



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

A Guide to Starting and Maintaining a Watch

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(original document Sarah Scales - amended May 2004 by Everett Bentley)

WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH?

The idea of Neighbourhood Watch is that a group of households in a road, or part of a road, get together because they are concerned about the well being of their community. A volunteer acts as a co-ordinator who then organises and runs the Watch. The co-ordinator is then encouraged to recruit one or more deputies from among the members to assist in the running of the Watch. Watches which work well and grow are those that:

- Encourage their community to work together
- Care about each other and the safety of the community
- Help to improve the local environment
- Develop a good liaison with the police and other parties involved
- Follow crime prevention advice
- Greater vigilance
- Fostering a community spirit

WHAT DOES NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH INVOLVE?

Individual Watches all have different characteristics, depending on the area in which they are situated and their objectives. However, most Watches have some things in common.

Watches are set up with the co-operation of the local police and Bracknell Forest Borough Council. The area has a team of crime reduction specialists and your local neighbourhood has local beat officers who are all committed to reducing crime and making the community safer. There is also a Neighbourhood Watch Administrator, based at Bracknell Police Station, who helps set up and administer the Watches within the Bracknell Forest area.

- Watches are run by their members through a co-ordinator and supported by the police, the Council and the Neighbourhood Watch Administrator
- Watches are all individual and can vary in size depending on the location
- The co-ordinator, co-ordinates the Watch and liaises with the Administrator and the police. The co-ordinator acts as the voice for his Watch
- All Neighbourhood Watch members are made aware of crime prevention and how to protect themselves and their property. This is done in various ways by crime prevention advice by the crime reduction team, leaflets which are produced by the Home Office giving advice on crime awareness, also security surveys for victims of crime and the vulnerable
- Watch members receive information and messages from the police. This vital communication link increases crime awareness, helps the police search for witnesses, may lead to an arrest and helps motivate members and keep Watches active

Each Watch is a community initiative, supported by the police, but not run by them. Neighbourhood Watch is about getting to know your neighbours, building trust and working together. The goal is to create a community spirit where people care about what happens to each other and their neighbourhood.

HOW ARE WATCHES SET UP?

Contact is made with the Neighbourhood Watch Administrator on **01344 823488**. A visit to your home can be arranged where more advice can be offered as to how to set up a Watch. You are not committed to set a Watch up at any stage, it is made quite clear that this is a voluntary decision whether or not to proceed.

Watches can be tailored to particular needs of the community and might not follow local protocol. It is up to the community on how they want their Watch to function.

If you decide to set up a Watch in your area, your Watch will be introduced to the local Community Beat Officer at a further meeting. New Neighbourhood Watch members usually use this meeting as an opportunity to ask about any local issues that may be of concern to them.

THE CO-ORDINATOR

The role of the Co-ordinator is to:

- Contact individual householders in the neighbourhood and discuss setting up a Watch
- Set up and maintain a Neighbourhood Watch within a specific area
- Keep an up-to-date register of the members
- Communicate relevant police information on crime in the area
- Communicate information from members to the police
- Act as a link between the Watch, other co-ordinators, police and the local authority
- Some co-ordinators also choose to liaise with the Neighbourhood Watch Association

A number of tasks that a co-ordinator can become involved in once a Watch has been set up:

- Encouraging members to inform the police quickly of suspicious and criminal incidents
- Encouraging members to inform police of all crime, no matter how minor. This information is used by police to assess crime trends (hot spots), and police may also be able to link this crime with another incident
- Encouraging members to note and report accurate details linked to any suspicious activities in your area, such as vehicle registrations
- Supplying individual households with door and window stickers as well as incident report cards and other literature supplied by the police or the Home Office
- Passing information between the police and individual households
- Circulating newsletters, leaflets and any equipment such as property marking kits
- Keeping in touch with other local Watches if appropriate
- Monitoring Watch activities and keeping a check on the vulnerable and newcomers
- Identifying local environmental problems and reporting these to the local authority
- Encouraging awareness of their members own security and of others

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

As a voluntary activity, Neighbourhood Watch was set up by members of the community to identify local problems, find solutions and reduce the fear of crime.

Individual Watches can be much more successful if they join together to form associations at local and county level. Local associations are not meant to replace individual Watches. Their aim is to provide:

- A clear focus across a number of Watches
- Support for individual Watches
- A way of passing on good ideas and best practices
- A way of attracting and sharing resources
- A voice when further action is necessary to solve a local problem

Some localised areas are already working hard to form associations. You can contact your Neighbourhood Watch Administrator to find out if this is happening in your area. If a local association is not already being set up in your area, then you may wish to consider becoming involved, there are a number of stages:

- Watch co-ordinators form a small local group. This could be based on an individual police beat area
- The next stage is to expand the group and base it on a district, police division, town or village area
- The chief co-ordinator from each of these larger groups would then form a steering committee. This committee would then decide whether to go for an association based on police force boundary areas
- The steering committee need to:
 - Establish the aims and objectives of the association
 - Decide on a plan of action for the forthcoming year
 - Decide whether or not to look for sponsorship
- Finally when the purpose of the group is clear and the way forward is planned, a launch meeting should be held to elect the committee and select the officers

Some Neighbourhood Watches have chosen to incorporate their Watches into residents or tenants association or other schemes such as the "Good Neighbour Scheme".

THE NATIONAL NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

The National Neighbourhood Watch Association (NNWA) has been established to provide support and advice to both Neighbourhood Watch and the police. The aim of the NNWA is to:

- Celebrate success
- Share best practice and new initiatives
- Provide a library of videos, newsletters, ideas and regular information
- Assist with sponsorship
- Provide regular forums for the exchange of new ideas and meeting colleagues
- Provide a central resource of training programmes
- If you need further advice on the NNWA, please contact:

National Neighbourhood Watch Association
18 Buckingham Gate
London
SW1E 6LB

Tel: 020 7963 0160
Fax: 020 7963 0170

e-mail info@neighbourhoodwatch.net

Website www.neighbourhoodwatch.net

SETTING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR WATCH

Step 1

One of the most important steps in starting up a Watch is to decide on its aims and objectives. Ask the question:

"Do we want Neighbourhood Watch, and if so what do we expect to get from it in our street, village or estate?"

Don't think about the broad benefits that Neighbourhood Watch brings, like reducing crime or reducing the fear of crime. Think about the specific problems you have and how Neighbourhood Watch can reduce them. i.e.

- You may want to reduce the damage to windows at your local school
- You may have a problem of cars being broken into in your area
- You may have anti-social behaviour problems
- You may want to improve contact with your local police

Every area has different problems. Some of the situations you want to tackle will be unique to your area.

Step 2

Once you've identified any problems in your area, think about the activities you want within Neighbourhood Watch to help solve them. In other words, what you can do as a group to achieve something.

Activities could include a whole range of things including:

- Representation to the council
- Arranging better communication with the police
- Circulating information
- Holding social events so that people get to know each other
- Holding meetings to discuss problems

Step 3

Ask the question:

"What do we need to make it happen?"

You need to think of the resources that will help you carry out your activities. Resources don't just mean money but also things like:

- People's time
- Premises for meetings
- Printing facilities

People's time is the most important resource you can have, without it your Watch will not run effectively. So at this point the question you should ask is

"Are we prepared to give the commitment to make it happen?"

Step 4

When you have planned your activities and identified the resources you need to carry them out, ask yourself:

"Will our plans help solve the problems we identified in step 1?"

If your plans do not meet your original expectations, it is important that you alter them now before you put them into action. It is much easier to change things at the beginning than later on when things have started to go wrong.

Step 5

When your plans are underway it is important to refer to steps 1 - 4 regularly to ensure that your plans are on course.

REMEMBER

Steps 1 - 5 can be repeated and applied to every individual problem in the future.

Any statements of aims and activities need not be a long document.