

Good Practice Case Study

Derbyshire County Council's
journey for reducing motorcycle
accidents ▼

East Midlands
Improvement and
Efficiency Partnership

Recognition for reduction in motorcycle accidents
across Derbyshire ▼

Derbyshire County Council has been awarded a Green Flag by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) for its outstanding work for reducing motorcycle accidents in the county. In 2007, a third of all road users 'Killed and Seriously Injured' (KSI) in Derbyshire were motorcyclists; following a focus on prioritising motorcycle accidents through 'operation-focused' activity, in 2008 this figure was reduced by 32% to 127. Derbyshire CC allocated £300,000 of funding towards activities including; assigning a full time project co-ordinator, events for motorcyclists, surveyance equipment

on 'hot spot' routes and an award-winning publicity campaign.

"We are proud that Derbyshire attracts so much tourism and that motorcyclists enjoy riding on our roads. We have a duty to ensure that our residents and our visitors are kept as safe as possible, and we believe in the case of motorcyclists that this is best achieved through a combination of education, engineering and enforcement."

Robert Hill, Manager of Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership

Making motorcyclists safer in Derbyshire ▾

Derbyshire is very popular with motorcyclists from all over the country, due to the stunning scenery and winding roads; Matlock Bath in particular is a busy destination for many thousands of bikers each year. The area has an influx of leisure riders at weekends and from the Easter period to September, with bikers predominantly travelling from Sheffield, Nottingham and Manchester. Research showed that motorcycle incidents are particularly serious at weekends, in better weather, on main roads in rural areas, at bends (where riders lose control) and in urban areas where other vehicles are involved.

Laying the foundations

A part-time project officer was already carrying out motorcycle project work, and police enforcement was in place to try and reduce accidents due to the nature of the roads and attraction to motorcyclists. However, this needed to be further developed:

- A preliminary Partnership structure was developed in April 2007 with the structure changing in 2008 to incorporate 5 priority action groups (PAGS) on the roads; motorcycle casualties, child pedestrian and pedal cycle casualties, young drivers, priority routes and work-related

casualties. The motorcycle group was the most active and the biggest problem in terms of KSI casualty figures.

- Funding structures between central government bodies and local authorities changed - in 2007 councils were able to choose the way in which they spent the money allocated for road safety rather than it being stipulated, providing a perfect opportunity to act on areas of concern.
- Councils are not required to work in line with National Indicators. However, working in partnership with Derby City Council, the two councils chose 'NI47: To reduce KSI casualties' from 39 National Indicators. Consequently, this required scrutiny through the Local Area Agreements (LAA), which led to better performance management, monitoring and the profile of the project being raised due to wider interest nationally.

Outlining objectives for reducing motorcycle casualties

Prior to this project, separate partners were working on different aspects of reducing KSI casualties on motorcycles – however this needed to be unified in an integrated, partnership-focused campaign. A full-time project officer

was taken on to oversee and co-ordinate the campaign, equipped with a motorcycle so that the officer could work with bikers on the roads and become a central point of contact. Partners, amongst others, included Derby City Council, Derbyshire Police, Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service, Derby City and County Primary Care Trusts and the Highways agency.

five key aims were identified:

- To improve performance in casualty reduction
- Wider ownership of road safety
- Better co-ordination of road safety initiatives
- Scope to add value using resources and expertise
- Ensure efficient and effective use of resources

This clarity was key in moving the project forward and implementing key activities.

An integrated motorcycle project: The four road safety 'Es' ▾

As part of the implementation and sustainment of the project the three 'Es' part of the Road Safety framework were used; Enforcement, Engineering and Education, plus a 4th – Evidence. The project operated on the assumption that these four elements must work in conjunction to drive the greatest effect and success.

1. Enforcement

The established partnership group is a multi-disciplinary group chaired by the Police, which undertakes the enforcement role within the project and manages camera safety operations.

The majority of work is around 'operation focus' aimed at motorcyclists on problem routes with the following key objectives:

- Having a routes-based campaign – with fourteen key routes identified as particularly popular and hazardous. This is an increase from 2008, when eight routes were targeted resulting in a 70 per cent reduction in accidents between April and September of that year.
- For the first time in 2008 an unmarked safety camera van was used. Whilst this led to negative publicity in the motorcycle press, the publicity in fact resulted in the project becoming more high profile and successful, as motorcyclists were aware their speed was likely to be monitored.
- High visibility police officers at peak times when most cyclists were likely to be travelling, such as weekends, bank holidays

and during the main tourist season, between April and September.

2. Engineering

Engineering is owned by the County Council, and entails the physical measures taken to carry out the project including:

- Surveying equipment costing a total of £100,000. This provides crucial data on the volume and type of traffic on the roads. It is sensitive to different classes of vehicles including motorcycles, the direction of travel, speed and, for motorcyclists, the numbers within groups. This helps create a profile of road users and the conditions when accidents are most likely to occur.
- Installing mobile Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) on seven routes costing a total of £50,000. Derbyshire CC demonstrates good practice, using an innovative and unique design that is highly mobile, smaller, and discreet, avoiding additional road ‘clutter’ that could actually prove hazardous.
 - o Two VAS deployed on 7 routes with a further 2-4 planned from 2010.
 - o Sensitive to type of vehicle travelling – particularly helpful for indicating to motorcyclists what speed they need to be at and highlighting it as a dangerous road.

o National Indicators have shown that these signs are more effective when frequently moved, to ensure regular travellers do not become complacent and this was also proved within this project.

o Having VAS close to survey equipment ensured that there was a close link between data gathering and enforcement, linking speed on those routes.

- In addition, 3,000 high visibility tabards on urban roads were targeted at the younger age groups, predominantly riding smaller motorcycles: this was introduced to address the fact that data suggests casualties in this group are more likely to arise from low-visibility with car drivers.

3. Education

Whilst enforcement and engineering are reactive measures, education is a preventative measure, allowing Derbyshire CC and its partners to build relations with the motorcycling community to raise awareness. This was a reasonably underdeveloped area, which has been brought to the forefront and is now integrated into the Council’s key objectives:

Derbyshire CC ensured it was open about all activity it carried out to keep motorcyclists informed and involved:

- Building partnerships with local training providers and offering discounts on rider development courses:

- o Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) Plus aimed at younger riders (16-20yrs) which has trained almost 100 riders with a manual for street bikers providing useful tips on 'Staying Alive'.
- o 'Bike Plus', for more experienced riders (41-55yrs) doubled uptake to almost 200 a year.
- Bike Plus Event held in Matlock Bath with 2,000 bikers attending – police, council staff and biking organisations were on hand to advise bikers on safe riding techniques and bike safety checks, as well as dealers being involved, which was the incentive for the bikers to attend.
- 20,000 Bikers' Guides to Derbyshire distributed in showrooms and events, which highlight key hazard routes within Derbyshire.
- Emphasis was made on the majority of casualties being due to rider error, attempting to ensure that motorcyclists take responsibility; it is common to find a 'blame' mentality whereby bikers believe it is factors other than the riders that are at fault.

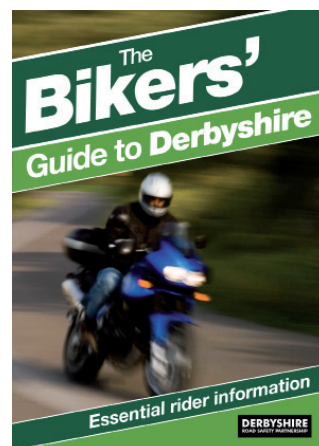
4. Evidence

Derbyshire CC emphasises the importance of collating evidence, data and statistics to evaluate progress and identify any issues – further cementing the merits of the project:

- A national Project called Market Analysis Segmentation Tool (MAST) is underway which maps postcode data with casualty data. It has previously not always been possible to link where riders are coming from, so this can give better indications on the traffic flow of bikers through key routes.
- Derbyshire CC is very keen to gain an external evaluator to further show statistics, developments and issues independent evaluation.

'Using the framework of the 3 Es plus the extra one - Evidence, has meant a truly consolidated campaign which gives us clear objectives, brings together all partners and allows us to communicate clearly to the motorcycling community. Having such visible results and positive feedback only encourages us, and the partners, to strive even more for safer roads in Derbyshire.'

Robert Hill, Manager of Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership



Lessons learnt to inspire similar practice ▾

Resource is crucial: Derbyshire CC believes that much of the success of the project, and of the partnership, is attributed to the dedicated officer, whose work combines engaging with partners, dealers, bikers and residents.

Education has to be a continuous process: the transient nature of motorcyclists coming into the area figures, plus the fact that younger drivers often use mopeds and motorbikes as a first means of transport, requires ongoing education in order to capture new motorcyclists in the area.

Publicity campaigns should be extended beyond a council's geographic borders: the very nature of travel means that motorcyclists will move through a region from elsewhere, particularly where a council has high levels of tourism. When it is known where travellers predominantly hail from, target those areas – whilst not residents, they could still end up casualties in your area.

Don't totally rely on data for education purposes: for example national research indicates that speeding may not account for a high number of casualties, but this could be misleading; casualty data is collated by police on roads, and speed is difficult to prove after an accident and therefore is low down on the list of causes of injuries.

Solution: Derbyshire CC believe that speed and rider error is a factor in most motorcycle casualties, in Derbyshire this is particularly due to the type of roads in the county.

Introduce as much flexibility as possible: to take account of external factors such as the weather. It is known that bikers are more prevalent during good weather; whilst no exact science, being aware of predicted weather patterns and being able to resource accordingly can help prevent casualties.

Having open solid working partnerships take time to develop but are crucial to the success of a similar project: this particular project introduced a Partner's Board to help cement the partnership quickly.

Human error can never be totally eradicated: when Derbyshire CC's 2009 figures are released, it is anticipated that there may again be an increase in the casualty and fatality rates. This is likely to mirror national statistics, which indicate that road safety figures do fluctuate.

Potential solution: Using a 'regression to the mean' method used to calculate the average number of casualties over three years can help establish a true reflection of figures.

Continued Campaigning ▾

- The National Target for reducing all KSI has been to reduce them by 40% over a 10-year period, which ends in 2010. New targets are likely to outline a 33% reduction over the next 10 years.
- Derbyshire CC is looking to further develop the 'motorcycle safe' area of Derbyshire having already installed 'Bike Guard' safety fencing on four routes – with two or three more routes to be considered for treatment as well as, bike-friendly inspection covers.
- A joint venture with Cheshire Council has been put in place, to be implemented by the end of the financial year targeting the 'Cat ad Fiddle' road over the top of North-east Derbyshire, which is classed as the most dangerous road in Europe. This is a prime example of cross-regional partnership working.
- As a result of successful campaigning, the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded Derbyshire CC a grant funding for the 'integrated motorcycle casualty reduction project in 2009 to 2011 of £100,000.
- Risk Assessment of particular routes.

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East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Case Studies

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The EM IEP Support Team publish case studies showing how East Midlands councils are improving services, and delivering significant improvements and efficiencies.

The case studies are intended to inspire councils in the region, and indeed nationally, to transform services and benefit from the processes developed by those councils that have pioneered the way forward.

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