



The home guard

How do you position enforcement officers to cut wasted travel time in areas where the population is widely dispersed? That was **Somerset County Council's** question – and **NSL** had an answer



A radical new approach has been brought in by a council that needed to drive efficiency in its deployment of civil enforcement officers (CEOs).

Working in partnership with NSL, Somerset County Council has adopted a new home-based model for its CEOs – one that has overcome the operational limitations presented by a finite

resource serving widely dispersed centres of population.

'We needed a more flexible and intelligent solution to minimise travel time and to cater for seasonal and fluctuating peaks in demand,' says Somerset County Council's parking services manager, Steve Deakin.

'Our shared priority was to ensure outlying areas, such as Minehead and the west Somerset coast – and inland areas, such as Shepton Mallet and Wells – received the same high levels of service at all times of the day and throughout the year. The areas around school entrances, at the start and end of the school day, posed particular challenges in these more remote areas. Until now, it had been very difficult to deliver an effective and consistent enforcement response for such hotspots.'

The parking services team at Somerset County Council and the account management team at NSL developed a new measure for benchmarking performance and deployment. Tested and evaluated alongside the existing arrangements, over several months, it provided valuable insight and intelligence.

Pete Harper, NSL's client account manager for Somerset, explains: 'We looked at the possibility of developing more flexible and improved contracts of employment that could offer potential for introducing a form of home-based deployment.'

'This would increase the scope for recruiting local people familiar with their immediate areas, and empower the CEOs with more direct responsibilities. However, there were challenges to overcome – not

least the requirements for additional training, remote management, reallocation of enforcement vehicles, and the functionality and reliability of mobile technology.'

After a detailed assessment of existing IT systems, to check the functionality of handheld terminals and the remote uploading of data, new contracts of employment were developed and the deployment model was introduced in March 2017.

Full training was given to recruits, including in enhanced customer service skills. The enforcement vehicles previously used to travel to more remote areas were now assigned, 'permanently, to the respective locations. This gave a more effective response to requests from police and headteachers to address serious cases of non-compliance around the entrances of schools.'

This approach represents a first for the parking sector and has paved the way for similar initiatives in other areas. [P](#)

About NSL

NSL helps government organisations and businesses to innovate and improve services. The company provides frontline, back-office and customer support services to design and manage places used by the public, and offers national enforcement expertise at borders. With more than 4,000 colleagues in 250 locations across the UK, NSL serves more than 150 clients and 20 million citizens.