



Setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Group Twitter account

Contents

1. [Setting up an account](#)
2. [How does it work?](#)
3. [What are Twitter handles?](#)
4. [What are hashtags?](#)
5. [Good practice guidelines](#)
6. [Monitoring engagement](#)
7. [Further help and support](#)

1. Setting Up an Account

All social media platforms work by allowing you to link up with other people you want to hear from or communicate with, but they all do this in slightly different ways. On Twitter, you have 'followers' and you 'follow' others to read and respond to their tweets (a tweet is a message posted on Twitter). If you like what they post, you can 'like' the tweet or 'retweet' (share) it to your own followers. Where Facebook is primarily about connecting people, Twitter is more about connecting ideas and topics, thanks to the use of hashtags (more on this below).

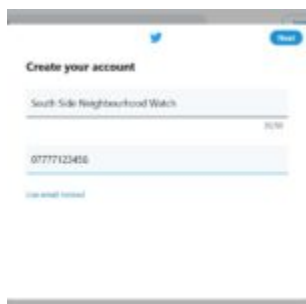
Tweets can only be 280 characters long, though you can add photos and videos too.

If you are new to Twitter, open up www.twitter.com, and click on **Sign Up**.



(Click images once to enlarge)

You'll be asked to enter your name and either email or mobile phone number:



Click **Next**, and then you'll be invited to **Customise Your Experience**. You don't need to do this yet, so just click **Next** again, and then **Sign Up**. Once you've done this, a verification link will be sent to the email address or mobile number you added, in order to check that you are a real person. Once you input this, you'll be asked to set a password and then to upload a profile picture.

On the next page you'll be asked to enter some things you're interested in. Twitter will use this information to suggest some other Twitter users for you to follow. You don't have to add anything at this point, but you could add the name of your local area, along with perhaps 'crime prevention', 'Neighbourhood Watch', or the name of your local police force. On the next page, Twitter will suggest some accounts that it thinks you might find interesting. You can follow these now or ignore them.

On the next page, you'll be asked to write a short description of your account (something like: "The local crime prevention and community hub for the South Side residential area") and then to put in a birth date for your account. **Warning:** Don't just put today's date, or the date your Neighbourhood Watch group was formed, unless it was more than 13 years ago – Twitter users must be 13 or older so if you put a date that is later than 2005 you will very likely be automatically locked out of your freshly-made account!

Twitter will create a username for your account based on the name you submitted on the first form. For example, for 'South Side Neighbourhood Watch', Twitter created the username @side_watch. This is what's known as your Twitter 'handle'. (More on Twitter handles and how to change them below).

After clicking **Next** you'll be taken to your new Twitter page. In the middle column, you can see all the tweets that have recently been posted by the people you have opted to follow. (There won't be anything on there if you haven't yet followed anyone). On the left, beneath your profile image, is a list of what's **trending** – this just means these are the most popular topics being talked about on Twitter now. On the right, Twitter will suggest some accounts that you might want to follow.

At the top of the middle column is a thumbnail image of your profile, and a box that says 'What's happening?' This is where you post your tweets.

2. How does it work?

The way that Twitter works is that you decide whose tweets you want to read and follow them. You can find people to follow using the **Search Twitter** bar at the top right of the page. For example, if you live in London, you might want to follow the Met Police. So, enter 'Metropolitan Police' in the search bar, and click on it in the results. You'll be taken directly to the Met's Twitter page, where you can see their tweets and follow them by clicking the **Follow** button just beneath the main image.



You might also want to search for 'Neighbourhood Watch' and follow other nearby Watches that have twitter accounts. It's also worth following the national charity; our Twitter handle is @N_Watch.

Once you've followed a few accounts, the next thing to do is to try to build up your account's following. Often when you follow people they will follow you back, but you can make a more concerted effort too. Outside of Twitter, you can notify your scheme members using your usual channels that you now have a Twitter account and request that they follow you.

If you already have a personal Twitter account and want to set one up for your NW scheme as well, you can create a new account exactly as you did your first. You'll need to log out of your first account and then click on **Sign Up** and follow the same procedure. However, each account must use a different email address. Furthermore, you can only be logged in to one account at a time in the same browser, so to use each account, you must log out of the first or use a secondary browser. Or you can use Tweetdeck, an application that allows you to see and manage multiple accounts at once. [Download Tweetdeck here.](#)

Twitter is all about communities of interest, and you want people to engage with your tweets.

Once a follower reads your tweet, they can take various actions by clicking on the tiny icons beneath the tweet:



To reply to your tweet in a new tweet that can be seen by your followers and theirs, they can click on the speech bubble and type in their response. If they just want to let you know that they acknowledge, or 'like' your tweet, they will click on the heart. If they want to share it with their own followers, known as 'retweeting' it, they will click the two chasing arrows. They can either retweet it as it is, or add a comment themselves. And if they want to forward the tweet in a private message to another Twitter user, they click the envelope.

You can also take all these actions with tweets from those Twitter users that you follow.

You can receive direct (private) messages from anyone if you check the box next to 'Receive Direct Messages from anyone' in your Privacy and safety settings on twitter.com.

For more detail about different types of tweets and who can see them, click [here](#).

3. What are Twitter Handles?

All twitter handles (names) start with @ – @metpoliceuk, @N_Watch, @tfl (Transport for London), @GlosNW (Gloucester Neighbourhood Watch). If you want to ensure that another Twitter user sees your tweet, you can ‘tag’ them by inserting their Twitter handle into your message; then your tweet will appear in their Twitter feed even if they don’t follow you. Like this:



If you want to change your Twitter handle, click on **Settings and privacy** from your profile image dropdown menu on the top right of your Twitter page. Under, update the currently listed in the **Username** field. If the username you want is taken, you’ll be prompted to choose another one.

4. *What are Hashtags?*

You will also see a lot of these on Twitter: #. This is called a hashtag and is used to identify messages about a particular topic. You can search for information by hashtag, ie if you search for #knifecrime, you will see all the recent tweets that people added #knifecrime to. And if you want to join a community of people discussing a particular topic, you can add a hashtag to your own tweets. You can either use a hashtag that's already in circulation, or make one up yourself. If people respond to or retweet your tweet, they too may use your hashtag and so the topic gains popularity. The hashtags that are being used the most at any given time are the ones that end up 'trending', as discussed earlier.

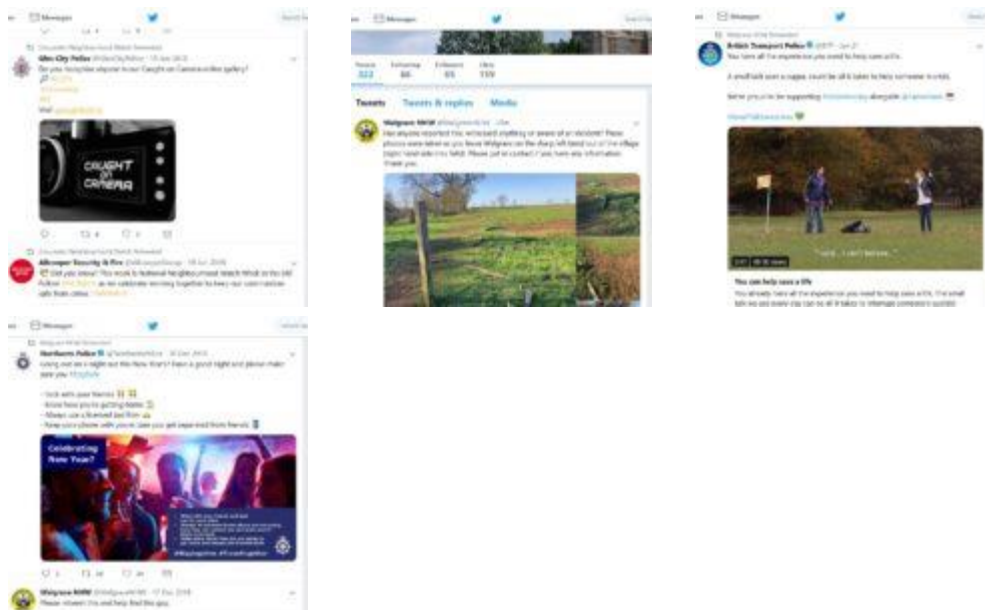
BUT – always check that a hashtag is not already in circulation for a different purpose before using it. For example, the national Neighbourhood Watch Network charity uses #starttheconversation to promote its campaign against knife crime, but two other similar hashtags, #letsstarttheconversation and #startaconversation, focus on mental health issues. Make sure you do not accidentally hijack an already well-established one.

5. Twitter Good Practice Guidelines

Of course, your NW scheme doesn't need to build a huge Twitter following; its purpose is to engage effectively with its members and other key stakeholders. But the more people you can reach with messages about crime prevention and building safer, stronger communities, the better. So, some of the general advice about building followers is still worth noting:

1. Establish an engaging profile, with your images and description
2. Post great content
3. Use hashtags
4. Engage with others on the social platforms
5. Make sure your content is shareable
6. Reshare other people's content
7. Tweet early and often
8. Talk with people, not at them

Here are some examples of how other Neighbourhood Watch groups use their Twitter account to communicate with their members and other followers:



6. *Monitoring Engagement with Your Twitter Account*

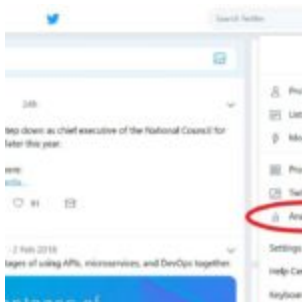
You can track the progress of your Twitter account to see how many people are engaging with it, and how. The common terms used are 'Reach' and 'Engagement'.

REACH represents the number of individuals who have seen at least one post on a Facebook page in the reported month.

ENGAGEMENT represents the number of times individuals have interacted with a post, be that to like, share or comment. (This is not a count of the individuals who have engaged).

You may not be especially worried about the popularity of your Twitter account, but tracking numbers of followers and interactions over time can be a useful indicator of the success of your Neighbourhood Watch scheme in general. If visitor numbers and comments start to fall after a while, this might suggest that interest in your scheme is waning, and you can take action, online or offline, to reinvigorate it. And if engagement is increasing, then you must be doing something right and should keep it up!

First, click on your thumbnail image on the top right of your Twitter page (**Profile and Settings**), then on **Analytics**:



Then click **Turn Analytics On**:



Along the top left of the page, you'll see **Home, Tweets, Audiences, Events** and **More**:



Home gives you a 28-day summary of Tweet impressions, Profile visits, Mentions and Followers, as well as your highlights for the month. Keep scrolling down to see past months.

Tweets has the data on Impressions – the number of times users saw a tweet – and Engagements – the number of interactions (likes, follows, retweets and replies). On this page you can select a date range and export the data to a spreadsheet.



Audiences gives you information on the interests, demographics and location (and mobile network!) of your followers, and **Events** provides data on Twitter interest in events coming up around the world.

7. Further help and support

To learn more about using Twitter and to answer any questions we haven't answered here, go to <https://help.twitter.com/en/twitter-guide>

There's also a video on YouTube called [How to Use Twitter for Beginners](#).

Or you can email Neighbourhood Watch Network for help on Enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk.