



# Call for Evidence on the Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Bill for the Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Submission from the Scottish Youth Parliament  
April 2017

## Introduction

SYP represents all of Scotland's young people. Our Vision for Scotland is of a nation that listens to and values the participation of children and young people. Our goal is to do our utmost to make this vision a reality. We see this as vital to ensuring Scotland is the best place in the world to grow up.

Our democratically elected members listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young people, ensuring that their voices are heard by decision-makers. We provide a platform for young people to discuss issues that matter to them, and support them to campaign for the changes they wish to see at community, local and national levels.

SYP's Values are:

**Democracy** - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 14-25.

**Rights** - We are passionate about ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and ensuring that local and national government deliver policies that ensure those rights are fulfilled.

**Inclusion** - We are committed to being truly inclusive and work tirelessly to ensure that we represent young people from every community and background.

**Political impartiality** - We constructively engage with, and challenge, decision-makers from all political parties to ensure the voices of young people are at the heart of policymaking in Scotland.

## Our approach

SYP welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on the Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Bill. As SYP has no official policy on the specific issue of seatbelts on school transport, we consulted with 22 young people aged between 12 and 25 to gather their views on the Bill.<sup>1</sup> Our response is based on this consultation. Given the small number of young people who have informed our response, this should not be taken to be SYP's definitive stance on the Bill, but

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<sup>1</sup> The consultation was conducted through an online survey, and contained a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions.

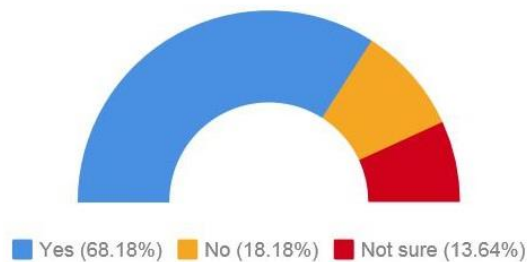
a snapshot of some young people’s views to help inform discussion of the Bill and its provisions.



### **Should seatbelts be made compulsory on school buses in Scotland?**

15 out of the 22 young people who responded to the survey agreed that seatbelts on school buses should be made compulsory, with 4 disagreeing, and 3 saying they were unsure.

Do you think having seatbelts on school buses should be made compulsory in Scotland?



Comments to this question largely asserted that making seatbelts on school buses compulsory could improve road safety:

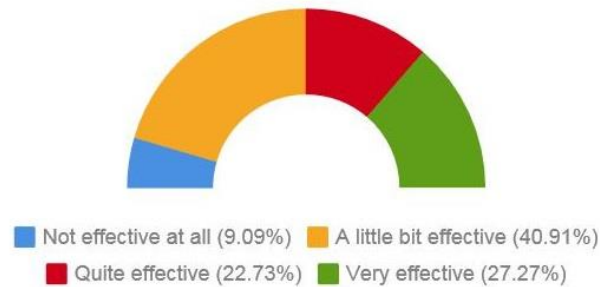
“I think in particular school buses should have seatbelts, as passengers often move about more, putting themselves at higher risk.”

Some young people also felt that this measure would ensure that school buses have the same safety standards required in cars.

### **How effective do you think this measure would be in protecting the safety of children and young people on the way to and from school?**

While the majority of young people agreed that seatbelts should be made compulsory, there was not a consensus on how effective any legislation would be in protecting the safety of children and young people on the way to and from school, with half saying that the Bill would be a little bit effective or not effective at all.

How effective do you think this would be in protecting the safety of children and young people on the way to and from school?



The main issue identified by young people in their comments to this question was that while seatbelts could potentially save lives, young people are unlikely to wear them if they are provided, and that little would be done by service providers to enforce the wearing of seatbelts:

“[Making seatbelts compulsory] would protect the children who wear them, but nobody wears them. I know this from first-hand experience.”

“No one puts seat belts on my school bus as it's "uncool" and if the driver comes round and tells people to wear them, they just get taken off again once he's driving.”

“There would be no way that every bus driver would ensure that all of the children on the bus would be belted up for the whole journey at all.”

A few young people felt that due to the low use of seatbelts on school buses, making them compulsory on every dedicated school transport service would be a waste of resources:

“It doesn't make much of a difference if there are or aren't seatbelts. Young people won't wear them - besides, many of the bus routes are run by public services. It would be a waste of money essentially.”

### **Do you have any suggestions for how to encourage children and young people to wear seatbelts on school buses?**

Young people were asked what suggestions they had for encouraging children and young people to wear seatbelts on school buses. Many suggestions focused on an awareness-raising campaign, using things like videos to highlight the dangers of not



using a seatbelt, or having school bus ambassadors to encourage people to wear seatbelts.

Other suggestions included making it mandatory for drivers to ask passengers to wear seatbelts, and that letters should be sent to parents asking them to ensure their child is aware that they should be using a seatbelt. However, there was also scepticism from some young people about how effective these measures would be:

“No matter what you do, it will be exceedingly difficult to force young people to wear seatbelts on the way to school without physically having a supervisor walk up and down the bus checking.”

## Conclusion

Our consultation suggests that young people are generally supportive of the provision in the Bill to make seatbelts compulsory on dedicated school transport services. As an organisation whose values are underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), SYP commends the Bill’s intention to provide enhanced safety and protection to children and young people on their way to and from school, in line with UNCRC Article 3, which states that “In all actions concerning children [...] the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”<sup>2</sup>

However, comments from young people strongly suggest that the effectiveness of any legislation will be limited by the low rate of children and young people wearing seatbelts on school transport. We understand from the policy memorandum accompanying the Bill that any final Act will be accompanied by guidance and publicity on raising awareness of the safety benefits of wearing seatbelts, and successful approaches to ensuring children and young people wear seatbelts. We strongly suggest that this guidance and publicity is co-designed with children and young people in order to ensure it is as effective as possible.

## Contacts

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, ‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’:  
[http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC\\_PRESS200910web.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf)