



Starting and maintaining a scheme:

Introduction

This module deals with some of the things you will have to consider when starting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The aim of this module is to provide you with a technique that will allow you to:

- set objectives for your scheme;
- plan activities to help you meet those objectives;
- identify the resources you will need to carry out the objectives;
- review the activities to see if they meet your objectives.

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- identify the kinds of questions to ask to help you get your scheme started;
- organise a meeting to discuss and plan your scheme's activities.

The module is in two parts:

- Part one contains the Development Notes which explain how to plan your scheme's activities.
- Part two contains the Session Notes which you can use to run an initial meeting for your scheme.

Important note

Each individual police force has its own procedures for setting up Neighbourhood Watch schemes. This module is designed to help you get the best from these procedures and is not meant to replace them.



STARTING AND MAINTAINING A SCHEME

Notes



Starting and maintaining a scheme: Development Notes

These Development Notes contain information about three main aspects of Neighbourhood Watch:

- background information about Neighbourhood Watch for new schemes;
- information about local Neighbourhood Watch associations – this may be of more interest for existing schemes;
- information about setting objectives for new schemes.

What is Neighbourhood Watch?

Neighbourhood Watch is a method of developing close liaison between households in a neighbourhood, the local police and the local authority. The aim is to help people protect themselves and their properties, to reduce the fear of crime and improve their local environment by:

- improved home security;
- greater vigilance;
- fostering a community spirit;
- improving their environment.

Why is Neighbourhood Watch necessary?

While police statistics sometimes show a fall in certain categories of recorded crime, the overall figures are higher than those of only a few years ago. It is important that the police and the community work in co-operation and partnership to prevent and detect crime.



What does Neighbourhood Watch involve?

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

- Schemes are set up with the co-operation of individual police divisions, and, in some cases, the local authority. Each police division has a police officer who is designated to work with Neighbourhood Watch.
- Schemes are run by their members through a co-ordinator and supported by the police and in many areas by a local Neighbourhood Watch association.
- Schemes vary in size from a few properties in sparsely populated areas to many properties on a road or estate.
- The volunteer co-ordinator, who is a resident of the area, co-ordinates the scheme and liaises with the police. The co-ordinator acts as the voice for that community.
- All Neighbourhood Watch members take steps to prevent crime, improve safety and reduce the fear of crime.
- Scheme members receive information and messages from the police, their local association or local authority. This vital communication link helps to motivate members and keep schemes active.

Each scheme is a community initiative, which is supported by the police but not run by them. Success depends on what the members make of a scheme, but Neighbourhood Watch gives people the chance to get to know and help each other better, particularly the more vulnerable.

The introductory video included with this package shows several examples of how individual Neighbourhood Watch schemes work.



How are schemes set up?

The first point of contact is your local police station! The police will be able to put you in touch with an established scheme, if there is one in your area, and your local Neighbourhood Watch association. If there is no established scheme the police will be able to arrange for a scheme to be set up if others in your neighbourhood are also interested. In this case someone will have to volunteer to become the co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator

The role of the co-ordinator is to:

- contact individual households in the neighbourhood and arrange a meeting to discuss setting up a scheme;
- set up and maintain a Neighbourhood Watch within a specific area;
- communicate relevant police information on crime in the area;
- communicate information from members to the police;
- act as the link between the scheme, other co-ordinators, the local police, the local Neighbourhood Watch association and the local authority.

There are a number of tasks that a co-ordinator can become involved in once the scheme has been set up:

- supplying individual households with stickers for doors and windows as well as incident report cards or memo pads if they are available;
- conducting a fear of crime survey;
- passing information between the police and individual households;
- circulating newsletters, leaflets and any equipment available to members, like property marking kits;
- encouraging members to inform the police quickly of suspicious and criminal incidents;



- keeping in touch with other schemes in the area;
- monitoring the scheme's activities and keeping a check on vulnerable households and newcomers;
- identifying local environmental problems and reporting these to the local authority.

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 schemes 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 schemes. Their aim is to provide:

- a clear focus across a number of schemes;
- support for individual schemes;
- a way of passing on good ideas and best practice;
- a way of attracting and sharing resources;
- a voice when further action is necessary to solve a local problem.

To start a local association there are a number of stages:

- Watch co-ordinators form a small local group. This could be based on an individual police beat or sector.
- 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 decide whether to go for an association based on county or police force area boundaries.
- The steering committee needs to:
 - establish the aims and objectives of the association;
 - decide on an action plan for the forthcoming year;
 - decide whether to look for sponsorship.



The police are usually quite happy to be included in the planning stage and are often included on the committee.

- 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.

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, newsletter 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:

The Chief Executive
National Neighbourhood Watch Association
Dixon House
1 Lloyds Avenue
London
EC3N 3DH
Tel: 0171 772 3348
Fax: 0171 772 3460/5



Setting up your scheme or association

The individual modules in this training package can all be used to help you set up an individual scheme or association. In particular the following will be helpful:

- The introductory video
- Funding and sponsorship
- Communication
- Making your meetings more effective
- Publicity material
- Writing a good newsletter

The introduction to the package has further details of these modules.

Setting aims and objectives for your scheme

One of the most important steps in starting up a scheme is to decide on its aims and objectives. The information in the rest of these Development Notes and in the Session Notes for this module show a simple four-step process for setting the aims and objectives of your scheme.



Step one

No matter how long your journey, it always starts with one step. Your first step in setting up a Neighbourhood Watch must be to ask:

“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. For example:

- you may want to reduce the damage to windows at the local school;
- you may have a problem of cars being broken into because the houses have no parking space;
- you may want to improve contact with the police since your local police station is closed during certain hours.

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

What do people living in your area see as their problems? You might want to make a note of these now for use later. One way of doing this is to conduct a crime audit of your area. More information about this can be found in the module on community safety.



Step two

Once you've identified the problems you have in your area, think about the activities you want within your 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 local 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.

Don't forget, your activities must address the problems you identified in step one.

Step three

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, for without it your scheme will not run properly. So, at this point the most important question to ask is:

“Are we prepared to give the commitment to make it happen?”



Step four

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 one?”

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.

Write it down

By the end of this session you will have done a lot of thinking. Hopefully it will have taken you through a process which will make your Neighbourhood Watch stronger and less likely to fold under pressure.

It is important to write down your collective thoughts.

A statement of your aims and activities is useful for:

- use in publicity materials;
- attracting new members;
- attracting sponsors.

Your statement of aims and activities does not need to be a long document. One or two pages listing what you want to achieve and how you plan to achieve it are enough.



Review

Each year you should look back at your original expectations, what activities and benefits you decided on, and what you were prepared to give to achieve what you wanted. Then ask:

“Have we achieved what we set out to do, have we done even better, or are we just standing still?”

It is important that you don't treat your original plans as set in stone. You must be able to react to changes in your area. At the review stage you can decide to change your expectations of the scheme and your activities.

The second part of this module contains notes to help you run a meeting to plan the objectives and activities for your Neighbourhood Watch scheme.



Starting and maintaining a scheme: Session Notes

About this session

This plan is intended as a structure for discussion prior to starting the process of setting up a new Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Each police force has a different administrative process for setting up Neighbourhood Watch. This session is designed to give your local process a firm foundation on which to proceed. It is designed to discover:

- what people hope to get out of a scheme;
- what activities a Neighbourhood Watch will generate;
- what resources will help make the scheme successful.

Although intended to be used in starting a new Neighbourhood Watch, this session can be used in an existing scheme to help assess how well it is working.

How long the session should last

If the time you take gives your scheme a better chance of success then it is time well spent. On the other hand, 45 minutes to an hour is the most meetings should last. So you may wish to spread the process out over a number of meetings, considering one or two stages at a time.

How many people should attend

A group of about 14 to 16 is an ideal number. It is appreciated that in a meeting of this nature it is difficult to turn away people who wish to attend. However, a larger number would test the skills of the chair in allowing everyone to express their views.



What resources you will need

- a good comfortable room with seating in a circle;
- a flipchart, chalkboard, whiteboard or other material to write on.

Session plan

You do not need to allocate a time limit to each stage and you may wish to spread the full exercise over a number of evenings.

Stage one

Use the flipchart to list what you hope to gain from your Neighbourhood Watch. Be careful to avoid using broad concepts like 'to prevent crime'. Concentrate on the specific problems of your area and what Neighbourhood Watch can do to help solve them.

Stage two

Again using the flipchart, agree what activities you want within your Neighbourhood Watch. Apart from meetings, consider:

- newsletters;
- property marking;
- social events.

Stage three

Once again use the flipchart to list the resources Neighbourhood Watch will require. Think of the term 'resources' very broadly. For example think about:

- a school or church hall for meetings;
- someone with facilities to produce a newsletter;
- how much finance you require and where it might be raised;
- how many people will be required and what their time commitment will be.



Stage four

Now go back to stage one and ask the question:

“Will the activities and resources listed in stages two and three meet the expectations of stage one?”

You need to decide whether you can meet your objectives with the activities and resources you plan to have. If your objectives can't be met, look again at steps two and three and make any adjustments that are necessary.

It is recommended that you write down a statement of aims and activities. The statement can be used throughout the year and for review purposes at the end of the year.



Notes