

Neighbourhood Watch

HANDBOOK



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch. The significant structural changes that have taken place within the Cambridgeshire Constabulary have inevitably had a knock-on effect upon our joint working practices and our mutual engagement to achieve a new and effective partnership working for a Safer County.

Accordingly it has been necessary to undertake a radical review of this Handbook to bring the police practices and our processes into line. Whilst this review is in progress, every effort is being made to ensure this version (v.1.2 – May 2013) is as close as possible to covering the current correct information whilst numerous changes are being introduced. Where a process is clearly out of date and its

replacement is not readily available, the relevant paras holding that information will be deleted until correct info can be released.

The revisions being introduced will endeavour to simplify the Handbook by covering the more changeable information, where appropriate, with cross-references to the relevant pages on the Cambridgeshire NHW Web-Site at www.cambsnhw.org.uk.

We have attempted to minimise any loss of significant info whilst these changes are addressed so I hope that this will not cause any detriment to your NHW community work. However, do please make contact with us on any such difficulties or issues as they arise by using the CONTACT US facility on our web-site to draw our attention to your concerns.

John Fuller, Chairman of the Cambridgeshire NHW Executive Group

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH TODAY

Neighbourhood Watch is a country wide voluntary organisation with the aim of making each area a better place for people to live, work and play.

- It encourages neighbourliness and provides reassurance to those who may come in contact with crime or anti-social behaviour.
- It provides a forum by which the public can have ease of dialogue with the police, through this crime is often reduced. Know someone you feel that you can talk to them!
- It provides contact persons, called coordinators, from whom advice and alerts can be received.
- It assists the police by way of encouraging reporting of crime, potential crime (It doesn't look right it probably isn't!) and by way of assisting them to identify offenders.
- It assists officers by affirming them and encouraging them in what can seem sometimes a thankless task.

There has been a de facto relationship between the police and NHW in Cambridgeshire for close to 30 years - primarily a verbal mutual understanding through which we have worked together.

BUT WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

Following the sudden deterioration in the national economy, the police budget has had to be cut drastically and the Chief constable has overseen a redesigned structure and completely new constabulary to meet the new challenges and at the same fit into the funding constraints being imposed.

As part of this reorganisation every policing dept. has had to produce a Business Plan to justify its existence – Cambridgeshire NHW was no different...In close consultation with the Constabulary, we have restructured to work alongside and to assist them in this new future relationship and we are now enjoying a successful new partnership for the future.

Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Executive Group

The County Group

The County Group in partnership with the Police is responsible for shaping the policy and working practices for Neighbourhood Watch across the county of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Group was originally formed in 1998 with the prime objectives of:

- Promoting, in partnership with the Police, Neighbourhood Watch for the benefit of the community therefore helping to protect people and their property.
- Supporting Neighbourhood Watch scheme members.
- Promoting good citizenship and encouraging neighbourliness and closer communities.
- Enhancing the image of Neighbourhood Watch.
- Providing advice, training, information and practical assistance for members, to enable them to promote their schemes and develop good practice.
- Providing a structure to assist local communities to reduce crime and the fear of crime, thereby improving the quality of life

The Group consists of Neighbourhood Watch elected representatives covering communications and activities in each of the six new police commands. The Group also enjoys the support and specialist advice of the Constabulary's Lead NHW Police Officer.

The group meets quarterly at Constabulary Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon.

Elections for the positions held by Neighbourhood Watch Members on the Executive Group are held each year at the Annual General Meeting.

SECTION 1: YOUR SCHEME

Objectives of Neighbourhood Watch

The NHW Co-ordinator

Scheme Members

Neighbourhood Watch Street Signs

Cluster Groups

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Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch aims to develop a close liaison between householders in a neighbourhood and the local police team.

Its aims to help people to protect themselves and their property, to reduce the fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance, rapid and detailed reporting of crime and suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit in the neighbourhood.

Objectives Of Neighbourhood Watch

To prevent crime.

By improving the security of property, increasing vigilance, reducing the opportunities for crime through crime prevention awareness and developing and maintaining a caring community.

To assist the police in the detection of crime

Through promoting effective communication and the prompt reporting of suspicious incidents and criminal activity

To reduce undue fear of crime

By providing accurate information about risks and through promoting a sense of security and community spirit, especially amongst the more vulnerable members of the community, the very young, older people, those with a disability and people in a minority group.

To improve police and community liaison

By providing effective communications through a communication system, which advises co-ordinators of local incidents and crime trends. These messages can be passed to on to scheme members.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes belong to the community, are run by their members and are supported by the local police. It must be emphasised that the scheme is a community initiative, which is supported by the police, and not organised or run by them. Success, therefore, depends on what members make of it.

The Co-ordinator

The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator is usually a volunteer member. They have an important role to play in setting up and administering a watch scheme. There is no standard format for a watch scheme and how the group develops will depend upon the support provided it's members. They liaise closely with the police, receive information and messages from the police to keep them in touch with activities and incidents in their area.

The following are suggested as the main duties of a Co-ordinator:

- Get to know your local Neighbourhood Policing Team. They will be your main contact.

- Encourage vigilance amongst scheme members and actively encourage early reporting of incidents to the police by the appropriate means at the time of reporting.
- Receive crime information from the police and distribute these messages to scheme members.
- Encourage members to be aware of and to put into practice crime prevention measures, home security, property marking, and security devices.
- Appoint a deputy co-ordinator [if possible] to assist in the administration of the scheme.
- Maintain a check on vulnerable residents and provide advice to members about dealing with unexpected callers at the door.
- Circulate newsletters and other relevant information provided by the police and other agencies concerned with crime prevention to scheme members.
- Welcome new members to the neighbourhood and invite them to become members of the scheme.
- If appropriate, hold meetings of members at regular intervals to discuss issues of common concern.
- Maintain an up to date list and contact details of their street / group members.
- Erect NHW signs and ensure they are regularly checked
- Encourage scheme members to attend area meetings and conferences.
- Where necessary attend NHW cluster group meetings.
- Make a list of local council services with names, telephone numbers to contact should assistance be required from a council department for example to report an abandoned car.

You may wish to raise funds with a small membership fee and to arrange fundraising events to pay for watch signs, paper for newsletters, security items and the like. Your scheme may have money coming in from subscriptions and fund raising and money going out on administration and projects.

In this event you should therefore:

- Appoint a treasurer to take most of the responsibility for money management.
- Open an account for your scheme at a bank or building society. Arrange for cheques to require two signatures, yours and the treasurers.
- Keep an up to date record of all monies received and spent. A separate note book should be kept for this purpose by the treasurer.
- Give a receipt to anyone giving money to the scheme. Buy a receipt book from a stationers.
- Ask for and keep receipts for any goods or services purchased for the scheme. If you spend money for which you cannot get a receipt, such as telephone calls from, make a note of the date, time and number called.
- If you are planning an event, draw up a budget for what you intend to spend and stick to it as far as possible
- Do not keep cash in the house, bank it at the first opportunity.
- Even with small schemes you should present a set of accounts to members at least once a year.

Scheme members.

- Be observant and vigilant
- Report unusual or suspicious events to their co-ordinator or directly to the police.
- Assist the co-ordinator if support is needed, (disseminating information, distributing leaflets and newsletters)

- Check home security and where necessary provide advice on the upgrade of locks on doors and windows.
- Assist in maintaining the neighbourhood environment free from rubbish, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and the like.

It is important for the co-ordinator to impress on members that the police can only react to a crime of which they have been made aware. Incidents of crime frequently go unreported and communities become aggrieved if nothing is done to resolve the problem. The police can only respond to a problem if they are made aware that a problem exists. If you see something which you think warrants a call to the police, make that call (101 or 999).

Neighbourhood Watch Street Signs

[To obtain NHW Street Signs – go to the web-site <http://www.cambsnhw.org.uk> - On the Home Page, mouseover Main Menu to Info for NHW Coordinators - Click on 3rd topic down Street Signs etc see 1st para]

Signs are not obligatory. However, if Neighbourhood Watch is to be a deterrent then it must be visible - the criminal should know where the boundaries of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme are, otherwise he/she cannot decide to avoid the area.

The best way of marking the scheme is by using Neighbourhood Watch street signs, which carry the distinctive “logo” in black and yellow. The signs are 15” X 12” in size, made of sturdy plastic or aluminium and printed to a good quality.

The erection of watch street signs is the responsibility of the scheme members and should be placed on County or Parish Council lamp columns at a height of 2.5 metres from the ground and facing the approaching traffic. The scheme must ensure that they have the appropriate level of insurance when erecting the signs.

Signs must be of the type and specification supplied by Cambridgeshire NHW for NHW Schemes. Your scheme is responsible for purchasing the signs but to satisfy insurance requirements. If a scheme ceases to function the signs should be removed and returned to Cambs NHW.

Co-ordinators should make frequent checks of signs to ensure that the fittings are secure and the sign is not damaged and is in good condition.

Cluster Groups

- Where there are a number of schemes in close proximity, there is much to be gained by the co-ordinators coming together to form a village, cluster or area group.
- It is useful to know what crimes are occurring in your area with an opportunity to discuss common problems and common solutions.
- Your scheme will not be working in isolation but as part of a larger group. Joint projects and initiatives will produce mutual benefits in tackling crime across the area.
- Regular meetings provide opportunities to meet officers from the Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- Provides opportunities to share equipment, expertise and good practice.
- Provides greater opportunities to share newsletters, social events, visits and training.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act provides a safeguard as to the manner in which information concerning personal details is retained and used by organisations.

Registration forms, which are given to you at your launch meeting must be completed by all Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. This ensures they are registered under the act to receive information relating to Neighbourhood Watch and crime prevention and for their details to be held on the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator database held by the Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

The police may disclose details of crime patterns and information concerning incidents that have taken place in identified locations. To assist in the prevention or detection of crime the police may also give descriptions of suspects and in unusual cases vehicle registration numbers, although the latter isn't standard practice. The Police will not give out personal details likely to identify a property or an individual.

Police staff attending the scene of a crime may consider it necessary for the purpose of detecting or preventing a crime, to give personal details to a person who may be able to assist the police with their enquiries.

There is not a universal authority for police staff to distribute personal details of victims to watch members. They must give good reason for giving out this information and should record these reasons, as they may be asked at a later to justify their decision.

Once this information is given, the person receiving it is bound by The Data Protection Act and should not pass on the personal details without the consent of the Constabulary.

As a Co-ordinator you may wish to keep personal details of their scheme members involved in a watch scheme on computer. It is necessary therefore to:-

- Advise members why it is necessary to retain their personal details.
- Obtain the written consent of each member of the scheme
- Only collect information that is necessary for the management of the group.
- Personal data should be accurate and kept up to date, new members added and details of those who have resigned or moved away removed.
- If you have any doubt at all you may wish to consult the Office of the Information Commissioner on 01625 545740.

To share personal details within a scheme, the individuals concerned should be made aware why it is necessary to share this information. Their consent is required.

Insurance

[See Cambs NHW web-site www.cambsnhw.org.uk - under Main menu Info for NHW Coordinators]

Every NHW scheme will have a unique reference number, which they can obtain from the police in order to quote to the insurance company.

All registered schemes are covered by- Aviva Public, Community and Charitable Services Policy Number 24942345 CCI

Broker: Towergate Insurance - Insurer: Aviva

The Policyholder Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (England & Wales) Beaumont

The Policyholder is more fully named as; Officers, Members, Committees and Volunteers working and/or acting on behalf of the Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (England & Wales)

The Business

The Business specified in the Schedule of cover is more fully described as; Any scheme registered with an Authority recognised or verified by the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network. Provision of a coordinated national network of best practice and volunteer support mechanisms within the local community.

Training [Under Revision]

The increased knowledge of crime prevention and community safety for co-ordinators and members is important and relevant to the expansion and development of neighbourhood watch in Cambridgeshire.

Resources

Supplies of NHW Street Signs, Window Stickers, and certain Posters and Publications are available

[For the current position go to the Cambs NHW web-site www.cambsnhw.org.uk - mouseover Main Menu and click on *Info for NHW Coordinators*]