



PCC's Community Speed Watch Scrutiny Panel

An internal OPCC scrutiny exercise into the successes and challenges facing Community Speed Watch in Devon and Cornwall.

Findings and Recommendations Report

May 2021

Police and Crime Commissioner's Foreword

Devon and Cornwall Police are responsible for policing the largest road network of any force in England and Wales, whilst road safety is consistently one of the biggest concerns for the public across the two counties.

When they work well, Community Speed Watch schemes enable local people to take a stand against speeding in their communities and support the police to promote safe and responsible driving. However, I know that some communities have encountered difficulties in setting up and maintaining Community Speed Watch teams and have asked for greater support to carry out their activity.

While the force has proposed some additional investment in staff, officers and equipment to better support Community Speed Watch, I felt that there were other issues facing the scheme that additional resourcing would not address. It was on this basis that I embarked upon a scrutiny review of Community Speed Watch, to better understand the challenges and consider how the force might improve its approach in future.

I chose to undertake this scrutiny review using a panel mainly drawn from my own office, with the addition of one external scrutineer who also has extensive experience of the voluntary sector. I would like to thank all those who joined me on the panel, particularly those who stepped outside of their normal role to undertake this work. I would also like to thank all force officers and staff who gave their time to support this piece of scrutiny, and in particular colleagues from Dorset Police who have been critical not only to this review, but in supporting Community Speed Watch to continue running in Devon and Cornwall.

I have been inspired by the dedication and passion of those within our communities to keep our roads safe, and I would like to extend my particular thanks to the Community Speed Watch volunteers and local councillors who gave their time and shared their views and experiences with us, and who provided so much additional insight and meaning to this piece of work.

The findings and recommendations in this report highlight the commitment and integrity of so many volunteers, frontline officers and force staff to tackle speeding in our communities. If the force's senior leadership are able to harness and build on this momentum, commit to driving it forward, and ensure consistency of support across the force area, then we should see Community Speed Watch really thrive in Devon and Cornwall.

The findings of this scrutiny review will be shared with the Chief Constable who will consider and respond to the recommendations. We will continue to work closely with Devon and Cornwall Police and monitor the progress of improvements to the Community Speed Watch scheme through my office.

Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

1. Key Findings and Recommendations

Structure, Leadership and Co-ordination

Community Speed Watch is an important tool for the police and communities to support the joint priority of making our roads safer, as set out in the Police and Crime Plan¹ 'enhance road safety initiatives and support community speed watch'. If the scheme is to effectively deliver the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan and achieve its aims, it needs to be an integral part of a clear and robust Road Safety framework, and to have strong and transparent leadership and support which promotes a culture of force wide responsibility for Road Safety. Devon and Cornwall Police's Road Safety responsibilities have historically been delivered through the Peninsula Road Safety Partnership², but this has resulted in a lack of ownership and proper leadership within the force, which needs to be addressed.

Community Speed Watch in Devon and Cornwall is currently being managed through the force's alliance with Dorset Police, but this is an informal arrangement. Whilst Dorset Police staff have provided excellent support to date, there is a clear need for a more permanent arrangement to be put in place. Greater investment in staff and officer resource and equipment to support Community Speed Watch will aid in achieving improved outcomes, but this will only have the required impact if the right structure and top down leadership is in place. This needs to be underwritten by clear strategies, policies and plans to support the delivery of Community Speed Watch, to improve operational outcomes and achieve the commitments of the Police and Crime Plan.

Recommendation 1

The force should develop and launch a clear, robust and transparent Road Safety leadership, accountability and delivery structure for Devon and Cornwall which supports the ongoing development of Community Speed Watch.

Timeframe: In place by September 2021

Recommendation 2

The force should ensure that the current Road Safety Strategy is refreshed, with a clear focus on Community Speed Watch.

Timeframe: In place by September 2021

Recommendation 3

The Community Speed Watch policy should be reviewed and revised to reflect the force's planned investment in staff and officer resource and equipment, and the findings and recommendations of this report. The role of School Speed Watch and Neighbourhood Speed Watch should also be reviewed and included in the policy.

Timeframe: In place by July 2021

¹ <https://www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/about-us/police-and-crime-plan/>

² <https://www.prsp.org.uk/>

Recommendation 4

A detailed action plan should be produced for Community Speed Watch improvement and brought to Joint Leadership Board to provide assurance on progress on a quarterly basis

Timeframe: First action plan to be brought to JLB in July 2021

Frontline Support and Feedback

Local policing teams have many competing demands which can be difficult to balance, but the success of Community Speed Watch is currently far too reliant on individual officer and PCSO interest and priorities, resulting in inconsistency of support across communities. This can be amplified by frequent changes in personnel. Stronger and clearer top down leadership in the area of Community Speed Watch, alongside a more data and evidence informed approach to activity should result in neighbourhood policing teams more consistently seeing Community Speed Watch as a 'resource', rather than as a 'demand'. However, it is important that Community Speed Watch remains a community led activity, supported by data and evidence, and not directed in its activity by the force.

The force also needs to ensure that Community Speed Watch teams have the enforcement support they need to give Community Speed Watch more 'teeth' and the backing that teams are calling for. The force's planned investment in additional speed enforcement officers and vans and equipment for Road Casualty Reduction Officers (RCROs) should go some way to providing this.

In addition, Community Speed Watch teams and the frontline officers who support them, need to better understand the impact of their activity. To do this they need to be able to access and understand Community Speed Watch activity data which shows trends and impacts, both for their own teams and across the force area. Equally, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the force's senior leadership need to be routinely provided with performance information so that the impact of Community Speed Watch activity can be properly recognised and monitored.

Recommendation 5

Community Speed Watch teams and force management should be provided with regular data and feedback on the impact of their activity. This information will demonstrate the value of Community Speed Watch work and also help teams plan future activity.

Timeframe: Ongoing, but regular reporting to be in place by July 2021

Recommendation 6

An annual report should be produced and published giving an overview of Community Speed Watch activity and outcomes. Quarterly performance reports should also be produced and submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Assistant Chief Constable for Operations.

Timeframe: Ongoing, but first quarterly report to be submitted by July 2021.

Valuing and Empowering Volunteers

Any community activity which relies on the time and good will of volunteers needs to ensure that its volunteers feel valued and empowered. It is clear from our conversations with Community Speed Watch volunteers and local councillors that many teams feel unsupported and unrecognised, and disconnected from the police.

In Community Speed Watch teams, Devon and Cornwall Police have a pool of passionate, community minded, dedicated volunteers, but the police are not always recognising or making best use of this resource.

In order to stay engaged in Community Speed Watch and reach their full potential, volunteers need to understand how their activity is making a difference. They need to see how their activity fits into the wider Road Safety landscape and feel that their work is recognised. They also need opportunities to network and share ideas with other teams, have access to appropriate training and feel supported by the police, as part of the wider 'police family'.

Recommendation 7

A formal process (through survey or consultation events) should be established for to better understand Community Speed Watch volunteers needs and concerns. This information should be used to inform future support for volunteers and to monitor volunteer satisfaction on an ongoing basis.

Timeframe: Initial process completed by July 2021, then repeated in six months' time, and every 12 months after that.

Recommendation 8

The force should explore what opportunities there are for DACCWA to provide volunteer/peer support services for Community Speed Watch.

Timeframe: Undertaken by September 2021

Recommendation 9

Creative solutions should be developed to enable Community Speed Watch volunteers to access opportunities for networking, sharing good practice, training, and to have their achievements formally celebrated and recognised by the force.

Timeframe: Ongoing, but initial solutions to be established by September 2021.

Recommendation 10

The force should support Community Speed Watch teams to promote the scheme across Devon and Cornwall, with the aim of both increasing awareness and understanding amongst the public and bolster the recruitment of volunteers.

Timeframe: Ongoing, but initial campaign to be launched by September 2021.

2. Background and scope of the review

Background

Community Speed Watch (CSW) is an initiative supported and administered by a number of police forces across the country, enabling communities to address local concerns about speeding by taking direct action themselves. CSW teams are formed and led locally, often with the support of town or parish councils or other community groups and use speed detection devices to record and report speeding vehicles. The scheme aims to engage and educate drivers rather than issue fines and court summonses. Using a staged warning system, first-time offenders will receive education and warnings, while persistent offenders can expect further police action and even a court appearance.

Successful CSW schemes bring many benefits to both police forces and communities, including:

- empowering local people to contribute to road safety and address perceived or actual speeding issues
- engaging with and educating drivers about the impact of their speed
- enabling local people to take a visible stand against dangerous driving in their community
- building positive relationships between communities and the police
- reducing the numbers of speeding vehicles in communities

A number of CSW teams in Devon and Cornwall have had great success in delivering these outcomes, but we know that many others have struggled to get a team up and running or to successfully maintain an active team. Other teams are successfully established but are not able to quantify their impact.

Devon and Cornwall Police are planning additional investment in a small number of police officers and police staff to support the scheme, as well as providing additional vehicles and equipment, alongside continued investment in the CSW Online web-based management system. Following the Commissioner's concerns that this additional investment may not address the wider issues facing CSW in Devon and Cornwall, a scrutiny review was established to consider the issues and plans in more detail.

Scope of Scrutiny Review

This review set out to achieve the following:

- Understand what makes a successful CSW scheme
- Understand the current challenges and barriers which prevent CSW schemes being delivered successfully right across Devon and Cornwall
- Re-consider the force's original proposal for further investment in CSW, in the light of evidence gathered
- Present findings back to the force, including recommendations and/or proposals for the future delivery of CSW

3. Structure, Leadership and Co-ordination

Road Safety Structure

Devon and Cornwall Police's Road Safety responsibilities have historically been delivered through the Peninsula Road Safety Partnership. This partnership brings together top tier local authorities with responsibility for highways and road safety, with Devon and Cornwall Police. Although the partnership has enabled a joint approach to Road Safety across local authority boundaries, it has also resulted in reduced ownership and proper leadership of Road Safety, and consequently of CSW, within the force.

A new Road Safety Strategy³ was launched in 2018 with a central principle of bringing a shared responsibility between all aspects of policing on Road Safety and recognising that Road Safety is a cross cutting issue. However, the panel have been presented with little evidence to suggest that this strategy has been implemented or progressed over the last two years, and whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted policing priorities over the last twelve months, it is disappointing to see the lack of progress in this direction.

Despite this, there is now a clear drive and ambition from the force's recently appointed Superintendent for Roads Policing to create a clear and efficient Road Safety structure for Devon and Cornwall, which could potentially be established through the force's strategic alliance with Dorset Police. However, at the time of producing this report, there does not appear to be any written or formal plan in place to take this forward.

Leadership and Policy implementation

The lack of a clear and robust Road Safety structure for Devon and Cornwall has consequently led to insufficient leadership and direction for CSW. A CSW Policy⁴ and action plan were launched in Summer 2019, but as with the Road Safety Strategy, it appears that very little has been done to implement these. The CSW Policy has not been reviewed on or since the stated review date of August 2020.

Despite being popular and gaining traction, School Speed Watch (where school children question drivers on their excessive speed) and Neighbourhood Speed Watch (like CSW but led by police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and police volunteers) seem to have ceased operating for no clear reason. These schemes could be reviewed and incorporated into a revised Community Speed Watch Policy.

Both Road Safety and CSW successes and failures appear to be far too dependent on individual officer or staff priorities and commitment, rather than being driven by organisational priorities and top down leadership. In the recent past, this has led to a corporate memory gap being created as officers move to different roles, resulting in drift and delay.

³[https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/PCP_Roads%20Policing%20Strategy_Oct%202018\(v.2\).pdf](https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Key%20document/PCP_Roads%20Policing%20Strategy_Oct%202018(v.2).pdf)

⁴ <file:///C:/Users/98252/Downloads/SA040open.pdf>

Whilst understanding the context that Road Safety is one of a number of priorities that needs to be balanced against high demand areas such as domestic abuse, hate crime and county lines activity at all levels of policing, the panel has concerns about the buy in and commitment to CSW from more senior leaders within the force, and would like to see more evidence at Chief Superintendent level and above of the commitment and drive needed to bring about the necessary changes to CSW. There is also a significant role for Basic Command Unit (BCU) Commanders in supporting this top down delivery and change of approach, which could be strengthened through the CSW Policy.

Co-ordination and Resourcing

The lack of structure in Road Safety and CSW has also meant that the co-ordination and administration of CSW has lacked clear management, direction or support, which has had further impacts both on staff and on the delivery of the CSW scheme. The introduction of the CSW Online management system has freed up some co-ordinator time and brought other benefits such as CSW teams being able to directly input information themselves, however the current co-ordination and administrative resource for CSW remains insufficient.

Whilst the CSW co-ordinator is employed by Devon and Cornwall Police, the line management and operational leadership for Devon and Cornwall's CSW scheme is currently undertaken by Dorset Police, through an informal arrangement under the strategic alliance. This is currently working well, and Dorset colleagues have been invaluable in not only supporting the day to day running of CSW in Devon and Cornwall, but also helping to review and identify gaps in resourcing and support found within the current CSW structure. However, this arrangement needs to be reviewed and formalised to ensure its suitability as a long-term solution.

CSW has continued to operate in Devon and Cornwall, albeit in a limited capacity, despite the lack of corporate leadership, structure and appropriate resourcing. Some of this is now being recognised by the force and proposals to increase co-ordinator and administrative resource should bring about some improvements in the day to day running of CSW. However, real and long-term change can only be implemented if the right leadership and structure is in place. It is important that the force recognises this and does not expect a relatively small investment in staffing and equipment to solve all the issues identified in this report.

4. Frontline Support and Feedback

Front line policing

Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), usually a local police constable or police community support officer (PCSO), play an integral part in the setting up of new CSW teams. They are the community's link to the police and should continue to provide the single point of contact for CSW teams into the force, beyond the establishment of the team.

There are many examples of CSW teams and communities receiving great support from their NPTs, but this is not universal. Some communities have struggled to get any engagement from their NPTs on CSW at all. Again, it is apparent here that CSW success or failure is very much based on individual officer's interests and priorities,

and frequent turnover of police officers and PCSOs can amplify this inconsistency. This should not be the case; all our communities should have access to the same service from their NPTs.

NPTs have many competing priorities to manage, and some may at times see CSW as a 'demand' rather than as a 'resource'. The force is currently considering a more data informed approach to CSW activity, which could include targeting and promoting CSW to communities with particularly high-risk roads. If NPTs are able to see the impact that CSW teams can have in tackling speeding in areas where it is really needed, then this should result in greater engagement from NPTs across the board. However, a data informed approach to CSW needs to be balanced alongside the community led approach which is so integral to the CSW scheme. Activity may be supported by data and evidence, but the force needs to be careful not to direct CSW activity, and to maintain community leadership of the scheme.

NPTs should not be the only policing teams supporting CSW teams and communities. This should also be a key part of the role of Road Casualty Reduction Officers (RCROs) who have the knowledge and skillset to support CSW teams with their operations and follow up with enforcement activity. Currently RCROs are restricted in the amount of enforcement support they can offer to CSW teams because they don't have access to roads policing enforcement enabled vans.

Devon and Cornwall Police proposals for investment

The force has already identified a number of gaps in frontline and co-ordinator support for CSW teams, and wider support for Road Safety within communities. Current proposals to address these gaps are:

- 4 additional speed detection officers based in North Devon and West Cornwall (geographies difficult to support within the current structure)
- 2 additional speed detection officers (one in Devon, one in Cornwall) working directly with CSW teams, providing support and enforcement where needed
- 1 additional CSW co-ordinator and 2 administrators
- 4 safety camera vans and 2 additional portable camera systems to be used by the newly recruited speed detection officers
- 5 marked, ANPR and video equipped vehicles for use by the RCRO team to provide communities and CSW teams with local enforcement support

Data and feedback

In Devon and Cornwall, the vast majority of drivers who receive a CSW first stage warning letter are not picked up by a CSW team again. In 2019, 6731 drivers received a first stage warning letter, 180 received a second stage letter and only 13 were referred to the third stage receiving a warning in person by a police officer. This indicates that CSW activity and follow up warning letters are having a considerable impact on the behaviour of drivers who receive these letters. However, this information does not get routinely fed back to CSW teams, many of whom have told

the panel that, other than anecdotal observations, they do not really know if their activity is making a difference. Routinely providing CSW teams and NPTs with activity data which shows trends and impacts, both for their own teams and across the force area has the potential to boost morale amongst volunteers, as well as helping teams to inform and plan their future activity.

The panel also identified that there is a lack of corporate reporting and understanding of how well CSW is performing at senior level. The CSW Policy states that an annual report will be produced along with monthly performance reports delivered to both senior leadership within the force, and to the OPCC, but this does not appear to be happening. It is also unclear what the force thinks 'good performance' looks like for CSW. The force needs to consider what information it needs to record and measure to better understand the impact of CSW activity. Whilst low numbers of second and third stage warnings is an indicator of success, this should not be the only measure.

Site risk assessments

When a community or CSW team have identified a site for CSW operations, a risk assessment must be carried out by the force, usually by a local police officer or PCSO. CSW teams have reported a number of issues around these risk assessments from long delays to the rejection of sites without reasonable explanation. There is a feeling amongst some volunteers that forces in other parts of the country take a less risk adverse approach to site risk assessments. Whilst the panel cannot comment on the quality of risk assessments being carried out, it does seem likely that many of these issues are exacerbated by poor communication between communities and local police, and that better working relationships between CSW teams and NPTs may go some way towards addressing these concerns.

5. Valuing and Empowering CSW Volunteers

The experience of CSW volunteers

The panel heard a wide range of views and experiences from the CSW volunteers and local councillors they spoke to. Some had very positive stories to share, others expressed dissatisfaction and frustration. Experiences seem to be very much reliant on the approach and support they receive from their NPT.

Community Speed Watch volunteers are no longer classed as 'Police Support Volunteers' but members of the community who are supported by the police to carry out CSW activity. There are benefits to this status (for example they do not need to go through the time-consuming police vetting process required of Police Support Volunteers) but this also means that CSW volunteers no longer have access to police buildings, are not issued with individual identification, and some volunteers have felt a loss of status because of this. Although CSW volunteers are often well supported by their communities, they are also regularly subjected to verbal abuse and confrontation from drivers, and many feel that their change in status and lack of individual identification, as well as the lack of police support and presence during CSW activity, contributes to the lack of respect and disregard that teams receive from some drivers. This has a knock-on impact on moral, and on teams' ability to recruit and retain volunteers.

There is a clear feeling from CSW volunteers that their contribution is not recognised or valued by the police. Many teams feel unsupported and unacknowledged, both by their local policing teams and by the wider force. Teams also feel disconnected from the force's wider road safety effort and are unclear about how their activity fits into the police's overall approach to address dangerous driving.

Volunteer recruitment and retention

Many CSW teams have had difficulty in recruiting and retaining a team of committed volunteers. There are many differing reasons for this, but it is clear that historic delays to getting CSW teams established have been a considerable factor. However, many CSW volunteers feel that one of their biggest issues currently is the lack of public awareness of CSW, and while teams have used social media with some success, they feel that their reach is limited. The force should quite easily be able to promote the work of CSW and the benefits of volunteering across Devon and Cornwall for very little investment.

Recognising the CSW volunteer role

Although CSW volunteers are no longer classed as Police Support Volunteers, many commit a considerable amount of time and effort towards making their community's roads safer, and they deserve to be recognised for their contribution. If CSW is to be successful, volunteers need to feel valued and part of the bigger Road Safety approach in Devon and Cornwall. If this is done well, CSW teams will become advocates and ambassadors for Road Safety within their communities, promoting this message through their connections with local councils and elected representatives.

The panel held two focus groups with CSW volunteers and it was clear that those who attended very much appreciated the opportunity to have their voices and views heard. The force needs to develop ways to formally listen to and understand the needs of CSW volunteers and use this information to continuously develop and review the scheme and the support provided. There could be a role for an experienced volunteer organisation such as Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association to support the force in carrying out this work.

Focus group attendees also valued the opportunity to come together to network and share ideas and best practice. Similarly, the force needs to develop processes and/or events to support and enable this, as well as provide training, guidance and recognition, on a regular basis. Dorset Police currently employ a range of approaches to support CSW volunteers in this respect, including an annual awards ceremony, visits from the Commissioner and Chief Constable, newsletters, conferences, networking events and conflict resolution training. There is a clear opportunity for Devon and Cornwall Police to learn from this practice.

6. Next steps

The Panel's findings and recommendations will be submitted by the Commissioner to the Chief Constable for his consideration. The Chief Constable will provide a written response to the Commissioner by mid May 2021. In that response the Chief Constable will set out what, if any action, he intends to take in respect of the recommendations.

This report will be published on the OPCC website and will be presented to the Police and Crime Panel at its meeting in June 2021.

The OPCC will support the Commissioner in monitoring progress through 2021. A full Scrutiny review of Road Safety in Devon and Cornwall is planned for the Autumn, and this review will consider the Force's progress against the recommendations in this report as part of its scope.

7. Sources of evidence

The Panel held a number of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with a range of people involved in the management and delivery of Community Speed Watch. This included:

- CSW co-ordinators and Road Safety managers from Devon and Cornwall Police, Dorset Police and Avon and Somerset Police
- Road Casualty Reduction Officers
- Neighbourhood Policing Teams
- Community Speed Watch volunteers
- Local councillors
- Superintendent for Roads Policing
- BCU Commanders

The Panel also reviewed and made reference to a range of policies, webpages and written documentation provided by the force, including:

- Devon and Cornwall Police Community Speed Watch Policy
- [Community Speed Watch UK website](#)
- [Devon and Cornwall Police Community Speed Watch webpage](#)
- [Peninsula Road Safety Partnership website](#)
- [Police and Crime Plan for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly 2017-2020](#)
- [Policing's Road Safety Strategy for Devon, Cornwall, Torbay, Plymouth and the Isles of Scilly: 2018-2021](#)

8. The Panel

This scrutiny review was chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner, supported by a mixed panel of OPCC staff and one independent member of the OPCC Use of Police Powers Community Scrutiny Panel.

For further information about this scrutiny review or for any queries relating to this report, please contact Vicky Church (Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer for the OPCC)

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To find out more about the Commissioner's scrutiny activities please visit the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner website at <https://www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/about-us/scrutiny/>