



accidents don't have to happen

RoSPA's Community speed complaint guide



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Speed is a national road safety problem

Exceeding the speed limit and travelling too fast¹ for the conditions were assigned by police officers as contributing to 27 per cent of fatal collisions in 2022, as well as 14 per cent of collisions in which a serious injury occurred and 12 per cent of total collisions.

In Great Britain in 2022, 303 people were killed in collisions involving someone exceeding the speed limit, with a further 2,180 people seriously injured and 5,648 slightly injured. A further 131 people died when someone was travelling too fast for the conditions.²

Speeding can be a matter of great concern to both individuals and community groups and speed concerns are one of the most common enquiries received by the RoSPA. This guide has been written for those with concerns about community speeding to help explain:

- What you can realistically expect to achieve
- Who you need to contact
- What to ask for and;
- How community groups can help themselves.

For common enquires you can access RoSPA's [local road safety advice](#) page.

Speed management measures used by Highway Authorities

Under the 1988 Road Traffic Act, Highway Authorities have a statutory duty to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles within their area, and in light of those studies take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents.

The risk of speed related road traffic collisions occurring can be reduced by using speed management. Speed management can be defined as a series of interventions designed to limit motorists from travelling at speeds that are excessive or inappropriate, and therefore reducing the negative effects that occur as a result of these increased speeds.

Highway authorities will use a variety of speed management measures, in different combinations, that are appropriate for the circumstances. These measures can be divided into physical traffic calming, which is when the road is physically altered to slow down traffic, and self-enforcing, which involves using signs and vehicle activated warning signs to encourage drivers and riders to slow down. The following section includes some examples of these speed management measures.

Physical calming speed management measures

Speed humps: These are raised and rounded vertical sections of road that are typically painted with white paint to make them more obvious to drivers. Speed humps tend to be found at intervals along the road to slow vehicles down to a safe speed before and after the hump. They typically span the entire width of the road.

¹ "Travelling too fast for conditions", where the individual has been driving or riding within the speed limit but this has been too fast for the conditions at the time, such as when it is wet, icy or foggy.

² Department for Transport (2023) Table RAS0704: Factors contributing to collisions and casualties, Speed related factors, : Accessed 02/10/2023

Speed cushions: Like speed humps, these are raised and rounded vertical sections of road. However, speed cushions are smaller than speed humps and tend to only span the middle section of a lane.

Chicanes: Chicanes are a horizontal form of traffic calming that work to narrow the road, using signage to stop vehicles and give priority to traffic in the opposite direction. There are often several chicanes along the road, stopping an alternating direction of traffic each time. This slows vehicles down as the driver or rider negotiates the changes in priority.

Self-enforcing speed management measures

Vehicle activated speed signs (VAS): VAS are made with LED lights and they illuminate when an approaching vehicle is exceeding a pre-set speed limit. Generally, they will show what the speed limit is alongside a phrase such as “Slow Down” to make the driver aware of the fact they are speeding. There are several types of VAS, one of which is a speed indicator device (SID).

Speed indicator devices (SIDs): These devices illuminate when an approaching vehicle is exceeding a speed limit to show the vehicle speed (some will display a happy or sad face). These can be either static or mobile to allow rotation around different sites. For this reason, SIDs tend to be used for a shorter period in any one location. SIDs also have the capability, depending on the type, to collect speed data for later analysis.

Signed 20mph speed limits: Due to the fact many collisions resulting in casualties occur in built-up areas where there are vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, the Department for Transport encourages traffic authorities to consider the introduction of 20mph limits and zones in urban areas. 20mph limits involve signage only, using repeater signs to make drivers aware of the speed limit. 20mph zones, however, involve physical measures, e.g. speed humps, chicanes and road narrowing, as well as signage, meaning the zone is “self-enforcing”. Signs are cheaper and allow greater coverage than physical traffic calming but tend to be most effective when speeds are already at or below 24mph. Further information can be found on RoSPA’s dedicated [speed](#) web page.

Community speed watch (CWS): This is a national scheme that encourages individuals to support the police in their local area by volunteering to monitor vehicle speeds using a speed detection device. Excessive speeds are reported to the police, who contact the driver or rider to try to educate them about appropriate speeds. If an individual receives several letters, the police may investigate them further and take appropriate action.



What can you realistically expect?

All highway authorities have a set budget to build new roads and to improve and maintain the existing road infrastructure, including footways and cycle paths. However, the reality is that demand for road improvements exceeds what can be realistically achieved financially, and therefore work must be prioritised. Hence the often-cited belief that someone must be seriously injured before action is taken. Unfortunately, there is a modicum of truth in this belief, as councils have to prioritise spending on identified treatable solutions. It is most unlikely that a single incident, unless very serious, will result in immediate action.



The highway authority is more likely to respond when the individual or better still the local community can demonstrate that they have a speeding problem, rather than a perceived one, with a casualty history which meets the local enforcement criteria. A well-meant individual's campaign can be extremely time consuming and ultimately result in failure. It can also be a drain on valuable highway engineer's time.

The following information is designed to help individuals and community groups whose aim is to reduce the speed of traffic in their area. Before proceeding, it is recommended that you ask yourself the following questions and are able to answer in the affirmative. If you cannot do this, your complaint is less likely to succeed in the short term; at best it will be added to a long list of non-priority sites to be treated sometime in the future, subject to resources being available:

- Do you have an identifiable speeding problem over more than a few weeks, where vehicles are traveling above the legal speed limit?
- Is this more than the odd, isolated vehicle speeding?
- Does the area in question cover more than just a few houses?
- Do pedestrians (and/or cyclists) use the area in question on a regular basis?
- Is there a history of crashes in the area?
- Have these crashes resulted in injury?

Before contacting your highways authority, it is a good idea to have an idea of the type and nature of the collisions and casualties in the area in question so that you are able to argue your case more strongly. Some highway authorities will provide crash data on request. There are also a number of free sites which provide data such as:

- [Bikedata](#)
- [CrashMap](#)
- [Collisionmap](#)

If you are seeking camera enforcement in your area, it is worth considering that most safety camera partnerships (police and highways) will use the following principle:

When a 'Community Concern' request is received, the latest vehicle speeds at the relevant location will be looked at and in some cases, this may include deployment of a covert roadside speed survey. The policy for enforcement normally requires there to be both a history of injury collisions and evidence of speed related collision history before a speed camera can be deployed. If data from the speed survey reveals that speeding is not a problem no further action will be taken, although other education or engineering measures may be considered. If there is both a speeding problem and recent injury collision history at the site, the location will in most instances be added to a 'Community Concern' site list and will be scheduled for enforcement. This will be subject to suitable and safe parking locations.

Who do you need to contact?

Most areas have a road safety partnership who will carry out the daily operation of speed cameras. It is recommended that you look at your partnership website as many of these, such as Leicestershire County Partnership, explain how they deal with [community road safety concerns](#). The highway authority is responsible for traffic engineering measures.

When contacting your local highway authority, it is best to research who is the responsible individual and to correspond with them initially, although it is likely that your enquiry will be forwarded to a member of the highways team responsible for traffic management and safety, or the Safety Camera Partnership. Each highway authority will have a set policy and criteria for dealing with traffic management complaints, which will be reviewed to determine whether further attention is required. This will usually involve looking at existing casualty and speed data. If the enquiry fails to meet the pre-set criteria (for example less than three personal injury accidents in five years) then the respondent will provide a standard letter of response.

If you are unhappy with the response provided, you may wish to escalate the matter by contacting your local county councillor or unitary authority councillor (whichever applies). Do not contact your district councillor as they will not have responsibility for highway matters. You can find out who your local councillor is by visiting the [Government website](#). You may wish to ask the councillor to arrange a site meeting with you and an officer from highways, police or the Safety Camera Partnership to view the area in question. If you are acting on behalf of a community group, avoid being seen as putting undue pressure on the councillor or officer by turning up with too many people as this may be counterproductive. At the site meeting it can be helpful to have a representative from the parish council if applicable, as sometimes they will have a small budget available which can be used to support small scale traffic management measures.



At the site meeting

To help the highways authority identify whether there is a speeding issue and whether the current speed limit is appropriate, you should ask them if a speed survey has been undertaken and what the results were. It is also worth asking whether a speed limit review has been undertaken. To support the site meeting, the highways authority should also be able to provide three- or five-years of casualty data in order to identify whether there has been a pattern of speed related crashes which can be treated. It is critical prior to any decisions being made that everyone has a clear picture of:

- The traffic speed: normally the council will use what is known as the 85th percentile speed as a guide to gauge the problem
- The crash history: who was involved, severity and primary causation factor.

If you are still unhappy with the outcome after the meeting, you may wish to contact the following to review the response provided:

- Chair of the Highways Committee
- Chief Constable
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Local MP

When contacting the above summarise:

- The issue
- What you have done to date
- The response provided and why you feel that this is incorrect.



If the council can justify that speed management or a reduction in the speed limit is not required and why, for example, it does not meet the council's policy, then you have to decide if it is justifiable to escalate it further or are you simply wasting yours and other people's time.

Community activity case studies

On occasion drivers may travel at an inappropriate speed where they are within the posted limit, yet their speed is too fast for the conditions or situation, for example near a school whilst children are leaving. In these instances, the use of vehicle activated warning signs (which remind drivers of the need to slow down) can be a useful option. Some highway authorities allow communities to self-fund additional treatments such as 'gateway' features or 'dragons teeth' markings. Some of these features can cost several thousand pounds and would not be possible without self-funding typically from parish councils and associated local community grants. Your local councillor should be able to advise on these.

Case study one: Vehicle activated warning signs

A Parish Council in Tetbury installed a Speed Indicator Device from Messagemaker Displays in August 2018 to help combat speeding motorists on one of their roads. The speed limit is set at 30mph, but motorists were travelling at speeds over 60mph. Within one month, the Parish Council saw a reduction in average speeds and the highest speed reduce from 61.5mph to 45.7mph. Results like this cannot be guaranteed but the devices do provide a reminder to drivers who are not intentionally speeding.

One resident said:

"The unit is proving very successful in calming traffic through the village. The flashing signal clearly and effectively reminds drivers of the prevailing speed limit, and the data gathering function is useful in determining which sites within the village benefit most from its deployment."

(Information courtesy of Stockwell Signs)

Case study two: Community speed watch

Community Speed Watch programs are run by trained volunteers to help reduce excessive speeding problems in their community. The scheme aims to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding and help control the problem locally. Resources available and management arrangements will vary by area, so make sure to look on your local road safety partnership website to see if schemes are supported in your area.

One such example is Alton Speed Watch where residents who shared a concern about the increasing traffic on the town's roads and the problem of speeding motorists got together to form a group. Drawn from various parts of the town, members were motivated by the desire to reduce vehicle speeds in the community. Volunteers use equipment that can monitor the speed of passing traffic and then record the details, later adding them to a database. Checks are then undertaken by the police and letters are sent to the registered keepers of offending vehicles, advising them of their speed and reminding them why it is a community concern. If a problem persists, resources allowing enforcement can be undertaken, in this case by the neighbourhood policing teams who will pay a home visit to the offending motorist.

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