

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communicating well

Listening and talking are fundamental to the work of Neighbourhood Watch. You'll need to discuss activities as a group, find out what local people's issues are, communicate these to the police and other agencies and sometimes make a case for funding.

Listening well shows people they are important and encourages involvement. Be patient and respectful. Pay attention to tone of voice, gestures and expressions. Make it clear you understand by feeding back: 'So, you're saying...' As for what you say yourself, in all instances, be sure of your message before you start and aim to make your communication accurate, well timed and clear. Don't talk down to anyone, e.g. older people.

Appearance and tone of voice cues are important. According to some estimates: 30–40% of people are 'visual learners', 20–30% are 'auditory learners' and 30–50% learn by doing. Tailor communications to tick all these boxes. For instance, when meeting potential members, you might give an example of existing group activity and then demonstrate some simple home safety measures. Other than that, face the person you're talking to and stay focused on them. This may sound obvious, but you might be surprised what you do without knowing it. Try speaking in front of a mirror or on video to improve your self-awareness.

Finally, ask questions, especially open-ended questions that invite more than a yes or no answer. This makes the other person feel involved and can bring out really useful information.

To read in more detail about communicating well, download the full version of this Toolkit module [www.ourwatch.org.uk/resource_centre/toolkits/communication_skills].

