

# More Effective Highways Services: Your Five Key Steps

With some of the lowest temperatures of the winter so far and the current culture of “where there’s blame, there’s a claim”, local authorities are taking a hammering on insurance payouts – and that’s driving a reactive culture which concentrates on mitigating insurance risk rather than making the streets safer.

So how can councils better deal with the big peaks in demand for road repairs that come with the bad weather?

Having worked with teams across the UK around these issues, our systems thinking specialists have identified some key actions which can support local authorities to drive more productive behaviours. Here’s our essential guide:

## 1. Eliminate temporary repairs

Often, a temporary fix will be made to a particular stretch of road, so no-one else can make a claim. However, this fix will inevitably not last long-term and will need further repair. It sounds obvious, but doing it right first time would make all the difference.

## 2. Work geographically

We recommend focusing teams on a particular parish, ward or group of wards. The size of the geographical areas assigned to each team will be determined by the areas which need repairs most frequently. For instance, these localised teams will better understand the ‘predictable demand’ of a country lane frequently used as a rat run by local drivers.

## 3. Understand the reasons for ‘wasted’ journeys

Over time, your geographical teams will build a deep local knowledge and immediately recognise when there may be specific barriers to getting the job done. For example, making repairs outside a school at hometime would be problematic, with a maintenance team having to ‘come back later’ rather than completing the job at the allotted time.

## 4. Be proactive, not just reactive

Again, this may seem fairly obvious, but a planned programme of road maintenance will eliminate many problems before they reach crisis point and need emergency repair. (In these challenging times, however, this is often an area where cuts are made first!)

## 5. Forge closer links between identifying an issue and successfully resolving it

Identifying a problem and passing it directly to the person who will fix it removes unnecessary duplication and paperwork. They can then report back directly when each job is done and are empowered to work more flexibly and productively.



We’ve seen time and time again that taking this approach will cut out waste, duplication, unnecessary handoffs and wasted journeys, meaning teams can fix more potholes without increasing the size of teams. Our recent work with one council, for example, supported **a 38 day reduction in the average time taken to resolve highways defects.**

To discuss how this approach could work for you, contact our Organisational Change team – Chris Lunn, Senior Organisational Change Practitioner: [chris.lunn@icecreates.com](mailto:chris.lunn@icecreates.com) / 07809 704 910.