

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

To function as a group, the members of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme need to meet regularly. You may have experience of organising work meetings, but remember, Neighbourhood Watch meetings are optional so they need to be worthwhile to ensure people come. Planning and management can make all the difference.

Planning

A well planned meeting runs smoothly and is more enjoyable. Be clear what needs to be achieved and make the agenda varied and interesting, with presentations and discussions as well as admin. Aim for a mixture of information and decisions on actions. Allow anyone to raise an item and have all items submitted in advance. You can then distribute the agenda beforehand, reminding people about the meeting and giving them time to prepare.

Management

While meetings should always have a clear purpose, you'll lose momentum if you leave too much time between them. Schedule regular times you know suit everyone. The trick is to hold them just far enough apart that there's always something to discuss.



Five tips for effective meetings

1. Tailor the event to your audience. Choose a suitably sized, accessible and safe venue. Arrange seating in a circle to facilitate discussion. Try to start and finish on time.
2. When you agree a project, break it down into small tasks to make it easier to achieve.
3. If you are discussing another organisation, ensure that either the relevant people can attend or you have good information from them.
4. To make meetings more interesting, you could offer one 'special' item: a presentation from a guest speaker such as a police officer, perhaps.
5. Try and identify the good and bad points in your meetings. Ask other members to give opinions – anonymously, if they wish. Don't play blame games. When problems arise, it is important not to concentrate on individual personalities, but, instead, work on improving processes.

Personnel

Group committee members take a leading role arranging meetings. A chair and deputy chair make sure that meetings run efficiently. A secretary provides the organisational backing. The committee can also have ordinary members so the scheme isn't too dependent on a few people.

To read in more detail about how to run effective meetings, download the full version of this Toolkit module [www.ourwatch.org.uk/resource_centre/toolkits/effective_meetings].