



Road Safety Needs Assessment
2026
Executive Summary

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Purpose	To enable the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for West Mercia to better understand the current landscape in relation to road safety and to ensure that resourcing and budgets are allocated where they are most needed and impactful.
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Aim and Purpose



Aim

To facilitate an understanding of Road Safety in West Mercia and to reduce the harm associated with the roads.



Purpose

To enable the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for West Mercia:

- To better understand the current landscape in relation to Road Safety.
- To contribute towards decision making around service design and provision.
- To ultimately ensure that resourcing and budgets are allocated where they are most needed and impacting.



Methodology, Caveats and Limitations

This needs assessment was commissioned by the OPCC and undertaken by the Service Insight Unit within Strategy, Planning & Insight (SP&I).

Methodology

Engagement with Services and Stakeholders

The OPCC provided a list of the stakeholders and services relevant to road safety and this needs assessment. An email was sent to each of these services and stakeholders, as well as those identified throughout the duration of the review, with a request to meet.

For a full list of service providers and stakeholders who engaged with this needs assessment, see slide 6.

Interviews with stakeholders were primarily completed either in-person or via Microsoft Teams.

Following an initial meeting with a representative from the Worcestershire County Council Highways department, questions were sent via email to Highways departments within the other local authorities with the option of responding via email or arranging a meeting. Herefordshire Council and Shropshire Council responded to the questions via email while no response was received from Telford and Wrekin Council. Additionally, Telford and Wrekin Council did not provide a response regarding their road safety education provision and Shropshire Council provided no information about their educational initiatives, indicating only that relevant posts were currently vacant.

Attempts were made to engage with Pathfinder and Bike Worcester to learn more about their initiatives, but no response was received.

Surveys

A survey was developed to gain feedback from Roads Policing Officers (RPO) in relation to the role of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO). This survey was shared with the Operational Policing Unit (OPU) Chief Inspector who distributed this to their RPOs. **27** responses were received.

Benchmarking

A benchmarking request was sent to all police forces in England and Wales. The purpose of this exercise was to understand what provision other police forces and OPCCs offer in relation to road safety. **Three** responses were received.

Caveats and Limitations

A degree of caution should be exercised when reviewing the data collated during the stakeholder consultation and engagement. Due to time constraints, a limited number of representatives from each organisation could be interviewed meaning there is likely to be a degree of subjectivity, therefore, any opinions expressed may not be wholly representative of their department or organisation. It was also not always possible to verify or validate information supplied during interviews for accuracy. Further, some of the contacts that were originally nominated as stakeholders were not available, meaning alternative contacts were interviewed. Additionally, as a result of differences in how Local Authorities are structured, it was not always possible to identify an equivalent representative for engaging with in each organisation.

Both Victim Support and Road to Change offered to facilitate consultation with their service users. However, due to the tight timeframe involved for the completion of this work, it was not possible to consult with victims as part of this needs assessment. It is acknowledged that it would have been invaluable to obtain feedback directly from victims to understand their experience of using currently commissioned services alongside identifying any gaps or areas for development as well as exploring how these might be addressed moving forward.

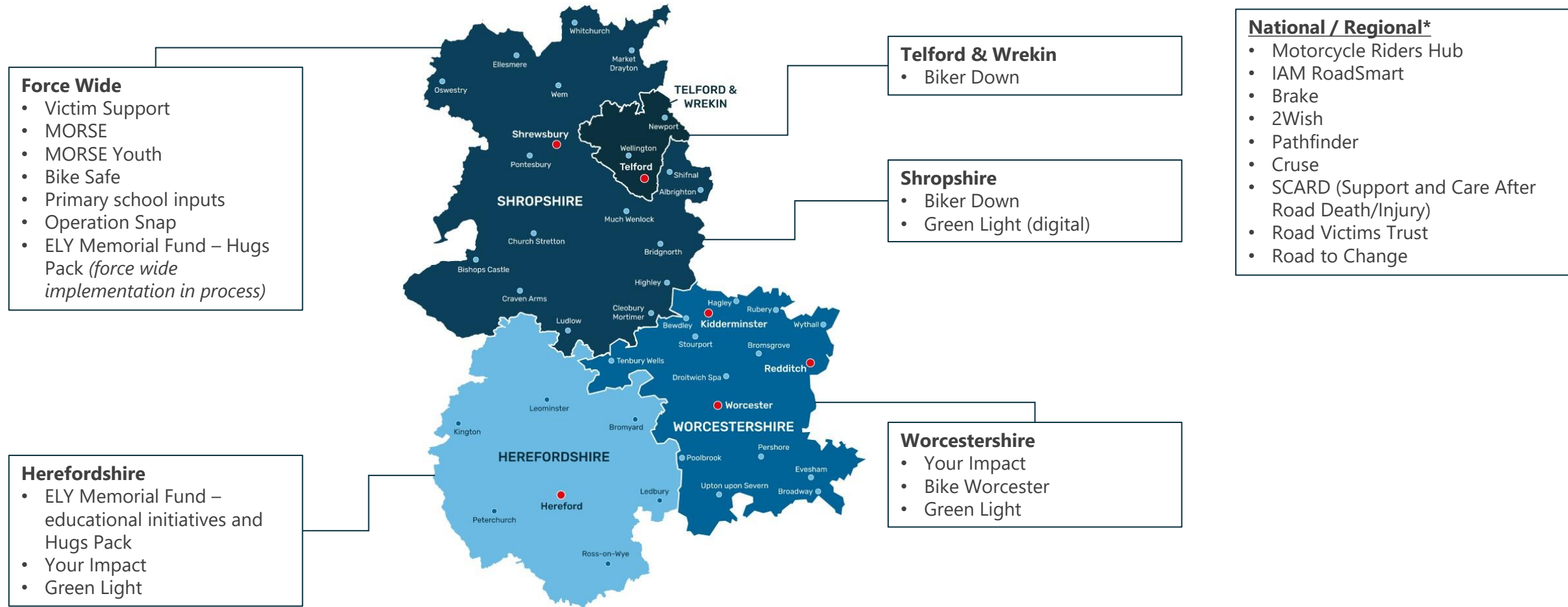
To go some way towards obtaining the service user's voice – albeit indirectly – an online survey was distributed to all Roads Policing Officers within OPU asking for feedback from those who fulfil the role of a FLO. However, it is acknowledged that this feedback is likely to be far less comprehensive and accurate than directly consulting with victims.

Due to the short timeframe that Victim Support has been commissioned to deliver support to those impacted by fatal and serious road collisions, no monitoring data or formal evaluations of the provision are available at the time of writing. In June 2026, at the time of the interviews taking place, there had been no service users accessing Victim Support within the previous six months who had subsequently exited the service.

The information provided throughout this needs assessment reflects what has been identified through stakeholder consultation and engagement and open-source research. Therefore, it may not reflect all service provision or information available within West Mercia, regionally or nationally in its entirety.

West Mercia Service Provision

Below is a summary of road safety provision across the West Mercia force area, including national services that have been mentioned throughout the needs assessment.



*Please note that this is based upon services identified during stakeholder consultation, open-source research and benchmarking, so may not be an exhaustive list of all service provision available.

Source: [Road safety | West Mercia PCC](#)

Map Source: [West Mercia Youth Justice Service](#)

Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

The OPCC provided a list of their commissioned services and suggested areas for consultation. An email was sent to these services with a request to meet with them. The following stakeholders and support services responded and engaged with this needs assessment:

West Mercia Police



Road Safety Team (RST)

- 2x Engagement and Campaigns Manager
- 2x Road Safety Managers
- 1x Operations Supervisor
- 1x Senior Traffic Management Advisor

Operational Policing Unit

- 1x Chief Inspector
- 1x Inspector
- FLO survey (27 responses)

Crime and Vulnerability

- 1x DI Force Lead for Family Liaison Officers

SNT and Prevention

- 2x Superintendent*

People and Organisational Development

- Investigative Skills Trainer

OPCC Commissioned Services



- 4x Victim Support
- 2x YSS (MORSE / MORSE Youth)
- 2x ELY Memorial Fund

Other Services



Local Authorities

- 1x Worcestershire County Council (Highways)
- 1x Worcestershire County Council (Education)
- 1x Herefordshire Council (Highways)*
- 1x Herefordshire Council (Education)
- 2x Shropshire Council (Highways)*

Fire and Rescue

- 1x Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
- 1x Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Support Services

- 1x Brake
- 1x Road to Change

Other Force Areas

- 1x Sussex Police (Sergeant – Fatal Five Unit)
- 1x Warwickshire Police (Supervisor – Road Safety Unit)
- 1x Thames Valley Police (Speedwatch Coordinator)
- 2x West Midlands OPCC

Key Findings by Safe Systems Pillars

The below table outlines some of the key findings found throughout this needs assessment. For all findings and conclusions, please refer to the full report (SPI 1346).

Safe Road Use	Safe Vehicles	Safe Speeds	Safe Roads and Roadsides	Post Incident Response
• There is evidence of a range of educational initiatives across West Mercia. • However, the approach across counties is inconsistent. • It can be challenging to access all schools to provide road safety education. • There is little evaluation of road safety education initiatives. • Mature driver programmes were discussed very positively by stakeholders. • MORSE and MORSE Youth offer a different approach to improving road safety by working with individuals who have displayed unsafe driving behaviours. • Motorcyclists are a vulnerable road user group, but they can be difficult to engage with.	• Some stakeholders felt that drivers are becoming complacent and over-reliant on vehicle technology. • There are examples of proactive policing and initiatives within OPU. However, there is scope for more proactive policing to improve road safety across West Mercia. This includes work that Local Policing could be doing in their day-to-day duties to support OPU.	• While TruCAM devices increase the force’s ability to undertake proactive speed enforcement, this has created additional pressure and demand for the Camera Ticket Office. • AI cameras allow the police to identify unlawful road user behaviour at scale. • Community Speedwatch is a valuable mechanism for engaging communities in road safety and responding to local concerns.	• Stakeholders felt that road safety needs to become the responsibility of the entire force. • Some stakeholders felt an increase in Roads Policing Officers (RPO) is needed to better improve road safety. • The force has no mobile ANPR capabilities which is a source of frustration for OPU who could use this to more effectively police the roads. • Op Forum was identified as a positive, police-led operational meeting. • However, gaps were identified at a strategic level but there were hopes that the West Mercia Road Safety Partnership Strategy will help address this. • Stakeholders were positive about the road collision caseworkers from Victim Support, but a gap was identified around co-location to all OPU bases. However, there are potential plans to address this.	• One stakeholder felt that this pillar is often lower priority but it was crucial to offer support to those impacted by road collisions. • The criteria for support should be carefully considered to ensure that all impacted by road collisions are able to access support that is appropriate for them and their needs. • There is a gap in support for children and young people impacted by road collisions. • There was consensus among stakeholders that post-collision support needs to be specialist and delivered by caseworkers only working on road collisions. • The force cannot easily track and manage the caseload of FLOs. This means that exposure to trauma also cannot be appropriately managed. • Managing the welfare of FLOs is crucial to ensuring they can offer positive services to the public. However, there was a feeling among some stakeholders and FLOs that this a weakness within the force. • There is no CPD or refresher training for FLOs.

Headline Recommendations

Safe Road Use

1. The Road Safety Strategy 2026 recognises that, while local authorities are responsible for delivering road safety education, there is currently no official UK guidance on its development and delivery. The Strategy indicates that the government intends to publish national guidance in this area. While awaiting its publication, local authorities and partners across West Mercia should explore opportunities to improve the consistency of road safety education provision through the use of nationally recognised, evidence-based resources and the sharing of best practice, lesson plans and educational materials across the region.
2. Consideration should be given to reviewing provision for Year 10 and post-16 road safety education across West Mercia, including the reach and effectiveness of digital delivery models. Further, opportunities to share successful approaches and improve access across all local authority areas within West Mercia should be explored.
3. Agencies providing road safety education should continue to proactively strengthen relationships with schools, particularly those with which they have not previously engaged with or have experienced difficulties accessing. This should include promoting the road safety education opportunities available and demonstrating how these interventions can support schools in delivering key safety messages to children and young people.
4. As planned evaluation activity is developed by the RST, consideration should be given to adopting a consistent approach to evaluating road safety education interventions across West Mercia and sharing learning with partners. This is likely to support a better understanding of programme effectiveness and help inform future investment in road safety education.
5. It is recommended that the mature driver awareness sessions continue across West Mercia and that evaluation of this initiative should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity. The RST should also continue to explore mechanisms to increase referrals from older drivers who may benefit the most from education/intervention but currently go under the radar. While it is acknowledged that there is ongoing work through Operation Snap to identify such drivers, consideration should also be given to publicising the mature driver awareness sessions to those who regularly engage with older people within the community, particularly health professionals, for example GP surgeries and optometrists.
6. West Mercia OPCC should continue to support the delivery and evaluation of MORSE and MORSE Youth, ensuring that findings from ongoing evaluation are used to inform future programme development and maximise their contribution to road safety outcomes.
7. Continue to use the 'Think Bike' as an engagement tool to facilitate positive engagement between police and motorcyclists and support the delivery of road safety messages. In addition, consideration should be given to reviewing emerging best practice and innovative approaches to motorcycle safety, for example, the PRIME (Perceptual Rider Information for Maximising Expertise and Enjoyment) initiative in Scotland. The recently developed PRIME toolkit provides local authorities and road safety partnerships with resources to support implementation and may offer useful learning to inform local approaches to reducing motorcycle-related casualties.

Headline Recommendations (continued)

Safe Speeds

8. As TruCAM 2 expands, it is acknowledged that training capability will need to increase. Alongside this, it is essential that the resulting increasing demand on the CTO should be proactively monitored to ensure that there are sufficient downstream processing arrangements in-place to meet the demand so that enforcement activity does not have to be constrained.
9. Following the success of the two-week trial of AI camera technology, consideration should be given to implementing future similar initiatives in different areas of the Force. However, given the challenges relating to the volume of AI camera related detections created, the capacity of the CTO and associated offence-processing functions should be assessed to ensure that there are sufficient resources in-place to manage current and future demand generated through technology-enabled enforcement, including TruCAM 2 deployment and any future use of AI camera technology.
10. Consideration should be given to exploring opportunities to increase CSW engagement in areas with lower levels of participation, drawing on learning from forces that have established large-scale volunteer networks and centralised administration processes.
11. Consideration should be given as to whether there are opportunities to adopt or pilot partnership-based approaches to identifying and engaging repeat speeders, drawing on examples of practice such as the Greater Manchester Police, Bolton Council and Tektrans initiatives highlighted by the College of Policing.

Safe Roads and Roadsides

12. Consideration should be given to West Mercia Police and West Mercia OPCC working collaboratively to explore options that will enable roads policing officers to engage with more proactive activities in line with the aims of the Road Safety Partnership Strategy.
13. Under the joint Road Safety Partnership Strategy, West Mercia OPCC commits to enhancing the enforcement capabilities of the Force. Therefore, consideration should be given to exploring what equipment could be purchased to support police officers make the roads safer.
14. Once established, the strategic Road Safety Leadership Board should work to ensure that responsibility for road safety is shared by all departments and that this matter is taken seriously by the Force.
15. It is recommended that RCCs regularly visit all OPU bases to build their relationship with FLOs and to further raise awareness of their services. Consideration must be given to how RCCs and FLOs work together while maintaining professional boundaries in terms of information shared.

Headline Recommendations (continued)

Post Incident Response

16. Based on the findings of this Needs Assessment, it is recommended that post-collision support remains a dedicated/specialist resource. Given the complexities of support required, it would be challenging for caseworkers to provide post-collision support and support for other victims of crime.
17. When re-commissioning the post-collision support in West Mercia, it may be helpful if the Service Specification for Road Traffic Support Service created by West Midlands OPCC is referred to, and potentially that of other forces, if available.
18. When re-commissioning the post-collision support in West Mercia, consideration should be given to what counselling provision is required. The findings of this Needs Assessment indicate that it may be more appropriate to provide the support service with funding allowing them to refer individuals for more timely bereavement counselling, as opposed to in-house counselling provision.
19. Given the gap in provision for young people impacted by road collisions, when re-commissioning the post-collision support in West Mercia, consideration should be given to exploring options for how the service provider will offer support to children and young people.
20. Given the repeated trauma RPOs are exposed to and the importance of the FLO role for supporting families, consideration should be given to reviewing the support provision available within the Force. This includes considering the nature of support offered by Occupational Health in other forces, with a view to identifying best practice.
21. When re-commissioning the post-collision support service, West Mercia OPCC should consider stipulating that the provider will take part in an introductory meeting with the FLOs. Additionally, consideration should be given to stipulating that the FLO trainer facilitates partnership working with the provider(s).
22. To ensure the knowledge of West Mercia FLOs is up to date and that they are responding in consistent ways, consideration should be given to introducing CPD for all FLOs. Potentially, the Force should also consider the viability or necessity of a FLO refresher training course.

Recurring Challenges or Themes

A number of recurring challenges or themes were identified during stakeholder consultation. These are likely to have a direct impact on the services that they are able to offer. Some of these pressures have accumulated over a number of years and will likely be felt by others, both on a regional and national level. It is acknowledged that this list is likely to not be comprehensive of all pressures encountered but provides an indication of some of the key themes highlighted.



Commissioning Cycle and Funding for Support Services

For support services, the commissioning cycle is often a recurring challenge for them. Services such as Victim Support and MORSE are funded by the OPCC, but often with shorter-term contracts or grants.

This can create uncertainty for service providers and there is the risk that by only offering shorter-term contracts, qualified and experienced staff will seek more secure employment and leave their role.

It was felt that it is not helpful to the quality and continuity of services and staff retention to only offer short-term funding. West Midlands OPCC stated that they will be offering their post-collision service a three-year contract with two potential extensions of 24 months each.



Funding and Resources for West Mercia Police

Multiple stakeholders from West Mercia Police outlined how funding and resources is a challenge for them.

There is equipment and kit that would allow officers to better police the roads and increase road safety. However, the force does not have the funds available to invest in this.

National Highways indicated that West Mercia Roads Policing as a reputation of being “poor” and that officers are not receiving training that would enable them to more readily participate in campaigns and events.



Capacity

Internally, changes as a result of the new operating model and management of change process have led to roles being removed and less staff in some departments which has increased the workload and duties of other officers.

Examples include RPOs delivering roads policing training as this is not offered by L&D. Roles such as Tasking Coordinator and related to ANPR management have been removed so this have created more workload and/or less resilience. SCIU lost their PIP 3 capability so they cannot work on PIP 3 investigations which now sit with MIU or CID.



Engagement with Motorcyclists

Engaging with motorcyclists was mentioned numerous times during consultation. It was identified that bikers will not often talk to a police officer, but they are more willing to do so if they are on a bike. Collisions involving motorcyclists account for 15.5% of KSIs in West Mercia so they are an important group to engage with*.

One OPU stakeholder felt that much of the Motorcycle Traffic Support Teams (MTST) time is taken up with abnormal load work which takes them away from both proactive and engagement work.



Drug Driving

Drug driving was described by one stakeholder as becoming more common than drink driving. While this is a known threat to road safety, stakeholder identified challenges to tackling this.

Firstly, more education is needed as one support service stated that some young people do not see cannabis as a drug. Therefore, they would not see any issue with driving under the influence of drugs.

Additionally, it is difficult to test for some drugs such as nitrous oxide which leaves the system quickly. Further, the intoxilyser's used in the force are coming to the end of their life, with the provider no longer offering these. This means that the force will need to purchase the latest devices to continue testing samples.

Emerging Trends or Threats

Driverless Cars / Automated Vehicles

Automated and self-driving vehicles are expected to become an increasingly important feature of the UK transport system over the coming years. The Automated Vehicles Act 2024 provides the legal framework for their deployment, with the aim of improving road safety by reducing collisions caused by human error. Automated vehicles must demonstrate a level of safety at least equivalent to that of a careful and competent human driver before being authorised for use on public roads.

Although deployment is now expected from 2027 following further trials and pilot schemes, the introduction of automated vehicles is likely to create new road safety considerations relating to public acceptance, driver behaviour, infrastructure, enforcement and collision investigation.

Source: [Automated Vehicles Act 2024](#) and [Self-driving vehicles set to be on roads by 2026 as Automated Vehicles Act becomes law](#) - GOV.UK

Vehicle Technology

The increasing use of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), such as lane-keeping assistance and adaptive cruise control, is creating new road safety considerations linked to driver behaviour. UK evidence suggests that some drivers may become overly reliant on these systems, leading to reduced attention and misunderstanding of their role in maintaining vehicle control.

As these technologies become more common, concerns have emerged about drivers placing too much trust in vehicle systems without fully understanding their capabilities and limitations.

Source: [Understanding the Knowledge Gap and Understanding Human Factors in Advanced Driver Assistance Systems: An Evidence Review](#)

Mental health

Mental health and driver wellbeing are increasingly recognised as road safety considerations. Conditions such as anxiety, depression and PTSD can affect concentration, attention, judgement and emotional regulation, all of which are important for safe driving. UK DVLA guidance recognises that some psychiatric conditions may impair fitness to drive, while research has linked poor mental health to changes in driving behaviour and performance.

Source: [Psychiatric disorders: assessing fitness to drive](#), [Assessing fitness to drive: a guide for medical professionals](#) and [Driving Behaviour in Depression Based on Subjective Evaluation and Data from a Driving Simulator](#)

Drug Driving

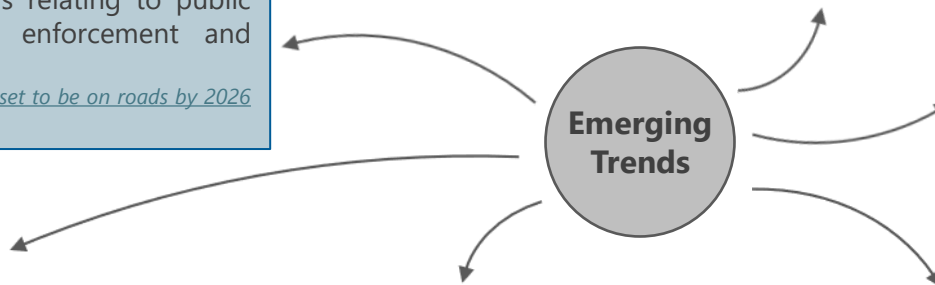
Drug-driving is an increasingly significant road safety concern. Data obtained by IAM RoadSmart through a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Justice show that drug-drive reoffending increased from 1,363 offences in 2020 to 3,193 in 2024, while around 44% of drug-driving offences are committed by repeat offenders.

Overall drug-driving offences have also increased substantially, with 20,072 people sentenced for drug-driving offences in England and Wales in 2024, representing a 143% increase compared with 2017.

Concerns have been raised that delays in processing evidential blood tests may contribute to continued offending by allowing some suspected drug-drivers to remain on the road while results are pending. The Government has acknowledged these challenges and has proposed powers to suspend the licences of drivers suspected of drug-driving.

Unlike drink-driving, which is supported by a national rehabilitation programme, there is currently no equivalent national scheme for drug-drive offenders.

Source: [Drug-drive reoffending rates on the rise](#) - Road Safety GB, [Drug-drive reoffending increases by 134% over last four years in England and Wales](#) | IAM RoadSmart and [Drug driving on the rise across England and Wales](#) | RAC Drive



Neurodiversity

For neurodivergent individuals, driving can present unique challenges such as maintaining attention or increasing anxiety due to the unpredictability of the road. However, neurodivergent drivers do possess strengths, and it is important to recognise driver experience is shaped by a combination of factors, including neurodiversity.

The need to understand neurodiversity goes beyond acknowledging differences and there are changes that can be made to driver education, testing and training so they are more inclusive.

Additionally, The Road Safety Foundation has awarded funding to explore the road safety challenges experienced by neurodivergent children.

Source: [Understanding Diversity in Drivers and Driver Behaviour](#) - Fleet Service GB and [Funding awarded to explore challenges faced by neurodivergent children](#) — Road Safety Trust

Nitrous Oxide

Driving under the influence of nitrous oxide (NOS) is an emerging threat to road safety. Its use can cause unconsciousness, neurological damage or death from suffocation of the oxygen supply to the brain. There have already been deaths connected to drivers who were under the influence of NOS.

The Joint Operations Roads Policing Unit of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary have been trialling a NOS breathalyser. This is an important technological development as, prior to this, there was no device available that could prove whether a driver inhaled NOS due to the speed at which it leaves the body. This breathalyser has the potential to detect NOS for up to two hours after inhalation.

Source: [PCC welcomes Nitrous Oxide testing trial](#) - Thames Valley PCC, [World's first 'laughing gas' breathalyser tested in ground-breaking trial](#) | Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and [West Midlands PCC says drivers on nitrous oxide 'harder to catch'](#) - BBC News