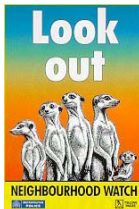




NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Take a lesson from nature by becoming part of a community team whose members work together to protect each other from crime.

The animals pictured on these webpages are meerkats. What's so special about them is their natural instinct to work as teams to keep themselves and their young safe. They take turns to go on look-out duty and by being alert warn others in the group of anything that might be suspicious or threatening. As Sir David Attenborough put it, their strength is their unity:



"This is the team where it's one for all and all for one."

Watching and caring - not snooping

That's what Neighbourhood Watch is all about - looking out for each other. Neighbours uniting and acting together means that dozens of eyes and ears are ready to pick up on anything happening in the neighbourhood that could cause worry or concern. It's not about being nosy or interfering, it's about being a good neighbour and caring about your community.

A better quality of life

And there is more to Neighbourhood Watch than protecting homes and property against burglary. By working together, neighbours can help reduce all sorts of local crimes. They can also take action to improve the environment by getting something done about things like vandalism, graffiti, poor lighting and a lack of local amenities.



As well as making the neighbourhood a better place to live and work in, tackling local problems and concerns will help people to feel less nervous about crime - especially those who are elderly or vulnerable for other reasons.

Neighbourhood Watch is for everyone

Neighbourhood Watch is also about bringing people closer together and involving them in local life. A stronger community spirit grows as people get to know each other and look out for one another.

Anyone can join a Neighbourhood watch team and everyone can play a part in its achievements. And any community or neighbourhood - however large or small - can set up a scheme. A scheme can be made up of just a few houses in a street, or a few households, the residents in a square or a whole estate. Each scheme can be different - you don't even have to use the title 'Neighbourhood Watch', or put a sticker in your window.

Schemes aim to meet the needs of the members and their neighbourhood. They are run by the members and belong to their members - so the members make a real difference to improving the quality of life.

Neighbourhood Watch means working together

Neighbourhood Watch means no-one is alone. Your neighbours will look out for you, your family, your home and your street or estate, and you will do the same for them. Neighbourhood Watch schemes also help the community to keep a check on people in the neighbourhood who are more vulnerable. Children and young people, the elderly and the frail, and people who have had their home broken into before can all benefit from having an extra eye kept on them.

As well as receiving support from scheme members, people belonging to Neighbourhood Watch can make contact with other local Watch groups. And the police, local councils and other community and voluntary organisations all support Neighbourhood Watch.

How does it work?

Everyone who joins a Neighbourhood Watch scheme plays an important part in making their neighbourhood a safer, more friendly and pleasant place to live in.

One of the most important things scheme members do is to look out for activity in the neighbourhood that seems suspicious or unusual and then report it to the police. Some things you see may help the police to solve or prevent a crime - and so stop some-one becoming a victim. When you join a scheme, you are given advice about the sort of things to look out for.

But it is always important to remember, when you see something that concerns you, to dial 999 and let the police check it out - you must NEVER challenge someone behaving suspiciously or put yourself at risk.

The police may also offer other advice, from simple ideas like seeing that circulars, newspapers and letters cannot be seen in letter boxes while householders are away on holiday, to promoting crime prevention schemes and home security measures such as marking property with a postcode.

Everyone is valuable

Each local scheme is run by a local co-ordinator. He or she is chosen by the members of the scheme and acts as a link between them, the local police and council, other Watches and community groups.

The link goes in both directions. As well as reporting suspicious activities or seeking help and advice from the police, the co-ordinator will hear from them about incidents likely to affect the neighbourhood. These could be about burglars operating in the area, reports of bogus door-to-door 'salesmen', car thieves at work, or local drug dealing, for instance.

Some members may be part of a support committee that shares the work. Others can keep an eye on the more vulnerable people in the neighbourhood, contribute to the scheme's newsletter, help to arrange events or approach local business for support - or simply do the most important job of all - looking out for others in the community.

Everyone in a Neighbourhood Watch scheme plays an important and worthwhile part in making their community safer.

Every member is valuable and every task they do contributes to bringing people in the community closer together.

