



Neighbourhood Watch is really well-known and for decades it has been helping to make thousands of UK streets safer and better places to live. Now you can get the benefit of the same sense of security, including police resources, information and contacts, as part of your Street Association, due to a new partnership between the Street Association initiative and Neighbourhood Watch (also known as Home Watch) at the national level. You can also get free public liability insurance for most Street Association activities (though not, say, for potentially dangerous ones such as fireworks displays) by registering as an NW group.

Crime is much less likely to happen in a community that cares – if there's a Street Association on your street, you are already half way there! The next step is to register the Association also as a Neighbourhood Watch scheme – and your personal job as coordinator is to bring to the wider Association the concerns, information, advice and contacts that have been proven to reduce crime and tackle any anti-social behaviour.

We recommend that you register yourselves and your scheme on www.ourwatch.org.uk (click 'Sign up' in the top right hand corner). This will add your scheme to the national database of Neighbourhood Watch schemes and make sure you are included in communications from the Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (England & Wales), the national umbrella organisation for Neighbourhood Watch.

The national database is actually administered locally by Neighbourhood Watch volunteers and so registering is a good way of getting noticed locally and immediately becoming part of a wider network of coordinators. In some areas it is directly linked with the police as well, saving you from registering on two separate systems.

The next step is to get a local police officer to come to a forthcoming meeting of your Street Association core group. Working closely with the police is important for Neighbourhood Watch. They can advise you about security measures that anyone can take (a lot of which is common sense – but who doesn't benefit from focusing on the security of their home for a few minutes and then doing something about it?). They can also keep you informed about what's going on in your area, such as a spate of a certain type of crime or things to be warned about and look out for. It can also be a real reassurance to people to know that the police are active, interested and directly involved with your Street Association. You can contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team by calling 101 or through the website www.police.uk.

While you're getting started and setting up your first meeting, we recommend you look at the toolkits at www.ourwatch.org.uk/resource_centre/toolkits. They have lots of useful information about setting up a scheme, and equipping the group to do the best possible job.

Almost every county in England and Wales has a county-wide Neighbourhood Watch Association or similar, and there are often District, Borough, city, town and village Neighbourhood Watch Associations too. It's a good idea to get in touch with one of these in your area if you can. They may have materials that can help you, such as lamp post signs, welcome packs etc. If you want some support, they might even be able to put you in touch with a nearby more established scheme so that you can talk to another coordinator about what works well in their patch. The police may be able to help you with this too.

To find a Neighbourhood Watch Association or wider group in your area, you can ask your police contact or visit www.ourwatch.org.uk/get_involved and click on 'Your region' to find contact details for the Neighbourhood Watch regional or county representative. You can also use the postcode search on www.ourwatch.org.uk to find other schemes near you and get in touch with them using the 'Send a message' web form.

Here are some steps to take as you get going:

- 1. Identify the problem(s) in your area.** Ask yourselves whether you want to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour in your area (or both!) and what you hope to achieve with the scheme. You might want to survey the residents in your neighbourhood to find out what they see as the problems and what they would like a Neighbourhood Watch scheme to tackle.
- 2. What are you going to do about it?** Once you have identified a problem in your area, think about what activities your Street Association/Neighbourhood Watch group can initiate to help address the problem. One of the key things is that neighbours know each other and communicate well. That will happen naturally as the Street Association gets going. So the security and the social sides of the Association really do work well together.
- 3. What resources will you need?** What will you need to get your ideas off the ground? As well as money, time and 'person power' this could include other 'in-kind' resources like meeting space, access to a printer, etc.
- 4. Review your activities.** Once a year, take a look as a group at what you've achieved, what you still want to achieve and whether anything needs to change to make the group more effective. In your review, you might find this check-list helpful:
 - How many people are actively participating in the scheme? Can that number be increased?
 - Are all Street Association members aware of the scheme and do they feel welcome to contribute and seek help? What about people who recently moved in?
 - Do people know you are the contact point and how to reach you?
 - Do you have a good way of sharing information with residents on security issues, such as a newsletter?
 - What more could be done to promote good home and garden security?
 - Is there good liaison between your group and the police?
 - Are you in contact with a wider Neighbourhood Watch area Association?

Remember, the key to real security is that neighbours take an interest in each other, and watch out for each other. As the street gets friendlier and people feel confident to approach each other, the street will be much safer – and feel safer, too.