

Neighbourhood Watch

Joint report on workshops

Cookstown and Templepatrick

March 2009



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1 Introduction

Neighbourhood Watch (NW) was launched in June 2004 as a regional initiative enabling communities across Northern Ireland to positively influence community safety in their areas and help reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods. The scheme is administered and funded by the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Office in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB).

The aim of Neighbourhood Watch (NW) is to help people protect themselves and their property, and to reduce the fear of crime by:

- Improved home security
- Greater vigilance
- Fostering community spirit
- Improving the local environment

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are now operating in all District Council areas across Northern Ireland with over 400 schemes involving in excess of 36,000 households.



2 Executive Summary

This report sets out the key issues raised at two workshops where Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators had an opportunity to meet with their counterparts from across Northern Ireland to discuss how they can enhance and develop their schemes.

In particular the report seeks to set out

- (i) the experience of Co-ordinators in relation to the operation of Neighbourhood Watch in their communities;
- (ii) a review of what Co-ordinators believe has been working well, enabling other Co-ordinators to consider and possibly apply good practice to their schemes;
- (iii) consideration of those things which Co-ordinators feel have not been working so well to afford Co-ordinators and agencies the opportunity to reflect on how schemes can be more effective;
- (iv) a review of how effective communication has been within and between schemes and key agencies e.g. Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs);
- (v) discussion on how Co-ordinators believe that momentum can be developed and maintained within schemes so that the positive impact they have can continue over a sustained period.

As a result we believe the report will provide useful information to Co-ordinators and to the supporting agencies as they seek to enhance Neighbourhood Watch in Northern Ireland.



3 Programme

3.1 Workshop Speakers

3.1.1 The Northern Ireland Office



Mr. Paul Goggins MP
Criminal Justice Minister

(spoke at the Cookstown workshop)



Mr. Declan McGeown
Head of Community Safety Unit, NIO

(spoke at the Templepatrick workshop)

3.1.2 Northern Ireland Policing Board



Professor Sir Desmond Rea
Chair, Northern Ireland Policing Board

(spoke at the Cookstown workshop)



Mr. Barry Gilligan
Vice Chair, Northern Ireland Policing Board

(spoke at the Templepatrick workshop)



3.1.3 Police Service of Northern Ireland



**Assistant Chief Constable Duncan McCausland
Police Service of Northern Ireland**

(spoke at the Cookstown and Templepatrick workshops)

3.2 Workshop

The workshop session was introduced by Mr. Tommy Stewart, Vision Management Services.

At the commencement of the workshop session those attending were asked to complete a brief Co-ordinators questionnaire (see Section 4 and Appendix B).

Table facilitators, who were District Policing Partnership (DPP) Managers, Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Managers or PSNI NW Link Officers led the discussions with groups of 6 -10 delegates.

The key outcomes of these discussions are detailed in section 5 of the report.



4 Co-ordinators Questionnaire

All NW Co-ordinators who attended were asked to complete a brief questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaires shows that:

- 85% of Co-ordinators believe that their experience of Neighbourhood Watch has been either very positive or fairly positive;
- Half of the Co-ordinators believe that Neighbourhood Watch has been fairly effective with a further third believing that Neighbourhood Watch has been very effective;
- Almost three quarters of Co-ordinators receive invites to DPP Meetings in Public;
- Just over half of the Co-ordinators report that their DPP consults with scheme members;
- Two thirds of Co-ordinators are regularly informed about the projects being run by their local CSP.

The key results from these questionnaires are set out in tables 4a – 4e with further detail in Appendix B.

How positive has your experience of Neighbourhood Watch been so far?

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Very Positive	40.5%
Fairly Positive	44.4%
Fairly Negative	7.2%
Very Negative	2.0%
Neither Negative or Positive	5.9%

Table 4a



How effective do you believe Neighbourhood Watch has been in your community?

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Very Effective	33.3%
Fairly Effective	49.7%
Made little or no difference	9.2%
Don't know	7.8%

Table 4b

Does your local DPP invite you to Meetings in Public?

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Yes	72.8%
No	17.0%
Sometimes	10.2%

Table 4c

Does your local DPP consult with members of your scheme?

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Yes	52.1%
No	33.1%
Sometimes	14.8%

Table 4d

Does your local CSP keep you informed of its projects?

Answer Options	Response Frequency
Yes	67.6%
No	17.2%
Sometimes	15.2%

Table 4e

A full record of written comments that were submitted on questionnaires has been received by all relevant agencies and these will be considered when further developing Neighbourhood Watch.



5 Workshop Discussion

5.1 Key Questions

Following careful preparations for the Neighbourhood Watch workshops, Steering Group representatives from CSU, NIPB and PSNI agreed on a number of questions that if asked, would help stakeholders understand how to better support Co-ordinators with the implementation of Neighbourhood Watch across all 26 district council areas.

The questions asked were based on four areas:

What has been working well?

Co-ordinators were asked to give one example of what has worked well, one example of how their scheme had addressed the fear of crime (in particular to older/vulnerable persons) or how it has taken steps to prevent crime. Additionally they were asked to state an example of good practice from their area.

What has not worked so well?

Co-ordinators were asked to identify problems that had been encountered, state how they had been overcome or comment on support required if the problem had still not been overcome.

Staying Informed

Co-ordinators were asked to confirm if they were satisfied with the level of contact they had with their local PSNI, CSP and DPP. Specifically they were asked about how often they would be in contact with the PSNI NW Link Officer. Additionally they were asked to comment on how effective communication has been and suggest ways it could be improved.



☑ **Maintaining Momentum**

Co-ordinators were asked to give an example of how to publicise/maintain interest in a scheme and to describe how they encourage residents to remain interested in the scheme. They were also asked to describe how they were making sure that they were getting the best from scheme members i.e. skills, time etc. and how they combined the activities of their scheme with other schemes that are within a similar geographical area?

All comments made in the workshops have been recorded and provided to the NIPB, CSU and PSNI. To ensure confidentiality, what follows is an extract of the key issues raised under each theme.

However it must be stressed that the views expressed are those of individual contributors and issues raised may be localised and may not necessarily be applicable to other areas.

5.2 What has been working well?

- Schemes work best when there is good communication with partner agencies;
- Seen to be important that Co-ordinator takes the time to introduce themselves to new residents moving into the area;
- Good co-ordination with regular meetings that anyone can attend are vital to the success of a scheme;
- Schemes that work well require the courage of residents willing to be a witness;
- Schemes can be advanced further if Co-ordinators become involved in other forms of partnerships;
- Signs and door stickers are making residents feel safer;
- Keeping households informed of local issues is vital;



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- One method of keeping schemes working is to ensure information on the scheme and on safety, is easily accessible e.g. on residents notice boards in a block of flats;
- TV screens in health centres have proved effective as a means of promoting some schemes;
- Press releases are seen as an effective means of raising the profile of schemes and of promoting good news stories;
- Schemes will work better where there is a strong community spirit;
- Where communities work well together, this is being reported as contributing to a reduction in the fear of crime;
- Increased reporting of incidents is leading to greater community confidence;
- Schemes are more effective when the Neighbourhood Police Officers know the local people and talk to them;
- Some have found holding information evenings with Crime Prevention Officers and display stands as an effective means of promoting the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch;
- Seen to be important that the local Sergeant contacts Co-ordinators once a week;
- Important that police officers have mobiles so that Co-ordinators can easily contact Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT);
- Schemes that have access to a support officer report that they find this very helpful;
- Important to have a booklet with all relevant telephone numbers, names and addresses included;
- Some schemes are benefiting from email updates once a week and text updates as other information becomes available;
- One approach to engaging young people has been to provide youngsters with an opportunity to obtain their cycle proficiency award;
- Bringing in Help the Aged to do security assessment and upgrades has helped promote the benefits of one Neighbourhood Watch Scheme;
- A number of schemes report that they have been able to access funds from other sources to help them with their work e.g. one group has received funding from the Rural Community Network;



- Strong support from the CSP is seen as a great help to schemes;
- Where schemes have worked well they can build confidence. This has been true for one scheme reporting that Neighbourhood Watch has helped build the confidence in a nationalist area.

5.3 What has not worked so well?

- Some Neighbourhood Watches are struggling due to apathy and disinterest from residents;
- One contributor said that the drive of the Co-ordinators makes or breaks a scheme;
- One Co-ordinator felt that “schemes come and go as people come and go”;
- Some schemes feel that they are not being as successful as they could be as local people have a fear of coming forward;
- In one area the Co-ordinator was threatened and this can lead to local people being afraid of getting involved;
- Some Co-ordinators are hesitant due to the fear of personal attack;
- Community engagement is not as high as it could be, partly due to residents fearing that even if they report crime nothing will be done;
- Some schemes are not getting moving or coming to a stand still as people don't want to be the Co-ordinator;
- The effectiveness of schemes is being detrimentally affected by Neighbourhood Police being taken away from the area;
- One Co-ordinator reported that the local scheme could be made more effective by more police visibility;
- Schemes are not making significant impact in some areas where there is a lack of confidence in the police;
- Fear that effectiveness will be impacted due to concerns over budget cuts affecting NPT's;
- Response times are a concern for locals. Concern that response times will be worse if possible part closure of police stations goes ahead, leading to reduced community confidence in the police and in schemes;



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- Ability to deter criminals adversely affected by the fact that offenders are aware of policing levels being reduced and therefore have less fear of being caught;
- A call was made for police to allocate more time towards supporting Neighbourhood Watch;
- Residents are being frustrated by the timing of police response to calls. It is therefore important that Co-ordinators be fully briefed on how calls are prioritised;
- Local residents and Neighbourhood Watch scheme members being frustrated by police call management systems which often result in calls being put through to wrong areas;
- Neighbourhood Watch in one area could be enhanced if there were better relationships between police and young people;
- Lack of enforcement of by-laws is negatively impacting some of the schemes;
- The overall effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch is being affected by a feeling of it being disjointed;
- Reported that schemes have not worked well in areas of low confidence;
- Felt that schemes could be more effective if there was clarity as to who is the lead agency;
- Co-ordinators have to pay insurance excess premiums themselves and this should not be the case.

5.4 Staying Informed

- PSNI NW Link officers need to make sure they are known to all local scheme Co-ordinators;
- Thought to be essential that there is a weekly call from the PSNI NW Link Officer to each Co-ordinator in the area;
- In one area it was suggested that the PSNI was contacted by the Co-ordinator when there were local issues but the PSNI are not normally proactive in relation to contact;



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- It was felt that schemes could be enhanced if there were better sharing of information between District Commands within the same policing district e.g. between Antrim and Lisburn;
- Some schemes report that they are not as effective as they could be as they are having problems with getting follow up/feedback from the police about incidents that have been reported;
- Some Co-ordinators believe that schemes could get better results if there were mobile phones for Co-ordinators;
- Suggested that the business community are asked to provide mobile phones to Co-ordinators;
- Some schemes believe they could have greater impact if they had a single point of contact, with the police, to move things along;
- Not being kept informed of crimes etc. on a regular basis means that schemes cannot be reactive to current issues;
- There is no consistency across Council areas in terms of the level of contact and communication with/from CSP and DPP;
- Confusion as to difference between CSP and DPP;
- Some felt that there was a low level of knowledge of CSP's and their role among the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators;
- Thought to be important that Co-ordinators know who the point of contact is for PSNI/DPP/CSP. Suggested that someone from CSP, DPP attend NW meetings;
- Whilst contact is relatively good from DPP's it was felt that they could be more proactive about involving Neighbourhood Watch;
- Frustration that scheme Co-ordinators cannot voice questions at DPP meetings, as they have to be submitted in writing before hand;
- One Co-ordinator expressed concern that DPP members don't seem to support the schemes when they ask questions at their meetings.

5.5 Maintaining Momentum

- Lack of momentum creates disillusionment;
- Informing local community of popular issues e.g. crime trends helps to maintain interest;



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- Regular leaflet drops to homes is essential;
- Continual flow of information to members is essential to keep them interested;
- Important to have information easily accessible in community venues and promote schemes by word of mouth;
- Important that good news stories are collated and publicised to demonstrate results;
- Quarterly newsletters can be useful to summarise all activities, events and good news stories;
- If information about DPP and CSP activities could be disseminated through Co-ordinators this would give more of a joined up feel to the work and help maintain momentum;
- NW Co-ordinators ensuring that signs stay up helps maintain interest and continues to deter crime;
- E-mail/text alert services is a very valuable tool and should be available to all Co-ordinators;
- Momentum can be supported by providing opportunities for local networking events;
- Momentum is important and hence it is important that schemes do not operate in isolation;
- Community engagement is vital if a scheme is to be able to continue to get support;
- Important to provide opportunity for residents to come together to discuss problems;
- Schemes that have been doing regular checks on elderly neighbours find this helps keep up interest;
- Co-ordinators who do calls on a door-to-door basis regularly report that it helps maintain momentum;
- Momentum can be gained by seeing the scheme as having a wider community remit and by organising a social calendar;
- Engaging community associations and utilising them as a base for volunteers is important to sustaining momentum;
- A tour of the local police station for scheme members can be an important tool in maintaining momentum;



- May be important to try to "sell" Neighbourhood Watch i.e. market it as you would do with a business;
- A useful tool and resource would be a website with NW Co-ordinators photos, contact details;
- Would be important to have an allocated budget for each scheme;
- Financial help with schemes would help maintain momentum and give resources to Co-ordinators.

5.6 Other Issues Raised

- Communication is the main bone of contention;
- NW Administrator role should be maintained;
- Why are Neighbourhood Watches not constituted? This prohibits them from accessing funding from CSP/DPP;
- There needs to be a local and regional networking structure for NW Co-ordinators;
- What's happened to the recommendations arising from last year's conference?
- To be really effective a full time NW Co-ordinator is needed;
- Sometimes police are not fully aware of what Neighbourhood Watch is about;
- Need to ensure there is a successor if NW Co-ordinator leaves;
- Induction course and training nights required for NW Co-ordinators;
- NIO should pay insurance excess if NW Co-ordinators home is attacked;
- Travel & secretarial expenses are required.



6. Summary / Conclusion

What has been working well?

A resounding message from Co-ordinators has been that schemes work well when there is good communication. Good practice emerging from conversations at the round table includes:

- Co-ordinator needs to take time to visit all residents in the area and then to also visit new residents when they move into the area;
- All scheme members and residents should be kept updated with meetings held regularly;
- Important that Co-ordinator engages in wider partnership working;
- Signage should be maintained;
- Use notice boards and TV screen advertising in public places e.g. health centres;
- Promote good news stories about schemes via local press;
- Ensure local beat officers are known to scheme members;
- PSNI should establish weekly updates/contact with each Co-ordinator;
- Work with Crime Prevention Officers and other agencies to provide guidance/devices for home security;
- Be prepared to seek funds from other sources to enhance safety of local residents.

What has not worked so well?

Whilst apathy seems to be something that impacts quite a number of schemes, other problems and approaches identified that may be of interest to others included:

- Need to seek to raise overall level of community engagement;
- Threats being made towards some Co-ordinators;
- Consistency in police personnel is vital if schemes are to be successful;
- The lack of confidence in policing in general can impact negatively on the effectiveness of schemes;
- Call for tougher enforcement of by-laws in scheme areas;



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- Need for clarity as to who is the lead agency;
- Concerns about insurance excess premiums needs to be considered.

Staying Informed

Primarily most Co-ordinators appeared to be pleased with contact from DPP's while contact from CSP's could be improved. Inconsistency of police personnel and lack of knowledge as to who was the PSNI NW Link Officer were area of considerable concern:

- PSNI need to be more pro-active in their support of schemes;
- More consistent approach to DPP and CSP information sharing and consultation is required across Northern Ireland;
- Co-ordinator needs more efficient feedback from PSNI on incidents that have been reported;
- If kept up to date on local crime scheme Co-ordinators believe they could be more effective;
- Clarification required as to the roles of DPP's and CSP's;
- Would be helpful if all Co-ordinators knew who the local DPP and CSP Managers were;
- May be beneficial for DPP and CSP Managers to visit each scheme to inform local residents of their role and work.

Maintaining Momentum

Co-ordinators were keen to emphasise that lack of momentum quickly creates disillusionment which can lead to the demise of the scheme. In order to maintain momentum it is important that:

- Communities remain informed;
- Good news stories are collated and publicised;
- Communication flow from PSNI, DPP and CSP is maintained;
- Schemes should be seen as a vital part of the local community infrastructure;
- More localised opportunities be provided for Co-ordinators to meet to share Good Practice.





NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WORKSHOP

Monday 2nd March 2009

Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown

PROGRAMME

5.00 – 6.00 p.m.	Registration/Buffer tea Viewing of Agency Stands
6.00 – 6.05 p.m.	Welcome and Introductions Tommy Stewart (Facilitator)
6.05 – 6.10 p.m.	Paul Goggins MP
6.10 – 6.15 p.m.	Prof. Sir Desmond Rea
6.15 – 6.20 p.m.	ACC Duncan McCausland
6.20 – 6.30 p.m.	Preparation of Groups for Workshops
6.30 – 8.00 p.m.	Workshops
8.00 – 8.15 p.m.	Workshop summary and Close (Tommy Stewart - Facilitator)





NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WORKSHOP

**Thursday 12th March 2009
Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick**

PROGRAMME

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 5.00 – 6.00 p.m. | Registration/Bufferet tea
Viewing of Agency Stands |
| 6.00 – 6.05 p.m. | Welcome and Introductions
Tommy Stewart (Facilitator) |
| 6.05 – 6.10 p.m. | Declan McGeown,
Head of NIO Community Safety Unit |
| 6.10 – 6.15 p.m. | Barry Gilligan (Vice Chairman – NIPB) |
| 6.15 – 6.20 p.m. | ACC Duncan McCausland – (PSNI) |
| 6.20 – 6.30 p.m. | Preparation of Groups for Workshops |
| 6.30 – 8.00 p.m. | Workshops |
| 8.00 – 8.15 p.m. | Workshop summary and close
(Tommy Stewart - Facilitator) |



Appendix B Workshop Questionnaire Results

How positive has your experience of Neighbourhood Watch been so far		
	Response Frequency	Response Count
Very Positive	40.5%	62
Fairly Positive	44.4%	68
Fairly Negative	7.2%	11
Very Negative	2.0%	3
Neither Negative of Positive	5.9%	9

How effective do you believe Neighbourhood Watch has been in your community?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Very Effective	33.3%	51
Fairly Effective	49.7%	76
Made little or no difference	9.2%	14
Don't know	7.8%	12
Other (please specify)		114

Does your local DPP invite you to Meetings in Public?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Yes	72.8%	107
No	17.0%	25
Sometimes	10.2%	15
Other		43

Does your local DPP consult with members of your scheme?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Yes	52.1%	74
No	33.1%	47
Sometimes	14.8%	21
Other		43

Does your local Community Safety Partnership keep you informed of its projects?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Yes	67.6%	98
No	17.2%	25
Sometimes	15.2%	22
Other		41



Appendix C Workshop Worksheet

Neighbourhood Watch Worksheet

We would ask that, with the assistance of your table facilitator, you reflect on the questions posed in each section of the worksheet.

What has been working well?

- Give one example from each Co-ordinator of what has worked well in your scheme
- Give an example of how your scheme has addressed the fear of crime (in particular to older/vulnerable persons) or taken steps to prevent crime
- Please give another example of Good Practice from your scheme

What has not worked so well?

- What problems have been encountered?
- If they have been overcome, how?
- If they have not been overcome, what support is required?

Staying Informed

- Is your contact with local PSNI satisfactory? Yes/No
- Is your contact with local CSP satisfactory? Yes/No
- Is your contact with local DPP satisfactory? Yes/No?
- How often would you be in contact with your PSNI NW Link Officer?
- Has this communication been effective?
- Suggest ways in which it could be improved

Maintaining Momentum

- Give an example of how you publicise/maintain interest in your scheme?
- How do you encourage residents to remain active in the scheme?
- How are you making sure that you are getting the best from scheme members i.e. skills, time etc?
- How do you combine the activities of your scheme with other schemes that are within a similar geographical area?

Other Issues?



Appendix D Press Release relating to Workshops

Goggins announces milestone for Neighbourhood Watch schemes

Monday 2 March 2009



A new milestone has been reached with every council area in Northern Ireland operating a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, Criminal Justice Minister Paul Goggins MP announced today.

Speaking at the annual Neighbourhood Watch Best Practice conference in the Glenavon House Hotel Cookstown, Mr Goggins said:

"I'm delighted to announce that every single council area in Northern Ireland now runs a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Neighbourhood Watch schemes play a vital role in communities across Northern Ireland; making people feel safer in their own homes, creating a greater sense of community and helping to reduce levels of local crime and anti social behaviour.

"Neighbourhood Watch helps communities to develop local solutions to local problems, and has gone from strength to strength since the first scheme started in Omagh five years ago. Today there are over 400 schemes covering over 36,000 homes across Northern Ireland.

"The Community Safety Unit, in partnership with the Policing Board and the PSNI, are committed to supporting the continuing growth of Neighbourhood Watch schemes across Northern Ireland."

Policing Board Chairman Professor Sir Desmond Rea said:

"Research carried out by the Board and the NIO's Community Safety Unit shows that people tend to feel more confident in their communities when Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are in place and are more likely to look out for suspicious activity in their community as a result of Neighbourhood Watch.

"Everyone has a part to play in help making communities safer and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes contribute a great deal as those involved have grass roots knowledge of what is happening on their doorsteps. The Board fully supports the Scheme and would encourage local people to find out more and get involved in Neighbourhood Watch."

Assistant Chief Constable Duncan McCausland said:

"Our aim is to provide a high quality, effective police service to all the people of Northern Ireland. The key to achieving this, is policing in partnership. Neighbourhood Watch is an example of this working in practice, with the full support of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Community Safety Unit, along with other agencies and the community.

"Everyone involved within Neighbourhood Watch schemes plays a vital part in making their neighbourhood a safer, more friendly and pleasant place to live.

"Neighbourhood Watch facilitates a problem solving approach to tackling local, community issues. When you belong to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, you are given advice on a range of issues including personal safety and how to protect your property. Any information, no matter how minor, may help the police solve or prevent a crime."



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Mr Goggins also visited a Clean Neighbourhood Programme project in Cookstown, to see at first hand the work of Cookstown Community Safety Partnership in tackling graffiti, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

Mr Goggins said:

"The Clean Neighbourhood Programme is key to helping to build safe, confident communities by improving the well-being of neighbourhoods. Communities are working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to clean neighbourhoods of unsightly graffiti and vandalism."

Note to Editors

1. Paul Goggins was joined by Professor Sir Desmond Rea and ACC Duncan McCausland at the launch of the Neighbourhood Watch workshop, which saw over 150 Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators from across Northern Ireland come together to share best practice and discuss how to improve the effectiveness of the schemes.

2. Neighbourhood Watch is a regional initiative which offers communities in Northern Ireland the opportunity to positively influence community safety in their areas and reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods. The scheme is administered and funded by the Community Safety Unit in partnership with the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

3. The aim of Neighbourhood Watch is to help people protect themselves and their property, and to reduce the fear of crime by:

- Improved home security
- Greater vigilance
- Fostering community spirit
- Improving your environment

