COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH *Online*

An introduction to the application

The Sussex policing area has one of the most challenging rates of road deaths in the country. The Force is keen to use both enforcement and education to change driver behaviour and improve road safety and recognises the role residents can play in this, protecting their own communities.

Community Speedwatch has been in place for several years, where residents are provided with speed detection devices and carry out non-enforcement speed checks in their local area. Offending drivers receive educational letters and this has been shown to change behaviour. However, management of these schemes, collection and processing of data and identification of risk drivers who are then targeted for enforcement has traditionally been paper based, taken a great deal of police officer and staff time and effort and has not always been effective. Reduction in police resources to co-ordinate Speedwatch volunteers and antiquated systems led to many volunteers becoming disillusioned, officers becoming overwhelmed and schemes disbanding. This led to the possibility of decreased public confidence amongst active citizens in communities who were willing to support the police but felt the police were not interested in them. Community Speedwatch was crying out for modernisation, effective technology and coordination.

Community Speedwatch (CSW) Online approached Sussex Police five years ago offering to develop a technological solution to modernise CSW and co-ordinate groups on behalf of the Police. They have developed and introduced an Internet-based application/web-platform to manage all aspects of Community Speedwatch activity. From an online calendar to schedule a local group's roadside sessions, the team developed a system which allows direct roadside tablet entry into back office police systems, provides performance information for police and for volunteers and facilities the auto-generation of educational/ warning letters to errant drivers.

The CSW Online system manages and automates a wide range of bespoke functions for registered groups to ensure consistently high standards and principles are applied to: volunteer/group registration, initial online training, site requests, safety assessment and approval procedures, equipment maintenance and booking, session scheduling, data accuracy training, semi-automatic roadside data acquisition and easy transfer to PNC keeper data acquisition, and multiple offence alerting to enable escalation, making education and -

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when necessary - enforcement considerably more efficient and more effective.

CSW Online today manages almost 2,500 trained volunteers spread across more than 500 local groups, spanning several counties and used by a growing number of Police forces. The system has improved the accuracy of recording speeding drivers, brought consistency to processes and practices, helped increase the number of CSW volunteers significantly and reduced the demands on police to manage, train and direct local groups. It has generated over 20,000 educational letters in Sussex alone in the last year and helped raise the profile and effectiveness of Community Speedwatch as a way of residents supporting the police to tackle local issues.

CSW Online leaders continue to bring forward innovative, exciting proposals to expand the system, including a 'curb side to doorstep' service where the system itself will auto-generate the educational letters, further reducing demand and costs on police services. As the system expands it links up Speedwatch groups across the country, enabling identification of drivers who cause the greatest risk to the public by speeding multiple times including cross Force borders, which in the original Speedwatch implementation was impossible to carry out.

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INTRODUCTION

CSW Online facilitates a series of fundamental functionalities, which otherwise have proven detrimental to the success and longevity of the Community Speedwatch scheme if not standardised and automated.

They are:

- • establishing and maintaining watertight audit trails
- • guaranteeing uniform procedures, rules and methodology
- • simplifying fast, relevant and rank differentiated access to - and dissemination of data, stats and information
- • providing data encryption of all information transmitted between - or stored in databases, on par with online banking or higher
- • continuously developing and supporting a flexible supervision system that can assist group coordinators with group management, and Police and/or Road Safety organisations with traffic education and/or enforcement

The automation of Community Speedwatch activity from roadside to letterbox maximises elimination of human errors caused by incorrect observation and/or misinterpreted information. It is NOT a service to replace community volunteer involvement but a toolbox to make their invested time and efforts worthwhile and efficient.

SIGNING-UP PROCESS

Whether establishing a new group or joining an existing group, the online wizard takes the applicant through a guided process of providing the correct, mandatory information and searching for existing groups in their local area. No one can obtain approval unless having passed the theoretical training and Quiz testing their acquired CSW knowledge. Subsequently, they are contacted directly by either the Police (new groups) or the local CSW group coordinator (new volunteers).
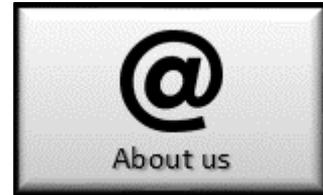
ONLINE TRAINING

Health & Safety, Code of Conduct, and Roadside Procedures are the cornerstones of the theoretical training that all new candidate must complete with a 85% pass-rate before their application moves forward for serious consideration. The topics are presented in an easy-to-understand eLearning format, and the Quiz at the end can be retaken until the required level of accuracy has been reached.

The online training is devised to filter out applicants with only short-term interests in the CSW scheme. Volunteer resources are often scares, and motives for participation not uncommonly driven by temporary resentment of drivers ignoring the speed limits. It is therefore essential not to disrupt a group's genuine interest in addressing the problem by internal disagreements. Irate vigilantes tend not to bother completing the registration process when asked to memorise the principles of correct procedures and policies.

GROUP EFFICIENCY

Organising Community Speedwatch activities efficiently is often a difficult and time-consuming task. Who is trained and available when? Who wants to work from which sites and be teamed up with whom? Who collects the equipment, gets the offence records logged, checks the accuracy, and feeds the results back to the group? Most often, this work rests with the coordinators.

Before teams are out recording speeding vehicles, sites need to be identified, risk assessed and approved, operators need training, equipment booked, collected and checked. Operators need reminding, schedules re-checking and often changing. Moreover, at the end of the day, does it all make any difference to solving the problem of speeding?

The CSW Online application platform organises all group-related activities for the groups. It provides operators with vehicle make recognition training, links up with the wireless roadside computer tablet for easy recording, and DVLA pre-checks the logged offences before automatically passing the data on to the Police for further PNC processing—or sending letters using vehicle owner details directly from the DVLA database (in development).

GROUP MANAGEMENT

Group autonomy is a fundamental principle that the system services through a variety of optional choices to be made by the individual groups. Some of these functionalities are:

Eligibility for roadside deployment is automatically determined based on the volunteer's equipment training status, and potentially their recording efficiency in relation to the group's preferred accuracy threshold.

Availability is checked automatically against calendar entries provided by operators in advance of their potential (manual) deployment by coordinators. Coordinators can plan sessions in advance and distribute operators by general agreement; or the system can be set only to display operators according to their explicit availability.

Preferences include choices made about individual members whom they are prepared to team up with, and from which sites they wish to work.

Accuracy is measured as an average rate of correctly recorded vehicle details across all individually deployed session. If an operator's rate falls below a group-determined standard, the operator is automatically removed from the deployment list. Subsequently they are notified about their need to engage with the systems Vehicle Training game to achieve better results. Only when the set target is obtained, the operator will re-appear on the list of available, trained volunteers for deployment.

Automatic deployment is the fully programme dependent functionality whereby all operators indicating their preferences and availability are given suggested deployments details when matching conditions between a minimum of two operators are met. This relieves the coordinator of tedious management work other than potentially supplying equipment and hi-vis clothing.

New location – when setting up a new group, or later when adding more sites to a group's operational area, this function is initiated through identifying the exact GPS coordinates through the satellite and street view mapping tool built into the online application. Authorised officers, automatically alerted to the request by the automated messaging system, carry out the site assessments and finalise the approval process.
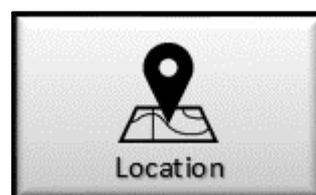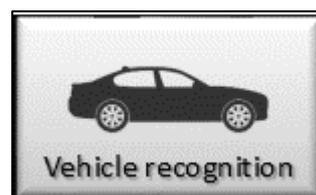
GPS is widely used to pinpoint positions of approved sites, and when used by groups to activate the bespoke, wireless tablet. Satellite view and street view assist volunteers to identify sites from where they can operate safely.

Site safety assessment forms part of the approval procedure. The Police or local council, ultimately being responsible for the Community Speedwatch scheme, usually provide Public Liability insurance cover. In order not to render this insurance invalid, operators must adhere to guidelines with respect to training and deployment. Working only from allocated, safety-assessed sites is one of these rules, for instance. Using the bespoke, wireless tablet makes it impossible for operators to record data outside the allocated site.

Deployment reminders are dispatched automatically either immediately or overnight, either as single messages or in batches, all dependent on the individual user preference settings.

Any action requested by users of the system will trigger a reaction. Often this is the distribution of messages related to deployment. The frequency of these reminders is dependent on group preference settings, too.

Apart from session deployment details, the system also reminds coordinators, operators and local Police officers of any relevant action expected to be taken by them immediately or in the future. These include: equipment calibration renewal reminders, operator training status, site approval requests, etc.

Internal massages can be composed and dispatched to various combinations of recipients from within the group coordinator's account.

Results updates are vital information that keep volunteers engaged with the process, and are a source of huge importance to gauge how efficiently the invested time and resources are utilised. Statistics also include accounts of individual operator efficiency rate, average speed of speeders, case status, etc.

Equipment is often shared either between groups or lend to groups by a local authority, e.g. the Police, local Councils, or Roads Safety Organisations. A core function of the CSW Online system is the equipment-booking calendar. Guaranteeing that the available device is calibrated (if needed), allowed for use in the booked area, and pre-selecting operators based on their relevant skills training; the booking calendar allows group coordinators to reserve equipment for up to three months in advance.

The calendar also displays local and international speed awareness campaigns, as well as local school holiday and bank holidays.

Roadside session is the lynchpin of the system. Recoded details of speeding vehicles – either obtained manually or electronically – are an essential prerequisite for any subsequent (re)action or statistic collated to help the affected community.

To deliver operational consistency and longevity, the online system centres its primary functionality on optimal scheduling of voluntary resources.

There exists no other bespoke software designed to manage Speedwatch session scheduling based on individual operator preferences while considering the full range of factors governing the rules necessary to optimise record accuracy.

Also, because of the substantial audit trail supporting each record, resulting actions taken against a registered vehicle owner is supported by data largely protected from human error. This allows Police forces to employ the automatic 'Objection' service where vehicle owners are offered an opportunity to automatically test the strength of the recorded evidence. Decision to reject or allow objection is automatically taken based on the strength of the audit trail components.

Linked with the myriad of automatically derived functions, the online platform delivers a full-scale management toolbox thereby considerably increasing the chances of successful outcomes, uncomplicated group coordination, and thus greater community satisfaction.

POLICE SUPERVISION

From the perspective of the enforcing authority, most notably the Police; interacting with the system provides advantages in the following areas:

- Community involvement and cooperation
- Intelligence gathering
- Neighbourhood Policing integration
- Improvement of Roads Safety

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

As attention to perceived, low-level, or victimless crimes start to bottom out of the list of policing priorities, it becomes increasingly important to include communities and members of the public to address problems of this character. Not only does building closer bonds between the Police (or other Enforcing Authorities/Agencies) and the affected communities increase the level of trust but it also transfers a sense of empowerment that inevitably will reflect on the involved communities' own perception of their opportunity and ability to prevent further problems from evolving.

In cases where the Police are responsible for approving new groups, the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is notified about requests to set up a new group. Initial personal contact to discuss existing knowledge of the problem: scope, perception, or prior attempts made to address the community's concerns, is often the best way forward to encourage volunteers to take ownership of the solution.

In areas where Traffic Surveys are available from local council, they can automatically integrate to show data of speeding levels for specific areas. Whether the problem is real or perceived, allowing a group to be established is often the best way to start a dialogue about the issue.

Coordinators in managed areas will have passed the compulsory online quiz before their details and request is forwarded to the SPOC. This guarantees largely that their intentions are real. Spur of the moment, knee-jerk reactions, and undesirable vigilante responses to real or perceived speeding problems will have been dampened by the matter-of-factly online training programme lasting up to half an hour before the initial registration process progresses to a level of e.g. Police interaction.

HIGH LEVEL APPROVALS

The system allows access to many different Police management levels:

• Interpretations of NPCC speed thresholds, speed detection equipment allowed by groups for purchasing from the CSW Online Shop, trigger mechanisms for issuing of warning letters and NPT visits, content of warning letters, etc. are but a few of the issues where individual enforcement authorities can individualise their Community Speedwatch scheme. This is managed at the Force top level.

• Approval of new groups and sites, allocation of Single Point of Contact (SPOC), equipment booking calendar, access to offense details, collating statistics and compiling e.g. bespoke council reports accumulated stats detailing both Police and/or group activity/results can be devolved to either Division, District, Department or Police Station level.

NPT & SC INTEGRATION

Any Police Officer details registered in the Government's Police.uk database is transferred automatically to the CSW Online system. This alleviates the problems of updating the frequent reshuffle of officers regarding session reminders and contact details available to groups.

Police Support Officers can use the online platform to record their own observed speeding offences on par with CSW groups. These records enter the system in an almost identical way to that of groups, and are consequently contributing to the accumulative effect of both statistics, intelligence, and increased response to multiple offenders. In cases where CSW sites and RPU 'Green' sites are kept separate, PCSOs will automatically have access to both site databases to allocate details of where the recorded offence took place.

PC(SO)s responsible for wards or boroughs where groups operate are automatically notified of upcoming roadside session details. Showing support whenever possible by visible presence during a session will not only reinforce the image of close cooperation between groups and local Police in the eyes of the public but also give officers an opportunity to gauge the character of concerns relevant to that area.

Where Special Constables are working alone or in conjunction with either Neighbourhood Policing Teams or Roads Safety organisations, their access and use if the system is identical to that of any other Police department.

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