

PE1098/S

4 March 2010

Re: PE1098

In response to the letter from Stewart Stevenson dated 21 January 2010 I would like to say the following:

As previously mentioned on many occasions I feel that the Scottish Government is 'passing the buck' so to speak by placing ALL the responsibility on the Local Authorities. Yes I agree that Local Authorities do have more of an idea on the circumstances surrounding their area however the point that I have been trying to make for some time now is that the LA are using the 'Best Practice Scheme' as the 'Cheapest Scheme' which is not necessarily the safest. Surely the safety of our children should be first and foremost in our LA's Best Practice and not money. Whilst I am sure that this will be debated I fully believe that from having a conversation with my own LA I was told that Best value is the issue. Also why can some LA's provide safe means of transport for their schoolchildren however because I live out with their area I have to accept what my own LA has provided. It seems like a postcode lottery! The same rules should apply in all cases!

My response to the letter from Dft on 9 February 2010 is as follows:

I note that the Dft have also thrown the ball back to the Local Authorities with their statement that the responsibility lies with those making the arrangements.

In the Dft's response some emphasis was placed on the differences between three point and two point belts, I would like to point out that most of our school children on home to school transport are travelling without seatbelts!

With regards to lights and signage – the current reflective yellow signs are barely visible a small square on a huge vehicle doesn't really stick out. Also I have certainly noticed that these signs are not regularly displayed when the bus is carrying school children and yet a lot of buses travelling with the signs displayed when they are not carrying children. The optional signage and hazard lights should not be optional but compulsory!

The excuse for not having a 'no pass' on school buses when stopped I find quite feeble. Education for ALL of the public would be required however just because something may be timely and require some effort does not mean that it should not be done. As for foreign visitors – I have spent time in a few countries abroad and driven whilst there, as far as I am concerned it is my responsibility to ensure that I am aware of the countries motoring laws before getting into the vehicle. As for children becoming dependant on cars stopping when they are not on school transport – again, education! I wonder if this is something that the United States have encountered. Ignorance of driver???? Well it is my thought that the law is the law and ignorance is not acceptable.

I hope that this is sufficient however before I sign off I would like to mention the BSOG grant for bus operators. I recently read that this grant will be increasing hugely and I wonder if clauses could be inserted into the BSOG scheme so that operators would only be entitled to it on the condition that seatbelts and lights /signage are used when carrying school children.

Kind Regards

Lynn Merrifield