

## Police Professional

Earlier this month, Police Professional visited the Partnership to examine its overwhelming success and identify its preparations for the future.

Following the general election, a new government is expected to set challenging targets for reducing accidents resulting in injury and death over the next ten years. *Police Professional* visited a force leading the success of the last ten years to examine its preparations for the journey ahead.

Britain's roads are very safe compared to the rest of the developed world, yet more than 2,500 people die and over 26,000 are seriously injured in collisions every year. Only in Scandinavian countries and Holland are there fewer deaths per head of population and in these countries much stricter laws on drink-driving are in place, with engine management systems governing speed in some. The Government set a target to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) in its strategy for road safety from 2000 to 2010. Based on the average for 1994 to 1998, road safety partnerships have set about meeting the target of reducing the total number killed and seriously injured by 40 per cent and the number of children and young people killed and seriously injured by 50 per cent.

The latest figures available show that the target for total KSIs were met and children and young people KSIs exceeded by nine per cent in 2008.

Extensive research clearly identifies the groups most at risk of being involved in serious accidents. Clearly, motorcycle users, young drivers and passengers, young and old pedestrians and young cyclists are a priority. Further analysis identified young male drivers (17-24) as representing just ten per cent of the population but over 40 per cent of drivers when blame could be attributed following a KSI collision. A third of KSI collisions involved drivers engaged on a journey for work.

In addition, the British Crime Survey reveals speeding traffic to be the biggest anti-social behaviour concern for the public, above teenagers, drunks, drugs, vandalism or any other factor.

Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) has clearly reached the Government's target early and by March this year, the total killed or seriously injured in the county was 56 per cent lower than the baseline set in 2000.

The partnership is proud of its performance crediting a combined effort across agencies and an integrated approach to targeting the relevant groups most likely to be at fault in serious accidents. Staffordshire's target of 375 KSI accidents by the end of this year has been achieved

well in advance and in March this year the annual figures showed just 281, a 55per cent reduction.

Roger Whittle, SSRP Operations Manager, explains the county has managed to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured per 100million km driven to the lowest of all its neighbours, by combining education, training and publicity, engineering and enforcement, the latter being a small part of its activity. The strategy employed targeted four main groups; child pedestrians, young drivers (16 to 24-year-olds), motorcyclists and at-risk drivers.

### **Education, training and publicity**

The SSRP has embarked on a major drive to educate and inform the public through a range of activity, including using the most recalled advertisement in 2007, a range of training courses and engaging the specific targeted groups in new ways.

The use of whole route analysis identifies the best place to locate activity including signs, posters and other measures.

Motorcyclists represent just one per cent of vehicular traffic but between 23and 24per cent of killed or seriously injured on Staffordshire's roads. The partnership targeted motorcyclists on 'Ride-It-Right Routes' that had seen the most accidents, particularly on bank holidays in the summer.

Yellow warning signs have been placed along the routes at appropriate places to warn motorcyclists about behaviour and excessive speed, and car drivers to pay attention to the dangers posed by motorcyclists.

Operation Octane is a police-led operation involving Staffordshire Police's Road Crime Team and Air Support Unit and aims to engage with motorcyclists in an intensive way about training, kit and roadworthiness.

The police attempt to stop every motorcyclist along these routes and discuss issues of safety. On one day, they stopped 98per cent of all motorcyclists offering them DVDs, leaflets and advice. The partnership also offers national courses such as BikeSafe and BikeSense, which provide a £30 subsidy towards insurance.

Where offences were identified, diversion courses were offered.

On May and August bank holidays, traditionally seeing at least one fatal motorcycle accident, the targeted intervention has led to no deaths of motorcyclists in the past two years.

Mr Whittle explained that most riders do not mind the inconvenience.

"On one day, we offered everyone a bacon butty, they were very pleased to have been stopped."

The partnership has also launched motorcycle forums, with 25 members in Stafford and 20 in Stoke, who take part in regular rides and assist liaising with the public.

A number of motorcycle accidents have involved 'livestock residues' and with the support of the National Farmers' Union, the partnership has engaged with farmers who have erected warning signs at danger points.

There are a range of other education courses in addition to BikeSafe and BikeSense, such as RIDE, to educate motorcyclists and a more general, less hard-hitting speed awareness course for anyone, delivered to 17,600 people in the county in 2009.

The trend of increasing phone use while driving is a factor in many KSI accidents, with those using a phone six times more likely to die in an accident. This led to partners engaging with large local companies, including JCB, Eon and Britannia to involve them on the CRASH course. Michelin has rewritten its policies as a result and banned all mobile phone use while on the move.

The course and engagement has created a positive influence to reduce other causation factors, such as not allocating enough time to plan and make a journey and educating HGV drivers about tailgating.

## **Engineering**

The second element of Staffordshire's combined approach to road safety involved designing engineering solutions that can be deployed flexibly and appropriately to problems identified.

Where specific incidents identify a pattern, or within days of a complaint being received, the force is able to deploy 24speed indicator devices (SIDs).

Head of Staffordshire Criminal Justice Unit, Superintendent Juliette Prince, says the devices enhance diversion and education measures rather than penalising offenders.

"The SIDs support Community SpeedWatch and can support the work of Police and Community Together (PACT) activity, but other measure may be appropriate and we try to design a solution that is appropriate to the location and problem."

Where drivers are seen to exceed the speed limit, diversion activity is sought rather than enforcement.

The partnership has purchased a trailer that can be located in specific problem areas at short notice; it includes a speed roundel, speed indicator and smiley/ sad face.

The key aspect is that the partnership uses a mixture of tactics through a longer route strategy, not just focusing on the particular blackspot but taking opportunities along the route to conduct roadside campaigns, target residents/road users with media campaigns and other mechanisms to reduce speeds before they arrive at the blackspot.

## **Enforcement**

Enforcement plays an important, but minor, part of the overall solutions in Staffordshire, but speed cameras have been shown to have a significant impact on collisions, especially when sited at junctions and hotspots.

The SSRP has attempted to be as transparent as possible, engaging with the public over reasons for the speed cameras, consulting on locations and even taking mobile cameras to public events where the public has shown considerable interest and gained a strong understanding of the reasons for their use.

Supt Prince said: "The use of cameras at junctions, for example, is communicated with the public as based on evidence." Their success, showing a 63 per cent reduction in KSI accidents at camera sites (fixed and mobile), has led to positive feedback at events attended. Reductions directly attributed to speed cameras are estimated to have saved at least £23million each year based on the average cost of a collision.

The siting of speed cameras is governed by the Utilisation Strategy, in which the partnership has again attempted to be as transparent as possible.

The partnership has shifted attitudes to a point where a 2009 public opinion survey showed a significant majority now favour speed cameras - 59 per cent of the public support fixed cameras, 35 per cent 'not minding' and just 24 per cent against. Mobile speed cameras are also supported by the majority, although slightly less popular.

Average speed check cameras have proven very successful on motorways with high compliance levels. Their success means they are likely to feature more in plans to change behaviour in the county.

Where they have been used to restrict speeds to 50mph, just 4.8 per cent exceed this speed with just 0.4 per cent exceeding 55mph. Significantly, a major sign of their success is at the 85 percentile, where motorists' speed is 48.5mph and the average is 46.5mph.

The partnership is now looking to extend their use from the traditional motorway roadwork's to a seven kilometre stretch of the A38, the first time the county will use the devices in this way.

Staffordshire Police at one time employed 120 officers in its traffic division, responding to incidents, accidents and patrolling. Since motorways have been policed by the regional Central Motorway Group, the force deploys just 18 officers proactively targeting the criminals' use of the roads and serial offenders.

Sergeant Steve Holt, Staffordshire Road Crime Team, leads Operation Talon, a hard-hitting campaign targeting anti-social behaviour, particularly boy and girl racers.

As part of the operation, offenders are given the option of either facing prosecution or attending the CRASH course.

Beginning in June 2008, 232 endorsable offenders have been referred to the course with a 91 per cent attendance rate - 355 offenders of non-endorsable offences have been referred, but with a much reduced attendance rate (45 per cent).

"Offences that have triggered a referral to the course include speeding, seatbelt and mobile phone use," said Sgt Holt.

"The process is an easy one for roadside officers, as an alternative to receiving an endorsable conviction; referral to the course is also seen as a favourable option for offenders. The cost has been the same as a ticket but since fines have increased, attendance rates on the course have improved."

In the future, officers who can refer individuals to the course will be extended to ensure the right people are targeted, often harder to identify than motorcyclists, for instance.

The list of offences that can be used to trigger a referral will also be reviewed with possible extension to other offences.