



Neighbourhood WATCH

Toolkit

Module 15: Neighbourhood Policing

This module should help to enable Neighbourhood Watch and the Police Service to appreciate how they best fit together.

By the end of this module you will understand:

- the importance of improving information flow between the police and your Neighbourhood Watch scheme; and
- how your scheme could become more involved in community policing.

Instead of a practical activity, this module has several case studies that show how Neighbourhood Watch and the police can work together.

Introduction

Neighbourhood Policing is the single most important development within the delivery of policing services in recent years. The Neighbourhood Watch movement (including Home Watch and other similar schemes) is the single largest voluntary organisation in England and Wales, with a presence in many neighbourhoods across the country and up to four million members. Given this overlap, it is natural to seek synergies between Neighbourhood Policing and Neighbourhood Watch.

Neighbourhood Watch has the potential to provide a ready-made structure, with the capacity and capability to develop the local consultation, engagement and problem solving required to deliver not only crime prevention but public reassurance. If configured with existing structures, as described here, Neighbourhood Watch will enhance Neighbourhood Policing.



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Note: This module is based on a briefing paper written by Chief Constable Frank Whiteley of Hertfordshire Constabulary, who is the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead for Neighbourhood Watch issues in England and Wales. The paper is intended to illustrate what could be done when Neighbourhood Watch and police work in conjunction with each other at police force and local level.

Aims of Neighbourhood Policing and Neighbourhood Watch

There is considerable overlap of the aims of Neighbourhood Policing and the Neighbourhood Watch movement - particularly in respect of crime prevention, sharing intelligence, identifying issues of local concern, being involved in community problem solving, promoting social cohesion, building community capacity, public reassurance and confidence in local policing.

Neighbourhood Policing

The Neighbourhood Policing Programme has three principles at its core:

- The consistent presence of dedicated neighbourhood teams, capable of working with the community to establish and maintain control - to be visible, accessible, skilled, knowledgeable and familiar to the community.
- Intelligence-led identification of community concerns and prompt, effective, targeted action against those concerns.
- Joint action and problem solving with the community and other local partners in order to improve the local environment and quality of life within the community.

Underpinning these principles are the communities' expectations of having:

- **access** - to policing or community safety services through a named point of contact;



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- **influence** - over community safety priorities in their neighbourhood;
- **interventions** - joint action with communities and partners to solve problems; and
- **answers** - sustainable solutions to problems, and feedback on results.

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch exists to:

- cut crime and the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour;
- provide reassurance to local residents and reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- encourage neighbourliness and closer communities; and
- improve the quality of life for local residents and tenants.

The Police Service supports Neighbourhood Watch in many ways, including by:

- providing regular, structured help and guidance, especially to co-ordinators and district-/county-/force-wide Neighbourhood Watch associations;
- providing routine crime figures, other information and expert advice to Neighbourhood Watch schemes;
- supporting the development of Neighbourhood Watches or similar schemes into areas with the greatest need, including engaging with minority communities that are currently under-represented within the Neighbourhood Watch movement; and
- assisting local schemes to find sources of funding for running costs and other initiatives.

Neighbourhood Watch members have worked with the Police Service since 1982 in a number of ways. Much of the work has focused on improving home security, passing intelligence to the police and reducing the fear of crime. Other schemes have been involved in more proactive enterprises based around building community cohesion, diverting young offenders and providing volunteers to assist police with administrative tasks.



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However, wider proactive work has been the exception rather than the norm, not least because of limited visible and accessible police leadership in communities. While not all Neighbourhood Watch members would wish to be more actively involved with the Police Service, the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing gives an ideal opportunity to tap into the unused energy and enthusiasm of the many who would wish to act in this way. Neighbourhood Watch members are natural supporters of Neighbourhood Policing and, with the right support and encouragement, offer a key and largely untapped resource to be used by Neighbourhood Policing Teams.



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How can Neighbourhood Watch help?

Information, crime prevention and reassurance

The Neighbourhood Watch movement has a long history of working with the Police Service in England and Wales. However, it is recognised that the ease of establishing Neighbourhood Watch schemes will vary across the country, and is more difficult in high crime areas and in some areas containing large ethnic minority communities.

Much of this involvement has focused on working with local community officers and specialist crime prevention officers to promote home security, a sense of ownership and guardianship within Neighbourhood Watch areas, and the collection of intelligence/reporting of suspicious incidents to the police.

There are many examples across the country where this type of activity has assisted in the arrest of offenders and the reduction of crime, as well as promoting a feeling of safety within communities involved in Neighbourhood Watch.

Poor communication between the police and Neighbourhood Watch schemes has been the biggest issue reported by scheme members over the years. As a minimum, Neighbourhood Policing offers good opportunities to improve upon these communications issues, improving the two-way flow of information between the police and Neighbourhood Watch members.

There is an increasing range of cheap, effective, easy-to-use and modern communication methods to assist this communication process that can supplement more traditional methods of communication such as leaflets or newsletters. Many of these systems not only deliver automated messages to Neighbourhood Watch scheme members through a variety of media (phone, text message, e-mail, fax) but will also receive replies (useful in recruiting volunteers to assist in emergency situations, for example). Further details of these systems can be obtained through Mark Custerson of Hertfordshire Constabulary (mark.custerson@herts.pnn.police.uk).

Neighbourhood Watch scheme co-ordinators need to be seen as part of Key Individual Networks for Neighbourhood Policing teams, and a



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regular schedule of contacts needs to be maintained to improve information flows.

Developing arrangements for community engagement and problem solving

Neighbourhood Policing offers opportunities to move beyond these traditional areas of interaction, to involve Neighbourhood Watch members in community engagement processes. Neighbourhood Watch volunteers have a wide and varied range of skills and experience that could add great value to community engagement, and these should be developed to their full potential.

Different community engagement and consultation mechanisms require different levels of community participation. When considering how to involve communities, it is important to think about the role that the Police Service will be making to those communities. This involvement can vary from information provision and communication to community empowerment and community-led problem solving.

There are a number of principal engagement methods and techniques that can be applied, each tailored for use in any given locality, ward or beat. These tools and techniques include the following:

- **Meetings** - formal, locality-based 'panels'.
- **Surgeries** - informal meetings or other meetings with a Neighbourhood Policing agenda item, e.g. school parent-teacher association or parish council meetings.
- **Environmental action days** - multi-agency 'clean sweeps' of neighbourhoods.
- **Environmental visual audits** - multi-agency physical surveys to inform local improvements and problem solving.
- **Postcards** - simple consultation.
- **'Street meets' or briefings** - face-to-face, street-level engagement.
- **Telephone, postal or online surveys** or surveys administered during door knocking.
- **Interactive planning events** or open forums.
- **Police-arranged** meetings, focus groups, workshops, citizen juries or interviews.



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All of these tools and techniques are available for community engagement purposes. However, the desired level of community participation will depend on the particular locality, the volume of crime and levels of worry or fear about crime. Neighbourhood Watch offers a conduit through which all of the above tools can be used for community engagement.

For example, in some circumstances it may be appropriate for Neighbourhood Watch to take on a lead role in organising the local meetings, surgeries and 'street meetings'. This would be influenced by the skills and abilities of the Neighbourhood Watch volunteer and the wishes of the partners involved in the engagement methods in a specific locality. Alternatively, Neighbourhood Watch members could take on a supporting role in environmental visual audits and local surveying by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).

In this latter respect, Neighbourhood Watch can and should act as a means of mobilising large numbers of volunteers for a wide range of activities, extending from the more traditionally reactive role to the new areas of community action and consultation shown **above**. For example, recent years have seen the development of Neighbourhood Watch schemes as an integral part of the response to civil emergencies such as flooding.

Following guidance issued by the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) - now the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) - surrounding Neighbourhood Policing and the National Intelligence Model (NIM), it is suggested that Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officers (i.e. paid members of staff responsible for the administration of Neighbourhood Watch at local levels) become standing members of partnership tasking and co-ordination meetings. Such a formal link will ensure that Neighbourhood Watch is represented, and is tasked as a Neighbourhood Policing asset in line with the NIM.

Alignment of the Neighbourhood Watch structure and the Neighbourhood Policing model

While arrangements for Neighbourhood Watch differ around the country, many forces now have representative structures for Neighbourhood Watch at a variety of different levels (e.g. force, Basic Command Unit, CDRP, neighbourhood, street). Given this variety, no exact model can be laid down for the alignment of



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Neighbourhood Watch and Neighbourhood Policing across the country. However, it is possible to consider an idealised structure, as shown in the **diagram below**.

The structure also depicts the close links that have developed at national level between the NSGWI, chaired by the Home Office, and the NPIA-managed Neighbourhood Policing Programme.

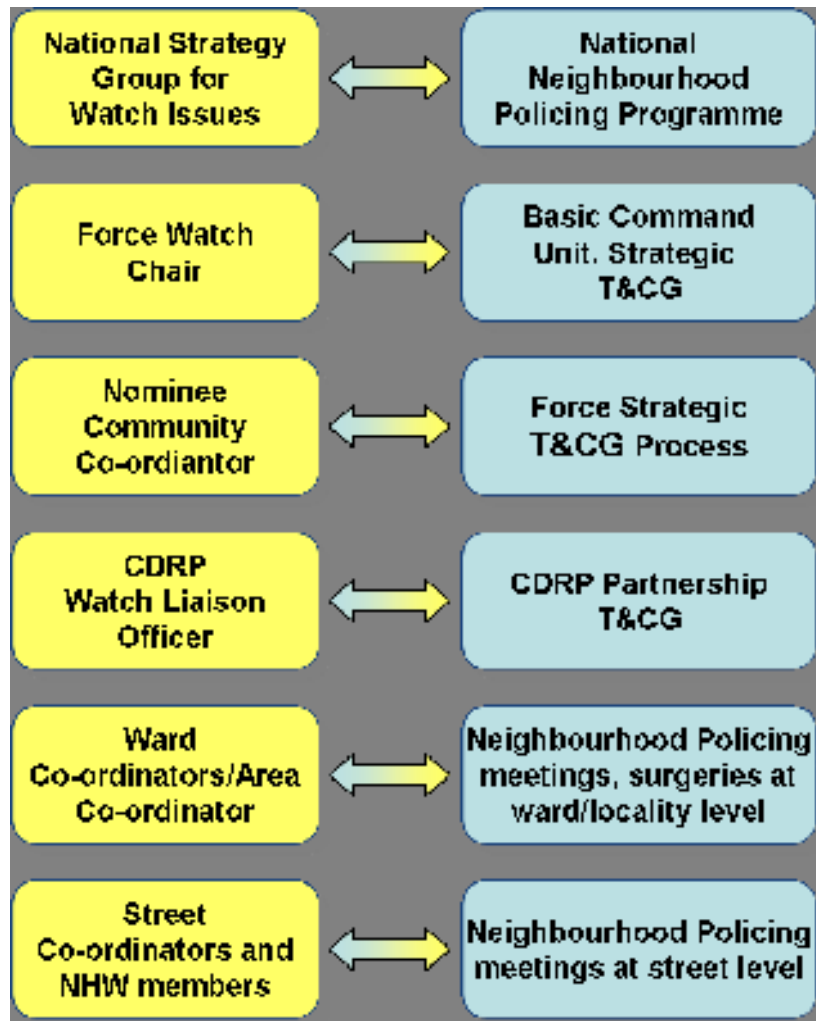
This structure could strengthen the relationships between the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, the NIM and Neighbourhood Watch. It also ensures that Neighbourhood Watch has a direct involvement in local engagement, consultation and priority setting and provides a direct link to partnership tasking and co-ordination meetings, where resources can be allocated to problems that are beyond the scope of local policing teams acting alone.

Clearly, the most important links between Neighbourhood Policing and Neighbourhood Watch are at the lowest levels of this structure. How far up the structure Neighbourhood Watch is involved in tasking and co-ordinating processes is very much a matter for local forces to establish.



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Possible alignment of Neighbourhood Watch structure and Neighbourhood Policing model

Conclusions

Neighbourhood Watch has the potential to provide a ready-made structure, with the capacity and capability to develop the local consultation, engagement and problem solving required to deliver not only crime prevention but public reassurance. If configured with existing structures, as described above, Neighbourhood Watch will enhance Neighbourhood Policing. It can provide real opportunities to enhance access, influence, interventions and answers - as articulated in the guidance issued by the NCPE, 'Professionalising the Business of Neighbourhood Policing'.



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Case studies

Here is a sample of the many case studies available that show how Neighbourhood Watch schemes and Neighbourhood Policing Teams are already working together to achieve their joint aims.

Case study 1: Walkabouts cut crime and clean up estate

Residents on a Cleveland estate of 350 properties who were affected by groups of drunken youths started a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Most residents were elderly, and because of the drunken behaviour and fear of crime on the estate, they wouldn't leave their homes after 5p.m.

It was decided by the Neighbourhood Watch group that some members should walk around the estate in pairs after dark. Their role was to observe and report any crime and to give reassurance to the residents; they were not acting as vigilantes. After a few months of nightly walkabouts, and with the help of the Neighbourhood Policing Team, the groups of youths moved away from the area. Other associated crime also disappeared from the estate. With the help of other agencies the estate was cleaned up, graffiti removed, street lighting repaired and a regular street cleaning program set up by the local authority.

For the first time in five years the housing association that owns the properties has a waiting list of people who want to move to the estate - before, there was always a list of people wanting to move away. Local Neighbourhood Policing teams reported an 85 per cent decrease in crime on the estate.



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Case study 2: Co-operation reduces anti-social behaviour

The local co-ordinator for the Neighbourhood Watch group on the Woodchurch Estate in the Wirral assisted the Neighbourhood Policing Team in gathering intelligence on a family in her road who were the main cause of anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Policing Team worked with Wirral Partnership Homes, Tranmere Alliance, education partners and social services in an effort to deal with the issues. The road in question was highlighted at a previous tasking and co-ordinating meeting as having more than 50 per cent of the police's anti-social behaviour calls. The community problem solving, multi-agency approach has reduced these calls to zero, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour felt by residents.

The local co-ordinator provides fortnightly written reports on her area and speaks to at least one of the Neighbourhood Policing Team members on a weekly basis. She delivers key messages and shares information with all residents. Another local resident has now offered to assist. The co-ordinator is a firm believer in Neighbourhood Policing and works hard to assist and strengthen the link with Neighbourhood Watch. Feedback from elderly residents shows that they feel they have got their community spirit back.