

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA



COMMUNITY
CRIME
PREVENTION
PROGRAMMES



Ag obair le Pobail chun iad a chosaint agus chun freastal orthu
Working with Communities to Protect and Serve

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Community Crime Prevention Programmes

An Garda Síochána operates a range of Community Crime Prevention Programmes in partnership with communities in Ireland. Two such programmes are Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert. Community Crime Prevention Programmes have been in operation since 1985 and in excess of 3,700 Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert groups have been established since then. There is a significant willingness amongst the public to participate at a community level in preventing crime. Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert have helped to promote responsible community involvement and have assisted in the promotion of good crime prevention practice. The aim of this publication is to guide and encourage such constructive participation in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

How do Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Work?

The principle of partnership reflects a long tradition of policing in this country and also recognises the important role that individuals and communities offer in helping to prevent crime. Every community has the opportunity to establish a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert programme with An Garda Síochána as partners. We advise that you consult with your neighbours and, if there is a consensus to start a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert programme, then contact your local Garda or check www.garda.ie

Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Require Support to Work

Every individual property owner can reduce opportunities for crimes to occur by taking basic precautions in relation to their home, car and other property. Timely and accurate reporting of suspicious behaviour can also prevent criminal activity, and help to increase a sense of well being in communities. The combined contribution and input of a large number of households is pivotal in creating successful Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert groups.

Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert?

Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert were established in 1985 and are well known and identifiable crime prevention programmes.

Neighbourhood Watch is a partnership programme involving *urban* communities establishing a crime prevention programme in conjunction with their local Gardaí.

Community Alert operates primarily in *rural* areas, in response to the particular challenges of that environment.

If you are in any doubt as to whether your community should set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme or a Community Alert Group please speak to your local Community Garda, who will assist you and your community in deciding which suits best.

Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert share a number of key principles, namely:

- **Opportunity Reduction** – a means to prevent crime.
- **Social Cohesion** – people who know each other are more likely to act and support each other.

There are many ways to reduce crime but one of the most effective ways is to remove the opportunities for crime to occur. This is particularly true for property crime such as burglary, and thefts from people and



cars. Securing your property is probably one of the easiest ways of making sure that it is not taken. Similarly, communities that are vibrant, active and civic minded are more likely, and able, to respond to any perceived threat. Reporting suspicious activity to the Gardaí is the best way to support policing in your community.

Community Policing

Community Policing is a partnership based, pro-active, community-orientated style of policing. It is focused on crime prevention, problem-solving and law enforcement, with a view to building trust and enhancing the quality of life of the entire community.

Community Policing is now in place in every Garda District in this country. All Community Crime Prevention Programmes are operated through Community Policing at the discretion of the local District Superintendent who will decide, in consultation with local communities, whether a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert programme is established. Every effort will be made to ensure that the Garda (Liaison Garda) assigned to each Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programme is a Community Policing Garda.

Community Policing Strategic Objectives

- To provide a dedicated, accessible and visible Garda service to communities.
- To establish effective engagement processes to meet the needs of local communities and provide feedback.
- To use problem-solving initiatives to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, through targeted enforcement and crime prevention.
- To engage in a community-focused approach to provide solutions that reduces the fear of crime.
- To engage meaningfully with young people to develop and foster positive relationships with the goal of promoting personal and community safety.
- To enhance communication strategies that support Community Policing objectives.
- To be accountable to the community we serve.

Each Liaison Garda will assist in helping to deliver policing for your area and they in turn are supported by other specialised Garda Units. It is important that each Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programme has a strong working relationship with their Liaison Garda to harness the expertise and support of the Garda Service as a whole.

Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert can:

- Improve the quality of life in your Community.
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- Create a sense of community and inspire confidence.
- Help to educate people with crime prevention advice and activities.
- Improve and maintain better communication with the Gardaí.
- Help residents feel more secure in their own home.
- Improve quality of life in the community.



Frequently Asked Questions

I would like to start a Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert scheme in my area. What do I do?

- Contact your local Garda Station and see if there is a scheme in existence. Your local Community Garda will also be able to advise in cases where a scheme is in existence but needs to be revitalised.
- Check www.garda.ie for information on both Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert. This will assist in establishing a new Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert scheme.

Should we start a Neighbourhood Watch or a Community Alert scheme?

Generally speaking Neighbourhood Watch schemes are operated in urban environments and Community Alert operates in rural areas, including small villages. Ask your local Community Garda if you are not sure.

How will our community benefit from Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert?

An increased sense of community, closer contact with your local Gardaí and reduced crime are all possible. Many insurance companies offer a discount on house insurance if you are living in a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert scheme area.

How are people deterred from committing crime in a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert area?

Every Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert area is encouraged to erect Street Signs and place Window Stickers on their homes. This helps to identify the area as having an active Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert presence. Acting on Crime Prevention Advice also makes a community less vulnerable and attractive to would be criminals.



Neighbourhood Watch



Structure

1 An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána manages Neighbourhood Watch through the following supports:

- i Garda Policing Plans
- ii Garda Community Relations and Community Policing Division
- iii Divisional Chief Superintendent
- iv District Superintendent
- v Liaison Garda

2 The Community

Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert are structured differently but in essence they operate with the same key relationships. The key Garda – Community relationship is between the Liaison Garda and Area Co-ordinator (Neighbourhood Watch) or Community Alert Committee (Community Alert).



Functions

1 An Garda Síochána

- i **Garda Síochána:** The Garda Síochána Policing Plan will set out specific targets for Neighbourhood Watch each year so that Neighbourhood Watch remains current, relevant and meaningful.
- ii **Garda Community Relations and Community Policing Division** will continue to promote, support and review crime prevention practice by:
 - a Providing Neighbourhood Watch with support material for communities through Liaison Gardaí.
 - b Communicating good practice and ideas to help support and sustain Neighbourhood Watch.
 - c Manage a National Database of all Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

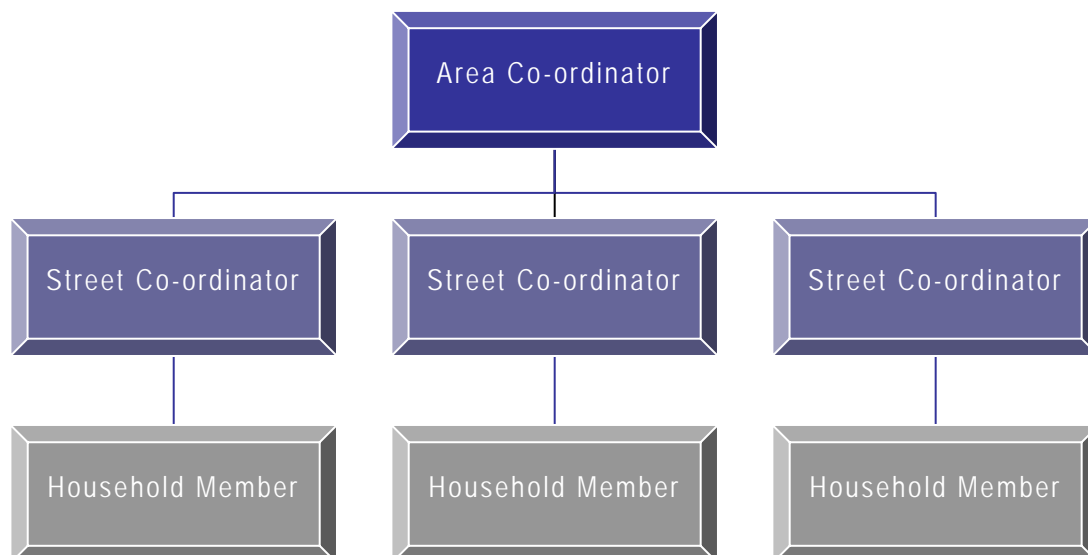


- iii Divisional Chief Superintendent will:
 - a Hold an Annual Divisional Meeting for Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Groups each year (February to March) to showcase new practices and ideas.
 - b Appoint a Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Inspector to oversee the operation of all Community Crime Prevention Programmes.
- iv District Superintendent will:
 - a Hold a minimum of one meeting a year (September to November) for representatives from Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and Community Alert Groups.
 - b Assist in co-producing (Gardaí and Community) a locally owned and devised **Community Crime Prevention Plan** to support and direct Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert each year.
 - c Nominate a Community Policing Sergeant to oversee the operation of all Community Crime Prevention Programmes.
 - d Ensure that every Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programme has a Liaison Garda.
- v Liaison Garda will:
 - a Actively pursue, foster and develop each Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
 - b Provide appropriate and timely feedback at Neighbourhood Watch meetings.
 - c Attend Neighbourhood Watch meetings.

2 Community

The following structure is utilised by Neighbourhood Watch to aid organisation and communication:

Neighbourhood Watch Community Structures



i Area Co-ordinator:

The strength of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is reflected in no small way in the contribution of the Area Co-ordinator. The essential attributes of the individual carrying out this function, which is voluntary, are commitment, hard work and an ability to get on with people. It is vital that the Area Co-ordinator has a flair for communicating with people at every level as he/she is the key link between the Gardaí and the Community.



Tasks

- a Establish a working relationship with the Liaison Garda.
- b Foster a two-way flow of information between your scheme and the Gardaí, in relation to local crime trends.
- c Organise at least one meeting with all Street Co-ordinators per year.
- d Maintain supplies of Neighbourhood Watch Material (Garda Leaflets, Window Stickers, Information Packs).
- e Discuss with Street Co-ordinators the idea of having street signs erected, so as to identify your locality as a Neighbourhood Watch area.
- f Assist in promoting best practice on crime prevention (which will be supported through the creation of a local Community Crime Prevention Plan).
- g Attend the Divisional and District Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert meeting each year.

ii Street Co-ordinator:

The success of Neighbourhood Watch largely depends on the ability of the Area Co-ordinator and the Street Co-ordinators to work together as a team. The role of the Street Co-ordinator is to assist the Area Co-ordinator, where feasible, to carry out the various duties and responsibilities as already outlined in the previous section.

Tasks

- a Encourage the residents on your street to contact the Gardaí immediately when suspicious activity is observed.
- b Provide feed-back on how the scheme is operating in your street and ensure that new residents are included.
- c Participate in Neighbourhood Watch meetings.
- d Suggest ideas on new projects which may help your Street and your Neighbours.
- e Encourage residents to “watch out” for one another and especially for any vulnerable neighbour.
- f Highlight the importance of reporting criminal activity, so that all residents can be alerted and advised to check on their own security.

iii Household Member:

The individual members of the scheme are the people who give Neighbourhood Watch its real meaning. Their day-to-day interest and awareness are the factors which determine how well the scheme works.

Tasks

- a Keep an eye on each other's homes – alarms, mail, damage etc.
- b Take steps to make the home look lived in while unoccupied.
- c Install good locks and an alarm and use them.
- d Report any unusual or suspicious activity to the Gardaí. Remember Who, What, Where, When and How?



Community Alert



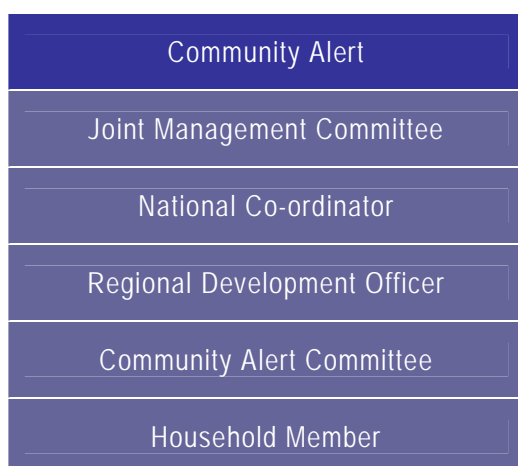
Structure

1 An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána manages Community Alert through the following supports:

- i Garda Policing Plans
- ii Garda Community Relations and Community Policing Division
- iii Divisional Chief Superintendent
- iv District Superintendent
- v Liaison Garda

2 The Community



Functions

1 An Garda Síochána

- i **Garda Síochána:** The Garda Síochána Policing Plan will set out specific targets for Community Alert each year so that the Community Alert remains current, relevant and meaningful.
- ii **Garda Community Relations and Community Policing Division** will continue to promote, support and review crime prevention practice by:
 - a Providing Community Alert with support material for communities through Liaison Gardaí.
 - b Communicating good practice and ideas to help support and sustain Community Alert.
 - c Managing a National Database of all Community Alert groups and schemes.
- iii **Divisional Chief Superintendent** will:
 - a Hold an Annual Divisional Meeting for Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Groups each year (February to March) to showcase new practices and ideas.



- b Appoint a Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Inspector to oversee the operation of all Community Crime Prevention Programmes.
- iv District Superintendent will:
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 - b Assist in co-producing (Gardaí and Community) a locally owned and devised **Community Crime Prevention Plan** to support and direct Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert each year.
 - c Nominate a Community Policing Sergeant to oversee the operation of all Community Crime Prevention Programmes.
 - d Ensure that every Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programme has a Liaison Garda.
- v Liaison Garda will:
 - a Actively pursue, foster and develop each Community Alert programme.
 - b Provide appropriate and timely feedback at Community Alert meetings.
 - c Attend Community Alert meetings.

2 The Community

National Management Committee National Co-ordinator

Community Alert was established as a partnership crime prevention programme with Muintir na Tíre, who employ a National Co-ordinator to oversee the operation and development of Community Alert. An Garda Síochána and Muintir na Tíre signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2002, to co-manage and develop this crime prevention programme through a National Management Committee.

Regional Development Officer

Each rural Garda Region has a full time Regional Development Officer assigned who will:

- a Support the future development and extension of the Community Alert programme.
- b Provide expertise and guidance to Community Alert groups to enable them to carry out their activities.
- c Identify and address needs regarding organisational development capacity in the Community Alert Groups.
- d Develop the capacity of Community Alert groups to contribute to formulation of policy at local and national levels.
- e Service existing Community Alert groups and actively facilitate the development of new groups.

Every Community Alert group needs to be properly organised and structured. The best approach is as follows: Elect / appoint a Committee who will represent the group and ensure that each area/townland has its own Area Co-ordinator. Everybody else in the group is a Community Alert member. Area Co-ordinators will be given training and advice on their role and responsibilities by the Community Alert Development Officer and Garda Liaison Officer.

i Community Alert Committee - Role

- a Communicate with and support Area Co-ordinator and Community Alert members.
- b Encouraging residents to report crime, suspicious activities and anti-social behaviour.
- c Encourage group participation at local level, involving residents and people of all ages.
- d Disseminate crime prevention information and literature to Community Alert members.



- e Support victims of crime.
- f Provide regular feedback to Area Co-ordinators on group effectiveness.

ii Community Alert Area Co-ordinator - Role

The relationship between the Area Co-ordinator and the Liaison Garda will be of critical importance to the long-term success of each group. The Area Co-ordinator acts with the help and support of the group members to:

- a Serve as the link between the Community Alert Liaison Garda and group members.
- b Encourage group participation in activities amongst the volunteers.
- c Organise the overall group:- recruitment, meetings, newsletters, AGM etc with the active co-operation and participation of the Liaison Garda.
- d Initiate activities which foster community interaction and crime prevention measures.
- e Identify crime problems and work to achieve solutions with local Gardaí.
- f Represent the Community Alert group at Garda District Community Alert Committee meetings.
- g Every Area Co-ordinator should seek the assistance and help of the community in the groups.

iii Community Alert Member - Role

Community Alert will work successfully with the active input of all members. Your actions and support will ensure its success. Don't leave it to others.

- a Make crime prevention a part of your life.
- b Attend meetings of your Community Alert group.
- c Take action if you are suspicious and report all crime ([call the Gardaí, in emergencies at 999 or 112](#)).
- d Take steps to create a caring and vibrant community - "[Be a Good Neighbour](#)".
- e Keep an eye on your property and that of your neighbours — help to prevent vandalism and theft.
- f Keep a look out for Older and Vulnerable People in your community, but respect their independence and get to know your neighbours.

Remember

- Leave the responsibility for apprehending criminals with An Garda Síochána.
- It is the quality of Community Alert meetings rather than the frequency that is important for the scheme to be successful.
- You are not asked to take any personal risk.
- Your community needs you and you have much to offer.
- You must **NEVER EVER** challenge someone behaving in a suspicious manner or put your personal safety at risk.

