



SETTING UP A NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME

The first step

If you are interested in setting up a scheme, the first step is to speak to your neighbours and find out if they are also interested. The more residents there are who want to get involved, the more successful a scheme will be. But not everyone in a street or neighbourhood needs to join a scheme for it to work. It will work as long as there are enough residents to keep an eye out for each other's properties and to liaise with the police.

Working with the police & Association

The closer the links with the police, the more effective a scheme will be, so we recommend you contact your local Policing Team to let them know you are interested in starting a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. You can find their details on www.police.uk. The exact process for starting a scheme varies across England and Wales, so you should also get in touch with your [Neighbourhood Watch Association](#) and they will let you know what to do next.

The Coordinator

Each scheme has a coordinator who acts as the key contact point for the scheme. They liaise with the police, scheme members and the general public – for instance, people who are interested in joining the scheme – as well as non-member residents when necessary. A scheme may have more than one coordinator as long as members and police know who the key contacts are. The coordinator ensures a smooth flow of information and communication between the police and scheme members.

Size & dispersal of your scheme

There are no hard and fast rules about the size of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This can vary depending on the geography of the area. A good rule is to think about which houses can see each other, so that they can keep an eye open for any suspicious activity. But some schemes don't fit into that model, such as long straight roads, blocks of flats and rural areas where houses are widely spaced, so choose what works best for you.

Multiple occupancy buildings

Swedish researcher Erika Sallander has produced a useful guide on setting up and maintaining Neighbourhood Watch in flats and other kinds of buildings with multiple family occupancy - [Neighbourhood Watch in Multiple Family Dwellings](#). This was produced for the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet) but is equally useful in the UK if the term 'local authority area' is substituted for 'municipality'. The guide is aimed at local agencies rather than individuals, but it contains many ideas and suggestions

which you might find helpful, particularly around conducting a survey in advance of setting up a scheme.

Here are some things to think about when setting up your scheme:

- What is the main aim of your scheme? (e.g. is there a specific problem you are setting up the scheme to address?)
- Do you need a deputy or second coordinator?
- Do you need to set up a small committee?
- Do you need to appoint a treasurer?
- How will you cover the costs of running the scheme (e.g. newsletters, meetings)?
- How will you raise funds if needed?
- How will you communicate with members?
- How will you communicate with the police?
- Will you produce newsletters? If so, how often and who will produce them?
- How often will you meet and where?
- How will you deal with new requests for membership?

Activities & partnerships

Traditionally, Neighbourhood Watch activities have focused on the immediate vicinity of homes, with members looking out for anything suspicious and helping their neighbours. However, more and more schemes are broadening their work to target a range of other problems such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism and graffiti. When links are made with other local schemes and wider alliances are formed, the membership can become a powerful voice within a community and get actively involved in problem-solving.

Neighbourhood Watch is well-known to help reduce burglary, anti-social behaviour, doorstep crime and environmental problems. But criminals are no longer constrained by geographical boundaries, and in recent years there has been a steady rise in fraud and cybercrime. Neighbourhood Watch is in a strong position to help tackle this kind of crime as well, by being a trusted source of information and support for people within their communities and keeping their eyes open for those who might be vulnerable. Victims of fraud and cybercrime might be embarrassed to confide in their families, or worry about losing their independence, and may not know that a crime has been committed or feel that they can't report it to the police. This is where Neighbourhood Watch members and coordinators can help.

As well as the police, Neighbourhood Watch schemes may also work with other agencies within their area who have an interest in reducing crime and building stronger communities. These may include Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), local authority environmental and social care teams, Trading Standards services, and Fire & Rescue services. You might also want to link up with other community groups like Residents Associations and special interest or cultural groups.