



18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## Neighbourhood Watch and COVID-19

Neighbourhood Watch supporters across England and Wales have been responding rapidly to the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis making a positive impact within their local communities. The Central Support Team at Neighbourhood Watch Network has been receiving many good stories as well as requests for support and guidance.

This is a challenging time for all of us - health, safety and wellbeing must be our top priorities and at the heart of every decision we make. It's critical to do our part to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and we are diligently following guidance and best practices from the [NHS](#) and [PHE](#). Many of our volunteers and supporters are in the age groups at higher risk from Covid-19 and may also have other conditions that increase their vulnerability. The most important actions we can all take is to do everything we can to avoid becoming ill and placing further pressure on the NHS and other emergency services.

We are working alongside other community organisations to coordinate a Community Action Response, led by the Eden Project, because of the unprecedented challenge that coronavirus presents for people in every neighbourhood in the UK. The Community Action Response asks for everyone to think of others; consider your actions and be kind; connect and reach out to your neighbours; make the most of online groups; support vulnerable or isolated people; and only share accurate information or advice. We will be sharing more on this as and when we can. Find out more here: <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/news/community-action-response-launched>.

We are also concerned about scams and fraud that may arise as people take advantage of the crisis and will continue to gather insights into coronavirus COVID-19 scams and crimes. We are aware of the following scams which we are sharing so you can inform anyone that you know who might be at risk:

- Impersonating Red Cross workers and health authorities - door-to-door knocking claiming to be carrying out mandatory testing for coronavirus as an excuse to enter a home and carry out robberies
  - Always ask for ID before letting someone into your home
- Impersonating willing shoppers – door-to-door knocking offering help with shopping but then instead steal the money
  - Ideally link up with verified volunteer groups for food delivery or support. Contact your council if unsure.
- Cybercrime - there are a number of people sending emails with false test results plus information regarding coronavirus via a link. That link creates a virus on your computer.
  - If you are unsure, do not open links within an email, visit official websites instead.

Advice and guidance is continually being updated and while we will do our best to keep you informed, it is important to check official websites for the latest information.

Our enquiries line remains open between 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday and you can contact individual members of the team via email and mobile phones. But please be patient and bear with us as we are a small team and in the process of establishing remote operations and working in different ways.

### **Key Points:**

1. Follow government advice on protection <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>.
2. If you or anyone in your household are displaying symptoms, please follow NHS guidelines <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
3. Be mindful – with all good intentions – that if you are in the high risk category you will not be able to participate in outdoor volunteering roles in the community, however you could be proactive in other ways, by communicating with people via social media, email or on the phone.
4. Why not set up a calling tree in your area, to ensure the vulnerable and isolate are contacted – this will be important as the days and weeks go on to maintain social contact.
5. Engage with your local authority to offer your help with their community resilience plan.

### **Local Action**

Neighbourhood Watch groups are doing some great things such as partnering with other organisations in their community and getting in touch with their neighbours through a variety of methods to identify those at risk and those that can offer support. There are working parents sharing childcare to enable each other to continue with shift work and groups looking at setting up exercise classes in their streets whilst following social distancing guidance. Neighbourhood Watch groups have also been printing leaflets and posting these through their neighbours' doors offering support or friendly chats. Associations have even been looking at creating a rapid response booklet for situations such as these. As the days and weeks go on we will share these positive stories and ways communities are adapting to this new world.

*'Whilst we encourage actions which support your community wherever it is safe to do so, we must stress the most valuable action that everyone can take is to follow Government advice and do everything you can to avoid becoming ill and passing the virus onto your close family or other community members – particularly those who are at higher risk from Covid-19. Where possible use technology or other methods that do not involve direct contact to support and engage with vulnerable and isolated members of your community.'* **Ian Bretman, Acting Chair Neighbourhood Watch Network**

We will be continuing to share information over the coming weeks and months. Our new website is now live and the best way you can follow us is via our website and social media:

**Website:** [www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/ourwatch>

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/N\\_watch](https://twitter.com/N_watch)

**Instagram:** [neighbourhood.watch](https://www.instagram.com/neighbourhood.watch)

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/neighbourhood-watch/>

To report crimes and scams please follow the following guidance:

- Call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or report incidents of fraud online and offline at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

- Call 101 to report non-emergency incidents to your local police
- Call 999 if you're reporting a crime that's in progress or someone is in immediate danger
- Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 to report crime completely anonymously.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you to continue to direct people in your community to the latest accurate advice from Public Health England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england> and NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/>.

Existing crimes will continue to occur whilst coronavirus COVID-19 new crimes are emerging. Issues such as burglary, domestic violence and modern slavery are all still prevalent. You can find toolkits with useful resources and information on these on our website. <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/help-and-advice/toolkits>

Please take care,

Central Support Team, Neighbourhood Watch Network

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH LINKS**

- PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

#### **USEFUL CHARITY LINKS:**

- AGE UK: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/coronavirus/>
- GET SAFE ONLINE: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/news/coronavirus-scams-you-should-be-aware-of/>
- COMMUNITY ACTION RESPONSE: <https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/community-action-response>
- NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH: <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/>
- MIND: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

#### **COVID-19 SCAM LINKS:**

- <https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-uk-intelligence-agency-issues-public-warning-about-criminals-exploiting-outbreak-11958113>
- <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-03-16/cyber-criminals-looking-to-exploit-peoples-fears-over-coronavirus/>