

Community Speedwatch Scheme in Wiltshire to reduce speeding and empower residents

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Organisation: Head of Community Governance

Country: United Kingdom

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Public order and safety

Type: Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2009

Overall development time: 1 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

Wiltshire Council has embarked on an ambitious plan to decentralise decision making and transfer power to local communities. One feature of this new local approach is the development of 18 area boards that bring together elected members, parishes, partners and local people to tackle local issues. To ensure the boards reflect the wider needs of the community there has been a strong focus on improving public participation, community engagement and social inclusion.

Community Speedwatch gives local people the power to tackle one of the biggest causes of concern in Wiltshire - speeding vehicles. Partnership working has been key to the success of the scheme with the council, police and local communities coming together to find new ways to tackle the problem.

This project was showcased by the BBC in 2011 - click here to watch their report: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11755222>.

Why the innovation was developed

- Speeding and road traffic accidents are the subjects of widespread public concern regularly raised at area board meetings right across Wiltshire County. They also feature as key priorities in the Joint Strategic Assessment for Wiltshire.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Increase citizen engagement

- The project sought to respond to community demand.
 - Forge a partnership approach to enable the police, the council and the community to work together to tackle the problem.
 - The community speedwatch scheme was linked to two strategic objectives - building "resilient communities" (the volunteering element) and "safer communities" (tackling dangerous driving).
 - The scheme is underpinned by driver education and behaviour change.
 - The initiative has helped to mitigate public sector funding reductions.
 - Community engagement, empowerment and co-production.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Government bodies

- Public safety
- Police
- Council
- Parish and Town Councils

Results

Effectiveness

- Figures assessed in January 2011 demonstrated a 53% reduction in speeding across active community speedwatch sites. The community speedwatch scheme has exceeded the original targets and is continuing to grow, with 140 CSW active volunteer teams and 765 volunteers.
- Since September 2013, there have been a total of 7038 CSW sessions and 14 076 volunteer hours of speed reduction interventions from 2014-2016. This equates to GBP 112 608 of community investment.
- Since September 2013, 44 910 warning letters have gone out to registered keepers whose vehicles were exceeding local speed limits, and police officers have visited 4211 homes to provide 'words of advice' directly to drivers who are either 'excessive' speeders or 'repeat' (3rd time' offenders). The whole ethos of CSW is to 'educate' drivers as we do not wish to have our CSW volunteers appearing in court as witnesses.

Development

Design

Wiltshire community speedwatch was developed in October 2009. Initially a three year programme, community speedwatch was designed to provide a county-wide coordinated response to the issue of speeding traffic and road traffic injuries and deaths. Speeding is an ongoing subject of public concern - it is regularly raised at area board meetings across the county. Since launch, the scheme has been reviewed and Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner has employed a coordinator and implemented a new IT system to provide a long term, sustainable intervention available to communities.

Implementation

Tools used:

- Community speedwatch uses Wiltshire's unique community reporting system - an online system that allows local people and community groups to raise local issues directly with their area board and the Council.
- When a speeding issue is submitted, Wiltshire Council officers check if the site is already the subject of police enforcement or has previously been surveyed using a "metrocount," an electronic system used for traffic data collection and analysis.
- If not, the Council sends "metrocount" request forms and criteria to the parish council to return to the road safety unit for action.
- When the "metrocount" survey has been carried out the road safety unit produce a report which states whether the level of speeding justifies further action – this report is sent to the parish council.
- When an area is identified as suitable and safe for community speedwatch the parish council is asked to recruit community volunteers. Wiltshire Constabulary's community speedwatch co-ordinator trains the volunteers to carry out roadside checks on the speed of vehicles. The volunteers are also supported by neighbourhood police teams.
- Community volunteers record the speed and registration numbers of offending vehicles and the owners of speeding vehicles are sent letters by the police which draw attention to the offence and warn the driver of the consequences of excessive speeding.
- Repeat offenders receive a visit from the Police.
- Prosecution is available as a last resort, with offenders actively targeted by the Police.

Resources used:

- The initial set up costs for the scheme were GBP 70 000 funded from the Government's Performance Reward Grant.
 - The scheme's creation has enabled Wiltshire to disband its Camera Safety Partnership and transfer the functions into the existing services and the community speedwatch scheme - helping to save over GBP 100 000 per year.
 - Administrative support has been integrated into existing job roles and systems, with a dedicated community speedwatch coordinator employed by the Police.
 - There is also a considerable benefit for the council in having in place a scheme that manages the hundreds of speeding inquiries the council receives each year.
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Diffusion

- The high level of demand was picked up at the council's area board meetings. As a result, the area boards team developed a bid for funding to support the development of a more comprehensive county-wide community speedwatch scheme.
 - In 2013 the Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire undertook a major review of the scheme, this involved consultation with community speedwatch volunteers. As a result, staffing support was formalised and a new IT system was developed to help speed up the issue of warning letters.
 - A range of other initiatives were also delivered to support the volunteers and create a sustainable model for the future, these are described below. These improvements have enabled the approach to grow from 68 schemes in 2011 to 140 schemes in 2015.
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Challenges and solutions

- The project has highlighted differences between local resident's understanding of speed limits and police enforcement thresholds: local residents typically want enforcement at any speed over 30mph, whereas the threshold for police enforcement action begins at 36mph. This has required education and the development of options for those areas where speeding thresholds do not meet the criteria, for example speed awareness signage.
- Community speedwatch volunteers have themselves identified a need for further educational work around speeding.
- Another challenge is how to help parishes where the "metrocount" data does not support the introduction of Community speedwatch. A number of these parishes reported a high perception of speeding and some had already recruited volunteers for speedwatch before their eligibility for the scheme was established. As a result, a variety of alternative solutions have been delivered, including: speedwatch signage, devolution of speed limits, 20mph zones, village gate grants, speed indicator devices, the marked enforcement car scheme and the Specials patrols.
- Demand for metrocount surveys is dealt with by the council. As demand has increased, this has impacted on processing times. Demand for the resources needed to support the scheme, such as metrocount strips, speed indicator devices (SIDs), speed guns and speed limit stickers for residents to attach to wheelie bins has increased significantly.
- As community speedwatch is most effective when used intermittently, other initiatives have been developed to sustain deterrence during deployments. These increase the tools available to communities and include: marked car, specials enforcement, village gates scheme, devolved speed limits, 20 mph zones, speed indicator devices, and other innovative solutions.

Lessons Learned

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- Wiltshire's community speedwatch scheme has grown strongly over five years and has resulted in enthusiastic and well targeted volunteer activity which has had a positive impact on speeding in Wiltshire.
- It has been recognised that speedwatch is only one tool available to communities. When combined with the other complementary initiatives developed it becomes much more effective and retains the enthusiasm and support of volunteers.
- Retaining speedwatch volunteers depends many factors – evidence of impact, recognition, support, consultation and engagement. They are the co-producers of the intervention in every sense. Volunteers have been fully engaged and asked to suggest improvements to the scheme and the steering group has acted on their suggestions.
- As the steering group continues to act on volunteer's suggestions the scheme will grow, build on success achieved so far and capture innovations that emerge. This commitment has been reinforced through sessions organised by the Police and Crime Commissioner and Wiltshire Council – including celebration evenings, visits to Police HQ, consultation events and local forums.

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