



APPG Cycling & Walking Justice inquiry: Cyclists and online reporting

June 2023

Key points

- Public reporting of offences online offers the chance for much greater detection of bad driving, including with close passes of cyclists.
- Cyclists account for many, if not most, of online submissions, and are key to detecting careless/inconsiderate driving.
- Cyclists deserve to be kept updated and informed of outcome. They qualify as victims in many cases, but even as witnesses, they have the right to be kept updated.
- Good practice should be agreed by police, PCCs and cycle advocates. This would cover staffing, training, feedback, transparency, sharing data with others.
- Local campaigners should work with police and PCCs to monitor adoption of good practice.

Background

Online reporting of unsafe driving extends the long arm of the law, with the police now able to be “anywhere at anytime”. It also means there can be more detection of careless driving, including close passes. Using bike/head cameras, cyclists can document the risk posed to them by drivers. Cyclists are a main source of online submissions. Action Vision Zero (AVZ) holds monthly meetings of local roads policing campaigners. Online submissions by cyclists is a regular focus. This briefing is based on the information shared in those meetings from local campaigners in different police areas.

Good practice

The NPCC adopted recommendations on third party reporting in 2021. A key issue was the need to provide feedback, as was publishing outcome statistics. These recommendations were shared online but are not on the NPCC website. Despite the existence of a NPCC working group with representatives from most, if not all, police services, there has been no systematic monitoring of how many police services have implemented them.

The Road Safety Trust funded research into dashcam reporting is due to report back by the end of June 2023. This is expected to include recommendations for good practice. AVZ has previously drafted good practice guidelines for online reporting which focused on priority, transparency and accountability and community collaboration. Key areas for good practice are summarised below.

Transparency. It can be difficult to know how many reports are being submitted and their outcomes. Data is not published in a consistent way across the 43 police services. Too often data is only available via FOIs. Some police services do share the stats on the number of online submissions. This includes Avon and Somerset Police who post them on twitter, as do Essex Police. Both also proactively provide the stats to local cycle campaign groups. As expected, it seems that if a police service is proud of their work handling online submissions, they are more likely to share data.

[Northamptonshire](#) is believed to demonstrate best practice and publish the most information on online submissions. This includes: date of offence, witness type, make, model, egress ref, offence, offence code, outcome, No Further Action (NFA) Reason, NFA Additional, and recommended disposal. Reasons for NFA included: insufficient evidence to proceed, no supporting footage uploaded, not in the public interest, out of time to process, passed to other internal department, and submitted to incorrect force.

The new [London Vision Zero Enforcement dashboard](#) shows data on the number of public reported Notice of Intended Prosecutions (NIPS) and for which offence. It does not present the total number of submissions received, nor data by road user mode or reason for NFA.

Effectiveness. Some police services take action much more often than others. London is reported to take action in some 40% of cases reported. West Midlands Police were recently revealed to average 16% of NIPS but less than 1% when careless or dangerous driving was alleged. Avon and Campaigners have questioned the effectiveness of warning letters.

Resourcing (staff and training). Units are believed to have limited capacity and unable to cope with the number of submissions, let alone the number that could be submitted if the scheme was publicised and perceived to be more effective. Nor is training thought to be consistent or even required. Submissions are reported to have been dismissed due to mistaken beliefs about where cyclists are supposed to be riding or wearing.

Feedback. Lack of feedback is a common complaint by cyclists. This discourages more submissions. The online submission process requires people to say they are willing to attend court to give evidence if required. The [Victims Code's](#) definition of a victim includes those who have experienced emotional harm—physical injury is not required. The [Witnesses Charter](#) (Standard 5) also states witnesses will be informed of the outcome by the police. Some police do provide feedback. West Mercia police are believed to provide feedback on a consistent basis.

Guides. Local cycling groups have produced guides to help others submit. Organisations like Pushbikes in Birmingham have organised training webinars and there have been presentations on Active Travel Café. The Met Police have been encouraged to work with local cyclists in developing a guide.

Action Vision Zero calls

1. **Good practice.** In addition to a standardised online reporting system police should be encouraged, if not required to use, there should also be supporting policies re transparency, staffing, collaboration with local campaigners etc. Our key call is for good practice to be clearly identified and promoted by senior police. This should include:
 - a. **Transparency.** Police should be encouraged to publish the same type of data on a quarterly, if not monthly basis. This should include outcome, by road user mode, NFA reason, and which offence with close passing reports by cyclists identified. Ideally it would be possible to identify the success rate by alleged offence.
 - b. **Resource.** Police should ensure these units are properly resourced with staff trained it should receive Cycle Savvy or bikeability training. NPCC Dashcam working group should identify recommended workloads, i.e. number of reports per staff member.
 - c. **Feedback** Police should be expected to provide feedback to all those submitting evidence. Consideration should be given to asking if the cyclist felt threatened whereby they should be recorded as a victim.
 - d. **Terminology.** Third party reporting nor dashcam reporting does justice to the submissions made by cyclists who have been put at risk by close passes.
 - e. **Guide.** Police should collaborate with local cycling groups and produce a guide to submitting.
 - f. **Working group.** Similar to Stop and Search working groups, police should establish working groups where videos are shared with local campaigners and the outcomes discussed and opportunities for improvement identified.
 - g. **SPOC.** There should be a single point of contact identified for the online reporting system.
 - h. **Local police.** Police to ensure data is shared with local police, e.g. Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
 - i. **Funding.** PCCS and local authorities should include funding for bike cams in their community safety grants, as has been done in Avon and Somerset and Devon and Cornwall.

Note: This briefing was written by Action Vision Zero based on input from cycling campaigners across the country. . It highlights the concerns and calls in our Roads Policing campaign for traffic law enforcement to focus on reducing harm posed to people walking and cycling.