



## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH TOOLKIT**

### **Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches**

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.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. What is Neighbourhood Watch?	1
2. What are the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch?	2
3. Neighbourhood Watch in Scotland	2
4. Getting started	3
5. Neighbourhood Watch roles and responsibilities	4
6. Communication	6
7. Sustaining your scheme	7
8. Public liability insurance	8
9. Resource Library	8
10. Contact details	8

### **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 1980s. Behind it lies a very simple idea... “Working together can help to 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**

Currently, Scotland has approximately 1500 active NW schemes. A recent audit has established a single database covering the whole of Scotland, consisting of up-to-date and accurate information. Whilst many schemes are long established, there are new schemes being established all the time.

Some areas of Scotland, Fife and Grampian, for example, have formed Regional Associations to provide focus and support for local schemes and to share good practice.

In May 2006 the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches (AoSNW) was established to provide advice, support and resources for Neighbourhood Watches in Scotland. Our Committee comprises NW representation from all Police Force areas.

Please check our website for information and resources:

[www.aosnw.co.uk](http://www.aosnw.co.uk).

## 4. Getting started

Every Neighbourhood Watch is different – one size does not fit all!  
How your Watch will be structured and run will depend on your area and what your members want from Neighbourhood Watch

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!**

**Contact us at the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches.**

We will be able to let you know if there is an existing scheme in your area. If there is not a scheme, we will be able to help you establish your own.

### **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?

**Gauge the level of support for setting up a NHW scheme in your area.** You can do this by conducting a survey of your neighbours. (Survey forms can be obtained from AoSNW website)

- Identify the area you want the watch to operate in. 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, 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

## **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 Watches.
- Communicate with co-ordinators about crimes in their area
- Work in partnership with NW and other relevant partners to address community safety issues, provide public reassurance and crime prevention advice.
- Provide a point 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. Communication

Communication is crucial to Neighbourhood Watch at every level. For communication within Neighbourhood Watch to be effective, it must be:

- Accurate
- Conveyed at appropriate time
- Conveyed via the right method
- Passed to the right person
- Two-way

### **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 communication, your method must work for your particular scheme and may include 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 that nothing will be done as a result of their information.

## 7. Sustaining your scheme

Throughout the history of Neighbourhood Watch, 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
- The problems the scheme was set up to address have been solved
- 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** – People will lose interest quickly if they are not kept informed.
- **It's not just about crime** – Keeping your community safe is more than just preventing crime. It can involve home-safety, fire safety, road safety, internet safety – any aspect of safety!
- **Get involved** – Find out what safety initiatives are happening in your area get your Neighbourhood Watch involved.
- **Effective partnerships** – The police are not the only partner that Neighbourhood Watch can work with. Any partnership must meet the needs of both partners. Keep things simple – have realistic objectives with tangible results.
- **Shared responsibility** - 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.
- **Meets the needs** - 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.
- **New Residents** – Tell new people about your NW and the benefits it brings.
- **Share with others** - Share your challenges, successes and ideas with other NW schemes in your area or region. Perhaps you could form an association

## **8. Public Liability Insurance**

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

The insurance cover is provided by Ansvar Insurance Company 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 their AoSNW.

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](http://www.keegan-pennykid.com) or download them from the AoSNW website.

## **9. Resource Library**

Various documents to help you set up and maintain your scheme are available at [www.aosnw.co.uk](http://www.aosnw.co.uk)

## **10. Contact Us**

**E-mail:** [info@aosnw.co.uk](mailto:info@aosnw.co.uk)

**Phone:** 01786 450145

**Address:** Freepost RSAA-YAAY-EGTA  
AoSNW  
Unit 10, Alpha Centre  
Stirling University Innovation Park  
Stirling  
FK9 4NF

**Charity No:** SC036510