



WELCOME TO
NEIGHBOURHOOD
WATCH

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WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH?

Neighbourhood Watch is one of the biggest and most successful crime prevention initiatives ever. Behind it lies a simple idea, and a central value shared by millions of people around the country:

Getting together with your neighbours to take action can cut local crime.

Everyone knows that the police are there to fight crime, but they need your help to do an effective job. Neighbourhood Watch (or Home Watch as it is known in some areas) is all about an active partnership with the police. Neighbourhood Watch schemes can:

- cut crime and the opportunities for crime
- help and reassure those who live in fear of crime
- encourage neighbourliness and closer communities.

A better place to live, work and play

Neighbourhood Watch is not just about reducing burglary figures – it's about creating communities who care. It brings local people together and can make a real contribution to improving their lives. The activity of Watch members can foster a new community spirit and a belief in the community's ability to tackle problems. At the same

time, you feel secure, knowing your neighbours are keeping an eye on your property.

There are other benefits to Neighbourhood Watch schemes too. You will become familiar with crime prevention ideas which will help keep your home and belongings safe. And the extra security which belonging to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme offers might even mean that you can get a premium discount from your insurance company.

How schemes work

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can be large, covering, for example most of the households on an estate or they might involve just half a dozen houses. It depends on the area and what people living there want.

A scheme is generally led by a volunteer co-ordinator whose job is to get people working together and make sure things get done. As well as the co-ordinator, there is usually a committee. Committees meet regularly to plan which problems to target and what action to take. Schemes keep in close touch with local police to share information and advice.



A lot. They can target local crime problems and take action to prevent them. Schemes should find out from local people what most concerns them and focus on a specific problem.

These are the key steps to targeting and reducing crime and the fear of crime in an area. In consultation with your local police:

- get a picture of local crime
- conduct a 'fear of crime' survey
- target crimes you can have a real impact on
- identify the opportunities for crime
- form an action plan to tackle the problem
- block or reduce opportunities for the criminal.

Most crime is opportunist, committed on the spur of the moment, or when a car or house is left unlocked. This means there is enormous scope for reducing chances for criminals.

Traditional Neighbourhood Watch activity has focused on the immediate vicinity of homes, with members looking out for anything suspicious, or helping their neighbours as necessary. However, more and more schemes are broadening their range of work.

Targeting local problems such as vandalism or graffiti are well within the scope of a well-organised Watch scheme. You may be able to take action yourselves, such as fitting more secure door or window locks in vulnerable homes, or you may need to get others involved. This could mean lobbying the local authority, for example, to improve the street lighting on your estate or to step up the security of a communal entrance.

Many schemes now work in partnership with other agencies like Victim Support, Help the Aged, and Age Concern to help reduce the fear of crime.



Repeat burglaries

When a home is burgled it is more likely to be burgled again than a home that hasn't. If it does happen it is likely to be within the next few weeks. After all, a burglar has been into the home, found the weak points in its security and had a good look at the contents and layout. So stepping up the security of a burgled home straightaway can prevent a further crime.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can tackle this problem by forming protective 'cocoon' around burgled homes. Immediate neighbours are asked to keep an eye on the targeted home, to be especially watchful for a few weeks and to report anything suspicious to the police. Where these cocoons have been set up following a burglary, they can have a dramatic impact in preventing another crime in the high risk period.

The key is to:

- respond fast
- get all neighbours who overlook the burgled property to help
- be extra vigilant for a few weeks.

Street Watch

Some Neighbourhood Watch schemes include Street Watch elements. This term covers many different activities, ranging from providing transport or escort services for elderly people, to walking a specific route regularly,

keeping an eye out for trouble and reporting it to the police. Individual Neighbourhood Watch schemes decide for themselves if they wish to tackle the problems in their area in this way. They then consult closely with local people and the police.

AN ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE POLICE

Watch schemes are not police-run groups. But to be truly effective against crime, they need to plan action in co-operation with the police (or other agency such as the local authority).

It is essential to establish a close working relationship with your local police, and to share with them all information relating to crime and other incidents in your area. Many police stations have volunteer administrators who, in conjunction with the police, act as a liaison point for Watch co-ordinators. The police can provide the up to date crime figures and other information as well as expert advice, while Watch members and local authorities can contribute valuable grassroots information about the area. When you team this local knowledge with the sort of statistical information and operational support the police can often provide, then you have a powerful basis for action against crime.



The following cases show that **Neighbourhood Watch** can work even for areas with a serious crime problem:

Example one

The Gaer Estate Neighbourhood Watch in Newport, Gwent was started up to combat a rising tide of break-ins, theft and vandalism – up to 25 incidents a week. The Watch scheme took off to such an extent that it soon covered almost half of the estate's 7,000 homes. The Watch is split into seven divisions, each managed by its own deputy co-ordinator, and is equipped with CB radios and mobile phones. Their achievements include:

- introducing Street Watch activity between midnight and 5am. People walk a specified route in pairs and are linked by radio and mobile phone to the Watch's headquarters. Anything suspicious they see is relayed to base and then reported to the police.
- re-introduction of police foot patrols
- escort services for the elderly
- regular meetings at street level to pass on crime prevention advice
- a Neighbourhood Watch information centre on shop premises, funded by donations by Watch members.



Example two

The Albany 2 Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Tyne and Wear began in 1987. The estate was part of a new town development, with people moving in from different areas, and not knowing their new neighbours. There was no sense of community. The residents recognised this, and set about organising a scheme to try to bring some confidence and reassurance to the area. It has grown into a highly active scheme, with a wide-ranging crime prevention role. Scheme members work with police, local people and local authorities to pinpoint problems and plan how to tackle them. Their achievements include:

- better street lighting
- speed bumps
- security gates installed on the estate.

The above examples have vital success factors in common which help them keep on top of local crime. They both:

- improve communication between police and residents
- encourage security awareness and an effective crime response
- prompt a better community spirit with neighbours looking out for one another.

Scheme members can also lobby the business community to play a part. When elderly people in Albany became anxious about a spate of muggings in the area, the Watch



scheme persuaded local businesses to organise a raffle to fund personal attack alarms for pensioners. Apart from reducing crime, such improvements contribute to the general quality of life in the area. It's all about listening to people's needs then rounding up support locally to see what can be done.

Neighbourhood Watch members want to know their hard work is paying off – and police can provide that evidence in the form of crime statistics. There's nothing more satisfying to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme than to see the hard evidence of a cut in crime showing up in local figures.

National Neighbourhood Watch Association

Schemes need never feel they are struggling alone. There are thousands of others all around the country with good ideas and sources of support. The National Neighbourhood Watch Association, formed in 1995, offers ideas and information for both police and co-ordinators. It can help Neighbourhood Watch scheme to:

- exchange good ideas
- share information
- build up knowledge of best practice
- support and help one another locally
- set up local associations.

The Association is funded entirely by sponsorship. Membership is absolutely free.

For more information

Visit the Home Office Neighbourhood Watch Website:

www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com or

National Neighbourhood Watch

Association

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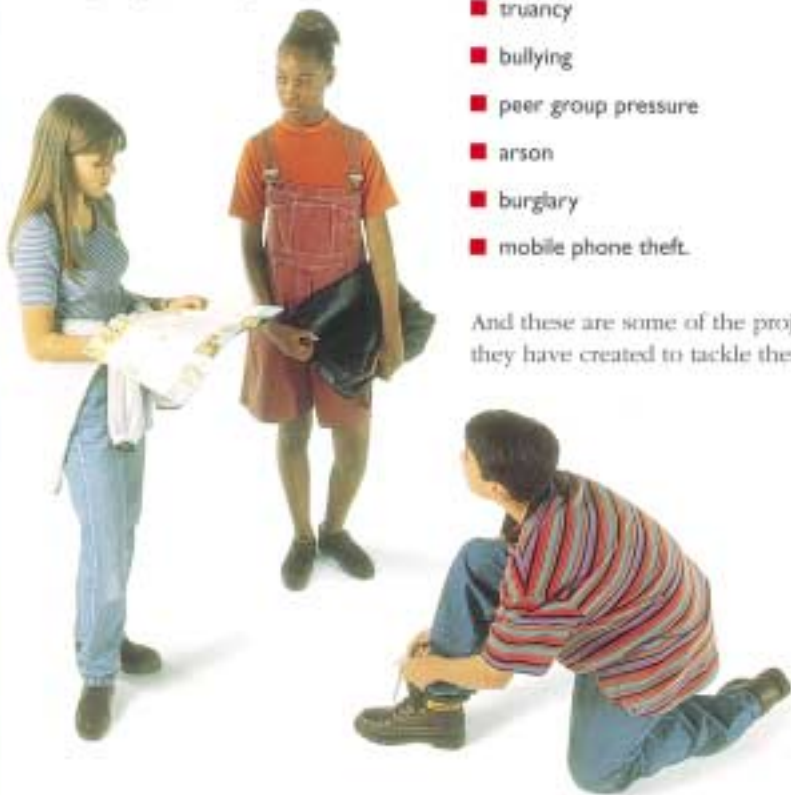
YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Young people are particularly vulnerable to certain types of crime and have their own perspective on which crimes matter most. One of the most widespread means of getting involved in crime prevention is by joining or forming a youth group, such as a Youth Action Group, or junior crime prevention panel. These are the young person's version of a crime prevention panel. They are usually attached to a senior panel, or a local school, and deal with areas of crime which are more likely to affect young people. Young people themselves are the driving force of these groups, but they can benefit and

take their plans further with help and support from adult groups such as Neighbourhood Watch. And in turn, Neighbourhood Watch schemes get an accurate picture of crime in their neighbourhood and can tap into an energetic resource to tackle such problems as:

- alcohol, drugs and substance misuse
- personal safety
- aggression and violence
- car crime
- vandalism and graffiti
- truancy
- bullying
- peer group pressure
- arson
- burglary
- mobile phone theft.

And these are some of the projects they have created to tackle them:



Example one

The Youth Action Group of a girls' school in Swansea decided to tackle the problems centred around the badly run down toilets. Smashed mirrors, broken basins and abusive graffiti all added to a sense of intimidation, and the toilets had become the focal point of bullying so that some younger pupils were too afraid to use them. The Youth Action Group carried out a survey to discover why pupils were afraid, which they presented to the school head and governors. Their action prompted the school to carry out a complete renovation of the building, which has since remained trouble free.

Example two

Pupils in a Stafford school devised a solution to bullying and playground disputes. The head asked every pupil and teacher in the school to identify the person they thought had the good qualities of listening, communication and leadership. The same 20 names kept cropping up, and he trained them in the skills they would need to mediate between disputing groups or individuals. They now staff an office in the school grounds all day, and any pupil with a problem or grievance, or anyone who is being bullied can go to the office for help. They are solving the bullying problem by getting the two sides together to sort it out between them.

Example three

Youth crime prevention doesn't have to be confined to Youth Action Groups. Neighbourhood Watch can also involve young people in their own communities. Samantha Holyman is street co-ordinator for the Pelsall Area Neighbourhood Watch in the West Midlands. She also writes the youth section for the local Neighbourhood Watch Association newsletter.

Samantha admits it's the work on the newsletter which attracted her initially, but combined with work experience in the community safety office of her local police station, it's given her an insight into crime prevention from both the police and civilian side. Samantha also relishes the chance to confront the prejudices some of the older Watch members may have against young people. Involvement with such schemes also introduces young people to networks, where they can learn more ideas and find out about where their activity fits into the broader scheme of things. A youth crime event in the Midlands was attended by over 100 teenagers representing schools in the area. Representatives also attended from the police, probation service and NACRO. It's this kind of pooling of ideas and sharing of perspectives which encourages young people that they can contribute something to the fight against crime.

'ALL THIS TALK OF CRIME MAKES ME ANXIOUS ...'

When you first join Neighbourhood Watch you may be given a lot of information about crime, especially in your area. This may alarm you. But remember – the risk of actually being a victim of violent crime is very small indeed.

Most crime – more than 90 per cent – is against property, not people, and most of your security measures will be

aimed at protecting your home and your belongings. Neighbourhood Watch is all about taking sensible precautions. It reassures vulnerable members of your community that you are keeping a neighbourly eye on them.

**HOW MUCH SHOULD I DO?**

It's entirely up to you. Some people have more free time than others, and may want to take a very active role as a committee member or even co-ordinator of a local Watch scheme.

- You may know something about marketing or communications, and volunteer to write and distribute newsletters, or publicise your local scheme's activities.
- You may be in business locally and know of avenues to seek sponsorship for Watch activities.
- Or your part may be as simple as keeping a look out while your neighbour is on holiday, making sure there are no tell-tale signs such as milk left on a doorstep that would attract a burglar.

Everyone can do something that will really make a difference.



HOW CAN I SET UP A SCHEME?

If you are serious about getting involved in Neighbourhood Watch you will want to find out about other schemes and how they operate. Your local police will tell you if there is a scheme in your area or help you set up one of your own.

To find your local police force visit - www.police.uk. The National Neighbourhood Watch Association can provide information and help. See page 7 for how to contact the NNWA.

Visit neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com

More Information

For general crime reduction advice visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk

For copies of the following leaflets visit www.crimereduction.gov.uk or contact your local Crime Reduction Officer:

'Be Safe, Be Secure: Your Practical Guide to Crime Reduction' - covers all aspects of crime prevention, including personal safety for yourself and your family, how to keep your home and possessions safe; car security and how to help prevent crime in your community. It also contains telephone numbers and addresses for other 'help' organisations.



You can get further advice on home security and postcoding your property in the leaflets '*A Guide to Home Security*'; '*Coded for Keeps*' and '*Peace of Mind While You're Away*'.

You can order crime reduction material from Prolog;
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