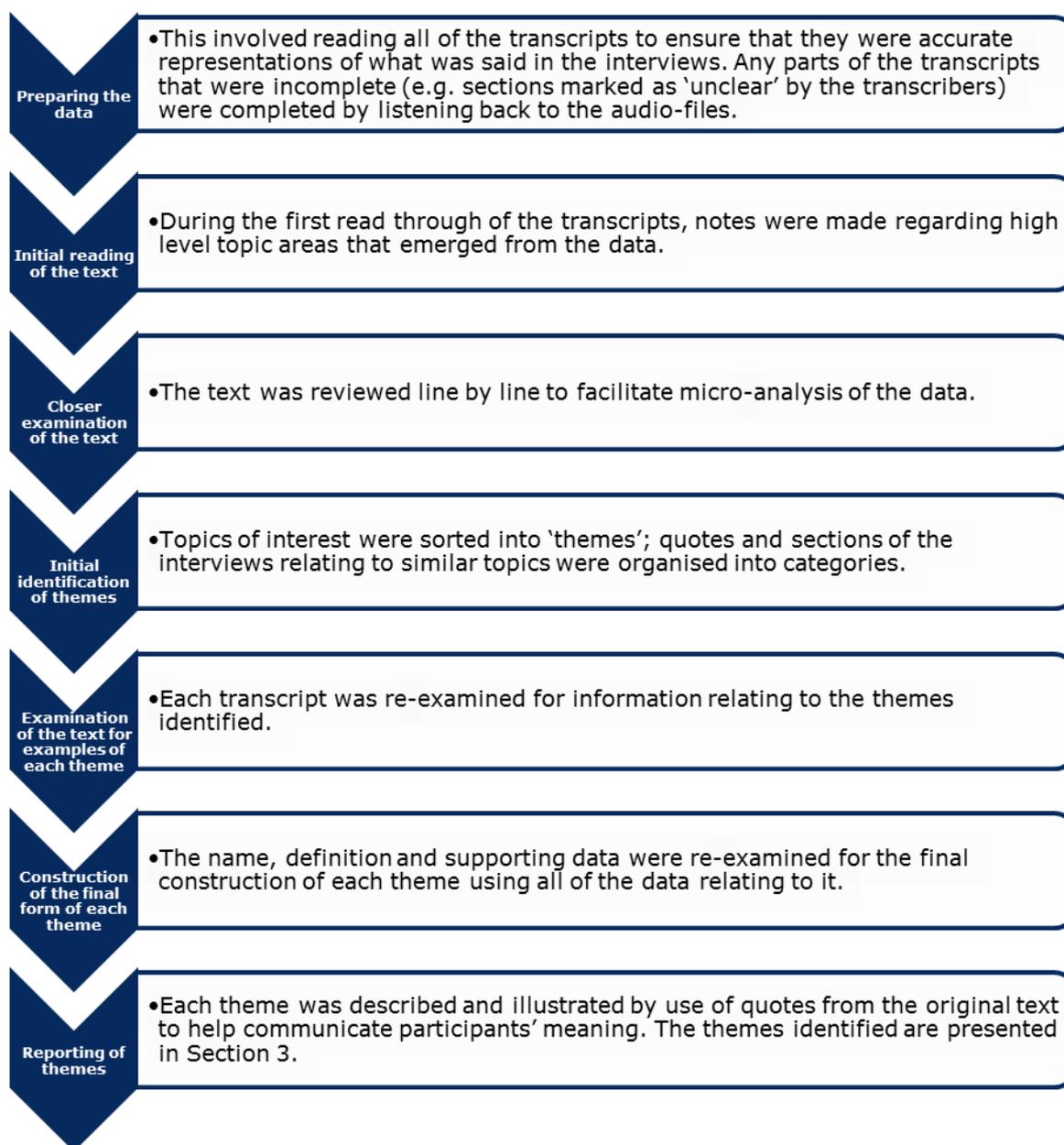
All interviews followed an interview topic guide which can be seen in Appendix B. This standardised approach ensured consistency and that all participants were asked the same questions.

2.4 Procedure

All interviews were conducted by the same TRL researcher to guarantee consistency. The interviews were recorded using a Digital Voice Recorder (DVR) and were transcribed by an external transcription company before thematic content analysis was conducted by a TRL researcher.

2.5 Method of analysis

Qualitative analysis is an approach which relies on developing themes during data collection to inform the analysis. The 30 transcripts were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis (e.g. Neuendorf, 2002). The steps involved in the analysis included:



All transcripts were reviewed in consideration of the seven key research questions set out in Section 2.1.

3 Results

3.1 Sample characteristics - roles and responsibilities

One of the first observations to be made following the interviews with council representatives as part of this review related to the broad range of different job roles, responsibilities and remits that were described. All interviewees were asked to describe their role at the council, how long they had held it and what their responsibilities for school transport safety were. While all of the interviewees worked in the area of school transport safety, there was much variation in the responsibilities within this area. Many described their responsibilities as sitting under the broad heading of 'transport' (including passenger, public and client transport), while others worked in transport planning, road safety, education or in some cases, engineering.

In terms of job roles, the following areas of responsibility were all mentioned:

- School travel plans
- Commissioning and reviewing of school bus contracts
- Accident investigation
- Traffic management
- Engineering
- Education

3.2 Respondent perceptions of the aim of the guide and the report

Respondents were asked to describe what they thought the main aim of the guide and report was. The most frequently cited ideas included: improving school transport safety (irrespective of mode – walking, cycling, car, bus) and disseminating good (and best) practice.

"I think the aim of the guide is to try and reduce accidents and risk to school children, improving safety really." Council 14

"[The aim of the guide is to] improve safety for all our children getting to and from school, whether they are walking, cycling or getting transport to and from school, so it's to improve the safety of those arrangements." Council 28

"It is a good tool for disseminating best practice." Council 11

Other thoughts that respondents shared about the aim of the guide included helping practitioners by highlighting priorities for the future, sharing knowledge and improving consistency between local authorities' approaches to managing school transport safety.

"I think it is basically to make local authorities aware of the priorities of safety within transport for children...make us aware of what we should be doing by law." Council 25

"My understanding is that the guide was produced to provide consistency and a general document that local authorities could use." Council 20

The majority of respondents felt that the guide and report were aimed at various departments within local authorities.

"[it was aimed at] local authorities primarily because all the issues discussed in here are the responsibility of local authorities." Council 15

"It wasn't aimed at parents, clearly, it wasn't particularly aimed at schools at a teacher level - it was a bit above that. So certainly local authorities - education departments and transport departments." Council 8

However, some interviewees mentioned that the guide was also applicable for schools, parents and others.

"I think it was aimed at people like myself within local authorities, but I would say maybe parents as well and not only transport people within the councils." Council 32

"I think it's aimed at local authorities, schools and parents" Council 22

3.3 Use of the guide and the report

This section discusses the use (and non-use) of the guide and the report by the council representatives who participated in this review. Information about respondents' general thoughts on the documents, their perceptions of the level of information provision, and suggested areas for improvement are presented in Sections 3.4 and 3.5. It is important to make the distinction between council representatives' use of the guide and their use of the report. The majority of respondents referred to seeing and using the guide rather than the report, very few people referred to the report at all in their interviews². For the purpose of analysis, participants were defined as either users (i.e. anyone who had read the guide and had used it to inform policy or practice) or non-users (i.e. respondents who had either seen and not used the guide or had not seen it at all).

Most of the interviewees described themselves as 'occasional' users of the guide, several respondents had not seen the guide prior to being contacted to take part in this review, and a small number said that they used it regularly:

"[I've] only very occasionally [used the guide]. I think when it first came out it was brought to my attention and I looked through to see what the priorities are in it" Council 19

"I've referred to it half a dozen times perhaps." Council 4

"It hasn't been off my desk for the last year...I've found it to be a really useful document." Council 9

3.3.1 Non-users

Non-users were categorised as council representatives who had either never seen the guide or who had seen it, but had not used it. There were several reasons why the guide had not been seen or used.

² The remainder of this review describes participants' interactions with the guide only; where the participant has referenced the report specifically this is indicated.

3.3.1.1 Dissemination

The majority of interviewees who had not used the guide explained that this was simply as a result of not seeing the documents. Some participants thought that the documents may have been received by the Council, but not been disseminated internally, while others were not certain that the documents had even reached their Local Authority. The following quotes illustrate respondents' thoughts regarding dissemination:

"I would say that dissemination was a problem...I just don't remember it arriving on my desk." Council 8

"The guide came out I think in 2010, but I personally didn't become aware of it until about a year ago. I don't know how it was launched or whatever, but it seemed to pass us by here. We just were not aware of it." Council 9

"I hadn't seen it until the request was made to contact you [to arrange the interview]. I was very surprised when I went on to the internet, I expected it to be an obscure document, I was really disturbed to find out it's a well-searched document and it's an easily found document, so that surprises me that I haven't heard it mentioned before." Council 26

"From a road safety perspective, this isn't the guide we've been using - we've been using the Scottish Government Road Safety Framework. The email [to arrange the interview] was the first time we've seen the guide. I found it interesting that we hadn't seen it before because it has quite specific outcomes that are very valuable to us...Things like improving school travel plans and reviewing communications, promoting pedestrian and cyclist training are all things that we push for on a day to day basis." Council 18

A sense of disappointment and frustration was conveyed by respondents with regard to dissemination. The council representatives felt that they had 'missed out' by not seeing either the guide or the report and the documents would have been useful in helping them to work towards goals and targets for improving school transport in their local authorities.

3.3.1.2 Already doing what the guide/report recommend

Several of the interviewees who had seen, but not used, the documents explained that they do not use the guide/report in their authority because after initially reviewing the documents, they felt that they were 'already doing' many of the actions and recommendations set out in the guide:

"To be honest, I've never really read it. I think the ten recommendations, some of them are basically things that we were doing already, so maybe it didn't come up with anything that we weren't already doing...The first one is reduce speeds in school routes and around schools. Well, we've been doing that and every council in Scotland's been doing that for probably 10 years now." Council 7

"It was interesting. It had a few good points in it and it's a pity I hadn't seen it, but looking through it, we do probably tick most of the boxes, I would say on the things that are set up in place at the moment" Council 6

3.3.2 Users

Users were categorised as those who made occasional or regular use of the guide (and, for some, the report). This section explores how the guide is used by these participants.

Respondents typically used the guide and report as reference documents, using them on an ad-hoc basis when situations required. Some examples of the ways in which the documents were referred to included use in conjunction with reviewing contracts, responding to queries and assessing priorities.

"I looked through it to see what the priorities are...I'll think about that and see if we are doing as much as we should be doing" Council 19

"When it came in, I read them both [the guide and the report], and I may occasionally look at them as a sort of reference document. It's on the bookshelf and if I'm trying to find something out, I may look at it, but it's not a document that I would use day to day." Council 24

"[Using the guide/report] would only be if there was a particular case I needed clarification on, so I would go back to the report and see what exactly the wording was and how it applied in that particular instance." Council 4

"I use it as a reference document for when we're reviewing our conditions of contract, so we always take that opportunity to refer to this document, but it's very occasional, probably just once a year." Council 28

3.3.2.1 Specific examples of the way in which the guide and/report were used

A small number of councils reported making use of the guide and report in specific ways; these are highlighted in the box below.

Use as a development tool

The guide and report have been used by one council as a reference document for their 'journey to school working group' which was formed to take a holistic view of problems in and around schools in terms of traffic management:

"[Since the working group was formed] we've been referring to it [the guide/report] pretty much ever since, because it covers in some detail a lot of the initiatives that we're working on. There are ten recommendations, we've actually listed the ten recommendations and stated what we're already doing and identified what more we could do." Council 9

In another council, the guide has been used in parallel with their current practice and policy to improve road safety:

"What we've done with the document is we've geared it to our current practice and policy, and looked at the bits where we are comparable with what's in the document and looking at other areas where we think we may be able to improve... Road safety is always one that can be improved and I think generally the whole thing about communicating with parents and schools about transport is one where we can always improve." Council 22

3.4 General perceptions of the guide

In general, most respondents who had seen the guide described it as being a concise useful and informative document:

"I think it's better than some other documents that come out and are maybe 60 pages long. It's quite a short document, which is good, it's an easy document to read, I found the whole thing to be useful." Council 22

"I found it, as a general topic, interesting." Council 16

However, many of the respondents explained that they had not come across any information that they were not previously aware of when they read the documents:

"I don't think that there was a great deal of extra information. It was just giving a bit more support to what we were already doing." Council 19

"I don't think that there was actually [any information contained in the guide] that I wasn't aware of before I read it." Council 31

A key theme that emerged when respondents were describing their thoughts about the guide was that they found it useful as it offered them a formal reassurance that the work that they were doing was in line with what was being recommended in the guide:

"I think the guide is very helpful. I think it is the reassurance, I think what we're doing is fairly up to date." Council 23

"It gives a bit of reassurance as well, obviously, the fact that you're doing a number of these things already that are in the document [the guide]." Council 29

"It was encouraging to read the report to confirm what we'd been doing was in line with the official recommendation." Council 19

"The guide reiterated the policies applied to school transport in [our council]" Council 3

All users were asked to describe which parts of the guide they found most and least useful. The majority of respondents described the recommendations and associated information as being the most useful part of the guide (this feedback is presented in detail in Section 3.6).

None of the respondents suggested that there were parts of the guide that were not useful and similarly nobody reported there being any parts of the guide that they had not looked at.

Respondents were asked about the degree of detail that the guidance provided and anything else that they would have liked to have seen included in the documents.

In general, respondents felt that the level of information provided was appropriate:

"I would say [the guide provided information required] very well. It's very detailed and then the summary at the back of it, the summary table, I found that really, really good as well." Council 25

"What it presented us with was a good guide to then go and look into other local authorities or the areas that you were interested in, so it was almost like a stepping stone to look into more research on it." Council 31

In terms of information that respondents would have found useful, but that was not included in the guide or the report, one area emerged from the interview data and that

was the area of parental responsibility. Council representatives explained that they have experienced difficulty in engaging with parents and encouraging them to get more involved in improving school transport safety. They felt that advice or guidance in this area would be useful.

"One of the things that I do think is missing and it's missing through a lot of similar stuff that we produce ourselves is responsibilities of children and parents, parental responsibility if you like." Council 26

"I think a bit more on the sort of parental responsibility of school transport and parental responsibility in general. I think there's too high an expectation here of 'if my son misbehaves on the bus, what are you going to do about it?'" Council 32

This point is discussed further in Section 3.6.2 where several different councils describe parents as being a barrier to implementing the recommendations made in the guide.

3.5 Areas for improvement

On the whole, respondents were positive about the ways in which the guide was presented, the format, structure, style and tone, as illustrated by the following quotes:

"It's actually in a good format to use at the moment; it's a good pointer for someone to actually increase the safety and controls they've got within their authority for kids going to school." Council 29

"I thought that the guide was clear, you don't want too big a document. I felt it was clear and easy to read, so I thought the content was fine." Council 14

However, some respondents did identify areas which they thought could be improved. One of the key points raised in discussions with council representatives was the issue of dissemination; as such the development of effective dissemination strategies was highlighted as an area for improvement.

"It's maybe getting to a point where more people are aware of what's there [the information in the guide] I suppose so that everybody knows what the standards are and what we want to do [to reach them] and this is how it should be done [using the recommendations in the guide]." Council 21

One respondent commented on the format and development of the guide and report:

"They [the authors] did a thorough review of the research literature. I'm not sure that was necessarily the best way of doing it. In Wales for example, they actually got together, sat around a table and said 'can we begin to get some common standards?' and I think that would have been a more productive way in Scotland of doing it rather than ending up with a report – both a big report and a summary report [the guide] which are useful, but there's nothing in them which is new." Council 24

In terms of the content of the documents, respondents suggested making changes so that the documents were more 'interactive'. They felt that this would increase usage and reduce the likelihood of them only being used as reference documents. For example, one representative suggested expanding the table of recommendations to allow councils to undertake internal benchmarking exercises whereby they could record which recommendations they are currently meeting and which they need to implement to improve school transport safety.

"You could take the list of 10 recommendations and put in two extra columns with 'where we are now' and then column two is 'where we need to be next' so it becomes a nice action planning tool, it makes your document [the guide] really helpful." Council 11

This point was expanded by the representative from Council 20 council who felt that the documents could be used to encourage councils to share their progress against the recommendations with each other and build on ideas together.

"[we could record] how many of the actions in the current guide are already done by each council and then ones that are done by the vast majority of councils, you could almost drop them, because if everybody is already doing them, then there's no point in getting them to do it again, but focus on the recommendations and actions that fewer councils are doing." Council 20

3.6 User feedback on the recommendations within the guide

Only respondents who had used the guide were invited to comment on the recommendations. They were asked to describe which were most and least useful to them in their local authorities. Many of the council representatives approached this question by talking through the list of recommendations and describing which were in place, which were not and why this was the case.

"A number of the recommendations, we feel that we're already doing those activities and are doing them quite well, but that doesn't lessen their importance, just because we're already doing it. Things like risk assess school transport pick-ups and drop-offs...that's something we do now for new pick-up and drop-offs and you know, we've had to sort of look at adopting a methodology for that but it would be a massive task for us to retrospectively go out and look and check every single school pick-up and drop-off because there's literally hundreds of them." Council 9

It was commonplace for respondents to be unaware whether certain recommendations had been implemented as they fell under the jurisdiction of other departments (see Section 3.6.2.3 for more information). Some respondents said that they found all of the recommendations useful, but explained that they had faced certain barriers in implementing some of them (which are described in more detail in Section 3.6.2):

"To be honest, they were all useful." Council 31

"I think any recommendations have their pros and cons. I mean, I don't think that any recommendation isn't useful." Council 32

Table 1 presents a selection of respondents' views on the recommendations and their perceptions of how useful they are.

Table 1: Respondent feedback on the 10 ways to improve school transport

Recommendation	Respondent feedback
1. Reduce speeds on school routes and around schools	<p><i>"We've had 20 mph zones at all of our schools for some time now. So...but you know, we're happy, again, that the report recognised that as making an effective contribution to school safety."</i> Council 9</p> <p><i>"We've been doing that, and every council in Scotland's been doing that for probably ten years, now."</i> Council 7</p>
2. Encourage motorists to reduce speeds when passing stationary school buses	<p><i>"There have been plenty of stricter checks on speed limits around the schools and the Safety Camera Partnership have certainly been very strong on mobile speed cameras in general. So as a general speed reduction campaign, then that's been involved."</i> Council 15</p> <p><i>"I wouldn't particularly see that as our role perhaps. A lot of this work is delegated by the council to the police in our area, so the police have road safety officers who do some of these things."</i> Council 19</p>
3. Set minimum standards in school transport contracts	<p><i>"I do think the minimum standards things are things we could put into some of our contracts."</i> Council 25</p> <p><i>"Setting of standards...suggesting things about drivers' minimum level of experience and age requirements, that's actually very useful stuff. We haven't actually implemented it yet, but that's stuff we could certainly consider."</i> Council 15</p>
4. Risk assess school transport pick-up and drop-off areas	<p><i>"This is probably quite difficult because, I mean, it would be very time consuming to go and risk assess all pick-up points. Many of the pick-up points have been there for donkey's years, they're where the kids have always been picked up, and that's where they go."</i> Council 32</p> <p><i>"I thought was the most useful of the recommendations, the pickup, drop off points, and I highlighted some of that, because I thought that it might be good to bring into our risk assessment."</i> Council 23</p>
5. Review school travel plans, improve communication and clarify responses	<p><i>"A very useful one and something that we're doing already...but there is a need to review the travel plans, we do that."</i> Council 28</p> <p><i>"We're lagging behind a lot of councils in school travel plans and I think that we're probably starting from scratch with that one."</i> Council 5</p>

Recommendation	Respondent feedback
6. Raise awareness of desired behaviours	<p><i>"This year, we've introduced what's called a 'Smart Travel Guide', which is like a fold up credit card-sized leaflet and sent it to all children, basically saying the dos and don'ts of how to safely travel to and from school in the bus."</i> Council 15</p> <p><i>"Yes, we're already doing that - all the school children who get school transport, they sign a code of conduct that says that they have to behave."</i> Council 23</p>
7. Promote on-road pedestrian and cyclist training	<p><i>"It was important for us to see that the guide recognised the importance of on-road pedestrian training, and we do have a pedestrian training coordinator...it gave us encouragement that the guide also highlighted that as being an important area."</i> Council 9</p>
8. Encourage schools to use Road Safety Scotland's educational material	<p><i>"That would be the responsibility of the school travel coordinator, working with schools, that would be her remit and we will work with her on that."</i> Council 23</p>
9. Discourage young novice drivers from driving to school and transporting others	<p><i>"I think that's an interesting one...there's been quite a lot of emphasis on young drivers...we do quite a lot of work in schools trying to target newly qualified drivers, and we have talked about, should we be taking that message into school and trying to discourage them from, you know...ask them to discourage pupils from bringing their cars to school and stuff like that. Although we haven't really done much with that at the moment, it's still an important area to look at."</i> Council 9</p> <p><i>"One of the 10 recommendations - the 9th one is listed as discourage young novice drivers from driving to school - it's so obscure and so impossible in today's climate. Most of the other things are good aims..."</i> Council 26</p>
10. Evaluate all interventions	<p>No specific comments made.</p>

3.6.1 Implementing recommendations and the role of the guide in facilitating change

Respondents were asked to describe whether any of the sections of the guide or report had been put into practice and how many of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year had been facilitated or informed (even partially) by the guide or the report. While many of the councils reported that several of the recommendations made in the guide and the report were in place, they were keen to stress that these had been in place for some time, in many cases prior to the publication of the documents:

"I think we're doing all of them, I think it has given us a little bit more impetus to do some things, but most of it was happening already. For example, the reducing speeds on school routes and around schools – almost all our schools already had 20mph zones." Council 19

"The majority of the points in the guide were already in place and have been used to back up current practice." Council 3

Very few changes to the provision of school transport were described as being facilitated or informed by the guide. Respondents explained that where changes have taken place, it has been as an indirect consequence of the documents:

"Whether it was a direct result of this report, I'm not quite clear, but the legitimate speeds around schools...all the schools have 20mph zones around them now." Council 15

"We have looked closely at the access areas to school minimising the traffic, calming measures as well as the behaviour of pupils on school transport. The guide has contributed [to this], however individual experience and partnership working has been the key to any major changes." Council 12

"Some things [are already in place], you know, they've not been a direct result of this document, but a lot of the things we have a policy for; for example, we have a policy of the '20's plenty' signs in and around all schools, we do have individual travel plans for every school as well. I think that quite a lot of these safety procedures were in place prior to this document being issued." Council 29

While the guide and report do not appear to have directly facilitated policy change in the councils represented in this review, the documents do appear to have provided support for existing good practice that is known to reduce casualty risk. The guide also appears to have encouraged some councils to consider areas that could be improved in the future.

"I do think that the minimum standards things are things that we could maybe put into some of our contracts...for example CCTV being fitted to buses, it's not something that we've ever asked for, but maybe for one of our secondary [school] contracts, it might be useful to have it. [At the moment] where there are issues with behaviour on buses, the drivers will feedback to our contractors and where required, we'll put an escort on the bus to monitor the children. It would be useful if we could request our contractors to have CCTV in making their bids for the contracts." Council 25

3.6.2 **Barriers to implementing recommendations**

Respondents were asked to describe the barriers that they have come across with regard to implementing the recommendations set out in the guide. Several themes emerged in response to this question.

3.6.2.1 *Financial constraints*

The most commonly cited barrier to implementation of the recommendations related to financial constraints in terms of both time and available resource. Respondents suggested that they would like to implement some of the recommendations in the guide, but in some cases, they simply could not fund such initiatives.

"Everybody's strapped for resources, so some of the things they've identified would be nice to have, but not practical on a day-to-day basis, some of the training for example, we've got 80 different contractors and each of them has 4-7 drivers, you know, we're talking an awful lot of people we'd have to train and at whose expense would be the question." Council 11

"Recommendation 3 has barriers to implementation - Fitting CCTV to all buses is difficult to justify when the costs far outweigh the few incidents that occur." Council 3

They also described how staffing reductions had meant that fewer people were available to actually work on implementing the recommendations if funding was available.

"The honest answer is going to be no [no changes as a result of the documents], because it's been a very difficult year, never mind two years in terms of staffing levels." Council 32

"We had a school travel coordinator whose post was put up [removed] as a saving in March, we had a dedicated officer who not only looked at cycling and school travel, but also looked at what else we could do to improve school transport, the use of school buses, working with the engineers when we're building new schools and what else we can do to make it safer for our children to get to school. So we went from having a dedicated officer and it's now a task that's added on to [other departments] roles." Council 18

3.6.2.2 *No requirement to act*

Respondents explained that they did not feel obligated to act on the recommendations made in the guide. They felt that the guide was an 'advisory' document and they did not feel under any pressure from senior management to work towards implementing the recommendations. Several respondents stated that it was not compulsory for them to make the changes suggested in the guide. They described how they had not been set specific targets related to the recommendations and that as a result, these were not given the priority that other objectives that they were working towards were.

"Well, it's only a guide isn't it? It's not legislation, so it's not something that we would automatically always go to" Council 32

"I felt that there was no pressing requirement for me to do anything. Nobody in any position of seniority said 'I want you to implement these recommendations'...You've got a summary table with recommendations 1-10 and there is nobody looking over my shoulder and saying 'have you done those?'" Council 8

3.6.2.3 Fragmentation of local authority departments

Many of the respondents described the responsibility for school transport safety as spanning different departments and teams within the council which proved to be challenging in terms of working towards the recommendations. Respondents indicated that they were not always sure what was being done in the other departments and used phrases like "I assume [the other department(s)] would be working on this." Examples of this fragmentation are demonstrated in the following quotes:

"There are some city-specific difficulties in implementation related to the fragmentation that I mentioned before, that the transport functionality for delivering vehicles at the right place at the right time and the right price lies with one department, but the policy and strategy lies with another department...We don't have a holistic approach to school transport at the moment." Council 11

"[Implementing recommendation 2 - encourage motorists to reduce their speed when passing stationary school buses] doesn't really fit into my remit, and I'm not actually quite sure if that's those who provide the transport's responsibility, or police responsibility, or an education responsibility." Council 7

"[Reading the documents] just kind've raised awareness that we've got that divide between the two departments and we should probably have more liaison groups." Council 25

3.6.2.4 Parents and schools

The role that parents and schools play in improving school transport safety was mentioned by a number of the council representatives. They explained how despite risk assessing school transport pick-up and drop-off points, they had difficulty managing parents' behaviour.

"I think some of the issues [with implementing the recommendations] are more to do with the parents. When we build new schools, we look at pick-up and drop-off points for parents, but we still have in just about every school, irresponsible parking, poor safety when it comes to driving in and around because parents want to get as close to the school as possible to drop their kid off. We still have people who turn up at the school at 2pm when it finishes at 3 because that's 'their' parking space." Council 29

Council 29 further described how they had attempted to take steps to mitigate the issues associated with parking by implementing a Junior Road Safety Officer programme.

"We try and work with the children and with community safety people, we try to encourage responsible parking and one of the initiatives we put in place was we actually got the kids to go out and speak to the parents. The junior road safety officers were going out and saying 'do you realise you're actually putting our lives at risk by parking there?'"

Other respondents also shared concerns over parents' negative impact on safety around schools.

"Another barrier is parents and the parents' point of view on drop-off around the schools...they will park as close to the school gate as they can possibly get. Teachers are finding that there are a lot of issues with parents trying to get into car parks. Some of the schools are on main roads and the way the cars are

parked, they're then blocking traffic. There needs to be more work done with parents." Council 18

"I think it's difficult with parents. I mean you can tell parents not to come and park at the school, but it's parents' behaviour, we've no control over how parents get their child to school." Council 22

The respondent from Council 18 suggested that as well as parents, the schools that fell under her local authority also made implementing recommendations challenging, but felt that having access to the information in the guide (now that it had been made available to them) would make this issue easier to manage.

"Trying to get them to update their school travel plans is an on-going and arduous task sometimes. So this [guide] would help them to see the relevance, to be able to quote information from this guide would be useful for us. I would say that is the biggest obstacle - the schools' time - it's not high enough on their agenda. For example, a lot of schools have issues with parking and congestion outside the school and unfortunately, they think the answer to that is more parking spaces, rather than trying to encourage more pupils to walk." Council 18

3.6.2.5 Limited choice of operators

A small number of participants described that implementing some of the recommendations was challenging for them because of the limited choice of operators in their area. They were concerned that by implementing some of the recommendations, they could effectively alienate some operators from submitting contract tenders.

"We often have very little choice in actually choosing an operator and sometimes there can be no choice whatsoever. So something like insisting on three-point seatbelts could actually mean that we couldn't fill a contract...the more terms and conditions we set, the less likely we are to get a tender response." Council 26

3.7 School Transport Safety Workshops

In addition to giving feedback on the guide, all participants were asked to provide an indication of their level of interest in taking part in school transport safety workshops. The majority of people who were interviewed as part of this review were positive and enthusiastic about the idea of being invited to participate in a workshop related to improving school transport.

"I most certainly would be [interested in taking part] and I am quite sure that my colleagues would be as well. I think that would be a positive, it's good to sort of share ideas and get feedback" Council 1

"I think these sort of things [workshops and inter-council working] can be of great benefit. I work with the west of Scotland road safety group, which is really useful, just 12 different councils all sharing ideas and that is really good and in some ways, we can get road safety messages across which individually we wouldn't be able to..." Council 13

A few respondents felt that their participation in the workshops would be dependent on certain factors, including the content, cost and location(s).

"The location and the cost of it would have a bearing as well, some places we get free seminars and things like that, and unfortunately, if something's going to be

£100 or something like that, I guess we would probably say, 'I'm not sure about the value for money'" Council 7

For those who were interested in being involved in the workshops, they were asked to describe what would make participating in such a workshop useful and beneficial for them. The overarching responses to this question focused on the themes of sharing knowledge and gaining insight from other councils, these views are illustrated in the following quotes:

"It would have to be something that offered practical solutions and good examples, and knowledge sharing...it needs to be, in my view a bit more practical." Council 7

"Learning from other councils...sharing their knowledge. If they're hosted by Transport Scotland, with their experts there, then you've got information. I mentioned about creating a consistent approach [to improving school transport safety across Scotland], it's not going to happen overnight, but you know, it might help to start developing a more robust way of doing things." Council 5

"I'm interested in getting practical solutions - examples of how other people have tackled these issues and dealt with them successfully...hearing best practice, I think is always good." Council 9

"There are some good ideas out there and I think what sometimes happens is we don't get enough of the local authorities together because you just concentrate on what your individual council is doing. But someone else might have a great idea just up the road and you're not talking to them enough. So workshops, for me anyway, can be good networking opportunities and obviously the opportunity to share best practice as well." Council 29

In terms of who respondents thought should be involved, a range of stakeholders were mentioned, including Transport Scotland, the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers (ATCO³), the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT⁴) and the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT⁵):

"You must have ATCO representatives there, CPT, which is the bus industry's professional body, obviously Transport Scotland and possibly the Traffic Commissioner." Council 24

"I would say that the ATCO education transport subcommittee would be a good place to go to sound out the development of a workshop like that...I think involving the practitioners in developing an agenda and saying what they would most want would be a useful thing." Council 17

³ The Association of Transport Coordinating Officers was formed in 1974 to bring together local authority officers whose work involved what were then new county council responsibilities for passenger transport. Promoting partnership and engagement, ATCO members include staff directly concerned with strategic policy development and implementation for securing of passenger transport services for a wide range of public authorities.

⁴ The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) is recognised by Government as the voice of the bus, coach and light rail industries, and the focus for consultation on national and international legislation, local regulations, operational practices and engineering standards.

⁵ SPT is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland. It was formed in 2006 as part of the transport framework created by the Scottish Government, which is made up of a national transport agency, Transport Scotland, and Regional Transport Partnerships.

In summary, the respondents who participated in this review were open to being involved in a workshop related to improving school transport. They were keen for the agenda of such workshops to facilitate the sharing of good practice and experiences from other councils in managing school transport safety. They were also enthusiastic about key stakeholders being involved in the workshops.

3.8 School bus signs

The council representatives were also asked questions about school bus signs, specifically, how their local authorities ensure that school bus signs meet the minimum requirements (e.g. for size) and whether they require their transport operators to remove all school bus signs from vehicles when they are not being used to transport school children.

SPT was frequently mentioned by interviewees when they spoke about school bus signs. The SPT area comprises of the following council areas: East Dunbartonshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. SPT's role involves planning and delivering transport solutions for all modes of transport across the region, in conjunction with its member councils and industry partners.

For those councils that were covered by SPT, they explained that ensuring that school bus signs meet minimum standards and any requirements to remove signs when not being used was the responsibility of SPT.

3.8.1 Ensuring that signs meet minimum standards

For those authorities that were not covered by SPT, interviewees described how they have tried to ensure that signs meet minimum standards (for example size) by writing clauses into their operators' conditions of contract and by undertaking spot checks. However, many of the council representatives explained that they faced challenges in terms of ensuring that these conditions were enforced.

"It's part of the contract. Where we perhaps might fall down - and I'm sure others have the same problem - is the ability to police the contract. We don't have a lot of resources to be stopping buses all over the place to check the signage. We've got a very modest compliance team and a lot of contracts. We've probably got about 400-odd contracts with 18 different contractors so compliance is very difficult" Council 11

"It's in our conditions of contract. It's something that whenever we're out surveying, we're checking. It's something that in liaison meetings with operators we highlight...I think if you asked any of our local operators, they would say we are ever-present in hassling them if they don't do it properly." Council 24

"We do occasional spot checks. We don't do nearly as many as I would like to" Council 17

"I go out and do spot checks, I check at least once every six month period. If we do find a vehicle without [appropriate] school signs, we have a clause in the contract (liquidated damages) and we issue that. If it was a repeated thing, then we can take further sanctions and we've got the option of terminating the contract actually." Council 1

3.8.2 Removal of signs

Similar to ensuring that the signs met minimum standards, those authorities who were not covered by SPT explained that removal of signs was covered by one of their conditions of contract. When respondents were talking about this topic, they suggested that managing and enforcing this was more challenging than ensuring that the school bus signs met minimum standards.

"It's in our conditions of contract. It's something that whenever we're out surveying, we're checking. It's something that in liaison meetings with operators that we highlight...I think if you asked any of our local operators, they would say we are ever-present in hassling them if they don't do it properly." Council 24

"All I can do is enforce a contract condition on the contract that's being operated. Really there should be stricter legislation instead of the ridiculous get out clauses that are there already." Council 15

Several respondents felt that the current legislation related to removal of signs is too relaxed and suggested that if legislation was stricter, local authorities would have greater power to manage this issue as illustrated by the quotes below:

"One of the things we've got about school signs says 'service providers must make every effort that bus signs are not displayed while the vehicle is being used on a service not provided, and they are only for service users to attend school or college' but...when they are then going away from the school, that's when our contract with them finishes because they're not doing work for us." Council 1

"I think if the Scottish government did nothing else other than try to outlaw school bus sign usage, where it was appropriate, I think they would make a big, big difference to school transport provision, because then we could really push it, and if you see this big yellow sign on the back, it's got school kids on - be wary. At present, they can't do that, because you've got Stagecoach running an express service from Ayrshire to Glasgow that got these things stuck on them and there are no kids on it at all." Council 24

4 Summary and discussion

This review aimed to gain an understanding of how “A Guide to Improving School Transport Safety” and the accompanying report have been used since they were published in December 2010, as well as exploring ways in which they could be improved. Thirty-one of the thirty-two councils in Scotland accepted the invitation to be involved in the review. The interviews followed a structured topic guide to ensure that all respondents were asked the same questions. All of the interviews were transcribed, which provided a rich data source for a full content analysis to detect emerging themes from the interviews. The discussion that follows is structured to provide answers to the key research questions set out in Section 2.

How have the guide and the report been used (if at all) and did they provide useful information for those that had used them?

Most of the respondents interviewed as part of this review were aware of the documents, although almost all of the council representatives referred only to the guide and not the accompanying report in their responses. The majority of respondents described themselves as using the guide occasionally and explained that they generally used it as a reference document. The general consensus was that the guide was a useful document which provided users with the reassurance that the work they were doing was in line with official recommendations. It was felt that there was an appropriate level of detail in the guide for respondents’ needs.

Most council representatives explained that much of the information presented was material that they were already aware of. It is noteworthy that while self-reported knowledge of good practice appears to be reasonably good, this knowledge is not necessarily translated into practice for several reasons that were outlined as barriers to implementation. Nevertheless, there were indications from one or two councils that the guide has formed the basis of on-going plans to improve school transport safety and that the recommendations provide a focal point for discussion and action.

It would seem that the guide and the report may have had an indirect influence on school transport practice by providing reference and support to encourage actions towards reducing casualty risk on the school journey.

Were non-users aware of the guide and the report?

Several of the council representatives (who had some responsibility for school transport safety) interviewed were not aware of the existence of the guide and the report. This was largely as a result of poor dissemination of the documents at the time of publication. Non-users were typically unable to recall how or when they or their council received the documents. For some council representatives, being contacted to participate in this review was the first time that they had been made aware of the guide. Some council representatives expressed concerns that they had not been made aware of the documents by colleagues as a result of a breakdown in communication between different departments involved in working on school transport provision.

The majority of non-users who had seen the guide felt that they were ‘already doing’ what the guide recommended and as such, did not feel a need to use it. While this could be regarded as an encouraging finding (it suggests that these councils are already aware of the priorities involved in improving school transport safety) it would be surprising if all

recommendations are being met in full by any council and therefore it must be considered whether more needs to be done to engage with those who feel they are doing enough already. Alternatively, these councils may be able to share examples of best practice where they have developed and evaluated measures to improve school transport safety.

How could the guide and/or report be improved?

On the whole, respondents described the guide as being a useful and concise source of information that they could make use of when they needed to. One suggested improvement to the guide was related more to dissemination than content or structure. Respondents were keen to ensure that the appropriate people received and could make use of it.

The key improvement to the structure and content of the guide proposed by respondents involved modifying the documents to make them more interactive by developing the summary table of recommendations to allow internal (within their own council) and external (between different councils) action-planning and progress-tracking against the recommendations. Factors that could encourage use were offered by respondents and included making it compulsory reading and additional funding to support initiatives.

A further suggestion was to expand the guide and the report regarding how councils can successfully interact with parents. The original report highlighted that there is often disconnect between councils and parents and responsibility is not always clearly defined or understood. Some respondents noted that this was a problem and suggestions for how to bridge this relationship would be useful.

Which recommendations were most or least useful and what are the barriers to implementation?

Only respondents who were familiar with the guide were asked to provide feedback on the recommendations. They generally did not describe the recommendations in terms of which were most and least useful, rather they talked through the list and explained which recommendations their authorities had not implemented, which were already in place, and which they planned to implement in the future. The key outcome was that respondents also described the barriers to implementation that they had faced.

The main barriers to implementation presented by respondents included: financial and resource constraints, external factors such as parents not engaging ideas presented by the councils and a lack of pressure or requirement from senior management and government to implement the guide's recommendations.

What sections of the guide/report have been put into practice or policy?

Many of the respondents who participated in this review reported that a lot of the ideas in the guide had already been put into practice prior to seeing the document. They considered the guide to be useful in reassuring them that their priorities were in line with the national recommendations. Nevertheless, it was noted by some that one or two of the recommendations had made them contemplate actions that had not previously been considered.

There was evidence that recommendations such as setting minimum contract standards, risk assessing pick-up and drop-off points and improving communication with pupils and parents had all been put into practice, or at least considered, since the guide was

released. It is unlikely that publication of the guide led directly to these changes, which may have occurred anyway, however, there was suggestion that the guide provided support for the decision to implement changes or prompted consideration of change.

What proportion of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year was facilitated or informed by the guide/report?

Very few of the initiatives concerning school transport safety described by respondents were directly facilitated by the guide or the report. It is encouraging that a lot of the councils have made positive changes irrespective of the guide. Nevertheless, where new practices had been put into place since the guide was published, respondents reported that the guide may have had an indirect role by encouraging the decision. This supports the role of the guide and the report as reference documents rather than policy documents per se. Also encouraging was the finding that some councils felt that the documents had given them an opportunity to identify areas for future priorities.

Is there interest in a workshop about school transport safety?

The respondents interviewed in this review were generally interested in being involved in a workshop aimed at improving school transport safety. They felt that this would provide a good opportunity for councils across Scotland to engage with each other, share knowledge and best practice and develop a common understanding of how to manage this area so that they could work towards reducing child casualties on Scotland's roads.

Respondents suggested that the workshop should involve opportunities to learn from other councils. In addition, representation from key stakeholders from the transport community would also be important. While the enthusiasm was encouraging, it was highlighted that practicalities such as location and cost might impact on local authorities' decision to attend.

It was also suggested that a round table discussion with a representative from each council could be a good approach to develop consistency between local authorities. Developing a standardised approach would help to centralise responsibility for school transport safety within local authorities which was reported to be fragmented at present, and a barrier to implementing all of the recommendations.

How do local authorities ensure that school bus signs meet the minimum requirements (e.g. for size) and do they require their transport operators to remove all school bus signs from vehicles when they are not being used to transport school children?

Councils that rely on SPT to administer transport provision also refer to them to enforce minimum standards; SPT were not interviewed as part of this review. Most other local authorities stated that they write terms into their conditions of contract which operators then signed and committed to. Respondents generally explained that they attempted to undertake spot checks to ensure that these contract conditions were being adhered to. Problems with undertaking spot checks were highlighted by respondents who explained that although checks are conducted, often resource constraints mean that checks cannot be done as frequently as they would like.

With regard to enforcing the removal of signs when not carrying school children, some respondents felt that the current legislation and a lack of resources made enforcement difficult. Some councils covering rural areas explained that they have a limited pool of

suppliers making it difficult to place too many demands in their contracts; conversely, councils in urban locations find it difficult to enforce conditions due to a large number of suppliers.

4.1 Conclusions

This review sought to explore how “A Guide to Improving School Transport Safety” has been used by councils in Scotland since it was published in December 2010. Qualitative analysis of interviews with a representative from 31 of 32 councils provided an in-depth understanding of how the guide was perceived and used, and how it could be improved. The general conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- The experience of recruiting participants highlighted two important issues with regard to the provision and responsibility for school transport safety. First, there is a lack of consistency between councils regarding the set up for school transport provision. Responsibility can be with education, transport or engineering departments and is often shared. Shared responsibility is the second issue as this can lead to a diffusion of responsibility between departments and agencies. There was evidence that this had an impact on participants’ responses to the recommendations whereby some recommendations were seen to be the responsibility of others.
- Problems with the dissemination of the guide were highlighted by some council representatives who were not aware of its existence until this review. There was surprise and disappointment that the guide had been available for so long without them being aware of it.
- Some who had seen the guide considered that they were already fulfilling the recommendations; therefore, they have not actively used the guide since reading it. There may be cases of best practice to be found within these councils although it would be surprising if any council is fulfilling all of the recommendations in full.
- For the remainder of respondents, the guide is generally seen as useful and is mainly used as a reference document (e.g. reviewing contracts, responding to queries and assessing priorities), as is the report. Some have used the guide to simply support and verify that what they are doing is the correct approach, while a couple of councils were using the guide to develop policy and practice and track progress.
- Very few changes to the provision of school transport were described as being directly facilitated or informed by the guide. Respondents explained that where changes have occurred, this has typically been as an indirect consequence of the documents.
- Several barriers to implementing the recommendations were identified, these included: financial and resource constraints, no requirement to act, fragmented council departments, concerns relating to parents and schools, and issues specific to geographical locations.
- Suggested improvements to the guide included making it more interactive, such as adding a table to track progress towards the recommendations and sharing experiences within and between councils. It was also suggested that more information on engaging with parents would be useful as this relationship is a

key issue. A further suggestion was to have a round table discussion with all local authorities to develop a consistent approach and share experiences.

- In general, respondents were enthusiastic about the prospect of attending workshops, although logistics and cost were potential barriers. They would like to have the opportunity to share best practice and engage with key transport stakeholders.
- Councils that rely on SPT for school transport provision expect them to enforce signage standards with transport providers. Other councils generally attempt to write minimum standards into their contracts and undertake spot checks. However, council specific problems with doing either of these things were highlighted and generally related to geographic and school population variables (e.g. a limited number of transport providers or too many routes to regularly check) . With regard to the removal of signs when the bus is not carrying school children, some indicated that it is difficult to enforce at the council level and a change in legislation should be considered.

4.2 Limitations of this review

All research methodologies have limitations. One of the main limitations of the methodology employed in this review relates to the representativeness of the views expressed. All interviews were conducted with one person from each council (with the exception of one council, who provided two respondents). One of the findings from this review related to the fragmented responsibility for school transport across council departments. It is very unusual for one department to be entirely responsible for managing school transport, therefore, the views presented in this report may not necessarily be representative of the whole authority that they were representing. For example, some respondents were unaware whether some recommendations had been acted upon because it was not something within their remit and responsibility belonged to another department.

A further limitation is that the consultation was only conducted with council representatives, while the guide and report is available to a broader range of stakeholders who may have had experience of using the documents. Examples of such stakeholders include organisations like SPT.

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Appendix A Initial email to participants

Dear <Participant's name>,

I believe that you are aware of the review of "A guide to improving school transport safety" that we are conducting. TRL are carrying out this review on behalf of Transport Scotland. We aim to gain an understanding of how the guide and the accompanying report have been used, if at all, since they were published in December 2010 and how they could be improved. The project involves us conducting telephone interviews with council representatives from across Scotland. The interview is likely to take 20-30 minutes.

If you are willing and able to take part, please reply to this email and indicate how often you've used either the guide or the report since it was published by selecting one of the following three options:

- *Never*
- *Occasionally*
- *Frequently*

Please also include your preferred interview date and inform us what time on that day would be most suitable for you. Please note that the interview is likely to take 20-30 minutes.

If you have never read or used the guide or the report, we are interested in hearing the reasons why this is the case and how the documents could be improved. You do *not* need to read the documents in advance.

If you have occasionally or frequently used the guide and/or the report, the broad questions we will ask you are as follows:

- 1. How well did the guide and the report provide information you required?**
- 2. Have any of the sections of the guide/report been put into practice or policy?**
- 3. In your opinion, how many of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year were facilitated or informed (even partially) by the guide/report?**
- 4. Which recommendations were most or least useful and what were the barriers to implementation?**
- 5. How could the guide and/or report be improved?**

You are welcome to consider these questions in advance of your interview, but don't feel that you need to do any preparation. When we conduct the interview, there will be plenty of opportunity for you to answer the questions and explore them in more depth with the interviewer.

Many thanks,

Rebecca Hutchins

Appendix B Interview Topic Guide

Introduction to be read to participant

We are carrying out this review on behalf of Transport Scotland. We aim to gain an understanding of how the guide and the accompanying report have been used since they were published in December 2010 and how they could be improved. This interview forms part of a consultation with representatives from each council in Scotland.

We have developed an interview guide that I would like to work through. The questions that I ask you will be the same ones that we are using for all of the other councils – this helps us to gain an understanding of any differences between viewpoints. However, we are keen to establish what you do in your council and welcome you to give examples of case studies that might illustrate your point. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as you can. It is ok if you feel that you can't or don't want to answer some of the questions.

I would like to record the interview with your permission. This will avoid me having to scribble everything down as you speak. We will only use this recording to help with writing the report. Once we have transcribed the audio recording, the audio files will be destroyed. You will not be personally identifiable within any reports that come out of this work although your responses may be linked with your council. Are you ok with this?

(If participant agrees, switch on recorder and tell them that you have done so)

Background

1. What is your role at the council?
2. How long have you held this role?
3. What responsibility do you have for school transport safety?

The guide

1. What do you believe the aim of the guide was?

- *Promote road safety?*
- *Raise awareness?*
- *Identifying responsibilities?*
- *Provision of recommendations to reduce casualty risk?*
- *Reduction of child casualties?*

2. Who do you think that the guide was aimed at?

- *Councils?*
- *Private companies?*
- *Schools?*
- *Others?*

3. In the questions that we sent you prior to this interview you said that you used the guide and/or the report "never / occasionally / frequently" [*delete as appropriate*], do you still agree that this is the case?

If never...Can you explain the reasons why the guide and/or the report were not used?

- *Were you aware of the guide and the report being available?*
- *What were the main problems / obstacles / barriers to using the guide/report?*
- *What were the main problems / obstacles / barriers that prevented you from implementing the recommendations?*

If participant has NEVER used the guide or the report, skip to Q.10.

If occasionally or frequently...Can you describe in a bit more detail how and when you made use of the guide and/or the report?

- *Which parts of the guide and the report were of particular interest to you? Why?*
- *Which parts did you find most useful? Why?*
- *Which parts did you find least useful? Why?*
- *Were there parts of the guide and the report you did not look at all? if so, which?*
- *Were you aware of any colleagues who had read the guide or the report? What were their impressions?*

4. How well did the guide and the report provide information you required? Please give examples.

- *What did you think about the degree of detail of the guidance provided?*
- *Was there information contained within the guide/report that you were not previously aware of?*
- *Is there anything else that you would have found useful to see in either the guide or the report?*

5. Have any of the sections of the guide/report been put into practice or policy?

- *If yes, which?*
- *If not, what have been the barriers to putting things into practice?*

6. In your opinion, how many of the changes to the provision of school transport in the last year were facilitated or informed (even partially) by the guide/report?

[If they think that some of the change that occurred was facilitated by the guide/report]...

- *Please explain how you think the guide/report helped? For example, did it provide ideas/ guidance / a prompt for discussion or to seek further information?*

Recommendations from the guide to be used as prompts for Q.7-10:

- *Reduce speeds on school routes and around schools*
- *Encourage motorists to reduce their speed when passing stationary school buses (i.e. by improved signage, use of lights and use of technology*
- *Set minimum safety standards in school transport contracts*
- *Risk assess school transport pick-up and drop off points*
- *Review school travel plans, improve communication and clarify responsibilities*
- *Raise awareness of desired behaviours*
- *Promote on-road pedestrian and cyclist training*
- *Encourage schools to use Road Safety Scotland's educational material*
- *Discourage young novice drivers from driving to school and transporting others*
- *Evaluate all interventions*

7. Of the ten recommendations, what were the most useful?

- *Why?*

8. Of the ten recommendations, what were the least useful?

- *Why?*

9. Were there any recommendations you did not agree with?

- *If so, please explain?*

10. What are the barriers to implementing the recommendations?

- *Financial?*
- *Lack of management support?*
- *Resource constraints?*
- *Other?*

11. How could the guide and the report be improved?

- *Accessibility? (e.g. available online and in hard copy)*
- *Format?*
- *Structure?*
- *Style/tone?*
- *Content?*
- *Amount of information presented?*

12. What would make you more likely to use it?

- *Access to a forum/network of other users for advice to share information with other councils?*
- *A professional on hand to provide advice about how to implement elements of the guide?*

13. If you were offered a workshop related to improving school transport, would you or any of your colleagues be interested in this?

School bus signs

14. How does your authority ensure that school bus signs used meet minimum standards (e.g. for size)?

15. Do you require your transport operators to remove all school bus signs from vehicles when they are not being used to transport school children? How is this checked or enforced?

End of the interview

16. We've now covered everything that I needed to ask you about, is there anything else that you would like to add?

17. Do you have any colleagues who you think would be interested in talking to us about this topic?