



**Follow-up paper to ERSC Webinar  
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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

*Margaret Mead*

## **The concept of Community Speedwatch – and how to proceed**

### **How to build trust and share responsibility for road safety**

With an estimated 25,000 people killed in traffic collisions on EU roads, the problem of providing adequate safety for local communities must now be considered to have reached such epidemic proportions that the time is ripe to include the volunteering sector to help reducing the number of road casualties. It is our experience that the inclusion of the very community that road safety organisations and the police are working hard to protect is either ignored or under-utilised.

Although many local communities successfully have influenced the introduction of lower speed limits to their areas, enforcement of these and other speed limits are generally lowly prioritised, most often due to lack of resources.

### **How to better understand the challenge?**

Drivers speed regularly for many reasons. The list of excuses is tediously long and profoundly irrelevant. Exceeding the speed limit is an offence, and the speed limit is there for a reason, even if drivers disagree with – or do not understand the reason. It remains the fact that almost one in three deaths on EU roads is caused by the effects of speeding – or because people drive too fast for the conditions.

On the other hand, communities demanding roads policing everywhere 24/7 are unreasonable and their perception of the problem is often exaggerated. Therefore, there exists a need to find a complementary approach to enforcement other than placing fixed roadside cameras – or introducing engineered traffic calming solutions everywhere.

We have found, that when engaging proactive communities applying educational means before enforcement to deter drivers from speeding, almost ninety per cent of offenders are not recorded exceeding the speed limits again within the next six months after their first registered offence.

However, the remaining 10% of die-hard habitual speeders, who continue to pose a danger to other road users, will always need enforcement. It is unrealistic however, to expect that any police force can ever justify allocating enough resources to identify where, when and how these antisocial drivers can be targeted efficiently. Focused intelligence collated automatically from data provided by well-organised affected communities is a workable solution to that problem.

### **A different, additional approach**

Everyone understands that there are different cultural, historical and physiological perceptions of cooperation between civilians and the police. However, volunteering is generally accepted as a beneficial concept in many other societal sectors or crisis scenarios. It is far from uncommon that altruistic citizens are called in to assist when the need for intervention and help overwhelm the professional organisations. The issue with speeding is to make the scale of the problem widely understood, and to make the volunteers' involvement accepted as a community safety concern rather than a shortcut to punishment or a personal attack on civil liberties.

By making a clear distinction between education and enforcement, communities involved with tackling the speeding problem in the UK are more often seen as genuinely worried citizens than vigilantes. But because

the latter inaccurate perception cannot be entirely excluded, there exists procedures and responses to educate the public about this misconception, too.

### **How does it work?**

Community Speedwatch is a scheme whereby trained volunteers from the affected communities, authorised, supported and supervised by the police, monitor speeds of vehicles using police approved speed detection devices. Information from vehicles exceeding the speed limit is sent to the police without further volunteer involvement.

Educating most of the offenders by “nudging” them towards a greater understanding of the potential consequences of their speeding is the primary objective of Community Speedwatch. But the scheme is also designed to flow information through to normal enforcement and prosecution action in the cases where these reach out efforts do not prove to be effective, and speeding behaviour continues.

Volunteers play no role in enforcement action which remains fully a matter for public authorities.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/fmWEB9pO4Z0>

### **Community Speedwatch Online (CSW Online)**

To organise large amounts of volunteers while securing their safety, training, code of conduct, and efficiency, and to sustain their interest long enough to measure evidence of their invested efforts, a national organisation is needed to safeguard equal rules, standards, methodologies and outcomes.

Many years of experience have resulted in the development of a format that comprises of best-practises working in tandem with a bespoke software to manage every conceivable aspect of volunteers’ participation in the scheme.

See: <https://www.communityspeedwatch.org>

### **From roadside to letterbox – and beyond**

The accuracy, integrity and uniformity of speeding observations are based on automation to the extent possible without overshadowing the human involvement. Seeing the highly visible, proactive volunteers from the affected community has been shown to have a different, more positive effect in the UK on most offending drivers than those caught speeding by a police officer or by a fixed roadside camera.

Data collected goes automatically to the police authorities who are then responsible for sending a letter to the speeding driver to inform him or her that they have been recorded as speeding. Subsequent events by the same driver would result in a visit by a local police officer, and ultimately in police involvement in a targeted enforcement based on the accumulated information of the observed driving pattern – e.g. time(s), place(s), and speeds.

## **Does it work?**

It is not uncommon that up to 90% of drivers speeding live either in or near the community where they offend. “Embarrassment” is therefore frequently quoted by recorded drivers as the reason they change their behaviour.

Also, statistics show that sustained, periodical Speedwatch activity reduces the number of speeding vehicles observed during roadside sessions. Similarly, 24/7 traffic surveys confirm that the average speed drops in areas where Community Speedwatch groups are active on a regular basis.

Longevity of the scheme is essential to produce these results, however. Motivation through instant, automated communication and relevant feedback combined with other incentives are central to achieving this. Hence, the CSW Online platform was designed around these fundamental principles.

## **Is Community Speedwatch and CSW Online transferable, scalable and adaptable?**

The scheme, the online application, and the methodology can be adapted to suit any country where speeding is a persistent problem. The groundwork has been laid, the system is in place, only the cooperative political willpower to introduce this life-saving concept needs to be established.

Speedwatch schemes exist across the United Kingdom. The national organisation is being developed with the help of government and police institutions. When fully deployed, it is estimated that from a population of about 65 million, during the next two-three years the number of volunteers will peak at around 75,000.

Although the scheme has shown to work in one specific type of society, we fully recognise that local variations would almost certainly be needed to fit with the local culture of other countries. Therefore, the technology and the methodologies were designed to accommodate a wide range of differences to sufficiently provide the same effect elsewhere.

## **Why is CSW Online a social enterprise?**

A fast, flexible and innovative approach to large scale organisation is fundamental to achieve success. The number of fatalities occurring while solutions are being discussed and sometimes only implemented partially, occasionally or never, have spurred the team behind CSW Online to pursue the route of independence. Although nested under police-controlled institutions, the team works fast and efficiently to adapt to changing circumstances and demands.

## **What are the costs?**

Is there such a thing as the price of a life? Many recoil from such calculations, but they can be useful to demonstrate just how much road crashes cost the community as a whole. In the UK, every fatality from collision impact to closing of the inquest costs the British State on average £2.0 million. Five people are killed daily on UK roads, almost 20% of these as a direct result of speeding or inappropriate speed. The total cost of fatalities amounts to £3.6 billion; £720 million for speeding alone. When fully implemented, CSW Online will cost £2.25 million annually to manage the estimated 10,000 groups and 75,000 volunteers. In addition to this, the issuing of letters to the approximately 1.5 million offenders recorded speeding annually will put another £1.75 million on top of this. It is still only £4.0 million or the equivalent to the cost of two fatalities.

Therefore, apart from the endless grief, anguish, and devastation from losing a son, daughter, dad or mum, a family member, a friend or an employee, plus the incalculable knock-on effect of the approximately 27,000 seriously injured victims added to it, we believe that this financial waste alone is a convincing argument for a large-scale organisation of the very communities from which these victims are plucked every day.

Based on existing statistics, Speedwatch activity easily lowers the average speed by 1 MPH. According to WHO research, this means a 5% reduction in the number of Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI). If this can be applied to a general change in attitude towards speeding, the first 90 lives will have been saved in the UK already. Some Speedwatch areas have shown to reduce the average speed by as much as 10 MPH.

### **How can we work together?**

First and foremost, we are here to help. Secondly, we want to find the best solution to the introduction of community inclusion, and how this principle can be maximised to work in your country while always respecting the law, traditions, perceptions and beliefs.

If you think this could work for you, let us start the dialogue.

Contact me directly via email – [jan@communityspeedwatch.co.uk](mailto:jan@communityspeedwatch.co.uk)

If you want us to come to your country to present the scheme and discuss the possibilities, all we ask is that you reimburse our travel and accommodation costs.

If you want to establish Community Speedwatch in your country, we will cooperate with you and all the relevant organisations that you and we understand are necessary to make it happen.

But everything starts with a conversation. From there it can grow to be tested in a small pilot area, and if we agree that it is successful, we will scale it up together.

On behalf of the CSW Online Team



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