

Neighbourhood Watch in Wandsworth

A Guide for Safer
Neighbourhood Teams



Wandsworth Council
Technical Services Department

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Foreword

For many years Wandsworth Council has recognised the invaluable contribution Neighbourhood Watch makes in reducing the fear of crime and making Wandsworth inner London's safest borough. Bringing neighbours together fosters a sense of community as people look out for, and after, one another.

The Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators act as a vital link between neighbours, the Council and the Police.

The introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams has made a tremendous difference by providing regular and consistent contact between Police and residents, both in person and through newsletters. This helps build a rapport, which can help develop all important reassurance and confidence amongst the public.

This booklet is intended to guide you through Neighbourhood Watch in Wandsworth from the very first expression of interest right through to the training offered to those co-ordinators willing to do that bit more. For those of you new to policing or to Wandsworth we hope you will find this guide useful in developing your role in the local community and making it stronger and safer.



James Cousins
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Community Safety



Introduction

Many of you may be very familiar with how Neighbourhood Watch works in Wandsworth, but for those of you who are not, this guide is designed to help you understand how it can assist you in your job.

In 2008 the Council undertook a major review of Neighbourhood Watch inviting everyone involved to decide on the direction it should take over the next 3 years. This review led to the development of the Neighbourhood Watch Strategy 2009-2012. An action plan was drawn up and many of the processes and systems outlined are now in place. If you are interested in reading the Strategy copies can be obtained from the Community Safety Division or on their pages on the Council's website.

Over 22% of households in Wandsworth are in a Neighbourhood Watch a fantastic proportion for an inner city area, but we want to see that figure rise and need your help to get there.

How does Neighbourhood Watch work in Wandsworth?

Includes: Council involvement/Police checks

The set up in Wandsworth is different to other places as the Council have a major role in the management of the many schemes in operation. Neighbourhood Watch is one of the core functions of the Community Safety Division based in the Frogmore Complex. Two Council Officers have responsibility in conjunction with Safer Neighbourhood Teams, for establishing new watches which includes canvassing, organising the launch meetings, arranging for street signs to be erected and making sure every co-ordinator is Police checked and receives an ID card. They also have responsibility for making sure the records held on the schemes are kept up to date and can supply you with an up to date list of names and addresses and contact details for all the co-ordinators on you ward.



Getting new schemes established

Includes: Identifying new co-ordinators/What happens next?

New co-ordinators are identified in a number of ways. They will often get involved because there has been a crime or anti-social behaviour problem and Neighbourhood Watch is seen as one of the solutions. Recent movers to the area may be keen to be involved or start a Watch in their new street. You may also come across people on your ward who are interested in Neighbourhood Watch but don't know how to get started. Whatever the reason, speak to the Community Safety Team and they will help.

If you are experiencing problems in an area that does not have an active Neighbourhood Watch but there is an existing Residents or Tenants Association, you could suggest that they incorporate the activities associated with Neighbourhood Watch into their remit. This is an excellent way of getting schemes established in the higher crime areas.

Once a potential co-ordinator has been identified a Police check is carried out. If the co-ordinator is cleared, dates and a venue for the canvass and launch meeting will be set. It is hoped that as many residents in the area as possible will attend to meet the new co-ordinator and their Safer Neighbourhood Team as well as getting some useful information about home and personal security.

If the Police check highlights any concerns about a potential co-ordinator someone of Chief Inspector rank makes the final decision and the Community Safety Division will send a letter thanking the person for their interest but informing them they have not been successful in their application. Another volunteer will then be sought.



The Launch Meeting

Includes: Co-ordinators guide /Ward structure / Crime messages /Street signs and stickers / Resignations

At the launch meeting we will invite you to introduce yourselves and explain to the audience what your role is in the local community; often residents are uncertain about who is responsible for dealing with particular issues. This will also give you an opportunity to find out about their local concerns and give everyone contact details for the team. Guides for Watch co-ordinators and members, so they know what they can expect and what is expected of them, will be given out to the residents at the launch.

Neighbourhood Watch street signs are erected in the area of the Watch and all residents in the Watch are encouraged to put a Neighbourhood Watch sticker in their window. There is evidence to show that advertising the existence of a Watch acts as a deterrent to the burglars – in 2008 67% of burglaries in Wandsworth were in roads without a registered Neighbourhood Watch.

The Community Safety Division also send out weekly crime messages by e-mail (and post for those not yet on the internet) detailing burglary and robbery information for each ward.

One of the actions in the Strategy was to establish a ward structure. One part of this would be that all Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators in each ward would meet quarterly with their Safer Neighbourhood Team. These meetings would provide an opportunity to discuss local issues and concerns – and possibly undertake some training – from a purely Neighbourhood Watch perspective.

If a co-ordinator resigns or moves away they are asked to try and find a replacement. If they are not able to do this the residents are notified that a vacancy has occurred and that unless someone takes on the role the Watch will no longer be considered active and the signs removed.



What can you expect from Neighbourhood Watch?

Includes: History / Neighbourhood Watch main aims / Neighbourhood Watch in high crime areas / identifying hot spots / local knowledge

Traditionally, Neighbourhood Watch members were seen as the 'eyes and ears' of the Police who would just pass on information or intelligence to the local 'bobby on the beat'. Whilst this was suitable in some areas, it did mean that getting schemes established in higher crime areas was more difficult as many people feared reprisals. In Wandsworth we want Neighbourhood Watch to be about bringing the community together by talking to, looking out for and looking after one another.

While information and intelligence will be passed on to the police, that is just one way the community can take responsibility for their own safety.

Good co-ordinators who really get to know their residents will be able to identify the vulnerable people who may be targets for rogue traders or distraction burglars who may need extra advice or support from you.

All new co-ordinators are shown how to property mark their valuables and are given permanent markers to do it. They are encouraged to get all their neighbours to do it as well. This is very helpful for you as in the event of a burglary any property recovered could lead to a conviction if it can be proved whom it belongs to.

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What can Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and Members expect from you?

Includes: Contact/Reassurance

Communication is key to the success of Neighbourhood Watch and this works both ways. If the co-ordinators get regular updates from yourselves you are likely to get good quality information back.

Reassurance for residents is important especially at certain times of the year and amongst certain types of people. An example of this would be Halloween and Bonfire Night when the fear of crime rises dramatically amongst elderly and frail people. Knowing you are out there patrolling in their area provides that all important reassurance so don't forget to let them know you are out there.

It can also be useful to respond to specific problems, for example if there is a burglary problem it might be a good idea to hold a street meeting, which the co-ordinator can help you organise. Residents could assemble at a particular point in the street where advice can be given on home security and property marking. The Community Safety Division has a roadshow vehicle, which can be booked for occasions like this.



Training

Includes: Emergency Volunteers/Training for co-ordinators

Wandsworth has developed a two-tier approach to Neighbourhood Watch with a selection of co-ordinators committing themselves to do a little bit more. These co-ordinators are called Emergency Volunteers and have undergone training from the Counter Terrorist Branch, the London Fire Brigade and the NHS. The idea behind this is to be able to call on this pool of people in the event of an emergency in the borough. This may be a serious fire, flooding, flu pandemic or any other major incident.

In addition to this more specialist group, ordinary co-ordinators have been offered training in home security and fire safety. They have also had presentations from CID Officers and the specialist Stolen Arts and Antiques Squad.

If you think there are other areas of training that would be useful and that we could offer please suggest it to the Community Safety Division who will organise it. All of this helps to keep the co-ordinators interested and motivated to do their role and demonstrates the value the Council and the Police place on them.

Other Partners

Includes Fire Service /Parks Police /Trading Standards

In Wandsworth we have an excellent relationship with Wandsworth Fire Service. They are always keen to get involved with any roadshows or other opportunities to get over their fire safety messages. Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators could also be asked to do an environmental audit of their patch to identify any rubbish or hazards likely to lead to anti-social behaviour. This would help the Fire Service tackle fire setting.

If you can think of other organisations or services that would like to work with Neighbourhood Watch talk to the Community Safety Division who are keen to develop any relationship that will improve the safety of the borough. To give some examples, concern over the use of status dogs resulted in a closer working relationship with Wandsworth Parks Police Dogs Unit and in some areas Watch members are assisting the council's Trading Standards team by reporting shops selling counterfeit or age-restricted products.



Wandsworth Borough Neighbourhood Watch Association Includes: Role/Structure/Contacts

The Wandsworth Borough Neighbourhood Watch Association was formed 10 years ago and is a registered charity. The association's purpose is to represent the interests of Neighbourhood Watch at the highest level with the Council and Police and provide a voice in any consultation that takes place which has a relevance to Neighbourhood Watch.

The strategy identified that the association could play a much bigger role in making the borough safer and should have a stronger and more democratic structure and the council and association are working together to make this happen.



Useful Contacts

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Community Safety Division | (020) 8871 8919 |
| Noise Team | (020) 8871 7869 |
| Noiseline (Housing) | (020) 8871 7490 |
| Anti-social Behaviour Team | (020) 8871 8894 |
| Graffiti Hotline | (020) 8871 7049 |
| Road Safety Officer | (020) 8871 6670 |
| Environmental Services | (020) 8871 6127 |
| Trading Standards | (020) 8871 7720 |
| Education Welfare Officers | (020) 8871 8306 |
| Victim Support | (020) 7223 1234 |
| Age Concern | (020) 8870 2020 |
| CRIMESTOPPERS | 0800 555 111 |
| Wandsworth Fire Service | (020) 8555 1200 |
| - Wandsworth Station | ext. 84549 |
| - Battersea Station | ext. 84548 |
| - Tooting Station | ext. 84550 |

Useful links

Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network
www.mynhw.co.uk

London Neighbourhood Watch Association:
www.lnwa.net

Wandsworth Council Community Safety
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/communitysafety

Home Office publications
www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications.htm

Wandsworth Safeguarding (children)
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/Safeguarding

Wandsworth Safeguarding (adults)
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200050/adult_social_care/197/safeguarding_adults



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For further information or to receive this booklet in a different format please contact the Community Safety Division, Technical Services Department on (020) 8871 7696 or email dtscommunitysafety@wandsworth.gov.uk.