

Road Safety Strategy



Foreword

Too many people in West Mercia are being killed or seriously injured on our roads, lives being cut short and families torn apart. As Police and Crime Commissioner I am committed to see this number consistently reduce.

I will ensure the police have the right resources that they need and I will hold the force to account for the role they play in improving the safety of our roads. I have increased investment for roads policing to improve visibility and enforcement on the roads. This increase in funding and in police officer numbers will help to reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured in West Mercia.

Increased investment will be allocated to projects and interventions with the aim to reduce the risk of harm caused on our roads by targeting those who are most at risk. Road safety is a key priority for me and I will continue to ensure there are ways for everyone to work together to keep road users safe.

Whilst I acknowledge the extensive work West Mercia Police does around enforcement and raising awareness, to change driver attitude, there is always more that can be done. Communities have the opportunity to empower themselves to tackle road safety by engaging in initiative such as OP SNAP (submitting dash-cam footage) and improving their own driving skills through awareness raising and training. I have been holding free driver awareness sessions to allow communities to do that.

As well as reducing those killed or seriously injured, we must also focus on denying criminals the use of the roads in our area. I am committed to supporting West Mercia Police by ensuring they have the tools they need in order to tackle this.

I will also lobby where possible, campaigning for change and improvements around road safety. I will work with highway partners where the physical environment on our roads needs to be improved to reduce the harm caused on our roads. I am committed to using my influence and resources with partners and stakeholders to ensure that this can be achieved.

This strategy outlines my commitment to tackling road safety issues and sets out my vision for delivering a more effective response. It also sets out how I will deliver on my responsibilities as Commissioner in a policing context and how I will work with partners locally and nationally to embed a whole-system approach across West Mercia.

PCC John Champion

1) Introduction

- The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Road Safety strategy sets out the policy context; the scale of road traffic collisions locally and nationally, and the PCC's vision for reducing the harm on roads in West Mercia.
- In West Mercia the total number of casualties has continued to decrease year on year. However, more recently data for those Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) has shown a slight increase
- Across the national Road Safety Statement (2019), the West Mercia Police Roads Policing Strategy and the Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-2021), three key themes have been identified:
 - Reducing Casualties through Prevention;
 - Effective Enforcement; and
 - Retraining offenders and supporting victims.
- Working in partnership is a key thread woven throughout all of these documents and is integral to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on West Mercia's roads, whilst ensuring a consistent approach across all counties.
- It is acknowledged that prevention activity is important, with the main aim being to educate at the earliest opportunity to prevent young people and at risk groups from being involved in road traffic collisions. This education should continue throughout people's lives, to ensure their skills are refreshed and developed to prevent harm caused on our roads.
- Other agencies have key parts to play in road safety prevention. This strategy highlights the needs for partnership working to ensure joint campaigns to target those most at risk of being harmed or causing harm.
- The police are the main enforcement agency for motoring offences, the national strategy details its commitment to ensuring officers have the right training for effective and targeted enforcement. This is seen locally and West Mercia Police regard road safety as a priority.
- A number of recommendations have been made based on the policy and research outlined within the report (highlighted in bold). These recommendations are made

to support the delivery of the PCC's aspirations set out throughout this document. A summary of all recommendations can be found in Chapter 11.

2) Purpose of the Strategy

It is estimated that the economic cost of road traffic collisions (RTC) amounts to £36 billion per annum¹. Human error is reportedly a factor in 94% of all collisions².

This strategy has been produced to inform the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response to road safety. This strategy intends to;

- a) Highlight the scale of RTCs in West Mercia.
- b) Provide an overview of the key themes in national and local strategies.
- c) Show the extent to which national and force priorities correspond with priorities in the PCC's Safer West Mercia plan.
- d) Provide recommendations to the PCC to aid the response to road safety.

3) Impact on West Mercia

West Mercia is a large geographical area which is predominately rural, with some densely populated urban areas and market towns. The number of people killed on rural roads is more than 10 times higher than on motorways³. The strategic location and comprehensive transport networks within West Mercia enable relatively quick and unimpeded movement locally and nationally.

Nationally, total casualties across all three severities: fatal, serious and slight injury, have dropped by 6% compared to 2016, which is the lowest on record⁴. In West Mercia a larger 23% decrease has been seen since 2016. However, the number of people killed locally has increased by 32.5% in 2018 whilst individuals seriously or slightly injured have decreased.

Slight injury data should be interpreted with caution, as nationally slight injury casualties are assessed as being grossly under-reported. Hospital, survey and compensation claim data all indicate a higher number of casualties than police data suggests⁵. However, police data is the most detailed, complete and reliable single source of information⁶.

In total, during 2018 there were 2,427 RTCs in West Mercia resulting in casualties of which 53 were fatal and 461 were seriously injured. Collisions involving cars were most common and accounted for 72% of all RTCs in West Mercia. This is followed by goods vehicles under

3.5 tonnes (accounting for 6.7%) and pedal cycles (accounting for 6.6%). Around 23% of collisions involving cars and goods vehicles under 3.5 tonnes resulted in people being killed or seriously injured (KSI), compared to 25% of casualties involving pedal cycles.

Motorcyclists are a particularly vulnerable group of road users⁷, especially those on motorcycles over 500cc. Across West Mercia 55% of collisions involving motorcycles over 500cc resulted in people being KSI. Whilst motorcyclists only make up about 1% of the driving population they are heavily represented in KSI figures⁸, particularly in Shropshire. Here many of the collisions involving motorcycles involved people that were visiting and live outside of the force area.

There are four main factors which contribute to KSIs, known as the 'Fatal 4. During 2018 their impact in West Mercia was as follows:

Driving at speed- Speeding offences are detected in a number of ways: fixed speed cameras, mobile speed cameras and by officers. In 2018, 856 speeding offences were caught by officers.

Driving whilst distracted- Drivers can be distracted by a number of different things whilst driving. The most common offence detected by police officers is the use of mobile phones. In 2018 there were 1,118 detected offences of mobile phone use whilst driving.

Being under the influence of drink or drugs- Driving can be impaired by both drink and drugs. In 2015, the law was changed to make it easier for officers to catch and convict drug drivers. In 2018 there were 2,210 arrests for driving offences related to drink and drugs.

Not wearing a seatbelt - Although, the rates of seatbelt usage are generally high, some road users still flout the law. Currently, offenders receive a fine but the government are considering imposing penalty points. In 2018 there were 440 recorded offences of failing to wear a seatbelt.

A number of road safety campaigns were completed by West Mercia Police and supported by the PCC throughout 2018 to raise awareness about fatal 4 offences such as using mobile phones, not wearing a seatbelt.

Alongside these issues, our communities are also impacted by criminality on our roads, including offences related to Organised Crime Groups. Such offences include insurance fraud (where RTCs are manufactured to facilitate false claims⁹), uninsured drivers, and use of the road networks to transport drugs, stolen goods and traffic people.

Road safety is not only represented in statistics but is also a reoccurring concern raised in correspondence received both via the PCC's office and by the police force. This correspondence demonstrates that road safety is seen as a community priority and there are many circumstances in which people do not feel safe travelling on the local roads. It is important that communities feel confident that their concerns have been listened to and are being addressed.

Any future commissioning intentions must consider the scale and impact of RTCs in West Mercia.

4) National Policy Context

The Road Safety Statement published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in July 2019 aims to move the UK to an integrated approach to road safety, focusing on both collision prevention and post collision response¹⁰.

Its statement sets out the governments priorities for improving the safety of Britain's roads. It sets out the context of road safety in Britain today and the overarching scope of road safety activity for the Government. It acknowledges that safer roads and safer roads users not only save lives but also reduce pressure on the emergency services leading to reduced demand.

West Mercia Police's Chief Constable Anthony Bangham is the national lead for Roads Policing. The National Police Chiefs Council strategy (NPCC) 'Policing the Roads Together' has three main aims:

- Safe roads, free from harm;
- Secure roads free from the threat of serious crime and terrorism; and
- Efficient roads that promote public confidence and satisfaction.

The strategy stresses the importance of working together and emphasises that the aims can only be realised through partnership working¹³.

5) Local Policy Context

The PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan sets out the PCC's vision for creating an even Safer West Mercia. The plan has four key themes:

- Putting Victims and Survivors First;
- Building a More Secure West Mercia;
- Reforming West Mercia and
- Reassuring West Mercia's Communities.

As part of the former Safer Roads Partnership (SRP), West Mercia police and a number of other local partners such as Local Authorities, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue service, Shropshire Fire and Rescue service, Highways England and the NHS had their own strategy with the aim of reducing road casualties and disrupting criminals use of the roads¹⁴.

The partnership placed an emphasis on local, regional and national agencies working together to achieve these shared aims with the aspiration of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on the road.

Key areas identified in the strategy included effective patrolling of the roads to protect people from harm; ensure there is a high visibility presence to impact on road user behaviour; reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured; deny criminals the use of the road network; tackle the threat of terrorism and tackle anti-social use of the roads.

West Mercia Police have a number of key priorities of which safer roads is one, particularly relating to death and serious injury, the fatal 4 and travelling criminality. Alongside local operational policing, the force also has a Road Safety team, who continue the work of the former SRP but under the direction and control of the force. The team aims is to reduce collisions and casualties on the roads through speed enforcement, engineering, road safety education, training courses and awareness raising campaigns.

6) Key Themes

Across both the national and local strategy documents 3 key themes are identified which are also reflected in the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan¹⁵. Working in partnership is an important thread found in all documents that is woven throughout.



7) The PCC's Vision for Tackling Road Safety

This strategy sets out how the PCC will work with West Mercia Police, partners and the community to reduce the numbers of those killed or seriously injured in West Mercia.

Reducing casualties through prevention

The PCC will:

- Reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in West Mercia ensuring West Mercia Police and its partners work to protect those most vulnerable to harm on our roads.
- Allocate funding to commission effective prevention initiatives to reduce the number of young and vulnerable people killed and injured on our roads. Where possible this work will be with partners in a system wide approach.
- Effectively lobby through parliament, road safety groups and vehicle manufacturers to influence change around improving road safety.
- Collaborate with public and private sector partners to deliver a holistic approach to tackling road safety in West Mercia.

- Target resources and influence key stakeholders to ensure prior to leaving school young adults will have been through a road safety prevention activity.
- Give all motorists the opportunity to develop their driving skills and knowledge throughout their driving career.

Effective enforcement

The PCC will:

- Ensure West Mercia Police have the funding they need to keep the roads safe.
- Hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure West Mercia Police Safer Roads strategy and enforcement activity is reducing the level of harm and criminality on our roads.
- Work with communities and partners to understand the true picture of driving offences in West Mercia and the harm it causes to allow for effective tackling.
- Ensure technology is effectively used by communities and West Mercia Police to successfully enforce and target criminals, poor driving and anti-social behaviour on our roads.
- Ensure that community priorities are taken into account when tackling road safety issues, and that communities are empowered to tackle road safety issues by working collegiately. The PCC aspires to make Community Speedwatch available to any community who wants it and it is appropriate for.

Offender rehabilitation and victim support

The PCC will:

- Ensure victims, their families and witnesses have access to the support they need to cope and recover.
- Support ground-breaking interventions and re-education to target the drivers causing the most harm to break the cycle of poor driver behaviour.
- Jointly commission services, such as #MORSE for offenders wherever it is appropriate and in the best interests of local communities.

8) Reducing Casualties through Prevention

Over the last 10 years the number of road deaths nationally has been on a downward trend, however, more recently this has plateaued¹⁶. The national, local and PCC strategy documents acknowledge the importance of prevention activity with the main aim being to educate at the earliest opportunity to prevent young people and at risk groups from being unnecessarily involved in RTCs.

Research has shown that areas of the brain responsible for impulsivity and risk-taking do not fully develop until someone is in their mid-20s¹⁷. This means that younger drivers are more likely to take risks including speeding, overtaking blind, driving under the influence of drink or drugs and not wearing seatbelts¹⁸. For this reason younger drivers are generally more likely to be KSI compared with those aged 25 or over.

New drivers are at an increased risk of being involved in a collision, regardless of their age¹⁹. Data for 2018 shows that around 50% of those who passed their driving test nationally were aged 16-20²⁰. Locally, 23% of all collisions involved someone aged between 16 and 25 of which 19% resulted in a casualty being KSI.

The education that new drivers receive is a key part in helping to reduce the risks they may become victim to and preventing them being KSI. Research shows that attitudes are formed at a young age and are harder to change by the age of 14²¹. This highlights the need for earlier education, even pre-license, not later.

The Government's approach for educating school aged children involves building confidence and providing them with the skills to travel safely on the roads²². This involves developing resources for within the classroom and also outdoor practical sessions for both walking and cycling including reference to the smartphone generation and the need for targeted education.

The PCC funds a number of services related to road safety, including the Pathfinder Course. As part of the course young people aged 15-17 (accompanied by their guardians) can learn essential driving competence, attitudes and understanding to become safe drivers.

Prevention activity must also consider the ageing population as people are living longer healthier lives' resulting in more older drivers on the roads²³. Active travel has a huge potential impact on the positive health and wellbeing of older people and can help to keep them mobile. However, older drivers or passengers are generally more susceptible to injury and as a result are more likely to be KSI than younger drivers in a similar impact accident²⁴.

Information and education are just as important for older drivers as they are for young drivers. To support this the government has funded a number of organisations to provide support and develop research into what works best for older drivers, to enhance services already in place through mobility centres²⁵. Mobility centres aid both elderly and disabled motorists by advising them about their driving choices and finding ways to enable them to retain their mobility. Perceptions of safety are key to encourage people, especially older individuals, to take up more active forms of travel. **It is recommended that any future preventative interventions will include pre license drivers, new drivers and older drivers to target those most at risk on our roads.**

It is recognised that many other agencies have a part to play in road safety prevention. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act, 1988, Section 39 to promote road safety through information, advice and programmes, take measures to prevent accidents such as practical training and ensure maintenance and repair of the roads²⁶. This highlights the need for partnership working to ensure joint campaigns to target those most at risk.

The PCC has worked with local authorities on joint road safety campaigns that include a complimentary road safety course, coinciding with national road safety weeks. **To ensure a collaborative approach partner agencies will work together in commissioning, planning and delivering interventions and prevention activity.**

A wide range of physical improvements to road layouts such as, lighting, signing and signal control, junction improvements and calming features have all played a part in increasing road safety and reducing risk and casualties. **The PCC will work with highway partners, where appropriate, to ensure the physical environment on West Mercia's roads are improved.**

Supporting and promoting the use of safer vehicles and equipment can play a role in reducing road deaths²⁹. The national strategy recognises that automated vehicles have a huge potential to improve road safety. **The PCC will use his convening powers as a Police and Crime Commissioner to highlight the benefits of safer more secure vehicles at a local, regional and national level when opportunities arise.**

Employers have a major role to play in improving safety on the roads through ensuring that their staff are properly prepared and motivated to drive and ride safely and use safe vehicles. The government has committed to work with partners in the public sector and commercial fleets, employer organisations and drivers to identify and promote good practice in work related road safety including through the Highways England Driving for Better Business programme²⁷. Around 27% of collisions involving a van or goods vehicle resulted in someone being KSI in West Mercia. **Therefore, it is important that businesses**

are taken into consideration when bringing together key partners to tackle road safety issues.

All strategies are clear that partnership working must be in place to achieve safe, secure and efficient roads. Wider partnership intelligence sharing is encouraged in order to help identify vulnerable individuals at risk of being involved in RTCs²⁸.

9) Effective Enforcement

The police are the main enforcement agency for motoring offences. West Mercia Police have set their policing priorities, which include a focus on safer roads. This priority has a specific focus on disrupting travelling criminality and reducing death and injury on the roads³⁰. Enforcement is critical in putting education and engineering efforts into effect.

The PCC has a clear and established governance role in overseeing and scrutinising the local and regional response to road safety. These roles are implemented in a number of different ways including holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable and local and regional governance meetings. **The PCC will ensure he continues to scrutinise the local and regional response to ensure outcomes are being achieved in respect of local and regional road safety priorities.**

Although not included within the national strategy, criminality on the roads is a significant consideration for policing locally. The link between West Mercia's roads and serious forms of criminal behaviour is well established³³. The use of technology such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) aims to make the road networks hostile for criminals or reckless road users and to make it a safer place for communities. Locally, there has been recent investment in ANPR to help tackle Serious and Organised Crime. **The PCC will continue to invest in technology to ensure officers have the tools and skills to proactively target criminals on the roads.**

Uninsured driving has fallen by 50% in the last 10 years, however, around 100 uninsured motorists a month are prosecuted in West Mercia³⁴. Evidence suggests that uninsured vehicles are consistently used to conduct wider criminal activity and are more likely to be involved in a collision, so targeting these drivers can help to make the roads safer³⁵.

The Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB) are responsible for investigating and paying claims of victims of uninsured and untraced drivers³⁶. The government have committed to working with the insurance industry and MIB to tackle uninsured and untraced driving. Under the Safer Road Users strand of the NPCC strategy, it sets out a commitment to working with

partners as part of the safe system approach to protect the most vulnerable and encourage compliance to enhance safety for all.

It is acknowledged that there is a need to be proactive in targeting criminal behaviour more effectively. Active data sharing between key stakeholders such as the police, fire, health, local authorities, probation and the courts will help to create a fuller picture of local issues, as different authorities have a different operational response to road safety and therefore different data. Intelligence is vital in aiding the police to assure the safety, security and efficiency of the strategic road network. Joint planning and coordination is needed between agencies and organisations to ensure this³⁷. **The PCC will use his influence through various forums to encourage stakeholders and partners to further improve the information sharing arrangements.**

Enforcement involves not only ensuring resources are focussed on strategic priorities but also incorporate community concerns. Within local policing teams, operational activity takes place to address local issues but communities should also be given the platform to voice their concerns. **The PCC will support interested community groups, local leaders and concerned residents to develop forums to provide them with the opportunity to share their concerns, share good practice, and to work in partnership to tackle road safety issues together. These forums will involve other partners such as the police and local authorities to ensure a more holistic approach.**

There are some ways in which communities can be involved and empowered to tackle reckless driving behaviour. Community Speedwatch schemes are in place across West Mercia and enable local residents to take an active role in road safety and help make their communities safer. Currently in West Mercia there are 35 Speedwatch groups. **The PCC will continue to support Speedwatch groups and commit to increasing the number of groups in West Mercia.**

Also in place, with successful results is OP SNAP, a national campaign developed in response to requests from the public for police to deal with traffic offences. It allows members of the public to submit footage detected by dashcams, helmet cameras or personal videos that do not involve a collision but witness driving offences³⁸.

The government have highlighted that they are exploring the feasibility of having a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) scheme which places restrictions on new drivers such as the number of passengers they can carry and they time of day they can drive³⁹. This scheme is in place in other countries as research has shown that increasing the amount of pre-test on-road experience can decrease the risk of collision post-test. However further research has shown that it can also restrict young people's access to education and employment. If

this was implemented further enforcement action would be required to ensure the restrictions imposed are being followed.

10) Retraining offenders and supporting victims.

The national roads safety strategy sets out the government's plans and highlights the importance of training and re-educating offenders to reduce offending behaviour.

As an alternative to penalty points and a fixed financial penalty, interventions known as the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) are available, depending on the offence committed, and can only be attended if referred by the Police or Courts⁴⁰. The courses aim to re-educate drivers around the offence they have committed and are funded by the offenders who take them. In West Mercia, these courses are run by a third party company.

There is clear supporting evidence to link offender training to reductions in offending. For participants that took part in a National Speed Awareness Course only 5% reoffended after 6 months. Reoffending refers to subsequent speed related offences after the first offence recorded for the driver. This proportion rises as time goes on and after 36 months it is estimated that around 21% of participants will reoffend⁴¹. However, this is still a lower rate of reoffending compared to those that did not take up the offer of a course.

For up to 2 years after an initial conviction for drunk driving, those who did not attend a rehabilitation course were 2.6 times more likely to be convicted of another drink drive offence than those who did⁴².

Currently in the UK there is no offender rehabilitation scheme for those caught drug driving, they instead take part in the drink-drive scheme. The drink-drive scheme is currently under review. The findings will be used to consider a combined rehabilitation scheme that covers both drink and drugs⁴³. Similarly, a High-Risk Offenders scheme is also being proposed for drug drivers.

The government are investigating the feasibility of installing Alcolocks as part of rehabilitation programmes in the UK. Alcolocks measure the alcohol in a driver's breath and can prohibit the ignition activation if the alcohol is too high⁴⁴. Evidence suggests that when used in conjunction with other interventions, Alcolocks can reduce drink-driving reoffending.

As such, evidence suggests that increasing awareness and re-educating those that offend can help to make our roads safer for the communities that use them. **The PCC has the commissioning power to invest in evidence-based activity and will explore opportunities for ground breaking interventions where appropriate and in the best interest of local communities.**

Safety is not all about statistics, it is also about people's families and local communities. The PCC has recently invested in a new Victim Advice Line (VAL) in West Mercia to provide a clear pathway of support to victims. It is important that these services are made available to victims and witnesses to RTCs. Alongside VAL, the NPCC outline that Family Liaison Officers will continue to support families and work alongside victims of RTCs. **Awareness will be raised around support for victims, victims' families and witnesses post-crash, by ensuring:**

- **Officers and staff have the skills to properly support victims;**
- **There is a seamless pathway of support for victims, victim families and witness, including through VAL.**

11) Summary of Recommendations

- a) Any commissioning intentions must consider the scale and impact of RTC's in West Mercia.
- b) It is recommended that any future preventative interventions will include pre license drivers, new drivers and older drivers to target those most at risk on our roads.
- c) To ensure a collaborative approach partner agencies will work together in commissioning, planning and delivering interventions and prevention activity.
- d) The PCC will work with highway partners, where appropriate, to ensure the physical environment on West Mercia's roads are improved.
- e) The PCC will use his convening powers as a Police and Crime Commissioner to highlight the benefits of safer more secure vehicles at a local, regional and national level when opportunities arise.
- f) The PCC will consider businesses when bringing together key partners to tackle road safety issues.
- g) The PCC will ensure he continues to scrutinise the local and regional response to ensure outcomes are being achieved in respect of local and regional road safety priorities.

- h) The PCC will continue to invest in technology to ensure officers have the tools and skills to proactively target criminals on the roads.
- i) The PCC will use his influence through various forums to encourage stakeholders and partners to further improve the information sharing arrangements.
- j) The PCC will support interested community groups, local leaders and concerned residents to develop forums to provide them with the opportunity to share their concerns, share good practice, and to work in partnership to tackle road safety issues together. These forums will involve other partners such as the police and local authorities to ensure a more holistic approach.
- k) The PCC will continue to support Speedwatch groups and commit to increasing the number of groups in West Mercia.
- l) The PCC has the commissioning power to invest in evidence-based activity and will explore opportunities for ground breaking interventions where appropriate and in the best interest of local communities.
- m) Awareness will be raised around support for victims, victims' families and witnesses post-crash, by ensuring:
 - Officers and staff have the skills to properly support victims;
 - There is a seamless pathway of support for victims, victim families and witness, including through VAL.

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