

Community Speedwatch scheme

Collaborating with Community Speedwatch UK, to provide support for schemes aimed at improving road safety.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Roads policing
Organisation	Thames Valley Police
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Region	South East
Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of Implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	October 2021

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Communities General public

Aim

To improve road safety and increase trust and confidence in policing.

Intended outcome

This initiative intends to tackle and improve road safety across the region.

A total of over 49,000 vehicles have been reported to Thames Valley Police (TVP), of which 94.52% of those drivers who have received a first letter regarding their speed have not gone on to receive further correspondence (over the last 12 months). This reduces the likelihood of drivers not being able to react in the appropriate manner, to any potential incident that may or may not occur on the road, resulting in a road traffic collision.

This figure is subject to slight changes due to the continuous process of collecting data.

Description

Community Speedwatch (CSW) is a national initiative where proactive members of local communities, with the support and supervision of local police, record details of speeding vehicles using approved detection devices, with the overall aim to improve road safety.

Staffing and pilot

There are currently 271 active groups operating across Thames Valley, with 1,814 CSW volunteers registered on the system.

TVP has used the following dedicated resources to effectively respond and manage the CSW scheme:

- one police constable (PC) – Community Speedwatch coordinator
- police staff – roads policing customer liaison
- eight police support volunteers (vetted) – processing and administering the lettering system. Letter production is the process of gaining registered vehicle keeper details from the Police National Computer (PNC) and populating the letter template, prior to it being posted to the registered vehicle keeper.

A CSW platform was launched across Thames Valley in October 2021. Following the success of an initial pilot which ran in small areas of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, the scheme widened to the whole of Thames Valley with the hope of reducing speeding in communities. The pilot, from 1 April–30 September 2021, ran in two areas that previously had strong established CSW networks to evaluate whether the new system was a suitable option to roll out across the whole of Thames Valley.

The CSW platform is an online based system, created and run by Community Speedwatch Online, that allows CSW members to manage their community activities while having backup from the PC coordinator, as well as upload data recorded from such roadside activities.

- The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) pre-checks log registration numbers for authenticity before automatically passing data on to the police for further processing. When CSW members finish their session, they upload data straight to the online platform. This in turn sends the information to the PC every morning at approximately 01:29am.
- The licensing to use the CSW online platform costs £15,000 per year.
- The system allows the communities to see their General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant data in real time, saving huge amounts of police officer work reporting month on month.

Equipment

Organised by Thames Valley's Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), in partnership with Community Speedwatch Online, Speedwatch groups in the Thames Valley are provided with a starter kit on a loan basis, including a speed detection device, to help volunteers assist in the effort to reduce speeding motorists. The starter kit includes:

- one Bushnell velocity speed gun
- one tally counter

- two hi-vis jackets
- one clipboard
- one large plastic container (for the above items)
- one tuning fork, at £516.50 per kit

The kits do require additional items to be obtained and added to the final kits:

- one roadside sign (to display while conducting sessions)
- two additional hi-vis tabards

As the cost of the Speedwatch kits fall below procurement stipulated guidelines this spend is not subject to formal procurement. However, a procurement exercise has still taken place to establish cost effectiveness of the current supplier against other providers on the market.

Delivery of Community Speedwatch

The CSW members have to submit an application stating where they wish to conduct their roadside activity, for every single location. This is reviewed by the Police Constable (PC) in order to authorise individual locations and to ensure the health and safety requirements are adhered to. The PC has access to the platform and can view activity both planned and undertaken by CSW volunteers. The PC also receives locations on a day-to-day basis on where CSW activity is going to take place, within the next rolling three months. This allows them to conduct unannounced roadside visits. This information also goes to the force control room every morning.

With the TVP starter kit, a minimum of three volunteers are required on the roadside. However, if they have their own tripod mounted device(s), a minimum of two volunteers are required. No vehicles are stopped, and they only record speed, registration number and other vehicle details such as car make and model.

For vehicles over 100% of the speed limit, a police PNC check is undertaken as soon as practical and arrangements are made for roads policing officers to attend the registered keeper's address as soon as possible, for positive intervention. This is recorded against the registrations taken profile.

Training

Community teams undergo a number of online training sessions and police risk assessments to ensure safety at the roadside. Once the equipment is handed to them, the PC conducts training to the CSW volunteer coordinator, who in turn disseminates that to other members within their registered group.

- The online training session consists of six two-minute videos which cover a broad spectrum of subjects, including risk management attributed to hostile motorists and GDPR requirements.
- Those taking the training will be tested after each video, and then a final test is undertaken after the last video. A protocol which covers risk assessments for every individual CSW activity/session that members need to adhere to.
- If there is no individual activity recorded in a six-month period, the volunteer is subject to refresher training. This is administered within the system, preventing the individual from being used as a roadside operator.

Additional police response and processing

Additional police response and processing includes:

- Uploaded data being sent to mobile camera vans to enable the possibility of having a certified location authorised for its use.
- Vetted police volunteers administer letter production and send letters to speeding drivers.

The force is represented at community and local forums, either in person or via a Microsoft Teams meeting (depending on travel restrictions). CSW becomes a focal point within these meetings, due to excess speed in communities being a very emotive subject.

As of June 2025 Community Speedwatch is now fully implemented across Thames Valley.

Overall impact

The overall impact of Speedwatch as of November 2022:

- 220 Speedwatch groups were operating in Thames Valley
- 1,238 volunteers (and rising daily)
- 962 approved sites operating
- volunteers have spent 8,298 hours at the roadside

- 32,282 vehicles have been reported to the police through the online platform
- 94.59% of drivers have not offended (that is, they have not received a second letter from TVP).
- 75,837 vehicles have been 'clicked' (counted) by the various teams (although at this time, not all teams have counted vehicles)

In comparison, the overall impact of Speedwatch by October 2023:

- 270 Speedwatch groups were operating in Thames Valley
- 1,841 volunteers (and rising daily)
- 1,411 approved sites operating
- 49,285 vehicles have been reported to police through the online platform
- 94.51% of drivers have not offended (that is, they have not received a second letter from TVP)
- volunteers have spent 1,209 hours at the roadside (in October alone).

The biggest impact of this initiative is that it has alleviated some of the workload from neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs), allowing more time for their operational duties. A brief review took place in September 2022 to focus on issues that were raised by different groups during the scheme's initial delivery phase. This highlighted areas of the programme where volunteers identified improvements, for example where to find roadside documents on the shared dashboard or where records were deleted.

Learning

Community buy-in and volunteers has not been a major issue in Thames Valley. This is evidenced in the ever growing and expansion of local groups and volunteers. Communities are proactive in reaching out to the force to mobilise CSW in their area, and the buy-in element, as such, requires minimal encouragement from the force. Where speed concerns are raised at local forums and meetings and there are no existing groups, the profile of CSW is always kept at the forefront and communities are signposted to the below links. The CSW coordinator is always keen to attend meetings to discuss engagement and raise awareness.

If there is concern of perceived excess speed, communities are encouraged to take action by following either of the links included below. This is to register their interest to either create or join an existing group to operate in their local community.

- [Community Speedwatch - Thames Valley PCC](#)

- neighbourhoodspeedsolutions@thamesvalley.police.uk

The demographic tends to be older people. This is normally the case as operations for CSW can only be undertaken during daylight hours. The minority of the younger people (over 18) are occupied with studying, employment or childcare and therefore may only be able to commit a few hours per month.

Individuals who receive the kit are registered on the system. One set of damaged kit which was covered under TVP's insurance policy was not owned by TVP.

In terms of integrity, CSW groups are generally protected by only being able to operate with a minimum number of operators for their individual authorised device. If a concern is raised, action will be taken by the force to either suspend or remove the individual(s) involved from the platform. The CSW coordinator will make direct contact with the individual, explaining the situation and take necessary action. If an individual does misappropriate any equipment belonging to the force or others, the normal terms of engagement are under the Theft Act 1968.

With Community Speedwatch Online, the force coordinator is in contact with them on a regular basis, at least two to three times a week, to understand and resolve issues that arise.

Best available evidence

Currently, the [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#) does not include best-available evidence on using volunteer schemes to reduce speeding. It does include the best-available evidence on [speed cameras](#) and [red light cameras](#) and other interventions to address driving-related crime, such as [increased patrols to reduce drink driving](#), [drink-driving school-based programmes](#) and [drink-driving media campaigns](#).

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Tags

Community engagement Roads policing