

Road Safety Research Report No. 124

Appendix G: The policy and context of road safety

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This appendix examines the influence of the wider context in which road safety strategies are planned and delivered. It looks at the ways in which road safety teams engage their wider networks and address some of the more ‘contested’ areas of their work.

A key role for many road safety teams, in addition to developing and delivering interventions on the ground, is one of mobilising support for these within the senior management of their own authority. This is linked with building effective working relationships with other related organisations and services, including the police, fire and rescue, health services, local schools and, increasingly, local community organisations.

The ability to build these relationships depends, in part, on the capacity and willingness of other agencies to engage in formal partnerships and joint work. For statutory organisations, this can be strongly influenced by the policy framework within which they are working and the arenas within which these areas are addressed at a local level. This is subject to the policy and guidance of at least four central government departments, including the Department for Transport, the Department for Education, the Department of Health, and the Home Office.

Key legislation and policy around formal partnership working, including the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and the establishment of Local Area Agreements, is another important element. Establishing road safety as part of a cross-authority priority (selected as one of their local National Indicators (NI) or embedded in a wider child safety strategy) was reported by the interviewees to have greatly facilitated the ability of road safety teams to mobilise multiple stakeholders around the road safety agenda. Having national targets around road safety was felt to be supportive in engaging with broader policy agendas at a local level.

In addition to Local Strategic Partnerships, the key arena within which formal relationships with key local agencies had been developed were within Road Safety Partnerships. However, the effectiveness and membership of these appeared to be somewhat variable from one authority to another. Considerable time and skill are required to ensure the effectiveness, and efficiency, of formal partnership working.

In addition to formal partnerships, a number of examples were given of good working relationships established on the ground, through joint projects and small working groups. This was particularly evident with the police and schools, often leading to the sharing of resources and extending the reach of road safety work. However, different sets of priorities, a lack of resources and different working cultures could also make such relationships challenging and time consuming.

Another important set of relationships was with local elected councillors. Because of the 'contested' nature of some road safety interventions, decisions based on an assessment of risks and evidence can face political and public opposition. A number of examples were given of ways in which road safety teams sought to ensure that their local councils, and senior managers, were kept informed of their plans and the basis upon which key decisions had been taken in order to mobilise support for decisions where controversy was anticipated.

G1 INTRODUCTION

G1.1 Evaluation overview

This appendix is one of seven prepared as part of the Evaluation of Local Road User Safety and Action Learning commission. The three-year programme of research and evaluation has considered a range of road safety activities, practices and delivery processes, identifying areas of good practice and lessons learnt. The main body of the report draws together evidence from across the evaluation. This appendix focuses on the wider policy context and the impacts that this has on road safety delivery and investment.

The work reported here has been drawn from 14 case study local authorities. The case studies were recruited as part of a programme of evaluation and action research. Three sets of visits over a two-year period were made to the authorities, involving interviews with senior members of the road safety team, and, in some cases, representatives from key partner agencies. Data from the visits were supplemented by a review of key policy documents and with information from three Action Learning Groups (ALGs) which had participants drawn from a wider range of authorities. References to the other appendices are included herein to highlight supporting evidence from other areas of the evaluation.

G1.2 The relevance of policy and context

Although the focus of the road safety evaluation and action learning project was on local road safety strategies and delivery, there were many examples given at a local level of the way in which the wider context impacted on road safety strategies and delivery.

This context provided the wider legal and transport policy framework within which local road safety activities were undertaken. It also shaped the policy framework within which other local agencies, often crucial to the planning and delivery of interventions, operated. Surrounding both of these are the political debates, and public views, concerning which types of intervention are acceptable.

Another core element of the work was negotiating across many, sometimes opposing, sets of interest. This can be particularly challenging when public, and political, views run contrary to technical evidence on levels of risk, or the effectiveness of interventions to enhance road safety. The goal of increasing the safety of one group of road users, such as pedestrians or cyclists, may appear to cut across other objectives, such as reducing congestion or enhancing the economic effectiveness of a road system.

Negotiating the necessary resources for road safety was another area identified as growing in importance. This generally focused on making a case for funding for road safety measures within local transport budgets. However, other difficult areas in terms of resources mentioned at a local level included police time for enforcement measures, and finding time within the school curriculum for pedestrian training.

This appendix is about the processes and structures that enable those involved in road safety to reconcile and negotiate the different competing interests, as well as some of the wider factors, which influence these negotiations.

G1.3 Contents

This appendix incorporates the following sections:

- **Section G2** – provides a review of some of the key areas of national policy that impact on road safety;
- **Section G3** – discusses the arenas within which different agendas can be negotiated at a local level, including formal partnerships and joint project work;
- **Section G4** – explores some of the wider issues of governance, and how road safety engages with political processes; and
- **Section G5** – draws some general conclusions and indicates some of the implications for future work in the road safety field.

G2 THE WIDER CONTEXT OF ROAD SAFETY

Key findings

- **Work on planning and delivering a local road safety strategy takes place in the context of a wider framework of legislation and policy.**
- **At least four government departments, and a number of professional and campaigning organisations, are key ‘stakeholders’ in influencing the road safety agenda at national and local levels.**
- **A key role for road safety teams is negotiating with different stakeholders and building effective alliances with other local agencies.**
- **How well the agendas of these different agencies align has considerable influence over the capacity of road safety teams to mobilise local resources and to engage with other local agencies.**

G2.1 The relevance of the national context

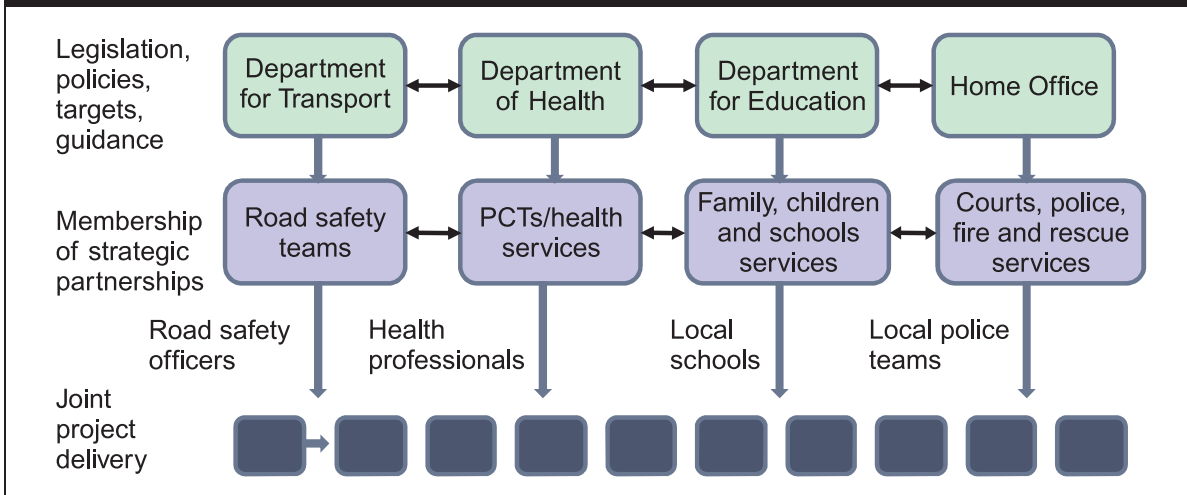
A central element of the overarching context within which local road safety activities take place is the legislation or policy framework within which it operates. This includes the legal framework setting out standards for transport infrastructure and vehicle safety, driver and vehicle registration and testing, and appropriate road user behaviour. There is also a legal framework under which Local Transport Plans are developed, established in 2000.¹

The day-to-day implementation of this legal framework is further shaped by the policy documents and associated guidance issued by central government departments. Of most immediate relevance to local road safety policy and practice is the targeted guidance from the Department for Transport. However, the policy and guidance from other government departments shape the work of related services: police, fire, health, and children’s and family services, which can have a considerable bearing on road safety work at a local level.

Figure G2.1 illustrates the influence of central government departments and their policy frameworks on local services, which, in turn, influences their capacity to engage in joint activities locally.

¹ Local Transport Act 2000.

Figure G2.1: Influence of national context on local partnership working



The capacity to engage in cross-service negotiation is also strongly influenced by policies and guidance relating to the establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Local Area Agreements and National Indicators (NIs).

A number of other stakeholders operate at a regional and national level, whose work can have an important influence on local road safety delivery. This includes other statutory service providers, such as the Highways Agency, the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) and the Driving Standards Agency (DSA), and regional bodies such as Transport for London (TfL).

There are also professional and campaigning bodies, organisations representing different groups of road users, or charities campaigning on road safety issues. Each of these brings a different perspective on issues of road safety, and can help to mobilise data and arguments for, or against, different types of road safety intervention.

Key finding: work on planning and delivering a local road safety strategy takes place in the context of a wider framework of legislation and policy. At least four government departments, and a number of professional and campaigning organisations, are key ‘stakeholders’ in influencing the road safety agenda at national and local levels.

The following section examines the relevance of these different bodies on local road safety work.

G2.2 The Department for Transport

The Department of Transport plays a central role in the development of local road safety strategies through setting out policy and guidance on a wide range of topics. This ranges from generic guidance on the appraisal and evaluation of new schemes

to specific safety related guidance, such as advice on urban road safety strategies (Department for Transport, 2005), undertaking child safety audits (Department for Transport, 2004) and setting speed limits (Department for Transport, 2006). The Department for Transport has also influenced local road safety activities through making specific road safety related grants available (e.g. Rural Demonstration Project grants, Road Safety Partnership grants), running national campaigns (e.g. the 'THINK!' campaign) and through undertaking 'Health Checks' where authorities appear to be having difficulties in improving levels of road safety.

In 2010 and early 2011, the case study authorities were preparing their third Local Transport Plans (LTP3) and developing new road safety strategies. The policy framework for these was the 2009 Department for Transport guidance on drawing up Local Transport Plans (LTP3; Department for Transport, 2009a)), and the draft consultation document *A Safer Way: The new Road Safety Strategy for 2010–2020* (Department for Transport, 2009b). Both documents placed a strong emphasis on building close relationships between all relevant agencies, particularly between local authorities, the police and fire service.

The consultation document also highlighted the areas in which, in spite of the overall success in achieving road safety targets, there remained a challenge in many areas. These included casualties among children and young people, motorcyclists and on rural roads. It also called for a stronger focus on behavioural change interventions, as well as better integration between engineering, education and enforcement (the 3Es). Even prior to the publication of the consultation document, many of the case study authorities were already reporting a similar refocusing of their activities, particularly in terms of a growing emphasis on education, and a more focused targeting of this work on high-risk road users. Many were also working towards closer collaboration between the '3Es', with some authorities establishing joint teams (see Appendix C).

Several of the case study local authorities had seen a change in local political leadership, which in some places had led to a change in political orientation towards issues such as speed cameras, speed bumps, 20 mph zones, and targeting areas of social deprivation. The anticipated closure of Government Offices was also seen by case study local authorities as adding to local uncertainty about the future, particularly for any regional transport or safety related partnership working.

During the course of the evaluation, many case study authorities had begun to reduce their road safety teams, and many were considering, or were in the middle of, a major restructuring of their organisation. This was in response to the comprehensive Spending Review and was usually designed to reduce the number of divisions and middle management posts, or to combine different functions to provide economies of scale. This often included combining road safety functions with other aspects of transport planning and delivery, and, in several case study local

authorities, bringing road safety and sustainable travel into one combined area of work.

G2.3 The law and law enforcement agencies

The Home Office, the police and other agencies of law enforcement (the Crown Prosecution Service, the Courts Service, and local magistrates) are the other key agencies with an influence on the delivery of road safety activities at a local level. Enforcement (of traffic law) is one of the ‘3Es’ of road safety, and responsibility for enforcement lies primarily in the hands of the local police authorities. The collection of STATS19 data, most widely used for analysing levels of accidents, is also a responsibility of the local police services.

Enforcement was the area about which we heard least during the visits to case study areas. In part, this was because our main interviewees were from the local authority road safety team, rather than from the local police service, who were seen as carrying the primary responsibility.

The police were centrally involved in all road safety and safety camera partnerships, and there was also representation on some of these from local magistrates and local courts services. The police and road safety teams also sometimes met in community safety partnerships, or specific partnerships to work on a particular target group.

Two of the national stakeholders interviewed in the early stage of this evaluation commented on the way in which national policy influenced local relationships between the police and local authorities. It was felt that a closer relationship between the Home Office and the Department for Transport would help to improve relationships at a local level.

For example, one interviewee felt that the emphasis on police performance indicators by the Home Office – related to crime clear-up rates – had led some local forces to place a lower priority on road safety. With no police funding dedicated to enforcement activities (a comparison was made with New Zealand, where 20% of police funding derives from a national road safety budget), and growing demands on the police to address other priorities, such as tackling the threat of terrorism, this had placed further pressure on resources for enforcement activities.

G2.4 Children, schools and families

Undertaking road safety work with children and young people is central to the work of road safety teams. The case study authorities reported that the delivery of pedestrian and, occasionally, cycling training to schools formed a significant part of their work. School crossing patrols often fell under their responsibility, and several teams reported working closely with school travel planners. Calls for 20 mph zones were reported to have been made for school areas in several authorities.

Again, a lack of alignment and shared priorities between road safety and other national policy areas was noted by some local interviewees and by one of the national stakeholders interviewed. One interviewee commented on the relative lack of reference to child safety documents from the 2003 Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DCSF, 2003) onwards (and including recent policy documents relating to ‘safeguarding children’ (HM Government, 2006)). This is particularly concerning, given the fact that road accidents are one of the major causes of death in children and young people (particularly in children from deprived areas).

The lack of explicit reference to road safety in relation to the national curriculum was also widely commented on as an obstacle to relationships with schools, particularly with secondary schools. A similar concern was expressed in the 2008 survey of road safety officers published by the Department for Transport (MVA Consultancy, 2009), which also called for closer liaison between the Department for Transport and the Department for Education around this issue.

One county authority, which was having considerable difficulty in getting access to secondary schools, had decided to address this through working with children of secondary school age outside school hours. This included ‘home education’ and working with parents to reinforce road safety messages at home.

A few examples were given by case study authorities of embedding road safety within policies relating to local children and young people. A county authority mentioned that road safety was part of their Children and Young People Strategy and a unitary authority mentioned that their Safeguarding Children Board had now joined their Road Safety Partnership, and that they were also planning to make a contribution to the Board’s meetings:

‘At this meeting the road safety team can tell them what they can provide and the Children’s Board can tell them how they can help.’

(Manager, country council)

G2.5 Other national stakeholders

A number of other local, regional and national bodies were also playing a part in influencing the work of local road safety teams.

Fire and ambulance services were often mentioned as members of the local Road Safety Partnerships, and in several authorities Fire services were seen as a valuable ally in delivering road safety messages to schools and young people. One case study authority had a fire officer on secondment to their team, which had been helpful in terms of supporting cross-service communication and ensuring that consistent messages were being delivered to schools.

Many road safety teams had also sought to establish a closer relationship with local health services, either to undertake joint work on the analysis of hospital admission data, or in order to work on road safety as a public health issue.

However, establishing effective working relationships of this kind was seen as challenging by several authorities. For example, although often members of Road Safety Partnerships, Primary Care Trust (PCT) attendance was often low. The key reason for this was frequent reorganisation and high staff turnover within the health sector.

However, effective working relationships had been established around joint projects (see Section G2) and in at least one authority the PCT was reported to have been both an active member of the county safety partnerships and a source of funding for the group. Recognition of road safety as a key factor in health inequalities was an important motivation for the PCT's involvement.

The Highways Agency was an important player at the local level, particularly in county council Road Safety Partnerships. A growing emphasis on driver behaviour – and some elements of education, training and publicity (ETP) work – by the Highways Agency at a national level meant that there was a growing overlap between its work and the work of local road safety teams.

Regional bodies were also sometimes noted as important. Particularly relevant to the London boroughs were the resources by way of data analysis, advice and support, grants and campaign material provided by Transport for London (TfL). Their involvement in the London Safety Partnership and the London Safety Camera Partnership meant that road safety work in London could take a slightly different focus from elsewhere in England:

'The London Road Safety Plans are a means of directly addressing the Mayor's Transport Strategy, whereas across the rest of England the focal point for the content of these documents relates to the objectives outlined in the DfT's "Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone" road safety strategy. Importantly, however, the Mayor's Transport Strategy must remain consistent with the DfT's strategy and, therefore, although the structure for road safety reporting and planning in London may appear independent from the national context, it is in fact a rationalised working of the same structural approach.'

(Road safety manager, London authority)

A number of other national bodies were mentioned in the course of interviews: these included bodies such as the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT), the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS), and the Standing Committee on Road Accident Statistics (SCRAS). These were seen as

providing resources by way of advice and information for local road safety practitioners.

Other organisations were those that were representing specific groups of road users, such as the AA and the RAC, or charities campaigning on road safety issues, such as CAPT (Child Accident Prevention Trust), BRAKE (road safety charity) and RoSPA (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). Most of these were seen as exercising their influence at a national level, rather than a local level, although some joint work was also undertaken at a local level.

Key finding: a key role for road safety teams is negotiating with different stakeholders and building effective alliances with other local agencies. How well the agendas of different agencies align has considerable influence over the capacity of road safety teams to mobilise local resources and to engage with other local agencies.

G3 JOINT WORK AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Key findings

- **The main arenas in which the agendas of different local agencies are negotiated are within formal partnerships, although many effective working relationships are built through joint work on the ground.**
- **Road safety partnerships are the main forum bringing key agencies together, but the membership and effectiveness of these partnerships are very varied.**
- **Local strategic partnerships can be important and provide the opportunity to incorporate the road safety agenda across authorities as a priority area.**
- **The existence of national targets has provided a useful stimulus to local partnership working.**
- **Good working relationships have been established on the ground through joint projects and small working groups, particularly with the police and schools.**
- **Different local agendas and working cultures were often reported as making joint working difficult.**
- **Road safety managers need time, and appropriate skills, to engage in effective partnership working.**

G3.1 Introduction

One of the ways in which local road safety teams sought to engage with wider agendas, and embed road safety initiatives within these, was by establishing strong partnership with relevant local agencies. These could operate at a strategic level, through their involvement in formal partnerships, or through joint work on specific projects and interventions.

Key finding: the main arenas in which the agendas of different local agencies are negotiated are within formal partnerships, although many effective working partnerships are established through joint work on the ground.

G3.2 Road Safety Partnerships

There was considerable variation from authority to authority as to the level of involvement and influence of key Road Safety Partnerships. Key members of these included local authority road safety teams, police and fire services, with some also including ambulance trusts, magistrates courts and court services, the Highways Agency, the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and, in one case, the Passenger Transport Executive.

Eleven of the authorities still had a Safety Camera Partnership – these had a similar membership to wider Road Safety Partnerships, but a narrower remit. In other areas, the Safety Camera Partnership had been absorbed into the wider Road Safety Partnerships. In one authority there was a standing committee on traffic and safety, which brought together senior directors from across the authority. The focus of the larger groupings was primarily on aligning their strategic approaches to road safety, although several also had resources to allocate to specific projects.

Several authorities also reported smaller inter-agency partnerships focusing on specific issues or target groups (two examples of these were Scooter Safe and Bike Safe in London), which provided opportunities for practitioners to share knowledge and experience and to work on specific projects.

Key finding: Road Safety Partnerships are the main forum bringing key agencies together, but the membership and effectiveness of these partnerships are very varied.

G3.3 Local Strategic Partnerships

In addition to meeting in the context of specific Road Safety Partnerships, many of the key agencies also met within their Local Strategic Partnership (LSPs), within which the broader framework for more specific transport, and road safety, policy was negotiated.

Since 2000, LSPs have been the key forum for bringing together key local authority services, and adjacent services such as health and police, to develop a common set of objectives, with community consultation also a statutory requirement. A key focus of these partnerships is agreeing a set of local priorities or targets (within their Local Area Agreements) and a set of 35 National Indicators (NIs), each of which link directly to the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) established by each central government department.

In 2009, the Department for Transport published advice to local authorities (Department for Transport, 2009c) for drawing up their road safety strategies, which listed the three PSAs most relevant to road safety. These were:

- **Sustainability, Growth and Prosperity** (Public Service Agreement 5: Deliver reliable and efficient transport networks that support economic growth);
- **Fairness and Opportunity for All** (Public Service Agreement 13: Improve children and young people’s safety); and
- **Stronger Communities and a Better Quality of Life** (Public Service Agreement 23: Make communities safer).

The document also provided a list of 13 NIs, two of which have potential relevance to road safety in the areas of safer communities and children. These were:

- **National Indicator 47** – the percentage change in number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions; and
- **National Indicator 48** – the percentage change in numbers of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions.

Four of the case study authorities (three county councils and one unitary authority) reported having adopted road safety related targets as one of their Local Area Agreements’ NIs. Interviewees reported that this had greatly helped in collaborating with other parts of their authority and mobilising political (elected councillor) support for road safety work.

The adoption of specific road safety indicators was observed to be controversial on many occasions. This is illustrated by an example where the suggestion from the Government Office that they should not use a road safety indicator (because they had already been successful in this area) was overruled because of the strength of local feelings about this:

‘X [their authority] was very keen that KSIs [were included]. 47 was the overall reduction in people killed and seriously injured on the roads . . . but this was opposed by the GO who said “No, you’ve already made such good reductions, it shouldn’t be there”. But then what happened was there was such a swell of opinion from the district councils, health authorities and other members of the Partnership that they said “No, we want it included”. The concession was that it would only be included if we had [a] secondary target for motorcyclists, which we accepted.’

(Road safety manager, county council)

It is unclear as yet what influence the abolition of PSAs, Local Area Agreements and NIs will have on future abilities to mobilise cross-service support for road safety activities. This is likely to depend on how far road safety is seen as a priority by local communities, as set out within the new arrangements established under the Localism Bill (House of Commons 2010-12).

Key finding: local strategic partnerships can be important and provide the opportunity to incorporate the road safety agenda across authorities as a priority area. The existence of national targets has provided a useful stimulus to local partnership working.

G3.4 Joint work at a local level

In addition to formal partnerships bringing road safety teams together with other related agencies at a strategic level, most authorities reported a number of local initiatives that were being undertaken together with one or more local agencies.

G3.4.1 Joint work with the police

A number of interesting joint working relationships were reported between the police and road safety teams. Most frequently mentioned was joint work in the delivery of road safety education campaigns, particularly pedestrian training in schools where greater reach was often achieved as a result. One county authority reported that their joint work with the police (and with the fire service) via the Safer Road Partnership enabled them to ‘do campaigns that no other local authority can do’ (Box G3.1). It was both in terms of reaching a wider group of road users and also ensuring that the same messages could be delivered throughout the county. It also led to economies of scale savings, particularly when producing materials for education, training and publicity (ETP).

Box G3.1: Joint work with the police on a campaign for young drivers

One of the county authorities was undertaking joint work on a road safety campaign with young and pre-drivers aged 16–17. The police had been given £1 million to deliver the road safety campaign and this involved extensive partnership working with the local highway authority (LHA).

The police were also leading a ‘Drive Smart’ campaign to educate drivers concerning the dangers of excessive speed. In this area there were 11 casualty reduction officers within the police, who were also represented on a joint ‘Communications Team’, which co-ordinated delivery through the local Strategy Road Safety Partnership.

The police were seen as a good source of evidence for steering delivery through the Neighbourhood Panels, as they attended meetings and learnt of local issues that were causing public concern and that may have needed to be addressed.

Another interesting area in which joint work was reported was in efforts to improve the quality and utility of STATS19 data. Concerns about the quality of STATS19 data were expressed by interviewees in several of the case study authorities. Difficulties included obtaining full data, including post code data, and delays in receiving information. One way of addressing this was to establish structures for better communication. A good example of this approach came from one of the county authorities, where any gaps in information were taken back to the reporting officers. This was initially reported as being up to 62% of all reports and – although time-consuming – to have had a major impact on improving the quality of reporting.

Other joint work included specific projects to address ‘problematic’ road users. Examples of such projects included the ‘Scooter safe’ and ‘Bikesafe’ partnerships in London, or the ‘Bare Bones’ partnership in one of the county councils, designed to encourage safety awareness among young scooter riders. These provided the opportunity for close working relationships to be established between individual road safety officers and individual police teams.

Overall, relationships between road safety teams and the police were reported to be strongest in county council authorities. Difficulties were noted in a number of other case study areas, with attendance by the police at partnership meetings being ad hoc, and communication difficult at both a strategic and operational level.

The key to more effective working was reported as being the ability to find a common set of objectives. An example was a metropolitan authority who was now taking part in Neighbourhood Action meetings (which were police led) to get road safety onto the agenda through linking this to school education. Working effectively could also mean adapting creatively to changes taking place in each other’s structure and organisation:

‘If the police are looking at cuts, which they are, [the Casualty Reduction Partnership] is likely to be civilian staffed rather than frontline staff . . . so if they were to be cut we’d obviously have to look at other ways of working with CRP [Casualty Reduction Partnership]. That may well mean going directly to the actual investigating officers, liaising with them directly rather than through the traffic management officers as it used to be.’

(Manager, metropolitan authority)

G3.4.2 Working with schools

The other primary group of organisations with which all road safety teams spent considerable time liaising was local schools.

Relationships were often variable – many reported good relationships with primary schools, but many reported difficulty in building similar relationships with secondary schools. Few interviewees mentioned trying, either successfully or

unsuccessfully, to build relationships with the children and families services within their own authorities. For example, one of the unitary authorities reported having good relationships with head teachers at local schools, but considered the education section within the wider authority as uncooperative.

This meant that a considerable amount of road safety officer time was spent at an operational level, in liaison with schools; initially with head teachers, and thereafter with nominated members of staff.

One particularly successful project had been a scheme in which an authority had recruited and trained pupils from Years 5 and 6 to deliver road safety messages to their peers. There had been a high level of school support for this project, which was attributed, in part, to the fact that they had undertaken extensive consultation with teachers before the scheme's delivery, and also to the fact that several of the road safety team were themselves ex-teachers who understood how feasible different interventions would be.

G3.4.3 Work with the health services

Fewer examples were reported of joint work at a local level with health authorities, although there were some examples given. One of the unitary authorities had entered into a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) aimed at reducing the number of casualties in the middle-aged and elderly age group. This provided them with a useful link with the PCT and improved the level of information they were able to obtain from GP units and hospitals.

An interesting scheme run by another authority was joint work between the road safety team, the police and A&E consultants to get photographs of trauma victims, as part of a road safety campaign which had achieved external recognition of its success. This required buy-in from a number of agencies to share a common objective and was reported to have increased emphasis on working with different agencies in a more systematic way, while retaining flexibility.

Key finding: good working relationships have been established on the ground through joint projects and small working groups, particularly with the police and schools.

G3.5 The benefits of partnership working

Being part of a partnership, whether a generic or specific Road Safety Partnership, gave road safety teams a formal platform upon which to negotiate with other related services in establishing a common agenda. One of the key areas of work for Road Safety Partnerships is on the development of a joint approach to road safety, either

via the road safety elements in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) or the local Road Safety Strategy.

In some authorities this appeared to be working very well. The following quote, for example, comes from one of the unitary authorities:

'The Casualty Reduction Partnership is also a source of feedback to the road safety team from the police, fire service and Safety Camera Partnership. Following from [the main] meeting: we have a strategic group through which we decide what we want to do, how we're going to achieve it, have we got enough money in the pot, all those sorts of things . . . where we're going to go for the next two or three years. Now of course everything is thrown up in the air and we don't know where we're going to go . . . or do we look towards sponsorship?'

(Road safety manager, unitary authority)

Although not all partnerships appeared to have achieved this level of organisation, the existence of national targets, and the need to establish local targets, did appear to have been a useful stimulus to local partnership working. Another important value of partnership working was the opportunity that these provided for pooling resources and avoiding duplication of effort:

'It seems that for a small authority this really helps as they are able to pool their financial resources when doing publicity and marketing campaigns which are then the same across the three LHA boundaries. It is likely that this type of collaborative partnership is the same for other geographically smaller unitaries and metropolitans which gives them measurable benefits from sharing resources.'

(Road safety manager, unitary authority)

Several of the authorities were part of wider regional partnerships (West Midlands, London, Thames Valley and Greater Manchester), while some of the county council Road Safety Partnerships incorporated smaller authorities from within their area. These larger groupings were found particularly effective in terms of liaison and joint working where the boundary of the partnership coincided with the boundary of the relevant police authority.

The larger groupings were also seen as particularly helpful in developing a joint approach to addressing cross-boundary issues. For example, where major trunk roads were running through neighbouring authorities, or where problem road users were moving from one authority to another (e.g. gangs of motorcyclists).

One of the metropolitan authorities mentioned their regional Safety Camera Partnership as being important both in terms of a significant joint publicity campaign and because it allowed for joint lobbying. One of the London boroughs

was a lead borough of a partnership that lobbied TfL and central Government on cross-borough issues.

Large partnerships also provided the opportunity to make joint applications for funding. In London, the London European Partnership for Transport (LEPT) helped London boroughs to benefit from research being undertaken at the European level, to network with the relevant European bodies and experts, and to access European funding streams. A further objective was to provide an opportunity for London to influence European transport policy. The most relevant project to date is the Partner Initiatives for the development of Mobility Management Services (PIMMS), which involved the exchange of information and best practice (via the completion of a database) on several areas, including road safety engineering and ETP.

G3.6 The challenges of engaging with wider stakeholders

Success in building and maintaining a partnership and close working relationships with other agencies could, however, be variable.

Many of the formal partnerships were relatively new – between one and three years old. Safety Camera Partnerships were more established, although in at least one case they were regarded as somewhat fixed and overly prescriptive in their approach to their work.

Difficulties were often reported in getting the relevant agencies to join in formal partnership working – and to take part in meetings. This was particularly true of engagement with local health organisations – particularly the local PCT. Even if they were nominal members, their representative rarely attended meetings:

‘Probably the weakest players are the NHS and I know that’s the same everywhere you go. The local Ambulance Trust is extremely willing, but is an organisation in crisis so much as they would like to contribute they struggle to. The Primary Care Trust sadly isn’t a key player because they have their own agenda and casualty reduction is not their highest agenda – you know once you’ve brought in obesity, cancers and all the other bits and pieces, they have far greater things to worry about before they get to ours.’

(Manager, metropolitan authority)

Attendance by the police and fire authorities was also reported as being ad hoc or sporadic in several areas:

‘The police and fire service were singled out specifically as having their own wider agendas, and it was stated that their frequent reorganisations and staff turnover means contacts keep changing and it is therefore hard to build a relationship with them.’

(Team manager, county council)

This was particularly evident towards the end of 2010, at which point ‘cuts’ in resources and staffing were beginning to present difficulties:

‘The police representatives, of which there are a number, are all saying “we’re a bit busy at the moment” because they’re trying to find their 25% saving, they’re dealing with crisis managing within their own organisation; and that will calm down because once those savings are established we can then get on with the day job. But we’re going through I think a short-term period of crisis, the Ambulance Trust are the same, they really are struggling to keep their heads above water.’

(Road safety manager, unitary authority)

Another issue which was raised in some authorities (and also discussed in the Action Learning Groups (ALGs)) was the quality of the leadership and management of these partnerships. Sometimes the chairing role was taken by the road safety team (manager) and sometimes by another agency (e.g. the police). Chairing skills and administrative support could be variable.

Another difficulty noted was of participants in partnership meetings not being of sufficiently senior level. The sending of less senior staff appears, in some cases, to have been a reflection that road safety was of low priority with their partner agencies. Similar difficulties of other departments viewing road safety as a relatively low priority activity were reported in the 2008 survey of road safety officers, published by the Department for Transport in 2009 (MVA Consultancy, 2009):

‘X did not feel that there was an effective partnership with the police and fire service as road safety was not such a priority for them and education was not their area of expertise. The key officers assigned to road safety tended to be sidelined or close to retirement and so less committed and with a high turnover.’

(Road safety manager)

Another challenge was ensuring that participants understood the key differences between their respective organisations in terms of areas of priority or decision-making structures. For example, one interviewee noted that the difference between the more hierarchical structure of the police and the ‘flatter’ and more consultative decision-making processes within the safety team could lead to difficulties. An interviewee from one of the metropolitan authorities commented:

‘The police and fire do have different cultures to road safety – they are strict and uniformed whilst road safety is softer. The groups can work as partners and suddenly police and fire can become overwhelming – they are seen to have loud voices relative to their real involvement in delivery.’

(Road safety manager, metropolitan authority)

A police representative in one of the ALGs, having recently taken over as chair of his local Road Safety Partnership, commented that he found the local authority representatives slow in arriving at and implementing decisions (because of their emphasis on wider consultation) compared with his police colleagues.

The appointment of a good chair, combined with sufficient resources to properly service these committees, was put forward as the best solution to the difficulties described above. Building in sufficient time for the members to get to know one another was an important element in enabling these committees to understand the different organisational priorities of other members, and to build-up mutual trust and a common understanding of their mutual goals.

One interesting example given by a member of one of the ALGs was of undertaking a 'branding' exercise with their partnership, requiring all members to sign up to a common set of messages and images. They were then required to use this in any of their own road safety communications. This was seen as a good opportunity to enter into in-depth discussions within the partnership about their purpose and common objectives.

Key finding: different local agendas and working cultures were often reported as making joint working difficult. Road safety managers need time, and appropriate skills, to engage in effective partnership working.

G4 WIDER GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS IN ROAD SAFETY

G4.1 Introduction

Cutting across many of the issues discussed above was the level of support received by road safety teams, either from senior levels of their authority or from their elected members. This could influence everything from the level of funding to the general direction of their work, as well as their ability to get specific interventions agreed and implemented.

G4.2 Leadership and support within the wider authority

Several interviewees in the case study areas reported how important it was, particularly in terms of the support and funding they received for their activities, that their work was seen as having status, or some level of priority, in terms of local policy and Local Area Agreement indicators. This was observed to vary considerably.

All the county authorities mentioned that road safety was high on the authorities' policy agenda and three had casualty reduction targets as priority indicators in Local Area Agreements. Getting road safety on the broader policy agenda appears to have been more of a challenge in the unitary authorities: two of these mentioned that road safety was not one of their authority's strategic priorities and, consequently, had a low profile among wider stakeholders in the local highway authority (LHA).

An interviewee in one of these authorities said that it was just 'not taken as seriously as it should be within [the] wider authority';² it was not a priority in terms of their corporate plan or as part of their Local Area Agreement targets.

However, a third unitary authority reported that they had a strong strategic role in the wider LHA, which they put down to the fact that they had representation on their Local Transport Plan (LTP) steering group, their Transport Forward Planning Group and on the Portfolio Holder group.

Key finding: establishing road safety as part of a cross-authority priority area greatly facilitates the ability of road safety teams to mobilise multiple stakeholders around the road safety agenda.

² Quote from an interview with one of the road safety managers representing the unitary authority.

G4.3 Political leadership and support

Closely related to the priority awarded to road safety in council policies is the political interest – or lack of – awarded to road safety by elected councillors. Political involvement in road safety was reported to be an issue that needed to be handled with considerable care: an active interest in the topic could be either supportive or it could lead to ‘interference’ on political grounds.

Several authorities (the best examples came from county council areas) reported having good relationships with their elected members, particularly on the operational side, where staff made considerable efforts to keep members informed. This helped to ensure that members understood the basis on which proposals had been put forward and how this fitted with the wider transport strategy, or data concerning local risks.

One county reported that their members were willing to listen to the professionals’ views about the best approach because they could see that road safety has delivered tangible successes and they also appreciate the ‘high-profile’ nature of ETP work. However, considerable efforts were also made in this authority to engage public opinion and, in some cases, as in Safer Routes to School, the public’s and members’ priorities were allowed to take precedence over a more data-led approach.

In other authorities, numerous examples were given of data-based decisions being overridden because of political pressure, sometimes closely related to public pressure, and sometimes because of particular political commitments. There were a number of areas in which political interest was particularly high, with safety outside schools, safety cameras, and traffic-calming measures and 20 mph zones most frequently mentioned. An example is given in Box G4.1.

Box G4.1: Example of pressure to introduce school safety zones

There was some concern over the political influence with regard to what is delivered for road safety. It was mentioned that from high level Government downwards there has been an emphasis on school safety zones, reinforced by loud voices from other stakeholders, even though child collisions in the immediate vicinity of schools is rarely an issue. The interviewee believed that a false concern had been manufactured, and because other LHAs are introducing such zones, his authority faces immense pressure to do the same.

A change in political orientation was identified by interviewees as being a particular challenge. An interviewee in one authority reported how, following the recent election, the road safety team was no longer allowed to prioritise activities in areas of social exclusion. Another reported an incoming party being in favour of 20 mph

limits, but with a dislike of speed bumps, which had led them to look at more innovative approaches to traffic calming, such as increasing the bends in roads and placing planters at strategic points.

As schemes could face opposition and be blocked at a number of points in the decision-making process, one of the county authorities reported using a score card to prioritise their delivery programme, which included factors such as potential political pressure in this area.

The key approaches used in managing political input into decision-making processes was through nurturing political ‘champions’ or engaging in careful strategies of communication and consultation. One unitary authority suggested that it was a particular advantage in being a small authority, as this gave plenty of opportunity to build up close relationships with their councillors. However, even this authority reported two cases where political considerations outweighed the actual evidence and recommendations of the road safety team (Box G4.2).

Box G4.2: Example of working constructively with elected councillors

In one county, where a number of schemes have been dropped due to member intervention, they have now taken steps to include representatives from all external partners and internal county council departments with an interest in road safety, together with a member on their Road Safety Board, which has greatly helped. Key members are now reported by the road safety team to appreciate and understand the approach that is being undertaken and, hence, there is general acceptance of the scheme’s priorities. It does not descend into political point scoring in terms of a scheme’s prioritisation as was previously happening.

Another county example illustrated a number of ways in which the political dimension was managed:

‘Officers and members, including the leader of the opposition, are regularly briefed about the current state of play. A casualty report is provided to all members and stakeholders on a quarterly basis. However, although there was generally reported to be a good officer/member working relationship, there had been a dispute between them over the introduction of 20 mph zones, and officers had been required to look again at the research into the effectiveness of 20 mph zones.’

(Road safety manager, county council)

Two other authorities reported that they wished to have better council involvement and support, but in both cases the hierarchical structure of their authority meant that

road safety team managers had no direct contact with elected members so they had little opportunity to be proactive in managing their interest and support for road safety measures. However, one of these is now running brainstorming sessions that include councillors and the Mayor in order to try and improve buy-in, and the road safety team has started to write informative articles for the internal magazine, which goes to elected members.

Key finding: because of the ‘contested’ nature of some interventions, data-based decisions can face political opposition, and a change in political leadership can lead to pressure to change strategy. A number of different approaches were taken to mobilise politician’s support and to ensure that these were kept informed about key road safety decisions and the basis upon which these were being taken.

G5 CONCLUSIONS

G5.1 Overarching conclusions

Decisions about road safety strategy and interventions at a local level are determined by a number of factors, only some of which relate to data concerning casualties and to technically sound solutions to the problems presented.

Other key influences over decisions include the wider national policy framework. This includes policy in the transport field as well as policy related to other sectors, such as the police, child safety and health, as well as broader policies relating to partnership working and priority setting at a local level.

Also of importance are the relationships that local road safety teams are able to establish with other parts of their authority and key partners. Several interesting examples were provided by the case study authorities of effective operational relationships with key partner agencies, delivering particular projects or working with particular target groups. However, strategic relationships were often reported to be challenging and sporadic, particularly where there was a high level of staff turnover in partner agencies, or where their attendance at partnership meetings was ad hoc.

Also important was having some overarching framework within which their work was embedded, such as having road safety targets in their Local Area Agreements, or sitting on joint committees related to other areas of work. It is unclear what impact the ending of Local Area Agreements and National Indicators (NIs) and targets will have on the work of road safety teams.

Engagement with local political leadership was also reported to be extremely important in many authorities. Many interviewees reported areas where councillors' decisions could override decisions based on a data- and evidence-led prioritisation system. A change of political leadership can also often lead to a marked change in overall strategic direction.

Interviewees also reported on strategies that had been developed to 'manage' political pressures to undertake work that was not seen to be an effective use of limited road safety resources through:

- regular communication with councillors and/or the public about their strategy and about impending decisions to be taken (newsletters, personal letters, information on the website);
- transparency about the basis on which decisions are taken;

- the identification of ‘champions’ with whom communication regularly takes place; and
- regular feedback of data on levels of causalities, etc.

G5.2 Implications for future work

The rapid pace of change in the wider policy environment makes it particularly difficult to draw out implications or make recommendations for future action in this particular aspect of road safety.

The role of partnership work, either with other parts of their local authority or with related services such as the police, is likely to be even more important in the future, given restrictions in funding and resources. Combining resources and having a set of shared objectives will help avoid duplication and contribute to economy of effort.

However, working closely, particularly with organisations with a somewhat different culture or set of priorities and targets, can be challenging, and is likely to require considerable help and support from central Government departments. Continuing existing partnerships, and building new ones, may be even more challenging with the ending of Local Area Agreements and NIS, which have, at least in some authorities, provided a useful catalyst for partnership working. Appendix D provides a more detailed review of good practice in partnership development and working.

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