



Devon and Cornwall
Community Watch
Association

How to set up and run a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association
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‘Bringing neighbours together to create strong, friendly, resilient and active communities’

Introduction

Thank you for getting in touch and for considering how you can help your local community come together to become a safer, more inclusive and resilient place in which to live.

You might already know a little about Neighbourhood Watch, but in summary it’s a recognised and fully-supported way for a group of concerned/likeminded neighbours to join together to help reduce crime and the fear of crime within their community. This is achieved by keeping their eyes and ears open, using their local knowledge and reporting anything suspicious to the Police. It’s also about being more knowledgeable about their own security whilst keeping a look out for each other.

However, Neighbourhood Watch doesn’t just stop at crime prevention. Schemes can also be used to focus efforts on so many other types of community assistance and engagement projects which will ultimately lead to much stronger, friendlier and more resilient neighbourhoods. For example, getting together to look at disability needs in the area, to fundraise for new play equipment or even investigate ways in which you can combat loneliness and care for the more vulnerable members of your community. It also gives neighbours the structure but also the freedom to explore how they can improve both their social atmosphere and sense of community spirit through bringing people together with a shared goal.

It really is up to you how you want to plan and run our own scheme, and to decide which projects and initiatives you feel you can collaboratively tackle for the benefit of your community. Within this pack, you’ll find lots of useful information on Neighbourhood Watches, the points you need to consider from the beginning and a step-by-step guide to help you set up a new scheme in your area.

We’re very aware you may have more specific questions so please do get in touch. We’re here to help.

Good luck

About Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch started in the UK in 1982 and since then has evolved into a co-ordinated national network.

Its aim is to bring neighbours together to create strong, friendly, active communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are less likely to happen.

Its vision is for a caring society that is focused on trust and respect in which people are safe from crime and enjoy a good quality of life. Neighbourhood Watch is about making sure that fewer people feel afraid, vulnerable or isolated in the place where they live.

The national body, known as the Neighbourhood Watch Network, is based in London and now represents the largest crime prevention movement in England and Wales with 2.3million household members registered.

However, the idea was, and still is, never to create central control but instead to allow easy sharing of advice, information and resources between groups and associations across England and Wales.

Neighbourhood Watch in Devon and Cornwall

The Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association (DaCCWA) is the recognized umbrella organisation for all Neighbourhood Watch Schemes across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

It provides the expertise, structure and partnerships necessary to enable Watch Schemes to be launched and maintained, supplying the knowledge, resources and support that people can collaboratively use to help cut crime and reduce the fear of crime. Through its dedicated network of local Watch Offices, it also inspires scheme co-ordinators to think about how else they can enthuse their members to create friendlier and more community-focused neighbourhoods.

With more than 68,000 households being active members of its Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, DaCCWA also orchestrates a growing collection of other Watch Schemes which address more specific communities and areas including Boat Watch, Horse Watch, Hotel Watch, Farm Watch, Caravan Watch and Heritage Watch.

DaCCWA also works closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon and Cornwall Police whilst liaising with the other emergency services and likeminded community organisations. It also represents all Neighbourhood Watch Schemes based in both counties with the national Neighbourhood Watch Network.

Benefits to your Community

We can't get away from the fact that we live in a world where crime and anti-social behaviour happens. It's equally just not possible to have a Police Officer or a PCSO standing on the corner of every street.

By setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme you're not only helping to cut crime, but also helping to reduce the fear of crime, which is a major issue for a lot of people especially the more vulnerable members of our communities.

You're also creating a structure which enables you to engage with your community more, and to consider and implement community-focused projects and initiatives which could ultimately help to create a friendlier, more inclusive and resilient neighbourhood.

There's lots of benefits to being a member of a pro-active scheme. These include:

- stopping or reducing opportunities for the criminals
- making our families, and our homes and the community in which we live that bit safer
- helping to improve the social atmosphere and community spirit by bringing everyone together in a shared goal
- helping to combat loneliness and improve people's health and wellbeing

Neighbourhood Watch is about local people working together to create safe, attractive, friendly, and most importantly, resilient places in which to live. Places where crime is less likely to happen and people are less likely to turn to anti-social behaviour.

It's about engaging with your neighbours, looking out for them and for them to look out for you. There are no barriers regarding age, race, class and religion - it's simply about making sure that no one feels alone, frightened or vulnerable in the place where they live.

How to Set Up and Run a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

There is no set Neighbourhood Watch Scheme requirement because each group is owned and run by its community. Communities have different needs and nobody knows these needs better than the individual communities themselves.

A Neighbourhood Watch Scheme's membership can equally vary in size from a single isolated farm, to a few houses in a road, or all or part of a large housing estate.

Each Scheme is generally headed by a volunteer Co-ordinator from the local area and we always recommend they are assisted by a Deputy.

The Co-ordinator, amongst other things, acts as the key point of contact for the scheme and is the link between the individual scheme members, Police and general public (remember there may be others who will want to join your scheme later). Their role is about ensuring a smooth flow of information and communication between all parties and they may also liaise with other neighbouring schemes as well as the other emergency services and other like-minded organisations as necessary.

Although some schemes may warrant having more than one Co-ordinator there should always be a lead Co-ordinator which the scheme's members, the Police and DaCCWA know who to liaise with.

Please note that the Police do not run Neighbourhood Watch Schemes but are pleased to share and receive relevant information, and to give advice and assistance where necessary.

First Steps to Setting up a Scheme

Step One - Gauge the level of community interest

Whether it's just you or there are others in your community interested in setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, it's best to act swiftly in getting your scheme up and running.

But first you need to determine the level of popularity in setting up a scheme and this can be achieved by using the simple survey form that's found at the back of this pack or you might feel it is more appropriate to simply call round or telephone your neighbours to create your group of interested members.

If you feel your proposed scheme area warrants a survey, you could identify one person within the proposed scheme who is willing to take responsibility for the distribution and collection of the survey forms, or you might like to do this yourself. Just don't forget to add contact details to the bottom of the form prior to photocopying sufficient numbers for every household within the proposed scheme!

Survey forms not returned within three days should ideally be collected, and as soon as all forms are returned, you will be able to also gauge any interest in potential scheme coordinators and deputies.

Step Two - Organise an initial meeting

Now you have determined the number of households who're interested in joining a scheme, you should find a suitable venue, the closer to the proposed new scheme the better, for an initial welcome and introductory meeting.

This could be a local village hall, school or even, if you're considering a small scheme, in a willing person's home. The time of the meeting should be determined by the availability of the majority of the households within the proposed scheme area to ensure as many people as possible can attend.

But most importantly, make this as easy as possible for you to organise and there is no need to pay out for hiring a venue.

Step Three - Who should attend your meeting

Once the venue is booked, ensure that everyone knows when and where this will take place. There's more information on how you can create more awareness of your proposed scheme and your initial meeting towards the end of the pack.

At this point it's a good idea to either contact your local Watch Office or DaCCWA's Head Office team. They will help you discover who your local Neighbourhood Police Officer is so you can also invite them as well as a representative from your local Watch Office. Having their experience and knowledge in the room will only help to inspire more people to come onboard.

When speaking with your local DaCCWA Watch Office, also ask them to bring or send you a range of handouts on Neighbourhood Watch and its benefits to communities.

Step Four - Get the most from your meeting

Alongside yourself, the meeting should be led by a representative from DaCCWA or a member of the Police.

The meeting should include a brief talk about crime in the area and how a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme will help reduce and prevent crimes and reduce the fear of crime. If possible, you can also distribute advice and security information and the DaCCWA representative will explain how to security mark property.

You can also ask for ideas or issues that people would like to tackle as part of the scheme. This might be fundraising for new community equipment, setting up a Facebook group for alerting members of any crime or issues in the area, or organising an event to bring the community together.

By the end of the meeting you should have determined who your Neighbourhood Watch Scheme Co-ordinator will be along with any Deputy. These details should then be recorded and sent to DaCCWA by using the Registration and Police Suitability Assessment Forms found towards the back of this pack.

The details you need to give DaCCWA are:

- Your Co-ordinator's and Deputy's names
- Their addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses
- The area covered by the new scheme
- Number of households within the new scheme

Step Five - Putting your Watch on the Map

Once you've had your first meeting, it's now time for you to make sure others know you exist.

By sending back your Registration and Police Suitability Assessment Forms, you will now be automatically registered as a DaCCWA scheme and will be able to tap into all of the advice, support and benefits of being part of the organisation.

Nationally, the Neighbourhood Watch Network represents all Neighbourhood Watch members and engages with the Home Office and other partners at a high level. It has its own website www.ourwatch.org.uk which also provides useful information and advice as well as a very useful interactive map to enable other people to find their local Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and their contact details.

To make this facility as useful as possible it is recommended that all Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are registered on the site as well as their registration with DaCCWA. Registration is simple and Co-ordinators control what information they wish to be on display. It can also be edited at any time for updating contact details, etc.

Registering also automatically signs you up to receive DC Alerts, the Devon & Cornwall community messaging alert service which the Co-ordinator will be able to check and use to share relevant information with the scheme members.

It's also worth noting that failing to register will mean that you're not covered by Neighbourhood Watch Network's Public Liability Insurance for your Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

Registration is easy, just go to www.ourwatch.org.uk and click on Menu which is located in the top righthand corner. Next, click on the button Join Us and then follow the instructions to put in your details and find your location on the map. If you do run into any difficulty with any part of this process, please contact David Braziel who is responsible for registration and also the DC Alert system for DaCCWA. The best way to contact him is on david.braziel@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk.

All members of your new Neighbourhood Watch Scheme should equally be encouraged to sign up to the DC Alert messenger system at www.alerts.dc.police.uk.

What happens next

Your Co-ordinator and Deputy will now undergo a basic PNC check by the Police to confirm their acceptability to run the new scheme.

Once this is completed, the Co-ordinator will receive a Co-ordinator's Pack which will include specific information on their role and responsibilities as well as details of how to order and erect Neighbourhood Watch Scheme street signs.

The scheme should determine the number of signs and where they will be erected. They will need to consider that both street lighting posts and BT poles require permission for signs to be affixed to them. Template letters for obtaining permission are included in the Co-ordinator's Pack as well as being available from your local Watch Office.

There will also be advice on how to seek funds for signs from Parish or Town Councils or by collecting from the membership. Signs cost £10 each.

Additional ways you could help your Community

Neighbourhood Watch is well-known to help reduce burglary, anti-social behaviour, doorstep crime and environmental problems, but with the rise of the internet, criminals are no longer constrained by geographical boundaries, and in recent years there's been a steady rise in fraud and cybercrime. As a result, more and more watch schemes are now broadening their work to also target this growing problem.

Neighbourhood Watch is in a strong position to help tackle this kind of crime as it's a trusted source of information and support for people within their communities as well as a reminder to keep their eyes open for those who might be vulnerable. Victims of fraud and cybercrime might equally be embarrassed to confide in their families, or worried about losing their independence. Worse still, they 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 Co-ordinators 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 such as Residents' Associations and special interest or cultural groups.

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 even more problem-solving.

Helpful Checklist

Here's a quick list of considerations for you to think about and help you get your scheme up and running:

- Do you need a Deputy or more than one Co-ordinator? But bear in mind you must have a lead Co-ordinator who will be the main point of contact for your scheme.
- Do you need to set up a small committee to help you?
- Do you think you will need to raise funds to cover any costs?
- How will you communicate with your scheme members?
- How will you communicate with the Police?
- How will you deal with new requests for membership?

Keeping in touch

It's important in the early stages that regular contact is maintained with your local Watch Office. They will be able to support you and answer any queries you might have along the way. If you can also find a way to speak to your local NH policing teams now and then, this would be useful as you begin to grow your scheme. However, policing levels may not allow this to be as regular as you'd like.

In addition, there's a wealth of knowledge and experience available to you via DaCCWA's Head Office team if your local Watch Office can't help.

Contact Details

Email: daccwa@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk

Website: www.daccwa.org