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Getting back to school safely

The Department of Transport has recommended that, as part of the re-opening process, pupils, staff and parents should be encouraged to walk or cycle to school as an alternative to public transport where it is safe to do so. However, it accepts that although this may be a realistic option for some, there will also be an increase in car usage for longer journeys. This will significantly increase the challenges for councils in areas that were already struggling to manage the impact of illegal parking on the yellow 'keep clears' outside schools before the pandemic as well as the adoption of air quality improvement measures. It is vital that councils find new ways to manage this increase in traffic congestion whilst reducing pressure on local transport services.

School street closures have already been adopted by councils across the UK to combat the increase in traffic and measures such as this can create safer spaces for walking, cycling and street play. Importantly, reports show that as

well as increasing active travel, such closures reduce traffic levels outside schools and in neighboring streets. It has also been found that school street closures are fully supported by most parents and residents and the corresponding traffic displacement does not appear to cause any significant road safety or nuisance issues.

Enforcing School Street Closures

After carrying out local consultations, councils install signs to notify drivers that these streets can only be accessed by cyclists and pedestrians at the displayed times. Exemptions do of course apply to residents, businesses and blue badge holders requiring access in these zones. Non-exempt vehicles that enter the closed streets during the peak times are identified by Videalert's automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) CCTV cameras.

Video evidence is transmitted to Videalert's hosted digital video platform where evidence packs can be viewed and validated prior to sending to the council's back office system for the issuance of

penalty charge notices (PCN). To reduce the number of appeals, all PCN recipients can view still photographs and video footage of their alleged offences over the internet.

Alternative Measures

In 2013, Videalert pioneered the use of its own video analytics software with CCTV to enforce parking contraventions on school keep clear markings which were designed to provide drivers with greater visibility of possible dangers as well as giving pedestrians a better view of the road in both directions. This solution was developed to improve the safety of children and other pedestrians in these zones which are widely ignored by parents at the beginning and end of each school day. Videalert now has cameras installed at over 250 systems school sites nationally.

This system automatically captures video evidence and the number plates of vehicles stopping in these zones without any manual intervention. Importantly, it only captures vehicles that actually commit offences by being stationary in the defined 'watch area' and

exceed the 'watch time'. Video evidence packs are automatically generated and transmitted to the council for review before any PCNs are processed or generated.

Mobile Enforcement Vehicles (MEV) can also be used to enforce these zones. Videalert provides councils with the widest range of vehicles to meet their specific requirements. As well as providing traditional petrol or diesel powered vehicles, Videalert offers a flexible choice of alternative solutions including hybrid and fully electric MEVs. These vehicles are multi-purpose enabling councils to enforce a wide range of parking and moving traffic contraventions as well as for traffic management and modelling studies utilising the captured VRM data.

For more information please visit www.videalert.com

