



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH TOOLKIT

Quick Guide

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed to provide guidance on how to set-up, maintain and develop Neighbourhood Watch (NW) in Scotland.

It is intended to meet the needs of people new to NW, existing members and partners such as the Police.

The toolkit provides easy to follow sections that can be accessed in sequence or you may chose to go straight to a section that is of interest to you.

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1. What is Neighbourhood Watch?

Neighbourhood Watch (NW) is a community led initiative to bring groups of local people together to address local crime and other community issues. Successful Neighbourhood Watch requires a close liaison between households in a neighbourhood, the local police and the local authority.

The concept originated in the United States and was introduced into the UK in the 1980's. Behind it lies a very simple idea... "Working together can help to help improve your community".

Neighbourhood Watches can be large, covering most of the households on an estate, or they might involve just a few houses.

2. What are the benefits of NW?

- Areas of local concern can be addressed
- Your problem becomes a shared problem
- You are not a lone voice
- You can work together with other NW Schemes, the police and other partners
- Opportunity to know your neighbours, local police officers and other service providers
- Being a member of NW may secure a discount on your house insurance

3. Neighbourhood Watch in Scotland

In 2007 Scotland had approximately 3500 active NW schemes. Whilst many of these schemes were long established a considerable amount comprised inactive schemes being steadily replaced by new schemes. Overall the numbers of NW schemes has remained fairly static.

Some areas of Scotland, namely Dumfries and Galloway, Fife and Grampian have formed Area Associations to provide focus and support for local schemes and to share good practice.

In May 2006 the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches was established. Their Committee comprises NW representation from all Police Force areas.

In 2006 the AoSNW gained approval from the Home Office to use a Scottish logo. It is not intended that all signage or use of other NW logos will be withdrawn, however the new logo should help NW develop within a Scottish context.

In June 2006 the AoSNW launched their website to offer advice and information with a facility for members to participate in various forums. For more information you can log onto www.aosnw.co.uk.

4. Getting started

Every Neighbourhood Watch is different – One size does not fit all! It all depends on the area and what people living there actually want.

Modern life can be demanding and people can find it increasingly difficult to free up their time for Neighbourhood Watch or other community led initiatives. Therefore whatever you do...

... **Keep it simple!**

1. Contact your local police station. The police may be able to put you in contact with established NW schemes in your area.
2. If you have access to the Internet the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches website: www.aosnw.co.uk may provide guidance and contacts. Fife Residents can contact the Fife NW Association www.nwfife.co.uk email nwfife@aosnw.co.uk
3. If there is no established NHW for your specific area and other residents are interested the police will assist you in setting up a scheme. In this case someone will have to volunteer to become the co-ordinator.

Gauge the level of support for setting up a NHW scheme

Ask yourself?

1. Why do we wish to set up a NHW scheme in the area?
2. What are the local concerns?
3. What will be the aims of the NHW scheme?

To gauge the level of support for setting up a NHW scheme in your area you will have to conduct a survey.

Generic questionnaires and audit forms can be obtained at www.aosnw.co.uk

You are now ready to identify the level of support for creating a scheme within a defined geographical area.

Ideally you want nearly half of households within your defined area to be supportive of the scheme.

Don't be dismayed if the level of support is lower than you expected.

You may need to establish it in a smaller area to begin with and allow the scheme to grow from there.

Remember again - Keep it simple!

Having gained the necessary support for establishing a NHW scheme you should, in conjunction with your local police contact, and any local or regional NW Association, arrange an initial meeting.

The meeting should be within a suitable venue (not your home) and at a time convenient to the majority of members. The objectives for the meeting could include the following points.

- Identifying the **name** of the NHW scheme
- Identifying a **co-ordinator(s)**
- Agreement on **objectives** for the scheme
- Agreement on **local concerns** and required **activities** to address these concerns
- Determine how you are going to **communicate** – meetings, newsletter, by phone, e-mail, word of mouth etc.
- Consider how you will **fund** activities – producing newsletters, signage, booking meeting venues can cost money!
- If you are to have NHW **signage** where can/should it be sited.

5. **NW Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of the NW Co-ordinator is to:

- Contact individual households in the neighbourhood to determine the level of support for setting up a NW scheme
- Where support is positive arrange a meeting to discuss setting up a scheme
- Set up and maintain a Neighbourhood Watch within a specific area
- Communicate relevant crime and community safety information in the area
- Communicate information from members to police or local authority
- Act as a link between the scheme, other co-ordinators, the local police, NW Associations (where applicable), the local authority and other relevant agencies.

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

- Supplying individual households with stickers for doors and windows as well as relevant support materials (see documentation section)
- Assisting police and other relevant agencies in delivering public reassurance and community safety/crime prevention initiatives
- Circulating newsletters/leaflets and any equipment available to members, such as property marking kits or response service house alarms
- Encouraging members to provide community intelligence to police, e.g. suspicious or 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 to the neighbourhood
- Identifying local environmental problems and reporting these to the relevant authority

The role of the Police

Historically the police were the primary and often the only conduit for the community safety issues identified within neighbourhoods. The demands on policing have increased considerably over recent years and the traditional 'village bobby' role is rarely achievable. Nonetheless Community Policing remains a cornerstone for service delivery and the link between community police officers and their NW schemes is a key element for healthy and sustainable schemes.

The police role is to:

- Assist in the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch
- Communicate with co-ordinators in respect of the incidence of crime in their areas
- Work in partnership with NW and other relevant partners to address community safety issues, provide public reassurance and crime prevention advice
- Provide a point(s) of contact for local police

Today, for NW to be successful, schemes must engage with a wider range of agencies in addressing neighbourhood concerns.

6. Communicating

Communication is the fuel on which Neighbourhood Watch runs. When communication stops NW can come to a grinding halt.

The essential elements of effective communication within NW are:

- **Accuracy** - Inaccurate information may be inconvenient – people turn up for an 8 o'clock meeting when it was changed to 7 o'clock – to very serious - a suspicious vehicle is seen at a neighbours house and rather than say I don't know the full registration number you make a guess leading to wrong identification.
- **Conveyed at appropriate time** - You see someone within a neighbours home when you think they may be on holiday. You inform them when they return only to find out the house has been broken into during their absence
- **Conveyed in the right method** - You send an e-mail around members seeking information, however 30% of the membership don't use the internet.
- **Passed to the right person**
- **Feedback** - you must provide the opportunity for people to respond.

Above all else - Keep your communication simple

An effective partnership between NW and the police is vitally important. Police Officers must contend with competing demands and it is unlikely that your local community officer can attend all your meetings. It is important to explore other ways of maintaining communication. It helps if there is an established point of contact within your police division or area who can provide support when your own community officer is unavailable.

Although technology such as e-mail and text messaging can assist. Your communication method must work for your particular scheme and may comprise a number of methods to cascade information.

Although any emergency call should use the 999 system, consider how relevant your call is before you contact the police. For minor, non urgent issues it may be better to maintain an incident log that can be discussed at a future meeting or with your local community officer. Incident logs are particularly valuable when dealing with anti-social issues.

Circulating information around the scheme may also be urgent or non-urgent. Very urgent information may have to be passed by word of mouth.

Matters of less urgency may be dealt with by e-mail or ring round systems. Non urgent matters can be dealt with through newsletters or at meetings

To maintain communication and to benefit from community intelligence it is vital that people know what happened to information they passed on, otherwise they think it was ignored or of no importance. Feedback encourages people to report things again rather than thinking 'it is a waste of time so why bother'.

It is important that police and co-ordinators work together to provide feedback.

7. Sustaining your scheme

Throughout the history of NW new schemes have been established at a steady rate, however the number of active NWs has remained relatively static. The main reason for this is that although relatively easy to set up the ability to sustain NW schemes through time can be challenging. The main reasons for poor sustainability have been: -

- No clear aims or objectives
- Lack of communication
- Ineffective partnership between NW and police
- Over reliance on a small number of individuals within schemes
- Constantly changing residence within neighbourhoods
- Reduced opportunities for communities to meet and discuss common issues

Although there are many reasons why NW schemes may falter there is good practice that can be adopted to help sustain NW:

- **Communication is key** - *effective communication is already covered in this toolkit.*
- The partnership between police and NW must comprise trust, be reliable and have realistic expectations - *the police should not be only conduit for airing community concerns. Any partnership must meet the needs of both partners. Keep things simple – have realistic objectives with tangible results. A small success is better than no success and the frustration associated with trying to make sweeping changes within your community.*
- Responsibilities within a NW scheme must be shared and not rest on the co-ordinator - *deputising and succession planning for co-ordinator roles can bring great benefit*
- The structure of your NW, regularity and timing of meetings and activities must meet the needs of the majority of your members, not a select few.
- Let new residents know about your NW and the benefits it brings
- Share your challenges, successes and ideas with other NW schemes - *our strength is in shared expertise and experience – Working together can bring increased success and aid sustainability.*

8. Public Liability Insurance

The Scottish Government in conjunction with the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches has provided Public Liability Insurance for all registered Scottish NW schemes.

The insurance cover is provided through Keegan & Pennykid (Insurance Brokers) Ltd. Although cover is provided free of charge to all approved Neighbourhood Watches, there is a requirement that the individual schemes are formally registered with the AoSNW as it is this body that handles the financial (premium) affairs, holds records of number of watches, members etc.

Registration is free and forms can be downloaded from the www.aosnw.co.uk and returned FREEPOST.

The insurance covers 3rd party risks in respect of injury and damage whilst carrying out the specific duties of NW. For full details of the terms of insurance go to www.keegan-pennykid.com

9. Resource Library

Various documents to help you set up and maintain your scheme are available at

www.aosnw.co.uk or at your local / regional Association.