

Marzena Piotrowska has been leading a study on freight deliveries to London primary and secondary schools. The purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of how freight deliveries to London schools are organised and to establish viability of their consolidation. There is a growing concern about local air quality and the issue is of particular importance around schools, given its impact on children. If more goods were consolidated (grouped) into fewer vehicles, the resulting reduction in the number of delivery vehicles on the roads and trips they make could help improve air pollution, traffic congestion, noise and safety around schools and beyond. The schools could also enjoy fewer and more reliable deliveries arriving at the most convenient and pre-arranged times, leading to financial savings and shorter time spent by the school staff on dealing with these activities.

The research started with a pilot study of two London primary schools. Following the pilot stage, a total of 2787 London primary and secondary schools across 32 London boroughs and the City of London were invited to complete an online questionnaire about their goods deliveries, which include both, products required by schools for their day-to-day operations, as well as personal deliveries for staff members. A total of 122 schools representing 29 London boroughs participated in the study (2 schools at the pilot stage and 120 schools by completing at least part of the online questionnaire).

The initial findings from the obtained responses indicate that London schools could benefit from freight consolidation initiatives, that would help to address current issues associated with goods deliveries. Majority (65%) of respondents indicated that their school have no on-street/kerbside space available to delivery vehicles. At 61% of premises, most goods vehicles arrive throughout the day, and although for 56% of schools lead time is the most important factor when choosing delivery option, 42% of them are offered no choice of delivery day/time. Consolidation of freight deliveries could also help schools to ease the pressure created by insufficient storage space at the premises indicated by 29% of respondents, and to reduce the time spent by the school staff on goods delivery receipt – at 22% of schools it currently takes 10-20 minutes per individual delivery. An interest in freight delivery consolidation initiatives, including collaboration with other schools and the use of an Urban Consolidation Centre has been indicated by 60% and 44% of respondents respectively, which may suggest their possible future uptake by the schools. Further analysis of the collected data will help to identify the barriers which may prevent schools from adopting the initiatives and to establish potential benefits of freight deliveries consolidation the schools could enjoy.