

Appendix B: Summary of comments

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to top-slice school budgets for statutory compliance testing and surveys, including tree surveys?	
<i>Summary of comments made by Primary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Needs to be done centrally; KCC able to secure lower rates; and confidence that this is being carried out to the satisfaction of the duty holder.
Tend to agree	Vital work that needs to be completed (3); appears value for money compared to own procurement (2); easier & simpler to have central management; ensures consistency across the county; compliance and risk are managed effectively; we need many of these services. Schools do not have the expertise to assess what a quality survey looks like (2); a level of KCC monitoring would still be required. Like the current services offered by Skanska, they have control over the timings and if out-sourced level of service would decrease.
	Mixed feelings, we are a tenant and KCC the landlord, so checks should be done by Kent. If we have to pay, makes sense for KCC to organise. Please can the tree reports be omitted and schools arrange as the current contractor is very poor.
Neither agree or disagree	Budgets are already tight, top slicing will have a negative impact, but ensuring all statutory regulations are met must be a key priority.
Tend to disagree	VA school - seems some inconsistency in what we are charged for and what KCC and/or the Diocese are responsible for (eg funding C1 and C2 electrical works). No trees in our grounds, thus we would not want to pay for a tree survey or be top sliced. We see some value in budgets being top sliced for the H&S aspect of Fire, Asbestos and Water.
Strongly disagree	Concerned at sustainability of school budgets/will go in to deficit (3); budgets are already stretched (10) (new SEN model, pay reviews, changing T&Cs for support staff, rise in NI costs, general costs rising, existing de-delegation, excepted items); pupils will suffer (5), having to make staff redundant/fewer adults (4), at skeleton staffing, cannot support children successfully in the current climate. KCC seeing school budgets as part of the answer to its financial problems (3); already top-slicing too much.
	KCC should provide these services; statutory compliance testing is the responsibility of the landlord and schools should not have to pay for this (3).
	The school is in a rural area with many surrounding trees, so it would need all the existing budget.

	<p>Small schools budgets would be stretched even further on systems not directly linked to pupil needs (2)</p> <p>Fees added to all bills by Skanska can at times be extortionate; have little faith in them as the maintenance arm for KCC schools; rarely use the help desk as quotes presented are always significantly higher than other contractors (2), contractors often unfamiliar with our setups and we end up taking more time trying to solve the issue (compared to going directly to our suppliers); quotes obtained via Skanska are not competitive (2) and we do not have confidence that we would get the best value via them. Skanska profit from arranging remedial works.</p> <p>Could achieve better value for money if we arranged testing and surveys ourselves (3); as a large school this would be costly; unconvinced KCC secures VFM given the costs of its traded services.</p> <p>The statutory compliance tasks are not always arranged on time and sometimes have to be chased for a date. Disconnect between the provision of surveys and the funding and resolution of critical resultant works, especially when KCC is the duty holder/responsible, with delays in agreeing funding. The proposal to top-slice funds for surveys without ensuring KCC's commitment to fund necessary remedial and preventative works in their capacity as duty holder effectively shifts financial burdens onto schools for issues that are clearly beyond the scope of day-to-day maintenance.</p>
<p>Summary of comments made by Secondary school respondents</p>	
Strongly agree	<p>The support for the statutory responsibilities for schools is essential and to ensure value for money, buying as a group is best value.</p>
Tend to agree	<p>No choice, to organize visits would be time consuming and probably cost more. However, expect a better service, not to have to chase for testing and surveys, or to keep having to explain.</p>
Neither agree or disagree	<p>Don't have a problem with top slicing, however Skanska provide a rubbish service to both the school and KCC, and at a high cost. We have no confidence in Skanska. We still have assets that are not on Skanska's database after years of trying. The helpdesk is chaotic and disorganised. Cases are regularly closed before issues are resolved.</p>
Strongly disagree	<p>Don't have the money (3); putting service of school at risk/diverts funds from school's priorities (2); disproportionate depending on the different types of school; the top-slice for our school does not seem to be value for money when looking at the costs provided for each survey (2); KCC should be finding this funding from other sources.</p>
	<p>This should be done on a case-by-case basis. Some / many schools will have no trees or very few on site - why should they subsidise those who do?</p>
	<p>Schools should commission (3). We have no quality control. KCC may view the service as satisfactory, but school are not consulted on this and we have widely varying experiences. Larger schools with experienced and highly-qualified School Business Managers are more than capable of managing compliance, in fact it is a key skillset for the role. No statutory requirement for KCC to carry out these check on behalf of VA schools. Delegate responsibility</p>

	to Governing Body and require evidence of having completed the checks.
	We are a PFI school this this would result in a double charge for my school. Obviously this would change after the PFI contract finished.
	Have well-established internal capabilities, being required to contribute to a central fund for services we may not fully need or use can feel unfair.
Summary of comments made by Special school respondents	
Strongly agree	Safety of all school sites
Tend to agree	KCC have the experience/knowledge base to draw upon when carrying our procurement. Hope bulk buy would reflect in savings for all schools and ensure reputable companies are used. Schools would need to have the time to assess and creating a bank of contractors, we are a small school without the man power for such a task. Skanska has a good response time for callouts.
Tend to disagree	Intention is understandable, but disagree with top-slicing budgets without clear transparency, fairness, and opt-out mechanisms. A better approach might be offering optional central services, backed by clear costings and evidence of value.
	As a foundation school we do this ourselves except the tree survey
Strongly disagree	Budgets strained. KCC should continue to cover these costs for maintained schools. There are many other areas of premises management whereby the statutory compliance testing and surveys are the remit of schools, ie FRA. KCC do cover the expenditure associated with surveys, however a majority of the remedial costs are covered by schools.
Summary of comments made by PRU school respondents	
Tend to agree	These are compliant checks and services and for us as a PRU; we would not be able to procure these for the proposed top slice.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to top-slice school budgets to fund Health and Safety advice and training?	
<i>Summary of comments made by Primary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	This is very important. Important that we remain with KCC to ensure that as a school we are following all the correct procedures (2) and any issues reported to Kent. It's well run by KCC with Health and Safety experts. Issues will occur if not overseen by LA. Rather pay KCC than an outside company, schools could not afford to employ experts.
Tend to agree	Vital service to ensure schools stay compliant (2). Confidence that this is being carried out to the satisfaction of the duty holder. Important schools receive advice and training and that the same message is delivered to all. At a cost of £1.81 per pupil, this top slice seems more manageable and offers greater value for money (2) for schools based on the support from the KCC Health & Safety Team. Ease of access for training. We find the training available via this service difficult to access.
Neither agree or disagree	School budgets are already tight, however ensuring all statutory regulations are met must be a key priority. This is not a significant cost, and the advice and training is still required.
Tend to disagree	Budget pressures; do not want to pay extra for something that is already included in school services; provides valuable support and advice, and the cost per pupil is noted as competitive, but while KCC provides advice, the actual costs of resolving safety hazards are not covered by the current funding model. The overall financial landscape, with KCC "taking more money off you for less services," makes this difficult to support wholeheartedly
Strongly disagree	Budget are tight (7) (SEN model etc); sustainability of schools (2); these services should be provided by KCC (4); need the money to support children (4); KCC using schools to balance its budget; adds no value to children; We could source these services should Kent not provide them; it removes the schools ability to find competitive quotes; KCC does not secure VFM; schools have no control over quality; Little use of the service. Use a different system for training.
<i>Comments made by Secondary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Query this for PFI schools as we do not require this service.
Tend to agree	Need these services, but use rarely, nor do we know what training is on offer.
Neither agree or	Support would be good if we can access it - was told as a Foundation school they couldn't help. Wouldn't want this top-slice from our budget if we were still not able to access the service.

disagree	
Tend to disagree	Could be a bought-in service. We source from a private company, why should my budget be top-sliced to support others who choose not to do similarly?
Strongly disagree	Leaves schools vulnerable when faced with no budget, will mean that health and safety will not be compliant.
	Schools should commission advice and training (2). Service does not add value to our school. Have quality in-house expertise, can manage quality. Make this a traded service.
	Told that as a Foundation school we do not need to send KCC anything so not sure why we need to pay for?
	The continued top slicing off of school budgets is disabling schools and putting the service provision at risk. KCC should be finding this funding from other sources.
Comments made by Special school respondents	
Strongly agree	Safety of school sites
Tend to agree	KCC have the experience /knowledge base to draw upon.
Tend to disagree	A more effective model may be an opt-in, centrally coordinated service with transparent costings, clear service-level agreements, and the ability for schools to source alternatives if preferred. Understand the need for a safety net for smaller schools.
Strongly disagree	As a foundation school and had to pay for our H&S audit. Schools should choose their own training. Training is online and schools can access a suit of H&S modules via our own National College log in (2). Offer a traded service.
Comments made by PRU school respondents	
Tend to agree	Better VFM than individual purchasing. Schools have been fortunate that KCC have been willing to cover this historically.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to top-slice school budgets to fund Employment Tribunal Awards?	
<i>Comments made by Primary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Cost is minimal but gives protection to schools who find themselves in that position; the guidance and support we would get from KCC would benefit the school; KCC are best placed for this and think the 82p is value for money. Unfair to take from all schools already tight budgets.
Tend to agree	Required, as schools can't afford the individual burden of settlement claims (2); VFM for schools and a level of protection which is sadly often needed.
Neither agree or disagree	Budget can't afford this/negative impacts; if schools are well managed, this should be minimal occurrence; KCC is simply looking to shift costs to schools.
Not sure	Should have a greater link to the school that is subject to the ruling
Tend to disagree	Budgets can't afford it/shifting costs; as school has to pay for own insurance don't see why school has to pay for council costs. School HR processes ensure that we should not ever need this service.
Strongly disagree	Budgets are tight (5) (SEN etc); these services should be provided by KCC; don't want to fund something we never have and may not need (2); no link to pupil needs/reduces pupil support (2); KCC using school budgets to underwrite its own (2); KCC have greater resources than schools and it is highly unfair for schools to be penalised by KCC
	This should be handled by the school with the tribunal (4). If due diligence is followed, it should not be necessary. Should not fund their mistake.
	Never had to fund an employment tribunal, but appreciate it would be an expensive outgoing. Perhaps should be just for those schools who need to buy into this option rather than take from all schools.
<i>Comments made by Secondary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Support for the statutory responsibilities for schools is essential; VFM buying as a group; useful service which we have used.
Tend to agree	No choice, to organize our own contract for Employment Tribunal Awards would be time consuming and probably cost more.
Neither agree or disagree	Top-slice is not material to our school. Never used so not sure of the benefits.

Strongly disagree	Having HR Connect to support this is vital - need 'the Kent way'.
	Could be a bought-in service; a school should be in charge of it's own budgets; if a school's poor leadership has led to a tribunal award being made then that school should be asked to contribute to that award, this should not come from all other schools.
	Buy into the RPA risk arrangement, cover is more than adequate. I would expect KCC to put in place a similar provision for its own staff.
Comments made by Special school respondents	
Strongly agree	Shared risk; Kent County Council have the experience /knowledge base to draw upon and legal assistance.
Neither agree or disagree	We use Safe Hands to support us with legal fees and advice
Strongly disagree	Until budgets match need, leave as is; fundamentally unfair, misaligned with the principle of local accountability, and could disincentivise proper HR risk management (2). A better alternative would be for schools to take out specific legal insurance or for trusts/LAs to offer an opt-in risk-pooling mechanism with clear terms and oversight.
Comments made by PRU school respondents	
Neither agree or disagree	The cost in the case of a ETA would significantly outstrip the proportioned cost of the top slice.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for schools to commission their own Occupational Health advice?	
<i>Comments made by Primary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Not always been completely satisfied, so good to have the option to shop around; already do this (2); would still use Staffcare but option is good for others; service is good.
Tend to agree	Schools should choose (4); already use others (2); may be better to have someone between a group of local schools; useful to have a list of reliable suppliers that have worked with other schools; not entirely happy with advice received (generic).
Neither agree or disagree	Occupational Health advice is not very useful.
Tend to disagree	Budgets stretched/can't afford (2); retain Staff Care Services on a "buy in" annual SLA so that the current value for money offered by the service can be retained and funded by schools paying for it; concerned about the quality control; feel there should be a consistent approach.
Strongly disagree	Budgets stretched (4); lead to staff reductions/impact children; lead to less well staff (2); poorer quality of education; inadequate number of staff to manage an admin burden, contracts and quality of the service; increased admin burden; higher costs for schools; no additional financial resource. Risk of inconsistency. Budget having a detrimental impact on safeguarding of school staff and the LA should have accountability for this; these services should be provided by KCC;
	As we are paying yearly cost towards this, and on top of that, we pay for referring a member of staff, why do you want a top slice?
<i>Comments made by Secondary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	OH need and provision varies and we would welcome the option to source our own provision (3); recent experience disappointing.
Tend to agree	Reasonable - they can be used by schools as and when they require them (2).
Neither agree or disagree	Not used this from KCC as not very satisfactory service.
Tend to disagree	It feels like this could be something a school should be able to choose to opt out of if they wish to source this from an external party.

Strongly disagree	The OH referral system really does work - and having to outsource constantly is a real issue.
Comments made by Special school respondents	
Strongly agree	Value for money, greater choice of who you can use
Tend to agree	Provided that schools are given: access to a vetted list of quality-assured providers; clear procurement guidance; optional access to central or trust-wide OH services if preferred. This model supports autonomy while safeguarding staff wellbeing through proper oversight and standards.
Neither agree or disagree	Depends on economy of scale, we may be seeking a different level of advice; already source directly due to the substandard offering provided via HR connect.
Strongly disagree	Costs should continue to be covered under the HR Connect SLA, or HR Connect reduce their agreed annual fees.
Comments made by PRU school respondents	
Tend to disagree	If we reach out to our own provider - this may be at a more effective cost; but would possibly lose the background crossovers that "may" occur already and the "one stop provider".

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to top-slice school budgets to fund the cost of administering the teacher pensions arrangements of maintained school staff?	
<i>Comments made by Primary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Best way of dealing with this; important that teachers pensions are maintained appropriately (3); this service is administered well; reasonable value for money; too burdensome for schools to administer pensions.
Tend to agree	No viable option (2); do not have the expertise to organise in house (2); given that this is a non-delegable statutory duty for the LA, it is reasonable for schools to contribute.
Neither agree or disagree	We would like KCC to continue with this but do not want to pay extra for it; I understand the reason for this; budgets are already tight, but statutory regulations must met.
Not sure	This is robbing Peter to pay Paul; is this cost not in the 'Premium' service from HR Connect?
Strongly disagree	Budget stress (6); will disadvantage children (2); this should be funded from the pensions; KCC should provide; this shouldn't be a school cost; should come from central government funding; schools do not have the financial resources to top up KCC's budget (2); no control over quality.
<i>Comments made by Secondary school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	Valuable service, see the impact day-to-day as a school that runs its own payroll; there is not the expertise in schools to carry this out and buying as individuals would be costly; this makes it much easier for my finance team.
Tend to agree	No choice, better VFM than self-commissioning, and we have the capacity with the school to manage this.
Tend to disagree	Accept there is a cost and schools should contribute, however, what about LGPS? I would not want to agree to this only to find out that next year we would be hit again with the cost of administration of the LGPS. The top-slice would cover the cost of TPS users who are not employed by schools – KCC should fund those costs. I would expect to pay a per-head cost of my employees, therefore I do not support the proposal in its current form, but would support a charge per employee.
Strongly disagree	LA's statutory duty; costs should be coming from other sources; money not in budget, impacts educating our children.
<i>Comments made by Special school respondents</i>	
Strongly agree	KCC have the experience /knowledge base; schools don't have the capacity to take on the additional work (2); systematic approach
Tend to	This is very specialist and requires the support of HR Connect.

agree	
Tend to disagree	Should be funded centrally by LAs as part of their statutory employer duties, or at the very least, offered transparently through an opt-in service with clearly defined costs and service standards.
Strongly disagree	Impact on budget. These fees should be covered under the HR Connect SLA, alternatively HR Connect reduce the cost of the SLA. This will allow schools to fund the administration of the teacher pensions arrangements.
<i>Comments made by PRU school respondents</i>	
Neither agree or disagree	Depends on the volumes and cost of the top slice. The cost is not significant.