



Community safety:

Introduction

This module has been prepared to assist you and your group to understand a bit more about:

- community safety and community safety partnerships;
- the role of community safety partnerships in the new Crime and Disorder Act;
- the impact of the role of partnerships on Neighbourhood Watch.

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- describe the major effects of the Crime and Disorder Act on Neighbourhood Watch;
- carry out a Crime and Disorder Audit in your area.

There are two parts to this module:

- Part one contains the Development Notes which give information on the Crime and Disorder Act and Crime and Disorder audits.
- Part two contains the Session Notes on community safety.



COMMUNITY SAFETY

Notes



Community safety: Development Notes

The wider picture

In the module 'Starting and maintaining a scheme', you looked at the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch for your area.

What you do locally can make a vital contribution to the overall effort to reduce crime and the fear of crime in a much wider area. Working together with the police and other organisations, such as your local authority and other Neighbourhood Watch schemes, you can make an impact on your town or city. This, in turn, contributes to the reduction of crime across the whole country.

Community safety partnerships

It has long been acknowledged that partnerships are among the best ways of reducing crime and the fear of crime. Partnerships include a wide range of bodies such as the police, local authorities, other statutory bodies and voluntary groups.

These partnerships give a framework against which local solutions, like your Neighbourhood Watch, can be co-ordinated over a much wider area. This framework means that information, resources and help can be pooled between many different organisations.

Many partnerships have already been successful in creating safer communities. The partnerships work to agreed common goals.

The goals are met by:

- providing support and sometimes funds to local initiatives;
- helping all local government departments contribute to the reduction of crime through their everyday work.

The strategy is monitored to make sure that the partnership has achieved its goals.



Although much of the country has already benefited from the formation of such partnerships, at the moment they have been formed on a voluntary basis. One of the key provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act is that:

- Police forces and local authorities will have responsibility to form partnerships to reduce crime and disorder with many other agencies. These partnerships will have particular tasks to undertake.

The purpose of this module is to:

- give some background on the proposed legislation and what it might mean for Neighbourhood Watch;
- help you undertake an audit of the crime in your area;
- give you an idea of what it might be like to be involved in a community safety initiative.



The proposed legislation

Crime prevention in our society is about to undergo some major changes. It is expected that local crime and disorder strategies will start in April 1999, but those involved will have to start planning during 1998.

The Act will:

- give local authorities and the police service a new joint duty to develop statutory partnerships to help prevent crime in their local area – whether it be urban or rural;
- ensure that other important agencies are involved, and that other community groups, including Neighbourhood Watch, are invited to participate.

The partnerships will be expected to:

- conduct an audit of the amount of crime and disorder in their area, consulting with other agencies **and the public**;
- analyse the findings;
- develop and publish a crime and disorder strategy in collaboration with local agencies and partners, based on the findings of the audit. The strategy must be a strategy for action – with targets to meet – to reduce crime and disorder.

Where does Neighbourhood Watch fit in?

If your scheme is functioning effectively, you will probably already be contributing to the underlying goals of community safety. When it comes to dealing with the partnership directly, however, it often makes more sense for Neighbourhood Watch schemes to get together to form a local association. And, just as a partnership can benefit from pooling its resources, a local Neighbourhood Watch Association can benefit from the shared experience of its members.



What can Neighbourhood Watch do?

The proposed legislation is the opportunity for Neighbourhood Watch to become involved in, and make an effective contribution to, the crime and disorder reduction strategy in its area. It is, of course, up to individual schemes and Associations to decide if they wish to participate in their local partnership.

The first step for the partnership is to conduct an audit of local crime problems. Neighbourhood Watch members might be asked to participate in the survey process. Neighbourhood Watch schemes that are already in an Association could survey their own members and feed the results into the partnership's audit process.

But be careful not to repeat work that the partnership is already doing.

The role of Neighbourhood Watch in a local partnership will depend on what issues the audit identifies as important. But there is potential for Neighbourhood Watch to undertake any of the following:

- intelligence gathering, either generally or in response to specific circumstances;
- active surveillance of a given area through 'streetwatch-type' activity;
- promotion of crime and disorder prevention messages;
- youth diversion work;
- burglary reduction;
- community development work, for example helping to reduce the fear of crime – and the consequences of such fear – by providing escort/taxi services to help the elderly or vulnerable get out.



Carrying out a local crime and disorder audit

One of the things your group could do is make a crime and disorder audit of your area. This would be similar to the audit that the police and local authorities will have to make under the new legislation. An audit of your area could provide some useful information both for your scheme and the new partnership group.

What is a crime and disorder audit?

A crime and disorder audit:

- measures the amount of crime in a particular area;
- describes the type of crimes that occur;
- describes the effect on the area being audited.

In other words:

- What crimes get committed in the area covered by your Neighbourhood Watch scheme?
- How many of each type are committed?
- What is the cost to your area? Cost can be both actual cost in money terms or how it affects the quality of life in your area.

As well as measuring actual crimes that get committed, you could also carry out a “Fear of crime survey” in your area. This type of survey does not measure the amount of actual crime, but measures how much people fear that specific or general crime takes place in their neighbourhood.

As the local organisation in your area that is closely concerned with preventing crime, your scheme will be in a good position to make your own audit.

The advantages of carrying out a crime and disorder audit are that it will help you discover what the real crime problems are in your area and which ones people are most concerned about.



How to carry out a crime and disorder audit

A crime and disorder audit does not have to be a large-scale or complicated process. You can carry out an audit on a much smaller scale and it will still be effective.

Whatever scale your audit is, there are some steps that you should take when you plan it.

- Decide on the area to be covered by your audit and timescales for when you want it completed.
- Write some simple objectives that you want to set for your audit. An example of an objective is:
 - to measure the number of crimes that have occurred on the X estate during the past three months.
- Decide how you are going to collect the information. There are several methods you can use. Two examples are:
 - collecting information from your local Crime Prevention Officer or Beat Officer about the number and type of reported crimes in your area;
 - interviews or questionnaires used to find out how particular types of crime affect local residents or businesses.
- Identify who to consult and who will do the work of carrying out the audit.
- Decide what resources you will need. This can be the cost of doing the work and the time needed to carry it out.
- Decide how you want to publish the results of your audit and who you want to read it.

When you have done all this planning, do the work. It is advisable to check your progress every so often to make sure you are still on course. The Session Notes with this module contain more details about how to carry out an audit.



Involvement in a community safety project

If you already have a community safety partnership that covers the area where you live, it is likely that the organisations involved will have employed an officer who might come from one of those organisations or be funded independently. They can advise you or help you develop a project that benefits not only your group but also the wider community. Your community safety officer will be able to find out about:

- similar projects that have been run elsewhere in the country, what the good points are and what things to avoid;
- events that are being run regionally or nationally that may help you;
- local resources and more formal funding, for example National Lottery funding, that may be available to you;
- support from major organisations and agencies;
- publicity opportunities, including press releases and launch events.

It is important to try not to 're-invent the wheel' and waste your time and hard-won resources by making the same mistakes that another project has made elsewhere. Similarly, you must ensure that your successes **and** failures are accurately recorded, to help future projects be as effective as possible.

GOOD LUCK!

The Session Notes for this module contain information on community safety and carrying out a community safety audit.



Notes



Community safety:

Session Notes

About these notes

These Session Notes contain an outline for how you can use the Development Notes on community safety to run short training sessions with the members of your scheme.

Because the needs of your Neighbourhood Watch scheme are unique, this session has been left as flexible as possible. The sessions are based round two activities.

Activities

There are two separate activities in these Session Notes:

- Activity one: What is community safety?
- Activity two: Carrying out a local crime audit.

Activity one is a group discussion activity. Activity two involves some longer-term work for your scheme.

Each activity has notes with points for discussion.

The resources you will need

- a copy of the relevant pages from the Development Notes for each member of the group;
- the activities from these notes.



Activity one: What is community safety?

Aim of this activity

The aim of this activity is to help scheme members understand what is meant by community safety and the new Crime and Disorder Legislation. By the end of this activity, the group will be able to:

- describe community safety;
- describe the effects of the proposed Crime and Disorder Act;
- identify what the new Act will mean to Neighbourhood Watch.

How to use this activity

There are two stages to this activity.

Stage one

At your Neighbourhood Watch meeting give out a copy of the pages on 'Community safety' and 'The proposed legislation' from the Development Notes. Allow 10–15 minutes to allow the group to read through the notes.

Stage two

With the main group, discuss what they think will be the advantages and disadvantages for the scheme of working in partnership with other groups. Allow 20 minutes for the discussion. Make a list of all the points raised. If you have a Community Safety Officer in your area, you could invite him or her to your meeting.



Activity two: Carrying out a local crime audit

Aim of this activity

The aim of this activity is to help your group carry out a crime and disorder audit in your area. By the end of this activity you will have:

- identified the main steps in carrying out your crime and disorder audit;
- written a plan to help you carry it out.

How to use this activity

There are four stages to this activity.

Stage one

Give the group the pages from the Development Notes on 'Carrying out a crime and disorder audit'. Allow the group 10 minutes to read the notes. Then allow a brief discussion about whether the group thinks a local audit is:

- useful for the scheme;
- a practical project for the scheme to work on.

If the meeting agrees to the principle of an audit, move on to stage two.



Stage two

Divide the group into three or four smaller groups. Ask each group to discuss:

- the area to be covered by your audit and timescales for when you want it completed;
- some simple objectives that you want to set for your audit;
- how to collect the information;
- who to consult and who will do the work of carrying out the audit;
- what resources you will need. This can be the cost of doing the work and the time needed to carry it out;
- how you want to publish the results of your audit and who you want to read it.

Allow 30 minutes for this activity. Ask each group to write their answers down. At the end of this stage you will have generated a lot of information, which will probably be too unwieldy to deal with in a large group. You should ask for three or four volunteers who are prepared to look at all the information and devise an audit plan. Set a date for when the group should report back with proposals for how the audit should be carried out.

Stage three

At a later meeting, the group who were nominated to look at the audit plan should report their findings. Allow 15 minutes for the report and 30 minutes for a discussion.

Stage four

If the group can agree the audit plan, you should then carry out the audit. Put the audit on your meeting agendas as a standing item and ask for reports at each meeting.