



Neighbourhood Watch Manual



Department of
Justice
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Personal, Professional,
Protective Policing



 Northern Ireland
Policing Board

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History of Neighbourhood Watch (NW)

NW originated in the United States of America and in the early 1980's came to the UK to assist with combating crime and also to assist with making communities safer and friendlier places to live and work. The first NW scheme was set up in the village of Mollington in Cheshire, in response to a prevalent outbreak of burglaries and was an immediate success. Surrounding areas became aware of this success and copied the NW scheme, which led to the rapid growth of NW schemes throughout the UK.

NW has proved to be a very effective example of communities working in partnership to prevent crime and vandalism, reduce the fear of crime and generally improve the quality of life.

Introduction

NW, which was launched in Northern Ireland in June 2004, continues to grow from strength to strength. The continued success of NW is dependant on NW co-ordinators who give up their time voluntarily to work with the police and to assist their neighbourhoods in tackling crime.

NW is promoted, supported and endorsed at a strategic level by the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland and at a local council level through Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and local policing areas.

NW schemes are widely considered to be an excellent way to reduce crime, the fear of crime and address anti-social behaviour. By working together, neighbours can help to reduce all sorts of crimes, for example burglary. NW schemes can help improve the local environment and may help reduce levels of anti-social behaviour.

Whilst this manual has been developed to provide guidance to NW co-ordinators in supporting NW schemes please note that local arrangements may vary. Roles and responsibilities of each of the partners involved in NW are outlined, guidance is provided on how to establish a new NW scheme and some pointers are provided on assisting NW co-ordinators in carrying out their role within NW schemes. NW schemes are community driven and supported by police and other relevant agencies.

Glossary of Terms

Please note the Neighbourhood Watch documentation was produced in accordance with legislation governing such information i.e. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Freedom of Information Act and Human Rights legislation, based on the understanding that all information gathered would be obtained and shared openly to build trust and understanding within the community at large.



Roles and Responsibility



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- Local Community/Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator
- Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Community Safety Unit/Northern Ireland Policing Board/
Police Service of Northern Ireland Community Safety Branch



Roles and Responsibilities

This section is a guide to the roles and responsibilities of each of the key partners and agencies involved in NW. Please note that local arrangements may vary. Please note that a supplementary pack to this manual provides further information including flow charts for the application process, application forms, templates for meetings and press releases and so on.

Local Community

The responsibility for establishing and maintaining a NW scheme lies primarily with the NW co-ordinator(s) in partnership with the three local agencies (Police Service of Northern Ireland, CSP and DPP) but the active support of the local community is also essential. The establishment of a NW scheme is often easier if there is already an active resident or community group, but this is not essential.

The roles and responsibilities of the community are as follows:

- To help identify the need for a NW scheme in their area.
- To designate and agree an area for the NW scheme with the local Police.
- To nominate a trusted representative(s) of the community to be the NW co-ordinator(s).
- To actively participate in the consultation of local residents on the proposal for a NW scheme by carrying out leaflet drops/hosting public meetings etc.
- To liaise with the local CSP Manager, DPP Manager and Police, as required.
- To work with the NW co-ordinator(s) to ensure that the documentation is completed and issued to the appropriate agencies .
- To liaise with the NW co-ordinator(s) in relation to issues of concern regarding policing, crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.



Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

NW co-ordinators are the key people in each NW scheme and are central to the effective operation of NW. They are nominated by others involved in a particular scheme. It is their responsibility to voluntarily manage its activities, to work in partnership with the three local agencies and to make the NW scheme as effective as possible. It is important that the NW co-ordinators have time to commit to the NW scheme, are able to listen to the concerns of the community and can act as a two-way channel of information between the community and the police. The relationships between the NW co-ordinators and the police will be of critical importance to the long-term success of each NW scheme.

All NW co-ordinators are subject to a Police Service check for the benefit and protection of the individual, community and all other associated agencies. It is important that all residents are made fully aware of the Police Service check procedure in order to build confidence in this process and to ensure that they have the confidence of the community and the Police to undertake their role effectively. When a NW co-ordinator is approved and the NW scheme is accredited, they are issued with a NW ID card. If a NW co-ordinator commits an offence or demonstrates behaviour that impacts on their ability to hold the position of NW co-ordinator, the Police will rescind their approval. The NW co-ordinator will then cease to hold the position and will return his/her ID card to the local CSP Manager.

The Role of the NW co-ordinator is to:

- Canvass local residents with a view to securing their support for the scheme in the area.
- Encourage local residents to join the scheme.
- Maintain a register of all local residents wishing to participate in the NW scheme.
- Communicate with police on an on-going basis, and exchange information on crime and related issues affecting the quality of life in that area.
- Act as first point of contact for local residents and the wider community for receiving and distributing information.
- Liaise with other local NW co-ordinators to share experiences and good practice.
- Notify the police of suspicious and criminal incidents, and community concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour generally.
- Attend regular meetings with the police to discuss local community safety issues.
- Assist in the maintenance of the scheme in terms of the allocation of leaflets, signage, newsletters, property marking etc.
- Identify local environmental problems and inform the relevant agencies.
- Ensure the appropriate positioning and maintenance of NW signage in the area.



Some additional tasks include:

- Regularly contacting all residents within the NW scheme by appropriate methods, for example, telephone call, calling door to door, or meetings and so on.
- Retaining information as required about households involved in the NW scheme.
- Managing and distributing relevant information in respect of the NW scheme in an appropriate way.
- Acting as a first point of contact between residents and the police and notifying the police of community concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Communicating with the Police on an ongoing basis and providing a two-way exchange of information on crime and anti-social behaviour issues.
- Ensuring appropriate positioning of signage in the local area and notifying the agencies if replacement/additional signage is required.
- Welcoming new residents to the NW scheme area.
- Maintaining the interest of NW scheme members.
- Distributing relevant crime prevention material as appropriate.
- Acting in an honest and law-abiding manner.

It is also recommended that the NW co-ordinator(s) is supported by additional NW co-ordinators or willing individuals within the community to carry out some of the above tasks if the NW scheme involves a large number of households.

Some points to bear in mind ...

- It is your NW scheme – you run it for the benefit of your community, your neighbours, family and friends.
- The police and other organisations are there to support you.
- Don't be afraid to ask for support when you need it. By working together we can continue to keep our communities, towns and villages safe and attractive places to live and work.
- No-one in the NW scheme, whether NW co-ordinator or member, is expected to put themselves at any risk whatsoever.
- As a NW co-ordinator, don't let yourself become a one-person security service for your area. Encourage members to support each other.
- You do not have to do any more than an ordinary member in terms of keeping your eyes open and reporting suspicious activities. You are not expected to make special efforts to be vigilant, nor be held responsible if a crime/criminal is not noticed.
- The whole NW scheme is operated by private individuals.
- No member or NW co-ordinator has any special powers, or any additional responsibilities, above those of an ordinary citizen.



Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs)

Local CSPs and DPPs support and endorse the establishment of NW schemes. On behalf of the CSP and DPP, the Managers will:

- Liaise with the Police and community regarding establishment of NW schemes and provide general advice on funding and establishment of NW schemes.
- Facilitate the establishment of supported NW schemes within their local council area.
- Ensure the timely processing of application forms and maintain records of same.
- Ensure that applications are endorsed by the Chair (vice chair or their nominated representative) of the CSP and DPP then forward endorsed applications to the Community Safety Unit in the Department of Justice (DoJ) for accreditation.
- Liaise with the local Council or Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) office to facilitate the erection and replacement of signage (they will also arrange for any signage to be removed for schemes that cease to exist).
- Monitor progress of NW schemes within their area.
- Create opportunities to promote and publicise local NW schemes in consultation with other partners and the NW schemes.
- Agree how partners at local level will work together to maintain NW.



Police Service of Northern Ireland

NW schemes are initiatives supported by the police, **not** run by them. Therefore, given the relationship between a NW co-ordinator and local police it is not appropriate for a serving police officer (full time or part time) to undertake the role of a NW co-ordinator.

Local Police support and endorse the establishment of NW schemes throughout the district and are responsible for:

- The timely processing of NW co-ordinator/s application forms and completion of Police Service checks and maintain records of same.
- Reassessing the ability of an individual to continue as a NW co-ordinator if he/she loses the confidence of the community or has demonstrated behaviour that is not appropriate for the position.
- Liaising with the community in relation to the establishment of NW schemes.
- Issuing NW signs to the local Council/NIHE for erection as agreed.
- Liaising with NW co-ordinators on (an agreed) regular basis – the need for meetings will vary between areas depending on the level of crime or type of issues.
- Providing a point of contact with local police – ideally this will be a named contact with a direct phonenumber.
- Providing feedback and response to the concerns raised by NW co-ordinators.
- Monitoring progress of NW schemes.
- Creating opportunities to promote and publicise local NW schemes in consultation with other partners and NW schemes.
- Agree how partners at local level will work together to maintain NW.



Community Safety Unit, Northern Ireland Policing Board and Police Community Safety Branch

At a strategic level the Community Safety Unit (CSU), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and Police Service of Northern Ireland, Community Safety Branch will:

- Endorse and monitor the implementation of NW schemes across Northern Ireland.
- Provide funding to support the development of NW.
- Develop policy and disseminate guidance and good practice in relation to the support and development of NW.
- Provide funding for signage and when available other materials for NW schemes.

The CSU in the DOJ is responsible for the administration associated with accrediting new NW schemes and also re-accreditation of the schemes every two years on behalf of the partner agencies. Applications for NW schemes endorsed by the CSP, DPP and the Police Service are forwarded to the CSU for accreditation on behalf of the NIPB and the Police Service. The accreditation certificate for a NW scheme is issued to the lead NW co-ordinator and individual ID cards are issued to all approved NW co-ordinators. Copies of the approval letter are forwarded to the CSP Manager, DPP Manager and local police.

Strategic Level Headquarter Contacts

Community Safety Unit, (Department of Justice)

Tel: (028) 90828555

E-mail: nwevent@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk

www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Tel: 0845 600 8000

E-mail: zcommunitysafety@psni.pnn.police.uk

www.psni.police.uk

Northern Ireland Policing Board

Tel: (028) 9040 8500

E-mail: information@nipolicingboard.org.uk

www.nipolicingboard.org.uk



Developing a new Neighbourhood Watch Scheme



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Developing a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

There are a number of stages which must be progressed in sequence when establishing a new NW scheme.

How do I get documentation on Neighbourhood Watch?

You can get the relevant documents from CSPs, DPPs and local police; you can download them from the Police: www.psnipolice.uk or CSU website: www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk or DPP website: www.districtpolicing.com or you can contact the Police Community Safety Branch, Telephone: **0845 600 8000** or e-mail: community.safety@psni.pnn.police.uk.

How is the need for a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme established?

Some of the questions that a community should address when considering the establishment of a NW scheme are:

- Is crime in the area causing concern?
- Is there a fear of crime in the area?
- Are there volunteers in the area with the resources, time, commitment and dedication to work with the police and the community on an ongoing, voluntary basis?

Community representatives should contact either the CSP Manager, the DPP Manager or the local police to set up an initial community meeting to get an overview of NW and clarify any issues. When community support for the establishment of a NW scheme has been identified, the community should identify at least one NW co-ordinator for the area to be covered by the NW scheme. The NW co-ordinator should be a well-known, respected and trusted resident of the area.

What area should a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme cover?

The proposed area for the NW scheme should be clearly defined. The size of a NW scheme can vary from a cul-de-sac to a small village. Good practice dictates that a NW co-ordinator should not be responsible for any more than **50 houses** and that the minimum number of households two though ten is considered reasonable. Boundaries should be clearly defined and agreed with the Police.

NW in a rural setting will also differ significantly from that in an urban location. Consideration must again be given to the size of any scheme and the ability of NW co-ordinators to communicate effectively with the wider community. This may be through local meetings, leaflet/letter drops, the Internet, mobile texting or even house-to-house contact if appropriate.



What level of community consultation is needed?

Raising awareness and consulting with all residents is essential. This can be done in the following ways:

- Press Release in local papers regarding the proposal
- Leaflet drop/letters to all properties in the designated areas
- Article in local Community Newsletter/ Notes
- Public Meeting – inviting all residents to register their interest
- Volunteers calling door-to-door

If going door-to-door, volunteers should keep a record of the details and the number of houses within the area that are willing to participate in the NW scheme. It is important that volunteers adhere to the legislative requirements outlined in the Data Protection Act 1998. The Data Protection Act provides safeguards as to how personal information is used.

NW co-ordinators may find it useful to retain personal data such as names of scheme members, addresses and possibly telephone numbers to keep in regular contact. NW co-ordinators should advise residents of this accordingly and ensure that they have their consent to retain their details. NW co-ordinators should only collect information that is needed and consent is required if the co-ordinator wishes to share personal details of residents. All information relating to or from which an individual may be identified must only be processed for the purposes of operation of the NW scheme which will include prevention of crime, the protection of the rights and freedom of others or the apprehension of offenders.

When the community consultation is completed, it should be possible to identify the level of community support for the initiative. This can be broadly defined as:

High: At least 75% of all households within the designated area wish to participate

Medium: 40-74% of all households within the designated area wish to participate

Low: 0 – 39% of all households in the designated area wish to participate

It is essential that there is a strong level of support for the initiative across the designated area. At least **60%** of households in the proposed Scheme area should be willing to participate to make it viable.

Applications for NW co-ordinators should only be progressed following endorsement from the community in the area to be covered by the proposed NW scheme.



How is a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator appointed?

The proposed NW co-ordinator should complete the NW co-ordinator application form. A declaration form for a Co-ordinator's ID card and NW co-ordinator agreement should also be completed and attached to the application form.

The NW co-ordinator application form and ID Card Declaration form and NW co-ordinator agreement should be sent – with two endorsed colour passport photographs, bearing the name of the applicant in capital letters and signed and dated by one of the referees to the local Police Area Commander. The Area Commander should then return the letter of approval or non-approval to the proposed NW co-ordinator directly. The Police Area Commander should also provide duplicate copies of the approval/non-approval letter to both the CSP Manager and the DPP Manager.

What happens if a replacement Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator is needed?

If a replacement NW co-ordinator is required, the local CSP Manager, DPP Manager and police officer will liaise with the local community to seek to identify a suitable replacement. If a replacement is identified they will have to complete the NW co-ordinator application form, NW co-ordinator agreement and ID card declaration form. The ID card of the former NW co-ordinator must also be returned to the CSP Manager.

If a replacement NW co-ordinator is not identified, the accreditation for the NW scheme will cease and the CSP Manager will make arrangements for any NW signage to be removed.

How does a new Neighbourhood Watch Scheme get accredited?

If the application by the NW co-ordinator to the police is successful, he/she should fill out the NW Scheme application form. This application form should be forwarded to the local police who in turn will forward it, along with a copy of the letter of approval, to the local DPP Manager. **One** colour passport photograph of the NW co-ordinator must accompany the application form to facilitate production of the ID card. The second photograph will be retained by police along with the NW co-ordinator application form.

The NW scheme application form should be endorsed by the local police, the DPP chairperson or vice chairperson and CSP chairperson or vice chairperson.

However, the DPP and CSP may delegate authority for endorsing applications to the CSP Manager and DPP Manager respectively.

The CSU will issue a two-year accreditation notice for the NW scheme to the NW co-ordinator. The local CSP Manager will notify local police and DPP of the two-year accreditation notice for a NW scheme and progress accordingly.



When are ID Cards issued for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators?

ID cards for NW co-ordinators will be endorsed with a two year expiry date and are provided to give reassurance to local residents when the NW co-ordinator is making personal contact with the community. The cards will be issued by the CSU with the accreditation notice. The Declaration Form, signed by the NW co-ordinator commits them to proper management and use of their ID card.

If a NW scheme has lapsed or there is a need to retrieve the ID card, this will be the responsibility of the CSP Manager. If the card is not forthcoming, the local police officer will be advised and will be responsible for ensuring return of the card. The Police may rescind the approval of a NW co-ordinator, if satisfied that the person is unable or unfit to discharge their functions as a NW co-ordinator.

How do we get Neighbourhood Watch signs erected?



The nominated NW co-ordinators will agree, with a local police officer, locations for the signs on street lighting columns which should be clearly marked on a map. The map is then submitted to the CSP Manager who will arrange for signs to be erected in the designated area when the NW scheme is accredited. Additional signs can be obtained by contacting The Police Community Safety Branch, Telephone: **0845 600 8000** or e-mail: **community.safety@psni.pnn.police.uk**. If you ask for additional signs, please ensure adequate time is given as it takes about a month before they are dispatched.

The current agreement for editing and maintaining of NW signs is as follows:

- The Department of Regional Development (DRD) has confirmed that the current design of the NW signs conforms to regulations. These regulations limit the maximum size of the sign and how they can be displayed, in that the sign must be parallel to the road.
- DRD has agreed that their 'street furniture' i.e. street lighting columns can be used to erect NW signs.
- If an accredited NW scheme covers an area of NIHE properties, the NIHE have agreed to erect NW signs.
- If an accredited NW scheme covers an area of private housing, most Councils have agreed to assist with editing NW signs.
- Due to insurance issues NW schemes should not erect their own signage.



How can we publicise and maintain interest in our scheme?

It is important to fully utilise local papers to promote and highlight the work of your NW scheme is doing.

NW schemes are most successful when they are run by members for members. One of the most important messages to get across is that everyone has something to contribute to their local NW scheme.

A NW scheme is more likely to be effective in helping to address local incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour if good networks are established and maintained with its members. Remember that although crime is a serious problem, people will be happier doing something about it if they are making a valuable contribution and enjoy doing it.

Effective communication is essential and it may help if meetings are held regularly with the dates, times and venues agreed in advance. A newsletter and a varied programme of events run by the NW scheme through the year are also excellent ways of maintaining momentum. Aim for activities that will both protect your community as well as make it stronger and more caring. Include some fun and social events in your programme to sustain interest and attract young people. Consider combining the activities of NW schemes that are within a similar geographical area.

How does the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme start working in practice?

The NW co-ordinator(s) and the local police officer should meet to agree methods of contact and agree times and locations for regular meetings to ensure methods for effective two-way communication are identified and maintained. It is important that the co-ordinators are aware of how they can contact the officers who deal with NW schemes.

The NW co-ordinator(s) should then contact each household within the designated area to inform residents that the establishment of the NW scheme has been approved and to confirm arrangements for liaising with the local police. The CSP Manager and DPP Manager will also keep in contact with the NW co-ordinators as the need arises.

Accredited NW schemes can register with Neighbourhood Watch UK. See National Neighbourhood Watch Trust website for further information:

www.neighbourhoodwatch.net



Re-accreditation of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Introduction

The original policy for the establishment of NW in Northern Ireland indicated that schemes would be re-accredited every two years. The process for re-accreditation of NW schemes is outlined below.

Objective for re-accreditation of NW schemes

NW schemes must be re-accredited for the following reasons:

- To ensure that the NW schemes are still operational
- To confirm that the NW co-ordinator involved in the establishment of the NW scheme is still acting as the NW co-ordinator
- To validate information held on the NW schemes

Process for re-accreditation of NW schemes

Police Service checks will be carried out for existing NW co-ordinators and local police must confirm that they are content that the NW co-ordinator can continue to undertake that role.

If a NW scheme is no longer operational, the CSU should be advised in writing.

If for any reason local police are not content to re-endorse the existing NW co-ordinator, they should advise the CSU in writing. **Correspondence should not include any specific information relating to the individual or reason(s) why they are not prepared to endorse the NW co-ordinator.**

The CSP Manager, DPP Manager and local police will then be contacted to identify a suitable replacement NW co-ordinator. If a suitable replacement is not identified within a reasonable time frame then accreditation for the NW scheme will cease. All relevant partners will be informed, arrangements will be made to remove the signage and the NW co-ordinator will be asked to return their ID card to CSU. If the ID card is not returned this will delay the process.

The CSU will administer the re-accreditation process on behalf of the NIPB and the Police Service. It is recommended that all partners communicate with each other clearly when considering the re-accreditation of a NW scheme.



Being a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and Crime Prevention Advice



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Being a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

There are no strict regulations around how a NW scheme should function, but central to the effectiveness and success of any NW scheme is the input from the NW co-ordinator(s). This section outlines some pointers around the different activities a NW co-ordinator might wish to organise such as production of a newsletter or organising meetings.

It is important to note that these activities are not essential to the operation of a NW scheme and some schemes operate differently depending on local circumstances. If there is more than one NW co-ordinator they should aim to meet on a regular basis to progress ideas and events which will help maintain the momentum of a NW scheme.

How to make local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme meetings work

When meetings are organised as part of the NW scheme they can be formal or informal. The priority, however, is to keep NW scheme members interested and motivated. This section outlines some guidance in how meetings can be organised.

Before the meeting:

- Make sure everyone knows where and when the meeting is to be held and whether they are expected to prepare or contribute anything. Use flyers, notice boards and newsletters to publicise it.
- Choose an accessible meeting place. For example, a small group could meet in someone's house whilst for more than ten people, a larger venue may be required.
- The room should have enough comfortable chairs, as well as any other items that might be needed such as paper, pens etc.
- Think how best to set out the room as this can affect the contributions that people make. People should be able to see and hear each other. Chairs arranged in a circle are more likely to make people feel part of a group than straight rows facing a platform.
- Prepare an agenda to cover necessary business and structure discussion. Do not forget to ask other people what they would like to see included on the agenda and, if possible, publicise it before the meeting.
- Agree who will chair the meeting, take notes, organise refreshments, etc.



Running the meeting:

- Begin by welcoming everyone, especially new members.
- Run through the main agenda items for the meeting.
- Review the notes of the previous meeting. Check that people have carried out any agreed actions.
- Guide the discussion through the agenda with a firm but fair manner. If you have a large group, you may want to ask people to indicate if they want to speak. Encourage people to keep to the point and be aware of the time.
- Give everyone the chance to express their opinion without interruption. Avoid the discussion being dominated by a few people and encourage an environment of mutual respect in which agreement can be reached.
- Try to reach agreement on any aims or actions that groups have identified.
- Make sure that someone keeps a record of the meeting (the 'minutes'). This should list those present, where and when the meeting was held. Above all, the notes should clearly record any decisions taken and the names of those responsible for carrying out the agreed actions.

After the meeting:

- Prepare and distribute the minutes as quickly as possible.
- Keep in touch with anyone who agreed to carry out an action to check if they need any support and to try and ensure that actions are carried out before the next meeting.

How to mark and record property

Property marking is about putting your postcode and your house number on valuable items that you own from DVD players and bicycles to mobile phones. It discourages thieves because marked property is less easy to sell on. If stolen or lost property is recovered, this marking system helps the police to return item(s) to their original owner.

Property marking can be promoted in several ways:

- The CSP, DPP or Police may provide property marking equipment free of charge.
- The property marking kit could be passed around to members with advice on how to mark different types of property.
- Hold property marking days for NW scheme members to work together.
- Ask housebound members if they would welcome a home visit from the NW co-ordinator, or a NW scheme member to mark property for them.
- Take photographs of valuable property for members and provide a form for them to record serial numbers and other details.

Property marking is not a one-off activity – a few moments each year will help protect your possessions. Local Police can provide advice on practical steps that can be taken to protect your property.



Crimestoppers

The Crimestoppers Trust is an independent charity that is not affiliated to the Police. It was set up in 1988 and operates across the UK to help identify, prevent, solve and reduce crime by use of a free phone number. It can be used by anyone who can provide information about crime but wishes to remain anonymous.

It offers the opportunity for a person who may have information about a crime, such as details about the offender, to report it without that person giving their own details to the police. In these circumstances information can be passed anonymously to **CRIMESTOPPERS** by ringing **0800 555 111**.

This number is not suitable for an emergency that requires immediate police attention.

How to help detect offenders

There are three main ways members of NW schemes can help to detect offenders:

- By being vigilant
- By recording descriptions of individuals and vehicles
- By reporting suspicious activity

Here is some advice that can be passed on:

Being vigilant

Everyone in the NW scheme area, including children, should be aware of anything unusual and should all know what to do about it (see below). Information can be circulated at meetings, through a newsletter or "checklist" etc. It is important to advise people that they should not put themselves at risk when trying to observe a crime, or by trying to prevent a crime.

Taking descriptions

Make people in the NW scheme area aware that the more detailed information they can provide, the more useful it will be to the Police.

Here are some tips on what to look for when observing people, or vehicles:

- Person: Gender, age, skin colour, build, height, dress.
- Hair: Colour, length, curly/straight, receding.
- Face: Shape, complexion, beard/moustache.
- Mouth: Shape, teeth.
- Eyes: Glasses, colour.
- Marks: Scars, tattoos.
- Vehicle Type: Car / Van / Lorry / Bike.
- Vehicle Details: Make, model, colour, registration number or distinguishing details (e.g. company name, damage, decoration).



Make sure that all members of the scheme have copies of the NW Information Card, which should be kept in a convenient location and used as prompts to record information. (Copies may be down-loaded from the Police and CSU, DPP website) Information should be recorded as quickly as possible rather than relying on memory.

Reporting Suspicious Activity

An essential part of the NW co-ordinator's role is to encourage people in the NW scheme area to report crime and suspicious activity promptly and efficiently. In an emergency when there is danger to life, or a crime is in progress, people should dial **999** at once, ask for the police and provide clear details about themselves and the incident.

In a non-emergency situation use **0845 600 8000** to contact the police. Your local police officer may also have an assigned mobile phone and their number may also be used to report incidents or suspicious activity.

How to be safe on the street, in a car or on public transport

NW is not just concerned with being safe in the home. The following advice is for members when they are out and about:

On the Streets

- Avoid short cuts through dark areas, or waste ground.
- Walk facing the traffic. A car cannot easily pull up behind you unnoticed.
- Walk on the street side of the pavement to be furthest from dark entrances.
- Run in the opposite direction from anyone in a car who is threatening you. If you can, note the number and type of car.
- Do not accept lifts from strangers, or hitchhike.
- Always have enough money with you to book a taxi if it is late, or arrange a lift home.
- Carry a personal alarm in your hand at night, or in areas where there are few people.
- Test the alarm every couple of months to make sure it still works.
- Cover up expensive jewellery when you are outside.
- Keep house keys in your pocket, not your bag.
- If you are followed, run to the nearest place where there are other people and call the police.
- Vary your route, if you go out regularly at night.



In a car

- Keep car doors locked and valuables out of sight.
- Make sure the car is in good condition before going on a long journey.
- Make sure there is sufficient fuel for the journey.
- Plan your route using main roads as much as possible.
- Take change in case you have to make a call. Also if you own a mobile phone ensure that it is charged.
- Be wary of hitchhikers and anyone who flags you down.
- If you break down on the motorway do not accept lifts from strangers. Wait for the police, or breakdown services.

On Public Transport

- Keep away from isolated bus stops after dark.
- If it is late sit near the driver and conductor on buses.
- On platforms, stand where there are several others waiting.
- On trains, sit in compartments with several other people.

How to be safe at home

Improving property security

- Fit good security hardware, including locks and bolts on doors and windows, door security chains and viewers, better lighting and possibly an alarm.
- Consider replacing doors and windows, if they are weak.
- Keep external doors locked. Always lock doors and windows properly even when popping out for a few minutes.
- Never leave keys under the doormat, or on a string in the letterbox. Give a spare key to a trusted neighbour to keep safely.
- Change door and window locks when moving to a new home.

Encourage your NW scheme members to visit the website **www.homesecurity.com**. This site enables householders to assess how safe their home is from the risk of burglary. On accessing the website the householder is asked to complete a short series of questions on four areas of their home i.e. the doors, windows, exterior and protection of valuables. At the end of each section they are given a security rating of red, amber or green and advice on which areas action needs to be taken to improve the security of their home. A print out of the results is also available.



Improving personal safety

- Do not give personal information to strangers on the phone.
- Never let strangers into your home when you are alone.
- If you receive abusive calls put the phone down immediately and, if they continue tell the telephone company.
- Have a telephone extension in the bedroom for emergencies.
- Do not go outside to investigate prowlers – dial **999** at once.
- If you find signs of a break in when you return home, do not go inside or shout out. Go to a neighbour and dial **999**.

How to protect empty homes

Whether a house is empty for just a few minutes or while the owner is on holiday, it is vulnerable. NW scheme members should take the simple precautions listed below. These precautions should be emphasised each year as the summer holiday season approaches and the checklist could be circulated to members. Do not keep a list of members' holidays, as this could cause problems if it fell into the wrong hands. It is safer for members to let a neighbour or the local police know when they are away and how they can be contacted in an emergency and provide contact numbers for key holders.

Make sure that every member knows at least one neighbour who can be called on to help. It may be helpful for the NW co-ordinator to keep a record of who 'house sits' for whom, in case unusual activity needs to be checked.

For short periods

- Always lock doors and windows.
- Consider leaving a radio playing.
- Consider switching on lights in some rooms.
- Lamps and radios can be plugged into a timer which makes them come on and off at various times which can make it look as if someone is home.
- Draw curtains in the evening.
- Tell neighbours if the house is unoccupied at regular times.



For long periods

- Make sure properties are secure when unoccupied.
- Cancel deliveries of milk and papers.
- Tell neighbours, local police and alarm companies when the house is unoccupied.
- Consider using a time switch to turn on lights.
- Ask someone to open and close curtains.
- Make sure post is removed each day.
- Mow the grass before leaving for holidays.
- Lock away ladders and secure sheds and garages.
- Do not put your home address on luggage labels.

Doorstep Callers

Be aware of bogus doorstep callers. Most callers are probably genuine, but some are not. The advice is:

- Keep the door locked.
- Identify the caller through a window/spy hole.
- Be cautious.
- Use the safety chain before opening the door.
- Ask for an identity card and check it thoroughly – don't be rushed.
- If unsure telephone the company concerned and enquire about the caller or phone Quick Check on 0800 013 2290.
- If still unsure do not let them in - ask them to write and make an appointment.
- If you have any concerns telephone a neighbour, your NW co-ordinator and/or the police.



Frequent Questions and Answers

Q What are the merits of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

Crime statistics show that crime in Northern Ireland is low; however the fear of crime, particularly amongst the elderly is high. Involvement in this scheme can reassure elderly residents and provide additional support to those persons in fear.

NW schemes enable communities to look after each other. They will hopefully lead to greater public support for local police and a greater chance of people reporting incidents that might have previously gone unreported to police.

Q How does this involve local police?

Requests for assistance by any individual to police are prioritised and treated accordingly. The public want a visible police presence to act as a deterrent to criminals. As NW schemes are co-ordinated throughout Northern Ireland, police need to support local areas within the NW schemes in terms of maximising patrols in the areas concerned. The NW schemes are given designated patrol officers from their neighbourhood policing teams, with response police also patrolling areas at any available time.

Q Can others join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

Any area which wishes to join a NW scheme can do so at any time. They will be asked to complete a survey which basically determines the public support for a NW scheme in the area. Any person who wishes to be a NW co-ordinator must go through police service checking to determine their suitability.

Q What about areas that are already involved in the Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

Whilst some areas are affiliated with Community Associations or other "watch" schemes some have developed their remit to include NW along with their current work. Other Housing Associations such as Fold Housing Association, Apex Housing for example, are now also involved with NW.

Q How much does it cost to become involved in the Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

Absolutely nothing only a little time and effort. Statutory supporting agencies such as the police and other non-statutory supporting organisations will assist.

Q What should I do if anyone asks about Neighbourhood Watch schemes?

Refer them to the local police, CSP Manager or DPP Manager. Alternatively information may be found on the Police Service of Northern Ireland website: www.psni.police.uk, the Community Safety Unit website: www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk or the District Policing Partnership website: www.districtpolicing.com



Local Contacts

Agency	Contact Details
Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator	
Local Police	0845 600 8000
District Policing Partnership Manager	
Community Safety Partnership Manager	
Local District Council	
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	0 3448 920 900
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Quick Check	0800 103 2290



Glossary of terms

A number of the terms used in this handbook are described below.

CSU Community Safety Unit

Community Safety Unit of the Department of Justice has overall responsibility for community safety within Government www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk

CSP Community Safety Partnership

Community Safety Partnerships were established on a voluntary basis in Northern Ireland, following the Government's response to the Criminal Justice Review recommendations concerning community safety

DPP District Policing Partnership

The role of a DPP is to consult with the community, establish in conjunction with the District Commander policing priorities and monitor police performance against the local policing plan www.districtpolicing.com

DOJ Department of Justice

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is a new Northern Ireland Department which came into existence on 12 April 2010 and was established by the Department of Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2010. It has a range of devolved policing and justice functions, set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010

DRD Department for Regional Development

Main responsibilities include strategic planning, transportation strategy, Ports and Public Transport, roads and water policy, providing and maintaining roads and providing and maintaining water and sewage services www.drdni.gov.uk

NIHE Northern Ireland Housing Executive

A comprehensive regional housing authority www.nihe.gov.uk

NIPB Northern Ireland Policing Board

The Board's principal function is to secure the maintenance, efficiency and effectiveness of the police in Northern Ireland. In discharging this function, the Board must hold the Chief Constable and the Police Service accountable for the performance of their duties www.nipolicingboard.org.uk

The Police Police Service of Northern Ireland

'Policing with the Community' is the style of policing delivered in Northern Ireland to meet the policing requirements of all members of the community and is delivered in furtherance of the statutory general duties of police officers www.psni.police.uk

