

Better information, better decisions, better services

Agreeing traffic-calming measures



A guide to demanding better information



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Agreeing traffic-calming measures

Part 1 – The purpose of the guide



Do you need to make a decision about traffic-calming measures?

This guide is ...

- one of a series produced by the Audit Commission alongside the national report *Is there something I should know?* More information on the study and supporting toolkit can be found at www.audit-commission.gov.uk

It is aimed at ...

- decision makers in councils: elected members, service directors and heads of service.

It will help you ...

- specify the information you need for decisions on agreeing traffic-calming measures. Better information will help you make better decisions, which will lead to better, more effective traffic-calming measures.

Agreeing traffic-calming measures

Part 2 – Demanding better information

- Objectives
- Scale and impact of road safety problems
- Assessing costs and benefits
- The public



The information that will help you

Clarity on your objectives

- Why is this an issue in your area?
- What are you hoping to achieve?
- What are your constraints?

The scale and impact of current road safety problems

- What are the local road safety problems?
- Who is most affected?
- How does this compare with other councils?

Assessing costs and benefits

- What do the options cost?
- What will the different options deliver?

Understanding public opinion

- How acceptable are the proposals to the public?
- What impact will the options have on the public?

Why is this an issue and what are you trying to achieve?

Objectives	
Why is this a problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High casualty rates?• Increased accidents?• High levels of complaints?• Poor roads?• High incidents of speeding?
What are you trying to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced accidents and casualties?• Improved road safety?• More value for money in approved schemes?• Change in public behaviour?• Increased public satisfaction?
What are the constraints?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government targets.• Agreed five-year Local Transport Plan.• Budget.


The **scale and impact** of road safety problems

Factors to consider	The data that will help	The analysis that is needed
What are the current road safety problems in your area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of accidents. • The type of accidents. • Frequency of accidents. • The times that the accidents take place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend analysis to measure changes over time. • Forecast of impact of not addressing the problems.
Who is most affected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The areas where the accidents are taking place. • The age groups that are most / least affected. • The socio-economic groups that are most / least affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend analysis to measure changes over time.
How does that compare with other councils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative data on how the local position compares with other similar councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the differences between councils.

Hints and tips – The relevance and quality of data on impacts

Bear in mind that ...

 You will need data over the right time period. Analysis of the changes in accidents over the past month or quarter may be less reliable than analysis over the past five years in ascertaining trends.

 Understanding which areas and age groups are most affected helps determine which measures are most appropriate:




- Where children are involved, targeted educational initiatives may be helpful.
- If particular areas are most affected, measures targeted at specific roads may be helpful.
- If there are high levels of traffic in shopping areas in rush hours, measures to discourage car use in those periods can be developed.

Assessing **cost and benefit** implications

Factors to consider	The data that will help	The analysis that is needed
What do each of the options cost?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the overall cost of each of the options under consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and assessment of whether internal funding could be sought where there are joint benefits (for example, reducing CO₂ emissions, encouraging walking for improved health). Analysis and assessment of whether external funding could be sought where there are potential economic benefits for the private sector (for example, retail or commerce).
What will the different options deliver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match each of the traffic-calming options to other council priorities (for example, education, economic development, older people). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecast which of the schemes will have the most impact on the most significant of the council's local priorities. Evaluate the effectiveness of previous traffic-calming measures in your area. Use case studies from other councils that have assessed and evaluated the impact of traffic-calming measures that you are considering implementing.

Hints and tips – The relevance and quality of cost and benefits data

Bear in mind that ...




-  You cannot forecast the impact of different schemes precisely. But imperfect forecasts can still inform judgements about the most appropriate and cost-effective scheme.
-  A rough comparison of likely costs and benefits will help you reject costly or ineffective schemes and focus on solutions with the highest likelihood of success.
-  Identifying wider impacts can help to generate funding from partners – for example, a scheme encouraging people to walk to school more frequently could contribute to efforts to improve adult health and reduce childhood obesity, as well as calm traffic near schools.

What do the **public** think?

Factors to consider	The data that will help	The analysis that is needed
<p>How acceptable are the proposals to the public?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A breakdown of public views by demographic type, geographical area and type of housing. • Historical data on how the public reacted to similar measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of complaints, enquiries and focus groups to understand the concerns locally. • Analysis of local media reporting on this issue. • Analysis of the views and the potential impact on local businesses.
<p>What impact will the proposals have on the public?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on public satisfaction levels in similar councils with the different schemes under consideration already in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend analysis of existing survey data. • Analysis and forecast of the impact that each option may have on public satisfaction levels. • Analysis of the risks associated with any possible decrease in public satisfaction levels.

Hints and tips – The relevance and quality of data about public opinion

Bear in mind that ...

-  Different stakeholders have different interests.
 - Residents may want to reduce traffic flow;
 - Businesses will not want to discourage customers.
-  Accurate information on these preferences will allow decision makers to weight them appropriately.
-  Public perception is difficult to measure; majority views may not be the most vocal ones. Combining and comparing data from different sources – for example, enquiries, complaints, meetings, surveys, and focus groups – will help to build up the picture.

Agreeing traffic-calming measures

Part 3 – Examples and case study



Example – Combining evidence to gain greater insight to establish the best method of intervention

A council is getting mixed messages. Residents, teachers and parents all maintain there are high numbers of bumps and near misses in a road next to a school. The police statistics show low levels of casualties in the area.

Analysis of accident data from police (STATS 19), combined with casualty data from the PCT and car insurance data.

Police accident data usually just includes casualty data and not minor accidents. Data from the PCT and insurance companies will provide a more complete picture.



Survey data and public requests.

Survey data will identify general community concerns. Requests for traffic calming from the public will highlight individual and group concerns.



Visits to schools and pupil workshops.

School events can help validate or challenge parent perceptions and help understand routes to school.

Combining data in this way provides a focused traffic-calming proposal taking into account complete accident data, perceptions and travel patterns from the whole community

Example – Tackling a problem with a range of evidence-based, low-cost solutions

A council receives complaints from both local businesses and shoppers that a main road is unsafe to cross. There is a groundswell of public support for the introduction of expensive major traffic calming in the area. This is beyond the budget of the council.

Solution 1 – Establish whether enforcement of existing speed limit is required.

The installation of a speed monitor gathers evidence about unchecked traffic speed and provides reassurance that enforcement is not needed.



Solution 2 – Introduce low-cost safe crossing points immediately.

Evaluation and case studies from other councils provides evidence that problems were solved in similar situations by the introduction of safe crossing points.



Solution 3 – Meetings presenting the true picture of accidents and possible solutions.

Myth-busting meetings on speeding data helped build confidence and road safety awareness, as well as generating ownership and ideas.



Solution 4 – The council holds meetings with larger shops to look at possible co-funding of other schemes.

More expensive solutions could not be met from the council's budget. The council seeks private sector partners to co-fund and deliver these.

In order to support the shopping area the council looks at a range of low-cost solutions, which also build public confidence in crossing the road.

Case study – An evidence-driven approach in Worcestershire

- Worcestershire identified a sudden increase in road traffic accidents. Before implementing traffic-calming solutions, the council conducted analysis to better understand the problem.
- The analysis identified that the source of the problem was not the usual black spot areas for accidents that had traditionally been the main source of problems in the area. Instead, the problem was an increase in accidents in a specific age group – teenagers.
- The analysis led the council not to introduce expensive traffic measures but to focus their campaign on sixth form colleges to raise road safety awareness amongst the target group.

'Accidents have recently increased and so we have analysed why this has happened in order to establish the root causes of the problem. This is not about a black spot. It is about an age group. Environment and Children are the two directorates working together to address this – we are looking at addressing sixth form colleges to target our campaign at a specific group of young people.'
Director of Planning, Economy and Performance