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## Risk control Community Speed Watch



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# Community Speed Watch

## Introduction

Speeding can be broadly categorised into inappropriate speed which is too fast for the conditions, and excess speed which is anything over a defined speed limit. In 2023, 57.7% of those killed on the UK roads were where speed was deemed to be a contributory factor <sup>1</sup>.

Many incorrectly believe that high speed roads are the most dangerous, as approximately two thirds of crashes where someone is killed or seriously injured occur on a road where the speed limit is 30mph or less.

## Speed Management

With risks in urban areas greatest there are a number of measures available to local authorities to manage speeding drivers. Local Authorities have a duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 s39 to review any collisions in their area and can subsequently take appropriate measures to prevent such incidents in the future. This is now a cornerstone of the Safe Systems Approach <sup>2</sup> adopted by governments and local authorities alike. Such measures <sup>3</sup> may include engineering like speed bumps and chicanes, vehicle activated signs, speed indicator devices and a reduction in the speed limit itself.

## Community Concern

Communities may also express concern about the speed of vehicles travelling in their local area and one option is to establish a Community Speed Watch (CSW) group. This is a national scheme run in partnership with the Police, whereby local volunteers monitor the speed in their area empowering them to help in reducing those killed and injured on the roads. The speed is monitored using a speed detection device, which volunteers are trained to use, although not calibrated so not legally admissible in Court in its own right. This is due to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 s20 requiring only type approved devices (now laser). Those used by CSW groups are radar only but shown to be closely accurate in most cases.

Volunteers monitor the speed of traffic and those over a prescribed and pre agreed amount are reported to the Police. The volunteers have no power to stop vehicles or deliver education to drivers at the roadside. Drivers are sent an initial letter by the Police, which advises them of their responsibility and repeat offenders are subsequently prosecuted.

For a speed limit to be changed on the road, following community concern, the local authority will require evidence and the community needs to demonstrate the problem exists. This can be collision history and evidence of speeds

travelled. The local authority may conduct their own additional research utilising methods such as roadside speed surveys.

## Community Speed Watch

CSW will never occur on high speed roads, so will only involve those defined as 20, 30 or 40mph. There are a number of points to be considered when setting up a group and it must always be in partnership with the local Police who can provide specific guidance. The contact officer is often a PCSO who is assigned the role of liaison.

### Where are the best places to monitor the speeds?

Risk assessments will be conducted by the Police to ensure the location is safe, such as away from bends. Once a location has been approved these must not be deviated from. The line of sight should be clear so that the volunteers and drivers can clearly see each other as the high visible presence will affect driver behaviour. A recommendation is for signage such as A-boards to be displayed but not blocking pavements or access <sup>4</sup>.

If drivers believe they are being monitored they may brake hard or be distracted by what is going on. The volunteers must be in a location where are able to quickly move out of the way such as back into a junction or on to a verge providing a safe escape route should a driver hit or mount the kerb.

### Training

Each group will usually have at least 3 members and all will be vetted by the Police. Training is provided so that each volunteer group is aware of their legal position, how to record the details and training received documented to provide an audit trail. Documenting of vehicle details must be meticulous so that the evidential chain is met and maintains its integrity. One member is required to use the speed detection device, one to write down the vehicle details and the third to ensure health and safety is adhered to.

### PPE

Each volunteer will be required to wear a high visibility jacket and it is important to note that they are not employed by the Police nor are they Police staff. They must not wear anything that suggests this is the case.

### Safety

It is entirely possible drivers will stop to challenge the activity and in some cases become aggressive. Volunteers must be trained to stay calm, be able to call for immediate assistance with a charged mobile and remain non-confrontational. Advice in conflict management would be advantageous.

Speed operations cannot be conducted at night due to the volunteers being harder to see and therefore putting themselves at greater risk. This can be frustrating as for many communities this is where the extreme speeds can be seen however the summer months provide greater opportunities should volunteers be happy to enforce at these times.

## Conclusion

The sheer presence of CSW volunteers in an area can often have the desired effect of slowing the vast majority of offending drivers down. It may be prudent for groups to be visible at different times of the day and subsequently suspend monitoring for a short time if the number of drivers being reported drops. This is no doubt a positive as it shows that the effort has been of benefit and achieved the desired result.

## References

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2023/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2023#factors-contributing-to-fatalities>
2. <https://www.pacts.org.uk/safe-system/>
3. <https://www.rospa.com/media/documents/road-safety/factsheets/community-speed-complaint-guide.pdf>
4. <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/6051/community-speed-watch-guidance-booklet>

## Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

## Get in touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.

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