

Local government

Summary

February 2007

Changing lanes

Evolving roles in road safety

Summary

Improving road safety will always be a priority...

- Almost 3,000 people die each year on roads in England; a person is seriously injured every 20 minutes.
- Road traffic accidents cost the English economy nearly £8 billion a year.
- While Britain has better statistics than most countries, motorcyclists and young drivers are disproportionately at risk, as are child pedestrians, especially in deprived areas.
- Anti-social driving and speeding vehicles are key quality of life issues that also have a road safety dimension.

...but building on the success of the past will be difficult because it means persuading road users to behave more safely

- Casualties have been reducing for many reasons, including better vehicle design, improved emergency medical treatment, seat belt wearing, enforcement of drinking and driving laws and well-planned road engineering.
- Returns from engineering are diminishing, because many accident black spots and dangerous stretches of road have been improved.
- Human behaviour contributes to almost all accidents; road conditions and vehicle defects are involved in fewer than 20 per cent.
- People often hold mutually contradictory attitudes to road safety, which are different when they are driving, riding or walking, or if they live near a road.

Local authorities need to work closely with the Highways Agency, police, NHS, and fire and rescue services...

- Many local agencies engage in road safety work, and they have more impact when their efforts are well coordinated.
- The Local Government White Paper describes a place shaping role for local authorities, in which they take a lead in coordinating local activities.
- The most effective approach is to achieve a balance across the three Es of road safety: **engineering; education, training and publicity (ETP);** and **enforcement.**
- Local activities can helpfully reinforce national publicity campaigns.

...to target at-risk users, as well as at-risk locations, and achieve value for money

- Behaviours are unlikely to improve unless public agencies engage effectively with road users and communities to understand and change their underlying attitudes.
- Data need to be analysed for information about the behaviours that put different groups of people at risk, as well as where accidents happen.
- Approaches to education and enforcement need to be appropriate for the people who need to change; for example, firefighters may be best placed to work with disaffected teenagers.

Local public bodies should work together better, both informally and in established partnerships, based on the framework in this report...

- To analyse data better, including anonymised data from the NHS, and use it to target ETP and enforcement, as well as engineering.
- To target activity on specific groups of people and on where they live and work, as well as accident black spots.
- To engage with the public to improve people's understanding and gain commitment, support and trust, with local councillors taking a lead in both their community representative and scrutiny roles.
- To make good use of all available local resources to reinforce messages, including teachers, police officers, firefighters and volunteers.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of local schemes, to guide future decisions about priorities for expenditure and the contributions of different partners.

...and use the self-assessment tools provided by the Audit Commission on its website www.audit-commission.gov.uk/roadsafety

A framework for improving road safety

Analysing data better

- To what extent does data analysis and intelligence allow you to target ETP on at-risk groups of road users?
- How does the analysis enable you to identify geographic areas where focused ETP and enforcement would be effective?

- How could local data and its analysis be made more useful? Are you getting data from the NHS? Do you share data with your neighbours, so you can analyse accidents and at-risk groups across boundaries?

Targeting action on locations and people

- How do you agree priorities with your local partners? How do you resolve disagreements?
- For each at-risk group, what combination of engineering, ETP and enforcement is most likely to influence their behaviours?
- How does your programme of local ETP and enforcement complement the national programme? How do the local campaigns reach the target groups that will not be influenced by national ones?
- How do you and your partners agree who should do what in ETP and enforcement campaigns?
- How well do engineering, ETP and enforcement reinforce each other? Is the balance of expenditure right?
- How do you ensure that adequate resources are available to relevant parties to make campaigns effective?

Engaging the public

- How do you engage with the community about road safety?
- How do you ensure that you and your partners do so in effective ways?

Evaluating value for money

- How do you analyse the impact of your activities?
- How is that analysis taken into account in future decisions about priorities and campaigns?
- How do you assess value for money? What would improve it?
- To whom do you account for your impact?
- How do you account for your actions to the public?

Recommendations

1 Local authorities should:

- Review their progress against Department for Transport (DfT) casualty reduction targets, taking any action needed to achieve them and reporting clearly through local transport plan progress reports.
- Review local arrangements for taking a strategic approach to road safety, bearing in mind the imminent changes to the funding of safety camera partnerships (SCPs) and the increasing role for local strategic partnerships highlighted in the Local Government White Paper 2006.
- Work with partners to improve practice, based on the framework in this report, particularly targeting at-risk groups and localities, and building on existing relationships within SCPs.
- Raise awareness among local secondary schools of road safety issues for pupils, and the resources available to them.
- Ensure local councillors have information and other support to help them engage local people.

2 Police forces should:

- Work in partnership with relevant local authorities to review arrangements for taking a strategic approach to road safety and improve practice, based on the framework in this report.
- Improve the accuracy, completeness and timeliness of STATS 19 data, by applying the same management processes that are applied to crime data.

3 Crime and disorder reduction partnerships should take account of road safety implications when consulting on and addressing community priorities, including anti-social vehicle use.

4 NHS bodies should provide aggregated data, analysis and intelligence to partners, so they can target their activities more effectively on the people most at risk, and on where they live and work.

5 Primary care trusts and fire and rescue services should work in partnership with relevant local authorities to improve practice, based on the framework in this report.

6 Central government can play a supporting role. It should:

- Take a consistent approach across all departments when considering issues of road safety. For example, the DfT and the Home Office should use the same target for casualty reduction.
- Develop a system so that knowledge from research into road safety is available locally, and easier to access.



📄 Copies of the full report are available at: www.audit-commission.gov.uk
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