

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch is one of the biggest and most successful voluntary crime prevention initiatives. Sometimes known as Home Watch, it originated in the United States and in the early 1980s came to the UK, where it fast became very popular. Neighbourhood Watch is based around the idea of an active community working in partnership with the police, and a shared value focused on bringing local people together. At its most basic level, Neighbourhood Watch consists of a group of like minded neighbours getting together to help reduce crime where they live and making their communities safer.

Neighbourhood Watch exists to:

- to prevent crime and reduce anti social behaviour by improving security, increasing vigilance, creating and maintaining a caring community and reducing opportunities for crime by increasing crime prevention awareness
- to assist the police in detecting crime by promoting effective communication and prompt reporting of suspicious and criminal activity
- to reduce undue fear of crime and improve quality of life by providing accurate information about risks and by promoting a sense of security and community spirit, particularly among the more vulnerable members of the community
- to improve police/community liaison by providing effective communication channels, and by members informing the police of incidents when they occur.

Neighbourhood Watch can do this by:

- Identifying issues of local concern and drawing them to the attention of local agencies
- Getting involved in initiatives aimed at tackling crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour; preventing the incidence of fire; and reducing the risk of environmental damage
- Promoting crime prevention and home safety
- Forming associations at district and county/police-force-area level to share good practice
- Recruiting new members to Neighbourhood and HomeWatch schemes
- Establishing links and working with other types of Watch, and more widely with other bodies in the voluntary, public, and private sectors (particularly tenants' and residents' associations, and neighbourhood police teams and their local panels)

Use of the OWL (Online Watch Link) computer system allows for two way, real time, accurate information to be forwarded between the police, community groups and other agencies.