

## CRIME PREVENTION HANDBOOK



HOW WE  
REDUCED CRIME & VANDALISM

but also .....

HELPED THE POLICE **CATCH** THE CRIMINALS  
IN AND AROUND OUR COMMUNITY

**(And how you too could do the same)**

"..... The Police were missing out on a huge amount of 'intelligence' and we filled the hole here, but who is filling it elsewhere in the country?...."

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## **CONTENTS**

1. How dare they make us Live our Lives So!
2. The Burglary
3. What we Achieved
4. The Police Can Never Do This
5. How I Started our Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
6. How Much Did it Cost?
7. Organisation
8. Data Protection and Human rights Acts
9. Insurance Cover Discounts
10. How Did We Reduce Crime and Vandalism AND Help the Police  
Catch the Perpetrators?
11. Police Involvement
12. Our Mobile Patrols
13. Missing Persons
14. Feedback
15. 'Intelligence'
16. Successes *out* of our Area
17. Community Spirit
18. Making Sure our Neighbourhood Watch Scheme Never 'Dies'
19. Campaigns
  - i. Post-coding
  - ii. Datalink
  - iii. Bogus Callers
20. Hard to Reach Areas
21. Children and Youths
22. How We Publicised What We Were Doing
23. Crimestoppers
24. Barriers to Overcome
25. Security Tips
26. Sample Letters
27. To Sum up

## 28. Useful Contacts and Links

### 1. **How DARE they make us Live our Lives so!**

In the past we built thick-walled castles against our enemies, then more recently we felt so safe we would leave our back doors open and wouldn't think of locking up the car. Now, the elderly hide behind locked doors, often too frightened to go out, and we are advised to lock our houses up securely even if we are just popping out into the garden which can be often on a nice day – cleaning the car; gardening; eating al fresco or just to sunbathe. What sort of freedom is this? Why SHOULD we live like this just because of a very small criminal minority? If we venture out after dark, we are advised to walk in well-lit areas but then we are also told that if we walk from the lit up areas to an unlit area, this creates a fear of crime and makes us even more nervous and anxious. We are advised to keep nothing in the car, even CD's, an old coat or small change for a parking metre. Have you ever tried doing this? We fill our boot up with shopping from the supermarket, then we might go to the bank or post office, or to buy a pair of shoes – it is just not practical to keep nothing of value in the car.

*How Dare the Few Make the Majority Live our Lives so!*

This Handbook explains how my neighbours and I managed to not only drastically cut crime and vandalism in our area, but also help the Police *catch* the criminals:

### 2. The Burglary

One weekday afternoon I was standing at the top of a ladder painting our dining room ceiling when I heard some loud banging noises that sounded like thunder. I got down from the ladder and looked through the window and yes; there were indeed some black clouds in the distance. I looked at my watch and made a mental note to pick up my husband from the train station a mile away so that he didn't have to get wet. Only moments after I got back up the ladder again, the phone went. It was my neighbour telling me in a very shaky tearful voice that she had just got home having popped out for just half-an-hour, to find the house had been tipped upside down; ransacked and burgled and worst of all that her new puppy had been beaten. Of course that was the banging I had heard, not thunder. TV's, video recorders and the such-like being thrown into a van must have made that sound. She had arrived home just minutes or even seconds after the thieves had left. She found a big wooden post on one of the beds upstairs and Police told her that it was meant for her if she had come back too soon. It would have initially been used to beat the puppy who suffered epileptic fits since that day and eventually died of them.

This lovely young family lost a lot in that burglary, but what I found most upsetting was the effect it had on them afterwards.

Over the next few days, the news got around and people were saying things like 'I saw a black Volvo near that house' but they didn't notice if it was occupied/the day/time/registration. A gardener working nearby hadn't looked up when he heard a vehicle go up or down that drive and none of the information being bandied about was enough to enable the Police to catch the criminals. It struck me that if we were a bit more organised with our information, we could help our villagers and the Police a lot more, so I suggested we start a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

### 3. What We Achieved

We set up an effective Neighbourhood Watch scheme covering 700 homes; the petrol station; farms, pubs and shops.

We drastically reduced burglaries, thefts and vandalism and passed very useful information to the Police, often enabling them to catch the criminals but very importantly also gave their 'Intelligence Office' valuable information such as the movement of criminals, better descriptions of them and the vehicle(s) they use. And all this can eventually link them with crimes elsewhere in the country.

This handbook will tell you how we did it in the event that you would like to do something similar, whether you live in a high rise flat in the City or in a small village. Any (responsible) person can do it.

It is a proven fact that criminals usually start young with petty crime and vandalism and if this is not checked at an early stage, that person will go on to commit more and worse crimes. Therefore, it is a very important job indeed that we do in Neighbourhood Watch – keeping an eye on our local youngsters. A sharp ticking off by a Police Officer at this early stage can mean the difference between that child being a good or bad citizen in the future. It could save many of us from becoming victims in the future and will also save millions of pounds spent in Police and Courts' time, and the cost of keeping criminals in our prisons.

### 4. The Police Can Never Do This

Police Officers walking their beats could never be enough, however many there might be, as society has changed so much over the years. The Police do not know who lives next door to us; whether they are on holiday or at work or whether they are elderly, or vulnerable to criminals like bogus callers. They don't know the cars our neighbours own. Only we know these things. Even in the old days, the local bobby on the beat wasn't always on hand anyway. Today, our Beat Officer will go on holiday; courses; sick leave and only work for part of the 24 hours in each day.

## 5. How we Started our Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

It is most important to start a Neighbourhood Watch or crime prevention scheme as soon as possible after a crime has been committed, whilst the residents are still angry and enthusiastic.

I posted an invitation (a sample of which is at the end of this booklet) to 36 householders around me, asking them to attend a meeting at the local hall, where a representative of our District Neighbourhood Watch from the Police Station, would explain how to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. I suggested at the same time that they should try not to leave their houses empty that evening as the last thing we wanted was to invite a crime at a crime prevention meeting! We also had refreshments and neighbours got to know each other as we discussed the new Scheme. I gave out forms (again, there is a sample at the back of this booklet) for them to fill in their details and asking for their permission to keep them on my database and to give these details out to their neighbours.

The Neighbourhood Watch representative was able to tell us of many more crimes in our area which we had known nothing about; handed out Neighbourhood Watch stickers and stickers telling callers that all of our property is post-coded; special post-coding equipment and Home Office information booklets.

## 6. How much did it Cost Us?

We were given the use of the hall, free of charge because it was being used for the benefit of the local community. We would need six Neighbourhood Watch road signs at a cost of £66. This sum was divided by the number of houses involved, with a little added on for petty cash for such items as stationery, and so it worked out at approximately £3 per household and to make it fair, all new Members from thereon, paid the same sum. Other Schemes I set up in a nearby town only cost 50p-£1 each household. It depends a lot on the layout of your area. A cul-de-sac will usually only need one sign for instance. In one Scheme I set up, the local shopkeeper paid the costs and in another, the local Council.

## 7. Organisation

We are a rural Parish in the South West Midlands nearly two miles square with mixed farming. We have a brook joining up the villages, ponds with good fishing, hills and footpaths, which attract many ramblers. There are two churches, two pubs a post office and three shops. Some

of the houses, large and small, are quite isolated and others are small, pretty, terraced houses; two modern housing estates, flats and houses belonging to the Housing Association; a school; nursery and a railway station and busses. There is a good mix of young and old people living here who enjoy: a park for small children and a large recreation ground for football and cricket; tennis courts, a Pavilion, a popular 9-hole golf course with magnificent views and two well-used community halls.

One person, a Co-ordinator, was made responsible for each group of about 10-20 houses (we took into consideration those properties with long drives in relation to small terraced properties quick and easy to deliver to) and so we had four Co-ordinators looking after our first 36 Neighbourhood Watch houses. Also consider including all properties opposite and backing onto your properties, as these eyes will make the Scheme even more effective.

Each time the owners of houses and shops adjoining our Scheme asked to join, we booked the hall again; posted the invitations to properties around them, and had another meeting on the same lines as before, with one or two people volunteering to be the Co-ordinator for those properties. This continued until all 700 properties were in Neighbourhood Watch Schemes with not one missed out. Having said that, I would occasionally come across a resident who flatly refused to join in, stating that it is the job of the Police to do this, and that "this is what we pay the Police to do". When they realised that everyone around them was discussing the latest crime and what happened a few doors away from them last night, and that we were successful in helping the Police capture criminals in many cases, they soon asked to join in.

#### 8. Data Protection and Human rights Acts

When collecting names and details of Members for our lists, we had to make sure we had their permission first to comply with the Data Protection Act and even then, we had to be very careful how we used this information. Also, we couldn't identify a person, or house when giving out information to our Members unless the Victim asked us to, due to the Human Rights' Act and so we got around this problem by saying something like "the burglary took place approximately half-way up such-and-such lane."

#### 9. Insurance Cover and Discounts

In our modern blame culture, volunteers trying to help their community are at risk of being sued, often by those they are trying to assist, if an accident, oversight or error of judgement causes someone any damage. If you don't want to chance losing your home and possessions, it is important to make sure you have public liability insurance cover. The easiest way to obtain this is to register your scheme with the National Neighbourhood Watch, and take advantage of their group cover. In addition we found that many Insurance companies were very happy to

give us free insurance for such things as signs, because we were an active group. They sponsored us in various ways such as the cost of newsletters and post-coding pens.

Most insurance companies are prepared to give discounted household insurance to those households in *active* Neighbourhood Watch schemes. This can be anything up to 40% reduction. There are one or two cases where this won't happen, e.g. if you have recently made a claim because of a burglary or if you are already receiving a discount due to being aged 55 or over. This does vary from insurance company to insurance company, but it is well worth checking.

#### 10, How Did We Reduce Crime and Vandalism AND Help the Police Catch the Perpetrators?

Communication – that is the key word. We gave every Member a list of contacts which included the Crime Stoppers' telephone number; our local Police Station and Police Officer's numbers; also my own telephone and mobile numbers, encouraging Members to ring me with EVERY little bit of information they thought might be useful. If they were suspicious about something, even only a tiny bit suspicious, and didn't think it worth ringing the Police about, they would let me know so that I was in a position to build up a sort of jigsaw pattern and had information for the Police if there really was a crime. Members also received a list of their neighbours' names and all telephone numbers, e-mail addresses plus their car details so that they could learn which cars are normally around and to treat any other vehicle as suspicious; write down its' details; time and date seen, immediately. Then if there were a crime committed later, we would have the details to pass onto the Police. I also set up a weekly 'surgery' at our local pub and publicised this regularly by flyer, in the local Parish Magazine and in our quarterly Newsletters. I'd be in the pub between the hours of 4.30 and 7pm, sometimes having a meal with my husband, with all my Home Office and Neighbourhood Watch leaflets and stickers and a notebook and anybody who wanted to discuss anything with me, could. It is surprising how much you can learn by sitting in a pub. And I once saw a man trying to sell a cardboard boxful of socks at a ridiculously low price!

#### *Example 1:*

A Victim rang me to say that his garden shed had been broken into and lawn mowers, strimmers and other tools had been stolen. He had already reported it to the Police. I asked for the times the crime could have taken place; method used for entry and other pertinent questions, then used the network of communication I had set up, giving *some* of this information asking if Members had seen or heard anything suspicious, then I sent flyers out to all co-ordinators (as e-mail attachments if they were on-line) and they would print these off, and deliver them to the group of houses which were their responsibility. The feedback amazed me. People were noticing and noting things more and more. After reading of this incident, other residents told me that they too had had their shed broken into that night (and had not

reported this to the Police) and on one occasion, in the light of day, you could plainly see in an adjoining potato field on a row of raised soil, the boot prints of somebody who had been running from one of the gardens to where, it turned out, his vehicle had been parked on the road. So we sent out more flyers to the residents of that road and received more information, which helped the Police catch the culprit. Of course all of this was relayed back to all Members as this sort of news kept them interested in the knowledge that their hard work was paying off. The Police statistics would have included a few more reported crimes as a result of our intervention, but at least the criminal was caught, so hopefully reducing crimes in the future. The local newspapers were very keen to report our successes and the added high profile this gave us, helped even more.

#### *Example 2:*

A car parked in the front garden of a house down the lane from me had all its alloy wheels taken during the night. This had happened before in our area, so I had previously warned everybody to try to garage their cars; bolt on their alloy wheels or to at least have a security light and be especially alert. This member had taken heed of the warnings and parked her car so close to husband's car, that it was almost touching, climbing in and out over the passenger seat. They were astonished to find that the thief had somehow still managed to steal all of the wheels. I sent around the message as usual, giving the information and asking for information so when a car had its alloy wheels stolen 2 miles away yet again, a youth driving home at 1a.m. took special note when he saw a man he didn't recognise standing by his van then thought nothing more about it until he went down for breakfast the following morning and saw a flyer on his mother's pin-board giving the details of another car which had been attacked overnight. He had cleverly remembered the details, including some of the registration of the car. The criminal was caught. He had stripped the inside of his van and specially fitted it out with spaces to take alloy wheels and worked alone with a pencil torch in his mouth. This was a major find for the Police as it was probably him who had been stealing the wheels over a large area, for a long time.

#### 11. Police Involvement

Our Police Beat Manager was an essential part of our Team. He would pass us information concerning criminal activity in the neighbourhood and particular vehicles or people the Police were keen to know more about. Some of this information was passed to Members but it was limited, again due to the Data Protection and Human Rights Acts. In return we would give him information, pieced together from the various snippets passed to me by Members ringing in, by e-mail, or gathered at our weekly surgeries. It is amazing how much you can learn when you are seen standing in a queue in the local shops too! Residents would see me and a conversation would immediately strike up giving me more useful information. This of course is what the old Village Bobby used to pick up in the days gone by.

## 12. Our Mobile Patrols

There were some areas in one of our villages, which were still having a lot of crime - burglaries, arson, drug dealing, vehicle crime and vandalism and as they were in places mostly unseen from any houses, at the suggestion of our Beat Manager, we set up a civilian Mobile Patrol system. These are surprisingly good fun to do, and very therapeutic if you have any worries on your mind as all concentration is needed to Patrol. *I must emphasise here the importance of responsibility when patrolling and to only set up this system in conjunction and agreement with your local Police Force. Any sign of vigilantism and the Patrols will be disallowed immediately. The Police did a lot of behind-the-scenes work before allowing us to Patrol.*

We invited Members to a meeting at my home to discuss and set this up, along with our Beat Manager, and ended up with an enthusiastic 50-strong team. We kept a rota and we had to work to strict Police Guidelines and act very responsibly. One of our Members kindly made 50 road signs, which we placed at strategic points, warning that this area was being patrolled. We patrolled in our own cars but during the fuel crisis we were able to patrol on foot. Both methods were successful in different ways and this also enabled dog walkers to patrol, so we continued with both techniques from thereon.

Each car Patrol comprised a driver and at least one observer. Patrollers would first phone the Police Control Room, giving their car and mobile phone details and the Police would often give us details of particular vehicles or people they were looking for which made it more interesting. The first couple of patrols were a little difficult in that we didn't really know what to look out for. However, we soon learned to wait discretely for the train bringing home the school children at 4pm each day, as there was sometimes a drug dealer waiting for them to do his dirty deed and the observer(s) noted down everything they saw in a log, which had to be posted in our nearest Police Station at the end of each Patrol, or we phoned the Control Room immediately, depending on the circumstances. At night we would notice that the children and youths were in the local park or playing on the railway platforms and we soon got to recognise them. Sometimes we would see two cars park next to each other in the dark car park; the occupants were selling and buying drugs. We took the details and rang the police with the information immediately then drove away leaving it in the hands of the Police. The two pub car parks were vulnerable especially after dark and we spotted burglars and car thieves in action on two occasions. Police caught some of them. We had to be very careful not to draw attention to ourselves and so when we once saw thieves breaking into a car after dark, we did a three-point turn so that our headlights would shine onto them and their car, to get the registration number. We immediately parked the car a short distance away and so that we could watch them in our rear view mirror, the observer phoned the police then we parked our

car nearby so that it looked as though we were just pub customers. However, we parked so that we could watch them discretely through our car's rear view mirror and gave the Police a running commentary until they arrived. The villains were of course caught and given custodial sentences. Patrollers should be prepared to give evidence in court if required.

A major TV company asked me if they could do a programme on our Neighbourhood Watch and Patrols but Police advised me not to accept this as they can apparently accidentally identify a Patroller, which would cause problems. I felt that was a great shame as others around the country might have felt that they could have done the same as us in their communities had they seen it.

When drug dealing was at its peak, I was able to ring all the Patrollers, past and present, to ask them to do an hour's stint. This meant that every hour of the day and evening was covered so that a whole week was taken up by us patrolling to make sure someone saw the dealers and their vehicles, so I knew I could always summon help from them when really needed. Police knew of this and supported us well.

As crime reduced, the Patrols tailed off and we relied mainly on our Patrol road signs to keep criminals at bay. Our Police also went through a lengthy period of problems when they moved their local call centres to one large one 20 miles away. As we needed to phone in so often when patrolling, it sometimes took a very long time to get through and when we did, the Police and Police staff didn't often know where our village was, never mind the Old School or the back of the Pavilion'. But also, the local operators knew the names, phone and registration numbers and when that went, they felt rather disheartened.

Yes we soon found out how to Patrol and what to look out for and the more we did and the more 'successes' we had, the more we enjoyed it. It was difficult for me to publicly thank the Patrollers as for obvious reasons, their identities had to be kept secret at all times to protect them.

*You need to have a supportive Police Force if you wish to Patrol*

### 13. Missing Persons

We were twice called upon to find missing persons. One was a young girl who had set off for school at the usual time, but hadn't arrived. I rang all Patrollers, asking them to patrol immediately if they were able and gave a description of the child. (One set of Patrollers set off in their pyjamas!). The child was found safe an hour later. The second instance was when a mentally ill patient escaped late at night from a hospital 2 miles away and here again, we were successful in locating him alive and well.

#### 14. Feedback

A major factor in our success was to always get back to Members after they had passed us information. If somebody rang with a description of a vehicle seen in suspicious circumstances, I'd ring the Police and then contact all the co-ordinators, asking them to look out for it. I would also send out an e-mail to everyone in our Neighbourhood Watch group, but just as importantly, I'd contact them all again with any feedback I had received or with additional descriptions or information; making a special announcement each time we'd helped the Police catch a culprit.

#### 15. 'Intelligence'

I found it shocking that so many people would not ring the Police themselves – even before we became Neighbourhood Watch. And these Members are not intellectually impaired people, either. One was a past Chair of the Parish Council and others, respected members of the community. Infact it was these people who gave me the most information, and some of it was very important. The Police were missing out on a huge amount of 'intelligence' and we filled the hole here, but who is filling it elsewhere in the country?

#### 16. Successes *out* of our Area

Eventually, Neighbourhood Watch members *and* non-members *outside* our area asked to be included on our e-mail list to receive information we gave out regarding warnings against the latest scams, crimes etc so that we had approximately 1,000 e-mail addresses in the end, some all over the UK.

Some of the information we gave the Police linked with crimes elsewhere. For instance: One night, a Member heard a noise and got out of bed to look through the window to investigate. She spotted a black car whose occupants were obviously trying to break into the house next door whose owners were away. They saw the light go on and fled. That neighbour got a good description of the car, occupants and part of the registration number, which we passed to the police. Everyone was asked to look out for this vehicle and two weeks later, a Member in an adjacent Neighbourhood Watch Group who was on our circulation list, spotted it driving very slowly down a road in his nearest town, with the occupants acting suspiciously and so she was able to ring the Police knowing that it really was urgently wanted information.

Then there was the time a large car- transporter carrying brand new Mercedes saloon cars was stolen in the night from a town four miles away. The Police passed this information to me and I emailed everybody in my book, asking for information. One of these Members from a

different Neighbourhood Watch group reported many miles away to me that he had seen three brand new Mercedes saloon cars still with a white banner across their windscreens, driving around the Ring Road of his town. He was able to give time and dates, which I passed onto the Police.

Another time an armed gang broke into a house *not* in our Neighbourhood Watch schemes but only a couple of miles away, early in the morning; beat and tied up the couple who lived there; stole their car keys and car. We immediately sent e-mails giving information and descriptions asking people to look out for this car and one of our Members who worked 15 miles away saw her copy when she got to work on her work's computer. She read the e-mail out loud to her colleagues in the office and one of them realised that this was probably the car he had followed into work, so contacted me at once - he had followed a car matching that description and from that direction at that time of day and which was being driven erratically with its side mirror hanging off. He was able to say where the car went and the Police were able to watch this on CCTV cameras. The bandits were caught.

### 17. Community Spirit

Our community spirit was raised automatically because everyone was involved with what we were doing but we also had BBQ's (where we raised money for Victim Support) and we also secretly raised a sum in excess of £1,000 for our village milkman when he retired. He had spent all his working life as our milkman. Everyone knew to meet at the local pub on his last day, and his replacement was to drive his float into the pub car park at a set time. We had managed to locate his wife and bring her in on our secret and one of the Members cheerfully played him in on his guitar. As he walked in there was an enormous cheer from all his customers who were able to attend and along with drinks, speeches and a cheque, another generous Member gave him and his wife a free holiday at his holiday home. He was not the only person in tears that lunchtime.

Afterwards, I found out that our local Police Officers were driving past the pub when the cheer went up and heard it all very clearly! They had been forewarned about this event so it gave them a chuckle.

### 18. Making sure our Neighbourhood Watch Scheme never 'Dies'

Many, many Neighbourhood Watch schemes across the country die, usually from lack of communication and once they die, it is often impossible to get the same enthusiasm from the residents to rekindle them. Sometimes a Co-ordinator moves on; new people move in or out of the area and are not kept informed, Neighbourhood Watch window stickers fade and the Neighbourhood Watch road sign gathers the dirt to the extent of becoming invisible and

criminals do notice when a Scheme has died. To combat this problem, we elected a small committee who closely monitored the progress of the Schemes and circulated a quarterly News sheet. (Or you could give your local Parish Council the responsibility, making sure Neighbourhood Watch is regularly on their agenda.)

We also had regular campaigns, such as DataLink; Post-coding Property; Bogus Callers; Vehicle Crime; Fire Kills and We Don't Buy Crime to keep it alive.

### 19. Campaigns

These were mostly based on Police or Home Office initiatives who supplied literature and publicity material. Examples include:

#### *i. DataLink*

This is to help the emergency services help people whose house they have been called out to and it regularly saves lives. However, it has to be supported by all of the emergency services covered by your Police Force to make it work. A little plastic pot with a green cross label on the outside, and with your medical details on a form inside (any medication you are taking and whether you are epileptic, asthmatic, diabetic, have heart problems, etc) is placed in the door of your fridge. When the emergency services arrive they look on the inside of your front door for a green cross, which shows that you have the system installed. This way they can get the correct help to you much sooner and it is these first few vital minutes which can make the difference between life and death. We raised money for this wonderful project and gave out the new DataLink sets to all Members who wanted one. Members also helped by collecting film canisters from chemists and film processors for use as the pots in the Scheme. Eventually though I obtained sponsorship from a major power company so that the four Counties around us had DataLink (again, free of charge).

#### *ii. Post-coding*

We Encouraged all Members to mark all of their property, even what they might consider to be small unimportant items such as hair dryers, with their post-code, using the special ultra violet marking pens we keep. Placing a sticker on your window saying that all your property is post-coded discourages burglars and thieves anyway. Members need to be reminded regularly, especially after Christmas when they have new gifts, which will need marking. When the Police recover marked property, they pass it through an ultra violet light which shows up the post-code and they can then trace the property back to its owner. IF THE POLICE DO NOT KNOW WHO OWNS THE PROPERTY, THEY HAVE TO GIVE IT BACK TO THE THIEF! For that reason only, it is worth post-coding *everything*.

Shed and garage burglaries are the most common, with lawn mowers, chain saws, drills and the such-like being stolen. Marking these too is important, in fact just use an old pot of paint

and paint your post-code on the lawn mower in large visible letters. The thief won't want a mower with your postcode written in bright paint for all to see!

### *iii. Bogus Callers*

This is one of the most appalling crimes and one that I worked hardest on trying to reduce. These criminals prey on the elderly and infirm and the shock can kill the victim, if not immediately, shortly afterwards.

It involves a person, often smartly dressed, knocking at the homes of vulnerable people with a plausible excuse to get inside the house and they can be very convincing, sometimes with an out-of-sight accomplice. The elderly by nature are kindly and are often lonely and so let strangers into their homes but once inside, the intruder will steal a purse or worse, leaving the victim in shock. They find it more difficult than most of us to put the door chain on or to speak to the caller from an open window. One of our Member's business included making sticky labels so he kindly made us door stickers, which say, "We do not buy or sell at the door" or "I do not open the door, please go to such-and-such a house".

I obtained a video and security gadgets such as spy holes and door bars and chains and showed these at our meetings. A 'memo minder' is a useful tool too. Usually a relative or a younger male voice would record a short message onto the 'minder' saying something like "remember to put the door chain on mum" or a man shouting from elsewhere in the house "who is at the door mum?" making it sound to the caller that they were not in the house alone. When 'mum' passes the minder, located near the front door, her movement activates the tape recording, which is hopefully heard by the caller, too.

## 20. 'Hard to Reach' Areas

It is often hardest to involve those who would most benefit from having some sort of crime prevention scheme, those who live in the most crime ridden inner city areas for example. Whether it is called 'Neighbourhood Watch' or another suitable name. However, I found that once they let me in, the results were tremendous. In my nearest town, three young mums asked me to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in their long cul-de-sac. At the first meeting, to which a dozen people attended including their Neighbourhood Warden, it became clear that the reason they had called for a scheme was because they were afraid and very agitated as they believed a paedophile had moved into their Close and they didn't mince their words, either. Thankfully, the Warden was able to reassure them that this poor man was NOT a paedophile and this put their minds at rest. At their follow-up meeting, I explained how our Police Force was currently pushing 'We Don't Buy Crime', and how criminals try to sell their stolen goods in such places as pubs, clubs, and to family members at much-reduced prices and also how the person buying the stolen goods receives a much longer prison sentence than the

one who stole them. This prompted a huge amount of Intelligence for the Police as they reeled off a list of pub names, times and days where this regularly happens.

At another 'hard to reach' area in that town, I was explaining to those who attended the first meeting how Neighbourhood Watch works, I received the negative remark "there is nothing we can do to stop crime and vandalism around here and Neighbourhood Watch is a waste of time". This was greeted by some of the others' nods and mumbles of agreement like some sort of contagious disease. I immediately said "oh yes you can" and reeled off a list of things they could do to help themselves and their road. Their attitude changed and they became much more receptive and positive.

If you have difficulty in these areas, you may find that trying to get the people to know and trust you first is the best approach. Hang around their haunts and chat to them. Many wives of immigrants, for instance, feel isolated as they often can't speak English, so maybe set up an English-speaking class at a local school so that they can make friends or perhaps yoga classes during the day for those who do not like going out at night. Once they accept you as a friend, it is much easier to help them further, with regard to crime and acts of racism.

I became part of the training team for new Neighbourhood Warden recruits. Here I was able to enlist their help in advertising Neighbourhood Watch around the area they worked, and explain how we really can help the community with their crime and vandalism problems. The Wardens helped enormously by finding people who wanted a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. I found that to remain enthusiastic and try to instil this enthusiasm a positive attitude into the community, was the biggest thing we could do. This rubs off onto others and changes their attitude. Once this was accomplished, all else just follows on. Children and Youths.

## 21. Children and Youths

Youths hanging around the streets can create anxiety in people. Often there isn't much in the area to occupy them, as in this day and age, ball games in the streets and squares are dangerous with so much traffic and children playing outside can so often be considered a 'nuisance'. You might like to consider asking the Landlord of the local pub if he would let youngsters, along with a responsible adult, use his snooker table once a week – with a glass of pop and a packet of crisps this would be popular with many youngsters. Or find them a well-lit room or area where they can congregate for a chat during the evenings. There is an open, cheerfully coloured 'youth shelter' on the market now which can be placed in a park or out-of-the-way part of the community for them to congregate safely in. Maybe your local Council will fund such a project? Try to involve youngsters in what you are trying to do in the

community - a young Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator for example can be extremely good for the area. But probably the most important thing you could do, is ask the children what *they* would like.

## 22. How We Publicised What we Were Doing

- I worked at District and County levels in Neighbourhood Watch where I was able to give Talks to groups such as the Round Table, Victim Support and the WI.
- I wrote a regular column in our local newspaper at the request of the Police, giving information regarding the latest scams, examples of how we were successful here, and crime prevention advice.
- We found local businesses who were keen to sponsor our quarterly Newsletters and this often covered the total cost of providing them, and
- I also wrote a full-page article for our monthly Parish Magazine.

## 23. Crimestoppers

Crimestoppers is a charity and is not a department of the police and as such, can take calls from people who do not wish to leave their identities. The callers can remain totally anonymous and they can't trace calls. Rewards are available but the vast majority of people who give them information do not ask for a reward. A high 50% of their information relates to the drug trade. An instance of their success in the West Mercia policing area, during 2004 - Crimestoppers received 1,360 calls with useful intelligence and were referred to be acted upon, enabling police to arrest and charge 298 suspects

## 24. Barriers to Overcome

- We did have difficulties when our Police Beat Manager was not on duty, especially for the long periods of holidays, courses and the such-like. During this time we were infuriatingly idle and some Members lost interest - not being fed with information and knowing crimes were being committed, their enthusiasm would tail off each summer.
- We didn't always have enough feedback from the Police, which was what we thrived on. Members need to know what happens as a result of their hard work and lack of feedback is extremely frustrating.
- As our crime reduced, the Patrollers weren't so keen to patrol either, but at least we knew they were there if we needed them quickly. Meanwhile, the road signs alone seemed to be doing a good job.
- When other villages came on board, the Members here lost their sense of identity. It was difficult to send out flyers to so many people. Some wouldn't even know the name of the street I would mention. So it is best, to work intensively on a *small* area.

- One of the biggest problems is maintaining contact with the Police when the Beat Manager changes. The relation with the Police is critical to an effective Neighbourhood Watch but in our area Beat Managers changed faster than football managers. The final nail in our coffin came when the Police borders changed and we lost our Police Beat Manager. His replacement only worked two days a week and as a result of this and much of the above, our Patrollers stopped patrolling and Members lost much of their initial interest. This had a detrimental effect on our crime prevention scheme and much of our work in building up such an effective Neighbourhood Watch unfortunately went to waste.

#### 25. Security Tips (*Crime Will Flourish When Good People Remain Idle!*)

- Exterior Doors: when you fix bolts to your doors, remember that the most important one is the one which goes from the bottom of the door into the floor.
- Never leave car or household keys near the front door. They can be stolen through the letterbox.
- Burglars can access your property via a very small open window so keep them all locked when you are not about.
- Postcode all of your property
- Keep lights and radios on a timer switch so that your house never looks empty.
- Take only the things you need on a car journey and never leave anything of even a very slight value, where it can be seen. A lot of damage can be done to your car for the sake of an old coat, empty bag or small change for the metre.
- Put all your jewellery on a table, perhaps next to a 50p coin to show its' size, and take a photo of it. Keep the photo in a very safe place.

(There is much more security advice on home, car and personal security on the Crimestoppers website – [www.crimestoppers.co.uk](http://www.crimestoppers.co.uk) at the end of this booklet).

26. Sample Letters

**Inviting Residents to the first Meeting:**

Dear

re: Neighbourhood Watch

*You are invited to attend a meeting at the local hall/at Jack Smith’s house 1 The Street, on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March at 7pm where refreshments will be served, to discuss the possibility of having Neighbourhood Watch in your area. Part of the success of a good crime prevention scheme, is when EVERYBODY is a Member, and so each person is looking out for their immediate neighbour, and no vehicle or stranger, is overlooked. If the same is done in your Watch, you will sleep better at night and enjoy an improved quality of life.*

*Could you please fill in the form below and bring it along to the meeting with you or post it through Jack’s letterbox if you are unable to attend.*

*If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number ideally between 9 a.m. and 5 pm Monday to Friday.*

*Yours sincerely*

-----cut-----cut-----

Name \_\_\_\_\_, Address .....

..... Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Mob: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address:

*if you do NOT want your telephone number circulated amongst your neighbours, please say so on this form, but it does come in very handy in alerting people to any criminal activity.*

.

**Please return this slip to Jack Smith at 1 The Street**

**This letter covers those who weren't at the inaugural meeting:-**

*Dear Resident*

*Following the successful launch of your crime prevention scheme, I must pay a very special vote of thanks to your Co-ordinator Jack Smith of 1 The Street, for making it possible. A lot of hard work has to go into organising a Scheme, and keeping it alive, but if you could always return calls, postcode marking equipment, letters, etc. to your Co-ordinator when asked, it does help immensely.*

*Neighbourhood Watch can help on many matters regarding the health and safety of the community, and we often receive phone calls regarding abandoned cars, excessive rubbish, street lighting as well as the more obvious crime-related ones. If you are concerned about anything, the very least we can do is point you in the right direction for help on any matters concerning you, and so make our neighbourhood a better and safer place, in which to live.*

*The key to success is Co-operation, Communication and Observation.*

*The three key roles of a Scheme Member are **Observing, Noting, and Reporting**. Log every strange face or vehicle you see, tell your Co-ordinator the date, place and the time of the incident, along with any further information. Do this when you see it, as this helps to get information as right as possible. Keeping a notebook and pencil with you at all times, in the car, or on your windowsill, is very useful.*

*If you maintain this neighbourly spirit, then you will reap the rewards of alertness. Always ring 999 if you see a crime in progress but in other circumstances, ring the Public Service Desk at the Police Station (**Tel: 01390 722888**) where your information will be logged, and then please tell your Co-ordinator. You can ring Crime Stoppers to report a crime (**0800 555111**) if you do not want to give your name.*

*I wish you all every success with your new Scheme.*

*Yours sincerely*

## 27. To Sum Up

- Involve every single property in the area you want covered (or every flat as in the case of a block of flats) with no gaps between Schemes.
- Keep an up-to-date list of all Members
- Keep them totally involved and up-to-date with flyers and regular Newsletters
- Give feedback to every Member and especially those who passed you information
- Make your Schemes highly visible to people entering your area
- Keep high profile
- Keep the Schemes alive and active with such things as campaigns and social events.
- Keep on good terms with your local Police, remembering that your Neighbourhood Watch scheme will only be a small (but important!) part of their duties.

## 28. Useful Contacts and Links

### **Crimestoppers**

0800 555111

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

- To report a crime anonymously
- There is a crime database where you can add warnings of scams etc to others
- Security for the Home
- Personal Safety
- Vehicle Safety
- Missing Persons
- Postcode Finder
- Lost, Stolen or Found

### **National Neighbourhood Watch Association (NNWA)**

0207 821 6459

### **Victim Support**

Support Line

0845 3030 900

Website address

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

If you are a victim of crime, the local Victim Support branches can give you and your family and friends information and support. And if you are going to court, their 'Witness Service' can help before, during and after the trial. You can phone their national Helpline above or write to them at the address below:-

*National Office  
Cranmer House  
39 Brixton Road  
London SW9 6DZ*

Telephone: 020 7735 9166

Fax: 020 7582 5712

**Home Office**

This is an excellent website where you will find such information as, possible funding for your work in the community and general tips on how to reduce crime. [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)

**Help the Aged**

[www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

**Age Concern**

0800 009966 or visit

[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

**Neighbour Disputes**

[http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family\\_parent/housing/neighbour\\_disputes](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family_parent/housing/neighbour_disputes)

Mediation UK will be able to give information about mediators in the area. Mediation UK can be contacted at:-

Alexander House  
Telephone Avenue  
Bristol BS1 4BS  
Tel: 0117 904 6661  
Fax: 0117 904 3331

**Abandoned Vehicles**

Look up your local and parish council on the Central Government Website

[www.tagish.co.uk/links](http://www.tagish.co.uk/links) where you will find such information as the telephone number of your council regarding abandoned vehicles.

**Police Forces in the UK** Look under 'Links' on

[www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com)

**Young People**

For more information visit:-

[www.rizer.co.uk](http://www.rizer.co.uk) which gives young people accurate information about the law

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk) gives advice on bullying for parents and young people

[www.need2know.co.uk](http://www.need2know.co.uk) – a young person's guide to using the web safely, and

[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk) offers a wide range of support for youngsters aged 13-19.

(8,377 Words)

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