



**ROADS POLICING AND ROAD SAFETY
A POSITION PAPER**

JANUARY 2004

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INTRODUCTION

In 2002, 3,431 people were killed, 35,976 people were seriously injured and 263,198 people slightly injured on the road.¹ The vast majority of these deaths and injuries were due to dangerous or careless driving (or riding). About one third (1,100) of the deaths were due to speeding. Around 500 deaths were due to drink driving.

Almost all road crashes are caused by, or involve, human error. Therefore, to reduce this appalling toll of loss and injury, it is necessary to influence the way drivers, riders and walkers behave when using the road. There are many ways of influencing behaviour and it is well recognised that the most effective approach is a co-ordinated strategy of:-

Education (including training and publicity) to provide road users with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they choose to use the roads in a safe and responsible manner

Engineering (both road and vehicle) to physically affect the way road users behave (for example, through speed reduction measures)

Enforcement to support and complement education and engineering measures, to specifically target irresponsible, dangerous and unlawful behaviour that puts other road users at risk, and to investigate, and where appropriate take enforcement action.

Road policing is a vital component of the Government's road safety strategy, and plays a key role in saving lives and minimising injury on the road. It must be given its rightful priority by governments and Police Services, and be adequately resourced.

The Police have many priorities (including violent crime, burglary and preventing terrorism) all of which are extremely important issues that concern the public. However, more people are killed on the road than by any other form of crime. In financial terms, road crashes cost around £17 billion per year.

There is a consistent public demand "for higher levels of visible police presence" on our roads. The visible enforcement of road traffic law is an effective deterrent to dangerous behaviour and significantly contributes to enabling people to use the roads safely. If drivers and riders believe there is less chance of being detected and prosecuted, they are more likely to behave dangerously (speeding, tailgating, drink driving, using a mobile phone and so on). Indeed the Government's White Paper on Policing Reform² provides evidence that the likelihood of conviction has more effect on deterring offenders than the severity of sentence.

The purpose of this paper is to

- (a) outline the role and effectiveness of roads policing;
- (b) explore issues related to the level and provision of roads policing;
- (c) develop RoSPA's policy positions in regard to roads policing.

The paper does not address accidents that occur during police pursuits, following or emergency responses.

ROADS POLICING

The enforcement of road traffic laws is primarily the responsibility of the Police, although some areas have been decriminalised and are now the responsibility of the local authorities, for example, parking enforcement. Roads policing includes certain duties devolved from Government Departments, such as the examination and prohibition power in respect of defective vehicles and drivers' hours abuse. The Police also co-operate with other agencies to enforce specialised traffic laws, although these functions may also be carried out separately from other bodies:

- Overweight vehicles (with Trading Standards officials)
- Large Goods and Passenger Carrying vehicles (with VOSA)
- Vehicles carrying dangerous chemicals (with the Health and Safety Executive)
- Red diesel (with HM Customs and Excise)

The police fulfil a wide variety of roles that make a positive contribution to road safety. Roads Policing:

(i) Deters illegal, dangerous and careless behaviour on the road

The visible enforcement of road traffic law is an effective deterrent to dangerous behaviour. If drivers and riders believe there is less chance of being detected and prosecuted, they are more likely to behave dangerously which will mean more road crashes and more deaths and injury. The very presence of a police vehicle has an effect on driver behaviour.

(ii) Detects illegal, dangerous and careless behaviour on the road

The number of convictions for motoring offences demonstrates that there is a high level of illegal activity on the roads. These figures under-estimate the actual number of offences as many are not detected. Higher levels of roads policing will result in more road criminals being detected or deterred with a resulting decrease in collisions and ultimately casualties.

(iii) Identifies offenders

Investigating crashes enables those who have behaved illegally and dangerously to be identified and prosecuted.

(iv) Identifies the causes of crashes

The data collected by the Police enables crash trends to be identified and monitored so that other road safety activity can be targeted appropriately. This data helps to form road safety policy. For example, it identifies topics for education campaigns or research. The Police also advise Highway Authorities on road engineering schemes and road design.

(v) Changes the attitudes of road users

Enforcement plays an important role in educating the road-using-public and helps to change social attitudes. This is best seen in the change in attitudes towards drinking and driving, which is now regarded as anti-social and inexcusable. This has been achieved through a combination of education and enforcement. "Don't Drink and Drive" campaigns would not have been as effective if they had not combined education with enforcement activity (especially roadside breath testing) which increased the perception that drink drivers will get caught, prosecuted and convicted, and the sentences will be severe. However, most other motoring offences are not yet seen as dangerous, anti-social behaviour. For instance, motorists caught speeding are often portrayed as 'unlucky' (or even as victims of unfair police activity) rather than as people behaving in a dangerous and criminal manner.

(vi) Educates road users

The Police work with other agencies to conduct education campaigns. When a new law is to be introduced, the Police will normally be raising awareness in advance, then warn offenders for a short period before starting to issue fines or tickets. The Police are often directly involved in training schemes. A good example is the BikeSafe Scheme to reduce motorcyclist casualties. It involves a range of activities, including rider assessment and training, classroom based courses and high profile policing of casualty locations. The police also co-operate in the National Driver Improvement Scheme in which drivers who would normally face the charge of 'driving without due care and attention' are given the opportunity to attend a course that includes education and in-car driver training.

(vii) Prevents other forms of crime

Targeting traffic offenders detects and disrupts other forms of crime. Research³ shows that traffic offenders are more likely to be involved in other criminal activity and that "targeting serious traffic offenders could be used as a tool to disrupt mainstream crime". The research also states that "traffic officers have a dual role in the detection of both traffic and mainstream criminal offences". Another recent study⁴ found that about 25% of motoring offences are committed by drivers who have also committed non-motoring offences.

viii) Identifies and Removes Dangerous Vehicles

Most Police forces across England and Wales take part in Operation Mermaid (a multi-agency initiative) in which Large Goods Vehicles and other commercial vehicles are checked. Usually, a substantial proportion of the vehicles have serious defects or their drivers have contravened driver's hours regulations. The Operation often finds people who are wanted for other criminal offences.

ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVES

Crash Investigation and Data

The police collect statistical information on reported personal injury collisions by completing a STATS19 form which records information which has been agreed nationally, including details of:

- The circumstances of the crash (when and where, etc)
- The vehicles involved
- The casualties involved (including age, gender, injuries and actions)
- Contributory factors (not always recorded nationally).

Local forms may, in addition, include information which has been agreed locally such as where a child pedestrian goes to school.

STATS19 data from all Police Forces is collated, analysed and published by the Department for Transport. This provides much of the evidence that informs and directs the national road safety strategy. There are some limitations to the data, in particular it is known that not all injury road accidents are reported to the police, especially in the case of pedestrian and cyclist casualties.

The police also produce written reports of road crashes they attend, together with statements by participants and witnesses and sometimes a sketch plan. These can provide extra information which is very useful for investigation purpose. However, they are confidential documents and access to them is restricted because they may be used as evidence in Court.

Road Death Investigation Manual

In December 2001, ACPO published the "Road Deaths Investigation Manual" which is designed to standardise the investigation of fatal road collisions in line with the quality of investigations of murder or homicide. This underlines the importance attributed to a road death. When a fatal crash has occurred, an investigation will take place following the guidance in the Road Death Investigation Manual (RDIM). Some crashes resulting in serious injury will also be investigated in this way.

The RDIM gives comprehensive advice to officers about how to effectively investigate a road death to a national standard. A senior investigating officer is then responsible for deciding if the evidence merits prosecution of anyone involved in the collision. The information produced can also be useful to local authorities by indicating the need for road engineering manager measures or to car manufacturers so the model can be checked for a general defect.

When evidence is collected of a series of similar types of collision this can demonstrate a problem that needs to be addressed locally and perhaps highlighted to the public in a publicity campaign. This may be undertaken by the police, the local authority road safety unit or both.

Traffic Management

The police are an integral part of the traffic management system and liaise closely with local authority engineers and transport planners. They are consulted on road engineering schemes planned by a local authority. In some forces this responsibility has been delegated to a specialist traffic management team who may consist of police officers and/or civilians employed by the police. They provide advice on the likely effect of the road scheme, and whether any particular enforcement activities may be required.

A close working relationship between the police and local authority road safety units is essential in casualty reduction. The police provide essential casualty data and can target specific enforcement activities to coincide with a local authority's road safety programme in the areas of both publicity and engineering.

Road Safety Education

Roads policing plays an important role in educating the road using public and helping to change social attitudes. Changes are achieved when education is combined with enforcement activity, for example the drink drive campaigns of the last 20 years have now made drinking and driving socially unacceptable.

The Police work with other agencies to conduct education campaigns. When a new law is to be introduced, the Police will normally raise awareness in advance, then warn offenders for a short period before starting to issue fines or tickets. The Police are often directly involved in training schemes. Good examples are the BikeSafe and the National Driver Improvement Schemes.

The police often participate in public education campaigns and may be invited to liaise with schools. Some Forces are involved in driver education and driver rehabilitation courses. It is important that the safety activities of the police are co-ordinated with, and are mutually supportive of, the work done by others.

Scotland Education Campaigns

The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) in partnership with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Road Safety Campaign, organise and promote road safety awareness campaigns. In recent years these campaigns have included Speedwatch in April, Summer Safety in August and Festive Safety over the Christmas and New Year period. The campaigns provide the eight police forces in Scotland with the opportunity to work together and raise awareness of key road safety messages.

Scottish Summer Road Safety Campaign

For several years all Scottish Forces have run a two or three week campaign during the summer to tackle the three major causation factors in road collisions; speeding, drink-driving and failing to wear a seat belt. The campaign uses high-profile policing, road-checks and intelligence-led operational patrols to target offenders and provide a deterrent effect.

Speedwatch

This campaign has been running for several years and aims to reduce the number of deaths and injuries on Scotland's roads caused by excessive and inappropriate speed. Each year, over a two week period, officers across the eight forces in Scotland, use the latest technical equipment and intelligence-led and high profile patrols to crackdown on speeding drivers. This is coupled with a publicity campaign to increase public awareness of the dangers associated with this behaviour. Enforcement is increased at locations where speed has been identified as a major causation factor in crashes.

Safety Cameras

Cameras are a very effective way of enforcing speed limits at accident hotspots.

Since speed and red-light enforcement cameras were first deployed in the early 1990s research has proved that they are an effective means of reducing speed and casualties. A Home Office study in 1996⁵ concluded that the full benefits of cameras were not being realised due to budgetary constraints. Therefore, a cost recovery system for safety cameras was introduced in eight pilot areas in Great Britain in April 2000. This allows safety camera partnerships between police forces, local authorities and other public bodies to be reimbursed for the capital and revenue costs of safety camera operations from the fines revenue collected from offenders. The approach is intended to be cost neutral to each partnership.

The two-year pilot evaluation report⁶, published in February 2003, demonstrated that the scheme has been successful in reducing casualties and speed at camera sites - deaths and serious injuries at the camera sites have fallen by 35%. The evaluation also found that generally the level of public support for safety cameras is high.

The financial benefits to society, in terms of the value of casualties saved, are estimated to be in the region of £112m for the first two years. The success of the pilot study has resulted in the scheme being 'rolled-out' nationally.

Cameras provided evidence for 1.1 million offences in 2001, an increase of 39% on 2000. They provided evidence for 72% of all the speeding offences dealt with, the majority of which resulted in fixed penalty notices being issued.¹

Drink and Drug Drive Campaigns

About one in every six people killed on the roads, die in an accident where a driver or rider was over the drink drive limit. There were 530 drink-drive deaths in 2001 and provisional estimates for 2002 suggest around 560 people were killed. In addition, around 2,700 people were seriously injured in drink-drive accidents in 2001 and an estimated 2,800 in 2002. In total, there were around 18,800 drink-drive casualties in 2001 and the provisional estimate for 2002 is over 20,000 - the highest level since 1990.¹

The police can require a person to take a breath test, if they have reasonable cause to suspect that they have been driving or attempting to drive with alcohol in their body, that they have committed a moving traffic offence, or been involved in an accident. A person failing to provide a breath test is guilty of an offence, unless there is a reasonable excuse.

623,900 screening breath tests were carried out during 2001 which was 13% fewer than in 2000. The number of positive or refused tests in 2001 rose by 5% since 2000 and the proportion of tests positive or refused was higher than in 2000 and the highest proportion since 1992.¹

It is possible that because only around a quarter of drink-drive convictions arise after an injury crash (the remainder coming from non-injury collisions, traffic offences and suspicion of alcohol incidents) discretionary road stops by police have fallen in recent years with attention focused on injury-crashes where breath testing is routine.⁷

Illegal drugs and driving is a growing problem. Around 18% of people killed in road crashes have traces of illegal drugs in their blood, this is a six-fold increase since the mid 1980's.⁸ In 2001 a Scottish Executive report estimated the prevalence of driving whilst under the influence of recreational drugs among 17 to 39 year old drivers in Scotland.⁹ An RAC survey found that young motorists are more likely to have taken illicit drugs than to be under the influence of alcohol. It is therefore likely that taking drugs before driving is increasing in line with the pervasiveness of legal and illegal drug usage in society generally.

Although the timing of drink-drive initiatives is a matter for chief officers and police authorities, there is a national campaign at Christmas and the New Year. Results for the 2002-2003 ACPO campaign show a 20% reduction in injury collisions over the same period the previous year which continued the downward trend and was 22% lower than in 1997, when the current method of recording data began. For the 2002-2003 campaign there were 5,242 injury collisions reported to the police during the 15 days that the campaign ran. Police in England & Wales administered 12,402 breath tests following collisions during the campaign and 1080 of these were positive, an 8.71% hit rate. This percentage of drivers tested positive after collisions has remained relatively steady since 1997.

Seat Belt Campaigns

Usually, these are local initiatives delivered by partnership working between a police force and a local authority road safety unit and including both education and enforcement. Sometimes campaigns are driven by casualty statistics. For example in north Essex, the policing unit noticed that the number of crashes had fallen, but the number of casualties had increased. Further investigation revealed a large number of drivers and passengers were not wearing their seatbelts. Officers, therefore, targeted the area and stopped 120 vehicles with 145 occupants who were not wearing seat belts. Offenders were given the choice of a £30 fixed penalty notice or spending time watching an in-car safety video of a car crash at 30mph and talking to a road safety officer. When the exercise was repeated a week later just 35 offenders were detected over the same period of time.

Enforcement campaigns may also be linked with national publicity campaigns. The Department for Transport's THINK! road safety publicity campaign focuses on education and awareness about seat belt wearing about 3 or 4 times each year. Many forces throughout the country co-ordinate increased enforcement of the seat belt laws to coincide with the publicity campaigns. For example in March 2003, at a time when the DfT were running a radio advert about seat belt wearing, Leicestershire police targeted drivers not wearing belts. Officers stopped 436 drivers and issued fixed penalty notices levying a £30 fine on offenders.

National Driver Improvement Scheme

The police can refer drivers involved in a blameworthy collision, and who would normally face the charge of 'driving without due care and attention' for inclusion in this scheme as an alternative to prosecution before the courts. The scheme has an element of education in it and attempts to reduce recidivism.

A short-term psychological assessment of the scheme showed an improvement in driver attitudes and self-reported behaviour in the three months following the course.¹⁰ A longer-term study is currently evaluating the effectiveness of the scheme in terms of re-offending and accident rates.¹¹

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

Video cameras record the number plates of passing vehicles and a computer checks them against a database which contains the registration number of vehicles that are, for example, stolen, untaxed, uninsured or have been used in crime. When a match is found, the system alerts the controller who then decides what action to take. The purpose is to deny criminals the use of the road by allowing officers to stop vehicles in a focused way rather than indiscriminately.

ACPO initiated Project Laser which established ANPR as a pilot in nine forces to assess its effectiveness and whether it could be self-funding through hypothecation. The pilots concluded in March 2003. There were in excess of 100 arrests per officer per year, ten times the national average. 328 stolen vehicles were recovered, with stolen goods also recovered on 101 occasions and drugs seized on 211 occasions. With a 10-fold increase recorded in arrest rates among patrol officers, for robbery, drugs, burglary and vehicle offences, indications are that the pilots have been successful. In the West Midlands the 12-month trial led to 1,662 arrests, with 34 for robbery, 376 for theft, 27 for burglary and 200 for drug offences. Over £500,000 of stolen property and 64 stolen vehicles were recovered. 600 defective vehicles were impounded and 2,000 cases of vehicle excise duty evasion were reported.

As a result, on 1 April 2003, the ANPR Programme Board selected 23 forces for inclusion in the second phase of Project Laser. This commenced on 1 June 2003 and allowed ANPR activity to be part-funded by hypothecated fixed penalty revenue. ACPO hope to have a dedicated ANPR capability in every Basic Command Unit by March 2005.

Vehicle Safety - Operation Mermaid

Operation Mermaid is series of multi-agency nationwide initiatives to tackle dangerous vehicles which involves the Police Service, VOSA, H.M Customs and Excise, the Benefits Agency, Immigration Service and the Environment Agency. It mostly targets large goods vehicles and other commercial vehicles. At the beginning of 2003, over 2000 vehicles were stopped; 51% were found to be defective, 84 drivers were found to have contravened driver's hours regulations. 37 people were arrested for various criminal offences, including five disqualified drivers, a small number of illegal immigrants and a couple of people wrongfully claiming benefits. Several stolen vehicles were removed.

BikeSafe

Bikesafe is a nationwide multi-agency initiative involving forces across the UK, Local Authorities, the British Motorcyclists' Federation and the Motorcycle Action Group. Its aim is to reduce motorcyclist casualties using a combination of education and enforcement. The initiative began in 2000 as concern grew about the number of deaths and serious injuries amongst motorcyclists coupled with an increase in the use of two-wheeled motor vehicles.

It includes assessed rides, classroom based courses, publicity through local dealers, and high profile policing of high theft hot spots and casualty locations.

Bikesafe Scotland

The British Motorcyclists' Federation, The Motorcycle Action Group, The Scottish Road Safety Campaign and every police force in Scotland collaborate on this initiative. Following the success of the pilot 'Scheme of Assessed Rides' in the Strathclyde and Grampian areas, the scheme has been formally adopted and expanded to include the whole of Scotland. It aims to reduce motorcycle crashes through education, encouragement and enforcement.

Research commissioned by the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Road Safety Campaign to evaluate the initiative involved a before and after survey of motorcyclists who took part in the Bikesafe Scotland Assessed Ride programme in 2002 and those who took part in Bikesafe in 2001. It found that the number of motorcyclists killed or injured on Scottish roads has been increasing since 1997 and that motorcyclists 30 years old accounted for an increasing proportion of casualties. The scheme does seem to be successful in attracting the 'vulnerable' groups of motorcyclists, such as born again bikers and riders who passed their test through the Direct Access scheme. The research indicated that participating in the assessed ride programme has a beneficial impact in terms of improving participants' control and encouraging them to ride defensively.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour on the Roads

In 2003, West Midlands Police implemented operation 'Red Flag' to tackle the problem of 'cruising' and 'racing' on the streets. The problem was specific to a couple of locations where drivers congregated in their high-powered, modified vehicles to execute dangerous stunts and manoeuvres and travel at high speeds on public roads. Using new powers to seize vehicles that are being driven anti-socially following a warning, officers swooped on the problem areas, having first carried out surveillance. Officers then collaborated with the organisers of the 'cruise' events culminating in a cruise being held at a suitable venue away from public roads.

Preventing Other Crime

Home Office research³ examined whether those who commit serious traffic offences are normally law-abiding members of the public or whether they are likely to have committed other types of criminal offence. It concluded:

- Drink drivers were about twice as likely to have previous convictions as would be expected in the general population. However the criminal history of a drink-driver was less extensive than for any other group of offenders examined and drink-drivers usually appeared in court for only that offence, rather than a number of offences, leading the report to conclude that drink driving was not closely associated with criminal offending.
- Disqualified drivers had criminal histories similar to those of mainstream offenders
- Dangerous drivers showed less involvement with crime than disqualified drivers but more than drink-drivers.

The report noted that targeting serious traffic offenders could be used as a tool to disrupt mainstream crime and highlights the dual role that traffic officers have in the detection of traffic offences as well as mainstream crime.

A recent study¹² into whether a driver's willingness to commit motoring offences tends to be associated with a willingness to commit other types of offence found that about one quarter of motoring offences committed are committed by drivers who have also committed non-motoring offences. The proportion was much lower for women (3%). A similar effect was found with drink-driving, but for dangerous driving the proportion was over one half and for driving while disqualified it was three-quarters. Again, by detecting motoring offences it is reasonable to assume that other criminal offences will be also be detected.

There is also evidence to show that stolen cars are around four times more likely to be involved in a crash resulting in injury, than a legitimately driven car. Crashes involving stolen cars were also more likely to involve serious injury than collisions generally.¹³ Detection and recovery of stolen vehicles is therefore a very important part of road policing and will assist in the fight to reduce casualty numbers and casualty severity.

THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO ROADS POLICING

The first principle of policing is the protection of life. The Statement of Common Purpose and Values published by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in 1990 and adopted nationally includes the phrase "... to protect, help and reassure the community." This is the primary reason for police involvement in road safety and why the responsibility for the day to day control of the roads rests with the Police Service

Since 1994, the Home Secretary has set key objectives for policing in England and Wales. For many years the objectives did not reflect all aspects of policing and roads policing was not a core function of the Police (except in Northern Ireland, where it is a core function of the Police Service of Northern Ireland). It is only very recently that this has changed, following the publication of the National Policing Plan (page 12).

The importance of road policing was recognised by the Government in its road safety strategy "Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for Everyone"¹⁴. The strategy was launched by the Prime Minister in March 2000 and sets targets for reducing deaths and serious injuries on the road by 2010. A chapter of the strategy is devoted to the importance of enforcement in achieving these targets. The strategy notes that enforcing the law is an essential part of reducing road casualties and the police have a central role in improving road safety.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Thematic Report on Road Policing and Traffic (1998)¹⁵ examined how road policing was being carried out in England and Wales. The report highlighted the link between traffic policing and other aspects of police work and the importance of consistency of approaches between police forces. It stated:

"It is disappointing that many forces have not seen road policing as a priority, despite the cost to society of death and injury and the ever increasing traffic volumes".

The report recognised that at service delivery level there were highly skilled and well-motivated officers who had good ideas about how to improve roads policing. However, the failure of chief constables to see roads policing as an integral part of core policing, according to the Inspectorate, resulted in an inefficient use of these officers. The report recommended a model for effective, intelligence driven roads policing.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) subsequently agreed that HMIC's concern over the lack of priority in the late 1990's was justified but ACPO now feels that roads policing in general and casualty reduction in particular is seen by the service as core policing. ACPO has made efforts to ensure that the issue of roads policing and the police service's role in road safety have not been overlooked. ACPO offers guidance on this issue which chief constables, who are operationally independent, can decide whether or not to adopt.

Since 1996 ACPO has published a National Roads Policing Strategy (NRPS), which has now been replaced by the Modern Road Policing Manifesto (page 13). The strategic aim of the earlier Strategy was "To secure an environment where the individual can use the roads with confidence, free from death, injury, damage or fear". This was supported by three key objectives:-

- Safer Vehicles
- Safer Roads
- Improved Road User Behaviour

The operational priorities of the Strategy with the most potential for improving road safety and reducing road casualties were identified as 'speed', 'drink driving' and 'seat belt wearing'.

An important step in raising the priority of roads policing was the publication in December 2001 of the ACPO Road Deaths Investigation Manual (page 4) which stated :

"Dealing with road death is core police work and it is the view of ACPO that national criteria should exist to enable the whole police service to work to a consistent standard of investigation."

At the same time, the Home Office published a white paper entitled 'Policing a New Century: A Blueprint for Reform'¹. This set out major proposals for reform designed to improve the performance of the police service and increase the support for police officers. The paper noted, amongst other things, that police officers everywhere are committed professionals but commented that the performance of police forces and local Basic Command Units (BCUs) varied nationwide. The Audit Commission had previously highlighted this problem pointing to the lack of consistency between the best and worst performing forces.

However, the white paper made no reference to roads policing and failed to identify or place any importance on the issue of road crime. This omission illustrated the concern that roads policing, despite the best efforts of ACPO, was not seen as a priority by the Home Office. This was further confirmed when the Home Office proposed to abolish the Best Value Performance Indicators 132 (BVPI 132) which is the only performance indicator related to roads policing. This proposal was implemented and the Home Office is currently, as a result of the National Policing Plan, developing the Policing Performance Assessment Framework which should be in place by April 2004 and will replace BVPIs.

Following the White Paper, the Police Reform Bill 2002 was introduced. Significantly for road safety the provisions of the Act include:

- Introduction of an Annual Policing Plan setting out the Government's strategic priorities for policing over the coming year and a requirement for police authorities to produce a three-year strategy plan consistent with the national policing plan.
- A provision enabling chief officers to designate police authority support staff as Community Support Officers, investigating officers, detention officers or escort officers in order to support police officers in tackling low level crime and anti-social behaviour and to free up officers for front line duties.
- Introduction of arrangements for the accreditation of members of the 'extended police family', for example neighbourhood and street wardens.
- Modification of certain police powers including conferring a power on a medical practitioner to take a blood sample from an unconscious driver.
- Enhancement of police powers to deal with the anti-social use of motor vehicles on public roads or off-road, to include a power to seize the vehicle or motorcycle in addition to powers for accredited community safety officers to remove broken down, illegally parked or abandoned vehicles.

THE NATIONAL POLICING PLAN

In accordance with Section 1 of the Police Reform Act 2002, the first annual National Policing Plan¹⁶ for the police service in England and Wales was published by the Home Secretary in November 2002. This was updated a year later and the second National Policing Plan¹⁷ which sets the strategic national priorities for policing from 2004 to 2007 was published in November 2003. The Plan sets out how the Police Service will contribute towards the delivery of the Home Office's Public Service Agreements (PSA 1 and PSA 2), which are:

PSA 1

Reduce crime and the fear of crime: improve performance overall, including by reducing the gap between the highest crime CDRP (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) areas and the best comparable areas; and reduce:

- *Vehicle crime by 30% from 1998-99 to 2004*
- *Domestic burglary by 25% from 1998-99 to 2005*
- *Robbery in the ten Street Crime Initiative areas by 14% from 1999-2000 to 2005.*
- *And maintain that level.*

PSA 2

Improve the performance of all police forces, and significantly reduce the performance gap between the best and worst performing forces; and significantly increase the proportion of time spent on frontline duties.

Through the National Policing Plan, the Government has set a number of overriding priorities which should be at the forefront of the police service's work for the period 2004 – 2007, and should form the basis on which all forces and authorities develop their own local policing plans. They should also inform the priorities and activities of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Local Criminal Justice Boards, and other relevant local bodies. The priorities set out in the National Policing Plan 2004 – 2007 are:

- providing a citizen focused service to the public, especially victims and witnesses, which responds to the needs of individuals and communities and inspires confidence in the police particularly amongst minority ethnic communities;
- tackling anti-social behaviour and disorder;
- continuing to reduce burglary, vehicle crime, robbery and drug-related crime in line with the Government's Public Service Agreement targets;
- combating serious and organised crime, both across and within force boundaries; and
- narrowing the justice gap by increasing the number of offences brought to justice.

The Plan also sets two themes which the Government expects all forces to address:

- community engagement and civil renewal
- countering terrorism and the threat of terrorism.

Roads Policing in the National Policing Plan

The first National Policing Plan included the following statement about roads policing:

"Roads policing

3.39: *Road traffic policing has an important role to play in reaching the Government's targets for 2010 of reducing deaths and injuries on the roads by 40%, child deaths and serious injuries by 50% and slight casualties by 10% when compared with the average figures for 1994-98. Such work has an additional benefit in crime reduction terms since research has shown a clear link between road traffic offences and the commission of other crimes. Vehicles detected by ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) for road traffic offences may be of interest to the police for other reasons too.*

- ***Forces and authorities should include in their local policing plans targeted and intelligence led strategies for reducing deaths and injuries on the roads and achieving a safe environment for all road users."***

This was the first time that the Home Office had given a clear and unequivocal statement that road policing is a key issue for the police service and part of its core work. Its inclusion was seen as very important to professionals and organisations engaged in trying to reduce road death and injury and improve the road environment for all road users.

The second National Policing Plan includes a similar statement:

"Roads policing

It is expected that the police will play a full role in the Government's Road Safety Strategy and the achievement of targets for casualty reduction by 2010. Local strategic and annual policing plans should include targeted and intelligence-led strategies for reducing death and serious injury on the roads. The Government remains convinced that the National Safety Camera Scheme is effective in reducing speed related death and injury and forces are encouraged to support the scheme. The Government continues to be concerned by the level of drink and drug driving and will bring forward further measures to help the police in combating those serious offences, particularly roadside evidential testing for alcohol."

The Police Reform Act 2002 also requires Chief Police Officers and Police Authorities to prepare three year strategy plans and annual policing plans. There is a list of 51 actions in the National Plan that chief officers and police authorities should take account of in local policing plans. Under the heading 'tackling crime effectively', action 27 states:

- ***"Forces and authorities should include in their local policing plans targeted and intelligence led strategies for reducing deaths and injuries on the roads and achieving a safe environment for all road users."***

ACPO's 'Modern Road Policing: A Manifesto for the Future'¹⁸ (which replaced the ACPO National Road Policing Strategy) acknowledged that road policing had in recent years been the poor relation of British policing and that much will have to change to ensure that road policing is a critical component of core police work.

The manifesto states that four tasks will be focussed upon, namely:-

- Enforcing the Law: The intention expressed is to use the police National Intelligence Model (NIM) to focus enforcement activity in order to detect, disrupt and challenge criminal use of the roads.
- Promoting Road Safety: ACPO will actively support the government's Road Safety Strategy and in particular will develop and enhance the national Safety Camera Scheme to ensure that the 2010 targets are met or exceeded.
- Investigating Incidents: ACPO anticipate that the adoption and development of the national Road Death Investigation Manual will result, where appropriate, in more serious charges being laid in court in future. Collision investigation will contribute to safer road and vehicle design and improved traffic law enforcement and compliance.
- Patrolling the Roads: ACPO recognise that there is a clear and justified public demand for a visible reassuring police presence on the roads.

Tenure

The value of road policing should be reflected in the career structure of the Police Service, so that officers do not feel they need to leave traffic departments to progress their careers. The policy of tenure (keeping officers in specialised roles for only limited periods) in terms of road policing officers who require and develop highly specialised skills should be reviewed. The loss of such skills and experience, either due to officers being moved to other duties or to a general reduction in the numbers of road policing officers, is likely to be harmful to the provision of effective roads policing. Again, this is an issue which should be researched and evaluated.

THE LEVEL OF ROAD POLICING

There are fifty-one police forces in Great Britain. Traditionally police forces operated a centralised traffic unit which was responsible for road law enforcement across the entire force area. Some forces then devolved responsibility for road policing to base command units, these are responsible for all the policing in a specific part of the force area. This has resulted in variations across the country in the level of road policing depending on the priorities set locally.

There is little evidence to show which method of organising roads policing is more effective in casualty reduction. A Home Office study in 1994¹⁹ examined the traffic policing activities of six police forces. It found that traffic policing was structured in different ways, although generally forces tended to adopt either a centralised or a decentralised structure. In the centralised structure, the Force tended to have a separate traffic division that managed the traffic officers, whereas in the decentralised structure traffic officers tended to be attached to Basic Command Units. The report found that both structures had advantages and disadvantages, and which structure was most appropriate depended on a number of factors, such as the force's geography, objectives and traffic conditions.

Centralised structures helped to retain and develop specialist traffic skills, resources could be deployed as efficiently as required and targeted at specific traffic related tasks rather than general police work. This structure seemed to help forces maintain consistent roads policing objectives and policy. However, there was some evidence that this structure may be more expensive.

Decentralised structures provided an extra pool of staff who could be deployed according to local requirements, and was better able to support local divisional objectives. The report also found that inter-departmental barriers were less likely when traffic officers were integrated into local divisions. However, traffic officers were more likely to be used for general policing activities and specialist skills were being lost.

Given the importance of roads policing, and the level of public funds devoted to it, the Home Office should commission research to evaluate the most effective methods of delivering a roads policing service.

Best Practice is an integral part of the police service and it is important that best practice in roads policing is established and disseminated. It is vital that forces are aware of operational strategies that have succeeded in reducing casualties and road and other crime.

The visible enforcement of road traffic law is an effective deterrent to dangerous behaviour on the road and significantly contributes to enabling people to use the roads safely. If drivers and riders believe there is less chance of being detected and prosecuted, they are more likely to behave dangerously (by speeding, close following, drink driving, using a mobile phone and so on) which will mean more road crashes and more deaths and injury on the road. The likelihood of conviction has more effect on deterring offenders than the severity of sentence. ACPO in their road policing manifesto acknowledge that there is a clear and justified public demand for a visible reassuring police presence on the roads.

Effective road policing requires adequate police resources. The HMIC Thematic report on road policing identified considerable variations between forces in the numbers of officers assigned to road policing and in the tasks they undertake. A Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) report²⁰ raised concerns that resources for road policing had not kept pace with increases in traffic and had also suffered as a result of the failure of road policing to be considered as a central element of policing in general. It recommended that the Home Office ensure that an adequate police presence on the roads is maintained to enable feedback on casualty reduction issues to continue to be provided to drivers.

The Government's response stated that the deployment of police officers is an operational matter for chief officers of police and it is for them to determine the size of deployment on the roads. It added that whilst the presence of officers on the road does provide one means of providing feedback to drivers, it is not necessarily the most effective or efficient means of doing so.

ACPO believe that it is difficult to quantify whether there has been a reduction in officers assigned to roads policing because of the way that HMIC classify police service staff. This changed in 1999-2000 so that some officers who were previously classified as deployed to traffic duties, are now recorded as deployed to duties relating to traffic wardens. However, there are figures available from the Home Office.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
 "Roads Policing and Road Safety"
 A Position Paper – January 2004

Table 1 sets out the percentage change in number of officers deployed on traffic duties for each English police force area. Total road police numbers appear to have dropped by some 11% over this period.

Table 1: % change in number of officers deployed on traffic duties by force area between 1997 and 2001²¹

Force Area	% change in number of officers deployed on traffic duties 1997-2001	
	Increase	Decrease
Avon and Somerset	No change	
Bedfordshire		22
Cambridgeshire		5
Cheshire		8
City of London		25
Cleveland		23
Cumbria		5
Derbyshire		2
Devon & Cornwall		6
Dorset		7
Durham		2
Dyfed-Powys		7
Essex		7
Gloucestershire		17
Greater Manchester		1
Gwent		4
Hampshire		8
Hertfordshire	7	
Humberside		12
Kent		30
Lancashire		48
Leicestershire	12	
Lincolnshire		7
Merseyside		34
Met Police		17
Norfolk	2	
North Wales	2	
North Yorkshire	1	
Northamptonshire		46
Northumbria		4
Nottinghamshire		1
South Wales	53	
South Yorkshire	4	
Staffordshire		83
Suffolk		7
Surrey	12	
Sussex		8
Thames Valley		8
Warwickshire		6
West Mercia	35	
West Midlands		8
Yorkshire	6	
Wiltshire		5

In 2002, considerable concern was expressed when the Metropolitan Police Authority diverted a large number of traffic officers in nine London Boroughs onto other duties for three months during Operation Safer Streets. During the Operation, 315 officers were moved from traffic duties to tackle street crime, and were returned to their 'normal' traffic duties at the end of phase one on 1 April 2002.

There is some evidence that an increase in the number of people killed on the roads over the previous year may have been linked to a 50% reduction in officers deployed to traffic duties for the same period.²² However, this contrasts with the evidence reported by HMIC in their inspection into the Metropolitan Police Service in 2002/2003²³ when they reported a 5.6% decrease in collisions resulting in death or serious injury compared to the previous year (although the number of people killed in road collisions did remain the same between the two years). HMIC were disappointed that the Metropolitan Police Authority could not provide detailed information on recent trends in traffic enforcement and urged them to address this as soon as possible.

HMIC congratulated the MPA for maintaining high levels of performance and victim satisfaction in the area of roads policing, despite a significant diversion of resources to support the 'Safer Streets' campaign during 2001/02. HMIC felt that this demonstrated the ability to target road policing and crime hotspots in an 'integrated and mutually supporting fashion'.

Another explanation for the apparent drop in numbers of traffic officers may be the increasing use of technology, such as safety cameras, which improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of roads policing. However, a House of Commons Select Committee highlighted concerns about this:

"Safety Cameras are of little use in catching or deterring drivers travelling at inappropriate speed or unlicensed drivers. Moreover, cameras paid for under the scheme can only be used at sever accident blackspots. The police must ensure that there are adequate numbers of traffic police to deter:

- *Inappropriate speed;*
- *Unlicensed drivers; and*
- *Drivers who speed at places away from the accident blackspots where cameras will be located.*

*There should be no further reduction in the numbers of traffic police.*²⁴

The Government's response to the Select Committee indicated that there was no evidence to suggest that police operational priorities had been distorted by the use of safety cameras. In fact, the Government felt that the use of speed cameras, which operate at all times and act as a continuous deterrent to speeding, can free up police resources to deal with other road traffic enforcement issues.²⁵

In responding to the House of Commons Select Committee's report on road traffic speed the Government expressed the view that the importance given to traffic policing should not be measured solely by the number of dedicated traffic officers. Instead they advocated an intelligence-led approach to road policing which they felt could allow a decrease in the number of traffic officers whilst at the same time increasing their effectiveness. The Government also noted that in some areas traffic policing is integrated with other work and therefore may not be as distinctively evident, with some functions being completed by non-police officers.²²

There is a growing move to supplement Police resources with the use of non-police personnel to carry out some duties that were previously the preserve of the police.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

Police Community Support Officers are police authority employed civilian support staff. They were introduced by the Police Reform Act 2002 and forces have just started to use them. One of the main aims is to provide a visible presence on the street. They are intended to focus on 'lower level' crime and crack down on anti-social behaviour and nuisance in the community. The types of powers that can be conferred on a PCSO are:-

- Issuing fixed penalty notices for cycling on the pavement
- Removal of abandoned vehicles
- Power to stop a vehicle for testing
- Direct and control traffic (in the same way as a traffic warden)
- Control of the traffic for the purposes of escorting an abnormal load
- Completing the administration at a road block

Police Forces using PCSOs state that they are not a replacement for police officers but an additional resource to deal with many of the tasks that do not require the experience or powers held by officers but which often take officers away from more appropriate duties.²⁶

Highways Agency Traffic Officers

Plans were announced in June 2003 by the Department for Transport, the Home Office and the Highways Agency to introduce Highways Agency Traffic Officers. Uniformed Highways Agency traffic officers will patrol motorways with new powers to deal with traffic diversions, manage incidents, restore roads to use after crashes and ensure the smooth running of the network. The Highways Agency will be responsible for setting message signs and signals for traffic diversions and incidents and adapting speed limits. It will also be responsible for co-ordinating the transport of heavy loads, answering emergency roadside calls and dealing with abandoned, damaged and broken-down vehicles.

The police will continue to be responsible for collision investigation and law enforcement. A new network of regional control offices, operated jointly by the Highways Agency and the police, will be set up to manage traffic and incident responses. The first control office will cover the West Midlands and is expected to be operational by 2004.

The Government and ACPO believe that transferring a range of network management issues from the police to uniformed Highways Agency staff will allow a speedier co-ordinated response to road incidents while allowing the police to concentrate on their core tasks. The Police Federation of England and Wales are concerned that the use of non-police personnel may create several problems:

- Potential for competence creep – ie. the conferring of what should remain exclusively policing powers
- Confusion from jurisdiction concerns – demarcation between police and other non-law enforcement officers
- Fragmentation of road policing. If some of the current responsibilities of roads police officers are transferred to non-police personnel there will be a drain in officers experience and appreciation for wider road policing issues.

Another concern is that the priority of the Highways Agency staff will be to clear the motorway and get traffic moving as quickly as possible. This could, potentially, mean that crash sites are cleared by the Highways Agency before the Police have had the opportunity to collect what evidence they need, or to decide whether a thorough investigation of the site is required. Appropriate training for the Highways Agency staff is essential, and must include strong guidance on ensuring that they do not inadvertently hamper the activities of the Police. Good co-ordination between the Police and the Highways Agency staff will clearly be essential, and every crash or incident scene should have an 'officer in charge'.

Freight Transport and road haulage organisations are also concerned about private contractors, rather than police, being used to escort normal loads on the road.

Effects of the reduction in traffic officers

It is not possible to show how the reduction in officers engaged in roads policing has affected road casualties or road crime. The Police Federation of England and Wales strongly believes that a reduction in traffic officers, all other things being equal, will lead to an increase in the number of traffic incidents.

The Police Numbers Task Force which was established in 2001 to look at the problems with data on police numbers, recognised that there exists a need for broader resource information in order to understand better the efficiency and effectiveness of the deployment of police resources. The task force noted that an appropriate understanding of the effective use of police forces cannot solely focus on the total number of officers available for duty.²⁷

The HMIC report¹⁵ identified an intelligence-led model for roads policing, integrating traffic policing with other core activities and making more effective use of police resources. An intelligence-led approach, plus the use of cameras and other technology would allow the level of enforcement to be maintained or increased with the same level of staffing resource.

It may prove helpful to transfer some duties to properly trained and managed non-police personnel if this enables the police to increase the resources devoted to traffic law enforcement and collision investigation. However, if this sort of transfer simply diminishes the roads police presence, this would be to the detriment of road safety.

Measuring Roads Policing Performance

The Home Secretary has ultimate responsibility for policing and police performance is regulated and assessed through a system of audit and inspection.

Currently the Home Office measures performance against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs), including BVPI 132: the number of road collisions involving death or injury per 1000 population. This is the only performance indicator that relates to roads policing. These indicators have to be included in local policing plans, they show trends and allow comparisons to be drawn between forces.

A new Police Standards Unit has been created to address the variances in the delivery of the police service nationwide. The Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) is being developed by the Home Office with police forces and authorities, ACPO, the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and others. It will be introduced from April 2004, and will replace the current Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) as the means of monitoring performance. Six performance areas will be monitored: citizen focus; helping the public; reducing crime; investigating crime; promoting public service and resource usage. In the interim, the Home Office has published the first set of Police Performance Monitors, which represent a method for displaying in diagram form, the relative performance levels of a police force across a range of key policing activities and allow comparisons to be made between similar forces.

HMIC has been charged, since April 2001, with scrutinising the performance of each of the 300 Base Command Unit (BCU) in England and Wales over a three year cycle. BCU inspections focus specifically upon leadership and performance against key crime indicators, they do not specifically scrutinise road policing. HMIC also is responsible for inspecting all completed Best Value Reviews. HMIC has not recently undertaken work which would provide a composite national picture with regards to roads policing. The 1998 Thematic Inspection¹⁵ remains its most recent publication on the subject.

Motoring Offences

10.5 million motoring offences were dealt with by official police action or penalty charge notice in 2001, an increase of 5% on 2000, and the highest number recorded. Half of these offences were penalty charge notices issued by local authority parking attendants (an increase of 14% from the previous year, reflecting the increasing number of local authorities using these powers), and 29% of the offences were dealt with by fixed penalty notices issued by the police (including traffic wardens). Only 19% of offences were dealt with by court proceedings, a decrease of 2% on the figures for 2000.²⁸

Casualties

Road casualties are falling and progress towards achieving the road casualty reduction targets by the year 2010 is very good. It is not possible to assess the proportion of these reductions that are due to roads policing. However, the national camera safety scheme is producing casualty savings of around 35%.

Table 2: All Casualties GB 2002¹

	Number			2002: % change over	
	1994-98 Ave	2001	2002	2001	1994-98 Ave
Fatal	3,578	3,450	3,431	-1	-4
Serious	44,078	37,110	35,976	-3	-18
Slight	272,272	272,749	263,198	-4	-3
All	319,928	313,309	302,605	-3	-5
Traffic*	4,458	4,776	4,919**	2	10

* 100 million vehicle kilometres

** estimated

By 2000, 733,500 speed limit offences had been caught on camera. However, there has been a decline in the detection of other motoring offences that cannot be caught by the cameras, for example, drink driving, dangerous and careless driving. In 1991 (before cameras were introduced) 12,200 offences of dangerous driving were detected, by 2000 this figure had fallen to 9,200 offences²⁹. This could be explained by improvements in driving behaviour although there is no evidence to support this.

Table 3 shows the changes in numbers of motoring offences dealt with by official police action between 1990 and 2000. In all categories of offences, except speeding, there has been a reduction in the number of offences dealt with. The reduction in obstruction, waiting and parking offences can be explained by the decriminalisation of some parking offences which are not dealt with by penalty charge notices issued by local authorities and not the police. The huge increase in speed limit offences dealt with is due to the use of safety cameras.

Table 3: Motor vehicle offences: findings of guilt at all courts, fixed penalty notices and written warnings: by type of offence: England and Wales: 1990-2000³⁰

Offence Type	Thousands of offences		
	1990	2000	%change
Dangerous, careless or drunken driving	232	144	-38%
Accident offences	39	18	-54%
Speed limit offences	624	1,188	+90%
Unauthorised taking or theft of motor vehicles	66	32	-52%
Licence, insurance and record keeping offences	796	785	-1%
Vehicle test and condition offences	253	243	-4%
Neglect of traffic signs, directions and pedestrians rights	325	232	-29%
Obstruction, waiting and parking offences	5,347	1,611	-70%
Other offences (except obstruction, waiting etc)	335	315	-6%
All offences	8,017	4,569	-43%

Home Office figures show that in England and Wales in 1991, 12,200 motorists were prosecuted for dangerous driving. In 2001 this figure had dropped by 21% to 9,600. Similarly, 128,800 prosecutions for careless driving in 1991 had fallen by 29% to 91,700 in 2001. A direct relationship between the reduction in the number of road policing officers and these changes cannot be proven. ACPO also point to the fact that some road crime that is detected and dealt with do not appear in the statistics above because the driver is given the option of completing a driver improvement course, rather than going to court.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENFORCEMENT

The effectiveness of enforcement campaigns can be measured by recording changes in the crashes and casualties, public awareness, compliance with particular regulations or by recording the amount of Officer time spent on certain activities. However, there are few research studies about the effectiveness of enforcement.

Each force analyses and evaluates its own initiatives and campaigns in whatever ways it feels are appropriate, which makes it difficult to assess whether the way in which one force targets a particular problem is better than the way in which another force does. Comparative data of this nature appears to be scarce.

There also appears to be few recent research studies about enforcement and its effects or effectiveness in this country. The studies that have come to light are detailed below.

A 1991 Home Office Research Study³¹ found wide variations between police forces in the rates at which they screened drivers for alcohol and examined whether these variations in police activity had any impact on patterns of alcohol consumption among drivers. The report was based on the results of a national survey of 1,700 drivers who were interviewed about their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards drinking and driving. Drivers in high-enforcement areas did not, as might be expected, think they were more likely to be caught drinking and driving than those in the low-enforcement areas. Instead, the results suggested that high levels of enforcement reinforced social pressures against drink-driving and increased awareness of greater accident risk for drivers impaired by alcohol.

Having examined previous research assessing the impact of different police enforcement initiatives and coupled with the findings from the survey, the report concluded that wider use of the breathalyser in routine traffic law enforcement accompanied by an increase in the number of driver check-points could, with supporting media coverage, produce major and lasting improvements in road safety.

A study by Aston University examined the effect of a police intervention on drivers exceeding the posted speed limit and on intentions to speed.³² The intervention consisted of a week in which 'police speed check area' warning signs were put up on the target 40mph limit road, followed by a week of active police presence and a further week in which the signs remained. It was found that fewer people broke the speed limit during the intervention than before, and that this effect lasted to a limited extent up to 9 weeks after police activity ceased and 8 weeks after signs were removed.

A 1997 report³³ examined the impact of enforcement measures on the driving behaviour of offenders and non-offenders and tested if enforcement had a different deterrent effect on different types of driving offence. The report focused on speeding, careless/dangerous driving and drunk driving. The research found that there were many influences on drivers' compliance with traffic law and that the deterrent effect of enforcement depended on the type of driving offence and the attitude of the public towards the severity of that offence.

The risk of either being caught speeding or being involved in a crash whilst speeding was found to be low amongst the drivers surveyed. None of the drivers indicated that they were likely to drink and drive, either because they feared the physical and social isolation associated with losing their licence (prevalent amongst previous offenders) and/or were motivated by the risk of prosecution and accidents promoted by media campaigns.

The report suggested that a key task in deterring drivers is to increase both the perception of risk and awareness of the real risks associated with speeding, which could possibly be achieved by better publicity about the relationship between speed and being involved in a serious crash and by increasing the penalties for violation. But there was caution about how effective such an approach would be whilst speeding is still perceived as a lesser offence and where the public's consensus is that a review of speed limits on particular roads is required before more rigorous enforcement would be accepted.

An international review of road safety enforcement methods³⁴ reached several important conclusions:

- The success of enforcement is dependent on its ability to create a meaningful deterrent threat to road users. To achieve this, the primary focus should be on increasing surveillance levels to ensure that perceived apprehension risk is high.
- Significantly increasing the actual level of enforcement activity is the most effective means of increasing the perceived risk of apprehension.
- The use of periodic, short-term intensive enforcement operations is a more cost effective option, however, the effect on road user behaviour may be reduced.
- The use of selective enforcement strategies, designed to specifically target high risk road user behaviour and traffic accident locations is another cost effective alternative.
- Automated enforcement devices provide the most cost effective means of significantly increasing apprehension risk and should be adopted as a matter of priority.
- The use of publicity to support enforcement operations should be adopted as a means of increasing enforcement effectiveness.
- It is essential that road users actually observe the publicised increase in the level of enforcement activity otherwise behavioural changes are usually only short-term.
- Publicity as a stand-alone measure can increase awareness but it has only minimal effect on actual road user behaviour.

Such an extensive review of traffic enforcement measures resulting in conclusions about what sort of enforcement is effective for different offences is invaluable. A similar review of traffic enforcement throughout the UK would be a welcome addition to the literature on this topic.

The Institute for Road Safety Research in the Netherlands (SWOV)³⁵, in conjunction with the Bureau of Traffic Enforcement (BVOM) are conducting a research programme to evaluate a nation-wide four-year police enforcement intensification programme in the Netherlands. The results should provide new knowledge about the relationships between enforcement, behaviour and traffic safety and are awaited with interest.

Random breath testing (RBT), which developed in Australia from a local initiative operating in the seventies, was a departure from the previously reactive style of enforcement of drink driving. Following evaluation of the initial initiative, the programme was rolled out across the country. Studies have shown RBT to be effective. Even though it is associated with a high cost of operation, when this is measured against the resultant savings achieved (in fatalities and other casualties) it remains cost-effective³⁶.

CONCLUSION

Almost all road crashes are caused by, or involve, human error. Therefore, the vast majority of the 3,431 deaths and 300,000 injuries that occurred in 2002 were due to people using the road in a dangerous or careless manner. Ultimately, the only way to reduce this appalling toll is to change the way drivers, riders and walkers behave on the road. This requires a co-ordinated strategy of:-

- Education, training and publicity to provide road users with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they choose to use the roads safely.
- Engineering (both road and vehicle) to physically affect the way road users behave (for example, through speed reduction measures).
- Enforcement to support and complement education and engineering measures, to deter irresponsible, dangerous and unlawful behaviour and to investigate, and where appropriate take enforcement action.

Roads policing is a fundamental and irreplaceable activity, which plays a key role in saving lives and minimising injury on the road. In order to do this effectively, roads policing must be given its rightful priority by the government and the Police Service, and be adequately resourced.

The Police have many priorities, including tackling many forms of violent crime, all of which are extremely important. They must, therefore, allocate and prioritise their limited resources to the best possible effect. The level of death and injury caused by poor, and often illegal, behaviour on the road far exceeds the number of people killed through any other form of crime. Accordingly roads policing must be one of the top priorities.

Deterrence

The visible enforcement of road traffic law is an effective deterrent to dangerous behaviour. If drivers and riders believe there is less chance of being detected and prosecuted, they are more likely to behave dangerously which will mean more road crashes and more deaths and injury. The likelihood of being caught and convicted has more effect on deterring offenders than the severity of the sentence.

Detection

The number of convictions for motoring offences demonstrates that there is a high level of illegal activity on our roads. It is fair to assume that these figures are an under-estimate of the actual number of offences as many are not detected. Higher levels of roads policing will result in more road criminals being detected with a resulting decrease in collisions and ultimately casualties.

Investigation

Investigating individual crashes enables the causes of the crash to be identified and if necessary for those who have behaved illegally to be identified and prosecuted. The data collected by the Police enables collision trends to be identified and monitored so that all other road safety activity can be targeted appropriately.

Attitudes

Enforcement also helps to change social attitudes towards poor road use. This is best seen in the change in attitudes towards drinking and driving, which is now regarded by most people, and by the media, as entirely anti-social and inexcusable. This change has been achieved through a combination of education and enforcement. The "Don't Drink and Drive" education campaigns would not have been as effective without the support of the enforcement activity (especially roadside breath testing) which increased the perception that drink drivers will get caught, prosecuted and convicted, and the sentences will be severe.

However, most other motoring offences are not yet seen by the general public or the media as dangerous and anti-social behaviour in the same way as drinking and driving. For instance, motorists caught speeding are often portrayed by the media as 'unlucky' (and sometimes even as victims of unfair police activity) rather than as people behaving in a dangerous and criminal manner. Speeding drivers kill and injure people in their thousands. These attitudes will only be changed by a combination of education, engineering and enforcement.

In addition, research has shown that targeting serious traffic offenders is also an effective way of detecting and disrupting other forms of crime.

The Level of Roads Policing

There has been considerable concern in recent years that the number of traffic police officers has reduced, and many officers have been diverted onto other police duties. There is some evidence to support this concern, although ACPO point out that roads policing is not just delivered by road policing officers and so it is difficult to measure changes.

It is important to have a visible police presence on our road network. Drivers are less likely to infringe traffic laws if they think they will get caught and their perception of this is directly related to the number of officers policing the roads. A visible police presence on the road also reassures the public as a whole that those breaking the law will be caught.

Safety cameras have proven to be an extremely effective and visible way of reducing excessive speed and speed-related crashes, and thereby reducing the number of people killed and injured on the road. They should remain one of the main tools used for this purpose. However, they can only tackle excessive speeding or red light offences, and not the many other forms of poor or illegal road behaviour. They are not a substitute for police officers.

In order to ensure that the level of roads policing is maintained (and hopefully increased) the numbers of officers who conduct roads policing duties should be monitored and reported by each force. The Home Office should establish guidelines for Chief Police Officers and Police Authorities on the level of roads policing.

Organisation of Roads Policing Officers

There is a diversity of approach to roads policing by each force, both in terms of policy and the way in which road policing officers are deployed. Some forces operate centralised traffic units, others have Basic Command Units responsible for all policing activity, including roads policing, in a defined geographical area. There is little evidence to show which method of organising roads policing is more effective in casualty reduction. Given the importance of roads policing, and the level of public funds devoted to it, the Home Office should commission research to evaluate the most effective methods of delivering a roads policing service.

Tenure

The value of road policing should be reflected in the career structure of the Police Service, so that officers do not feel they need to leave traffic departments to progress their careers. The policy of tenure (keeping officers in specialised roles for only limited periods) in terms of road policing officers who require and develop highly specialised skills should be reviewed. The loss of such skills and experience, either due to officers being moved to other duties or to a general reduction in the numbers of road policing officers, is likely to be harmful to the provision of effective roads policing. Again, this is an issue which should be researched and evaluated.

De-regulation

Some of the roles traditionally carried out by the Police have been devolved to other agencies (e.g., de-criminalising parking) and plans are underway to devolve some of the Police's traffic management duties to Highways Agency Officers.

If the police resources that would have been devoted to these activities are targeted at roads policing duties, this should mean more effective roads policing. However, if the resources are diverted to non roads-policing activities, it would result in an overall reduction in roads policing. This is an issue that needs to be monitored and evaluated.

The introduction of Police Community Support Officers makes it clear that the policy makers are keen to increase the civilian element of the police force. This may make the force more efficient, freeing up officers time to deal with crime rather than paperwork. However by transferring roads policing duties to non-police agencies or officers may transmit a message that roads policing is less important or valued than other policing duties that are kept within the police's remit.

National Policing Plan

For many years, road safety organisations have expressed concern that the Home Office did not set roads policing as one of the Police Service's key objectives. However, the first National Policing Plan for the police service in England and Wales published by the Home Secretary in November 2002 included, for the first time, a clear and unequivocal statement by the Home Office that roads policing is a key issue for the police service and part of its core work. The current National Policing Plan for the period 2004 – 2007 states:

It is expected that the police will play a full role in the Government's Road Safety Strategy and the achievement of targets for casualty reduction by 2010. Local strategic and annual policing plans should include targeted and intelligence-led strategies for reducing death and serious injury on the roads. The Government remains convinced that the National Safety Camera Scheme is effective in reducing speed related death and injury and forces are encouraged to support the scheme. The Government continues to be concerned by the level of drink and drug driving and will bring forward further measures to help the police in combating those serious offences, particularly roadside evidential testing for alcohol."

This is an important and welcome step forward in the recognition of the value of roads policing.

The Police Reform Act 2002 requires Chief Police Officers and Police Authorities to prepare three year strategy plans and annual policing plans:

"Forces and authorities should include in their local policing plans targeted and intelligence led strategies for reducing deaths and injuries on the roads and achieving a safe environment for all road users."

ACPO's 'Modern Road Policing: A Manifesto for the Future' acknowledges that road policing has in recent years been the poor relation of British policing and that much will have to change to ensure that road policing is a critical component of core police work. The manifesto states that four tasks will be focused upon:

- Enforcing the Law
- Promoting Road Safety
- Investigating Incidents
- Patrolling the Roads

Both the National Policing Plan and the ACPO Manifesto are welcome signs that greater priority is being given to roads policing by the Government. However, they will need to be accompanied by adequate resources for roads policing.

In the National Policing Plan, roads policing appears within the section entitled 'other policing responsibilities'. Given the level of death and injury involved in road crashes, it should merit its own section within the Plan to emphasise its importance.

The Plan does not set targets for roads policing, whereas there are targets for other policing activities, such as domestic burglary. This raises the risk that Police Forces may focus on those areas against which their performance will be measured, to the detriment of areas such as roads policing which do not have targets.

HMIC Thematic Report

The HMIC thematic report on road policing and traffic, last conducted in 1998, should be repeated. This would assist in producing a national picture of the effectiveness that the National Policing Plan has had on roads policing.

Roads policing is one of the most important ways in which the police fulfil their duty to protect the public. The inclusion of roads policing in the National Plan should ensure that it is given the priority and resources it deserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Roads policing be set by the Home Office and Chief Constables as one of the top priorities for the police service.
2. A high profile, visible police presence be maintained on the roads.
3. Roads policing should adopt an intelligence-led approach based on the National Intelligence Model.
4. The Home Office should set guidelines for the level of traffic policing.
5. Research should be conducted to assess the most effective methods of delivering roads policing.
6. The value of road policing should be reflected in the career structure of the Police Service, so that officers do not feel they need to leave traffic departments to progress their careers. The policy of tenure (keeping officers in specialised roles for only limited periods) in terms of road policing officers who require and develop highly specialised skills should be reviewed.
7. The move towards transferring some roads policing duties to non-police personnel should be closely monitored.
8. Roads policing should be given its own chapter and targets in the next revision of the National Policing Plan.
9. The HMIC thematic report on road policing and traffic, last conducted in 1998, should be repeated.

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