



**THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION**

STREET CO-ORDINATOR'S GUIDE

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1. Introduction

On behalf of The London Borough of Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association (BNWA), I am pleased to present your Co-ordinators Handbook which I am sure you will find of great assistance to you as front-line troops in our efforts to make your Borough a safer and happier place in which to live.

2. Neighbourhood Watch - Background

Neighbourhood Watch started in this country by the Police in 1982 with the basic aim of reducing household burglary. Today, it is about much more than crime prevention; it also aims to foster 'good neighbourliness' and a strong community spirit. Neighbourhood Watch is now the fastest growing 'grass roots' organisation in the country and is so successful that there are over 200,000 schemes nationwide. Neighbourhood Watch is not just about crime and disorder although it obviously has a part to play in any initiative to combat crime and disorder. In most of London the fear of crime is greater than the reality. In many neighbourhoods it is not always the most serious crimes which cause concern for the majority of residents. Rather it is the overall quality of life, litter, graffiti, troublesome neighbours, disruptive children – in fact a dripping tap which can wear people down until apathy and a feeling of helplessness set in. Tackling these issues demands the redevelopment of community spirit and commitment to make a positive change to the quality of life in the area. In some instances Neighbourhood Watch can act to direct problems to the relevant organisation, e.g. the Local Authority for complaints about noise, and consequently reduce the number of inappropriate calls to the Police. Neighbourhood Watch has the ability to improve community spirit but a sense of purpose and a sense of achievement are missing in many schemes. This is often linked to a lack of clarity on objectives. Where schemes have defined objectives and evaluated what they have done, greater enthusiasm and satisfaction is evident. Experience shows there are a number of critical elements that need to be present for Neighbourhood Watch to succeed. This strategy focuses on those elements where the Association can have a direct influence on making schemes more effective.

Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association recognises the commitment of co-ordinators and residents in keeping Bromley a safe place in which to live and work. It supports those who build and retain community spirit thus reducing the fear of crime and raising the quality of life for all. BNWA will promote active citizenship in the community with greater public participation in the prevention and solution of crime through Neighbourhood Watch activities. The Association currently has a number of Strategic Objectives:

Administration - Endeavour to provide a professional service and image.

Partnerships - Encourage the development of partnerships at all levels with statutory bodies, Local Authorities, Government Departments, Trade Associations, voluntary organisations, commercial enterprises and all others with an interest in reducing all crime and the fear of crime and in fostering community spirit.

Funding & Marketing - Seek funding to ensure the future of BNWA and support potential growth.

Communication - Keep members informed of developments, initiatives, current legislation and news.

Training - Develop a training package for co-ordinators.

To achieve these, a number of fundamental issues need to be addressed. The purpose of this document is to highlight these critical issues and provide a strategy for implementation that relates back to the aims and objectives of the Association that are to:

- Provide support, guidance and resources for co-ordinators;
- Support areas still to establish Watches;
- Provide a strong voice for links with key partners;
- Set up regular communication links;
- Identify and circulate best practice;
- Increase local community involvement;
- Ensure membership reflects the community it serves;
- Raise status and professionalism by providing specialist training opportunities;
- Organise positive media campaigns to publicise successes.

3. The Street Co-ordinator's Role

The Street-Co-ordinator is the lynch-pin of the whole organisation and is the first contact their neighbour will have with Neighbourhood Watch. He or she is the person who will give out information (e.g. by distributing *Newsletters* and any other information members might find helpful) and who will be someone to whom members can express their concerns and seek a solution by acting together. The Street Co-ordinator is also someone who can monitor (i.e. by maintaining a diary) matters of concern in their Watch and pass the information on through their Safer Neighbourhood Teams and/or direct to the Borough Police.

The role includes maintaining the Watch and acting as a link with other Co-ordinators, the Police and the Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association. The Co-ordinator's duties include collection and circulation of Neighbourhood Watch material (e.g. newsletters, stickers, crime prevention advice) on a regular basis. The Co-ordinator should be prepared to hold occasional meetings of his or her Watch and encourage members to report suspicious activity. The Co-ordinator might want to consider creating and distributing a Watch newsletter, should be prepared to attend the Annual General Meeting and may want to consider serving on the Executive Committee. Try, too, to have a designated deputy, to help you and to take your place if you are away.

4. Setting up and Developing a Watch

Set objectives – Decide the issues, relevant to your area, you want your Watch to tackle.

Consider the size of the Watch – There is no upper limit but you should not aim too low. Around 50 homes is a manageable size for a Watch. If you live in a small cul-de-sac, for instance, consider including other, surrounding streets. Decide where you would like your street sign to be positioned.

Canvas your neighbours – You should next contact the residents of your target area, personally or by mail drop to see how many are interested in forming a Watch.

Appoint a Co-ordinator – The Co-ordinator's role is described above and is the key element of an effective scheme.

Consider Street Wardens – Although delivery of material is rarely urgent, you may want to consider splitting the Watch into segments (about 30 homes each) and appointing a Street Warden for each segment. This way, the Co-ordinator distributes his or her local segment, plus single, bulk deliveries to the Wardens. If the Co-ordinator has no ready access to a car, one of the Wardens could, perhaps, be appointed to collect material from storage as needed.

Organise a "Launch" venue – Decide where the Watch is to "launched" and contact the undersigned to arrange a date and time. A member of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team will attend and bring along launch material.

Keeping records - Talk to your members before you start. Discuss with them exactly what information you plan to collect and how you will be storing it, and only go-ahead with their agreement. Never give anyone information about a member unless he/she has agreed. Keep a diary sheet record of crimes and other problems reported by members; but never keep records about people suspected of committing a crime or anti-social behaviour. Remember, if you use a computer or word processor to keep records you may need to register under the Data Protection Act.

5. Actions for Watch Members

'Observe and report' - promptly alert the police if there are suspicious persons in the neighbourhood.

Keep a watchful eye on each others' home and cars when they are at work, on holiday or in hospital. Ensure items such as milk left on the doorstep, or mail spilling out of the letterbox, are removed – do not let an opportunist burglar know that the house is empty!

Discreetly identify elderly and other vulnerable neighbours and invite them to ask for help when faced with unsolicited callers; and make sure they are alright in times of severe weather conditions or power cuts; or if they have not been seen for a while.

Tell the Street Co-ordinator about matters of concern such as anti-social behaviour, graffiti, vandalism, bad parking, poor street lighting and rubbish tipping; and consider keeping your own diary sheet (anonymously if you prefer) to help record for the police what is happening, where and when.

Look at what needs to be done to improve your area – for example, organise with the council a special rubbish collection day. It will come out on Sundays to collect large unwanted items; but it has to be a well organised event covering a lot of people.

Focus on cleaning up graffiti – cleaning kits may be available from your Council.

Consider holding an annual front garden or window box competition and get someone from the Parks Department to judge the entries.

Organise a 'clearing up' day on say some nearby waste ground that needs tidying up

Work together in supporting a local charity, for example by holding a coffee morning or a book or garage sale.

Involve the young people in the activities – many of them have good ideas about what needs doing. Contact the local brownies or cubs groups; they might like to join in. If you have a school nearby, they also might like to get involved as part of their citizenship studies.

The aim of every member should be "to be a good neighbour and look out for each other". By doing this, as well as working together to defeat the criminal, everyone in the community can become involved, from the young to its older members. Everyone can play a part and the more people that become involved in their Watch, the more effective it will be. Neighbours can become real friends and no-one will ever feel alone because they will know that everyone is also looking out for them.

6. Preventing Crime

What you should do if you are going on holiday - Cancel deliveries of milk, newspapers etc. discreetly – don't announce your departure in a shop full of people! Only tell those who need to know (e.g. your immediate neighbours). Make sure that your home looks occupied – closed curtains during the day make it look as if no one is at home! Consider fitting automatic time switches to switch on lights and a radio in a downstairs room; and leaving the lights and a radio on when you go out at night will make a burglar think twice!

Beware of bogus callers and tradesmen - Distraction burglary, bogus caller crime and burglary by trick is increasing! Criminals use a variety of hoaxes to get into people's homes:

- Small children who have lost their ball in the garden,
- People needing to borrow a pen to leave a message for a neighbour, 'carers' from the hospital picking up people for appointments.
- Bogus police checking for counterfeit notes or chasing criminals escaping through the back garden.
- Delivery men or women leaving packages.
- People with broken-down cars needing to use the phone or wanting money for public transport.
- Incidents involving bogus fire officers have been reported!
- Bogus Utility men pretending to be from say a gas or water company. In order to help to reduce this threat, utility undertakings have introduced a system whereby their workmen should only be allowed entry if they can give the householder a pre-agreed code-name.
- Beware of window cleaners, especially those with ladders!

Be a good neighbour to someone who is vulnerable to this type of crime, e.g. the elderly, and remind them that they should not open their door to anyone without proper prior arrangements, and let them know that they may call you if they are worried about someone at the door. This could make all the difference. If you think that you have been visited by one of these bogus callers, telephone 999 straight away.

Bogus tradesmen are also of concern, like those who knock at the door saying they would like to check your roof for loose tiles or offer to tarmac your drive as they have some left over from a previous job. Many of these people will either grossly over-charge for a bad job – or might even be checking out your home to see whether they would be able to achieve easy entry when you are out. Always ask yourself: "Would I have had these repairs done if a trader had not called?" If the answer is "no", think very carefully about your decision! If the trader refuses to leave when asked, call the Police. The Bromley Trading Standards Officer should be informed of any such cases; but, remember, they will have less chance of taking effective action against bogus traders if there is no evidence with which to follow-up the incident. So, to help them, get the suspected bogus trader to provide you with a *written* estimate, note the trade name under which they are operating and try to make a note of their vehicle's registration number.

Protecting your Possessions and Personal Security

- Consider marking items of value with your postcode, plus your house or flat number.
- If too small to postcode, consider photo-graphing them and write a description including size, colour and any special markings.
- Try not to use your mobile phone in crowded areas where it could be easily snatched from you, and avoid keeping it in public view.
- You should also do the following, both to help trace your phone if it is stolen and to make it more difficult for thieves to sell it on: always use your phone's security pin code; security mark it and the battery with your postcode; register it with your network operator, so that they can block its SIM card if it's stolen; and make a note of your phone's unique serial number (you can get this by typing **#06#* into your phone).

Protect yourself from Identity Theft

- Before disposing of it, shred or destroy any paperwork that could enable someone to represent themselves as you and run up heavy expenditure in your name. Such paperwork includes bank and credit card statements, invitations to take out a credit card and household bills etc, bearing your name and address.
- Keep all such paperwork locked or hidden away in case your home is burgled!
- Never disclose your password or PIN for bank or credit cards.

Try not to use a PIN that is a date and try not to use identifiers such as your mother's maiden name, or reveal other personal information, particularly your date of birth, as such information can easily be used to impersonate you or even to obtain a copy of your birth certificate. Also consider regularly checking your current credit status position with a credit check agency.

Burglaries

- How vulnerable is your home? Put yourself in a burglar's shoes and think about how you could gain entry. Remember, the burglar would want to avoid making a noise or being seen. Most would first wander around to identify easy targets – looking at these from the road, an adjoining footpath or alley, or any open land before deciding which home to break into. They look for homes that appear to be empty, have easy access to the rear and provide good cover in the form of bushes and trees; and they prefer those with no visible signs of protection such as alarms and lighting – and they will not try to enter a garden through say a prickly hedge.
- Be aware that once a property has been burgled then it is very likely to be burgled again within a very few weeks. This is because the burglar has already found the weak points to your security and has first hand knowledge of the layout of the property. So enlist the watchful of the neighbours during this critical period and try to set up, by say rota, a cordon of protection around the home in question- this action will likely catch the villain second time around!

Vehicle Safety

- When leaving your car ensure that you lock the vehicle securely, set the alarm and if you have one set the immobiliser.
- If leaving the vehicle over night then park it in the garage or behind locked gates on the drive if you are lucky enough to have them. Where this is not possible, park the vehicle in a well lit place preferably under a street lamp.

Scams

- A scam is when people con you out of your cash by offering you something for nothing! To recognise one, ask yourself "Is it too good to be true?" Be very wary and do not respond to their offer if they ask you to send money straight away, or give you a PO Box number as their address or if they ask you not to tell anyone about the deal! Further information is available from the Trading Standards Office.

Personal Security

- Be aware of what is going on around you when out and about, especially where the area has poor street lighting and in the early mornings and late evenings.
- Whenever possible during the above times when you need to go out do not travel on your own. Go with a friend you will feel more confident and two or more people together deter the opportunist mugger from attacking you.
- Keep your valuables secured and out of sight.

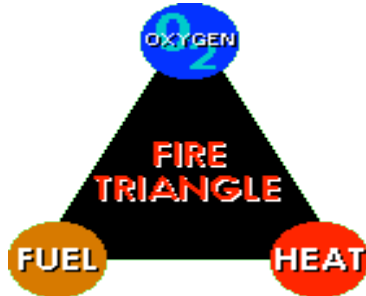
There are various internet sites that provide excellent information on keeping yourself and your valuables safe. Probably the best organisation providing this information is the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the web address to this site is given below for those of you that have access to the internet. It is well worth visiting.

<http://www.suzylamplugh.org/home/index.shtml>

7. Fire Prevention

IF YOUR HOME CAUGHT FIRE, WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO? WOULD YOUR CHILDREN?

For a fire to exist there must be three things present: oxygen, fuel & heat. These 3 elements make up what is commonly called the Fire Triangle.



If a Fire should occur in your home

- **Leave the house** - Familiarize yourself with at least two exits from each room; for example, one window and one door. Know where the exits are; practice using them.
- **Have a safe meeting place located outside your home** - A fire is no time to be worrying about who made it out and who did not. By establishing a central meeting place outside the house, you can count heads and not have to wonder who might still be inside.
- **Telephone the Fire Brigade (999)** - from a Neighbour's house
- **Do not re-enter the home for any reason** - Once you are outside, do not go back inside. The fire department will be there in a matter of minutes. Stay at the meeting place and wait for the fire department.

In a fire, seconds count. For early detection of fires, install **smoke detectors** near your sleeping areas. If you have a multi-story house, install smoke detectors at each level.

REMEMBER, THE BEST STEP TO TAKE IS TO PREVENT FIRES FROM OCCURRING

- Knowing what to do should fire occur is very important. More important still is the **prevention** of a fire. Take the time to inspect your home for possible safety hazards, bare wires, and improperly operating heating equipment.
- Fire prevention is something the entire family may participate in. Encourage children to assist with checking the home for hazards.
- By taking the time to carefully inspect your home for possible hazards, you may prevent a major catastrophe later on.



8. Reporting crime and anti-social behaviour

The different ways of reporting crime or anti-social behaviour are:-

Emergencies – telephone **999**

Non-emergencies - telephone **101**

Racist crime, hate mail, homophobic crime or domestic violence - telephone the local Community Safety Unit

Disorder, anti-social behaviour or similar activities - telephone the local Community Safety Partnership

Graffiti, abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping for removal - Log onto the local Council's website to find the numbers for these services

Anti-Terrorist Hot Line - Where anyone has specific information to assist police concerning terrorist activity telephone **0900 789 321**

Anonymous reporting of crime - telephone **0800 555111** for **Crimestoppers** (also to give anonymous information about a person whom you believe has committed a crime Remember, though, that whilst a crime can be reported anonymously by this method, the police will be unable to investigate it without a statement from you.

9. Disseminating Information

The usual method for passing information down to Street Co-ordinators is the Association Newsletter, Community in Action, through our e-mail service, e-Watch and via the BromleyNWA Group at Yahoo.

Much useful information can also be found in leaflets published by organisations such as Victim Support, Age Concern, the Fire Service, the Police, the local NHS Trust and the Borough Community Safety Partnership. Another good source of leaflets is your local Library.

10. Useful Contacts

Insert your local contacts here – a sample of the type of contact is listed below:

Age UK:

Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association:

Community Safety Partnership:

Borough Council:

Borough Fire Service:

Borough Police/ Community Consultative Group (PCCG):

Trading Standards: