Police crime data

A toolkit for Neighbourhood Watch & Home Watch Coordinators

March 2014
About this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to introduce you to police.uk, the street level crime mapping website for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and how you can use the website’s data.

You will find information on how people use police.uk and the website’s crime data, so you can discuss this information with your members and others in your community and answer any questions they may have. You will also find information on the website’s key features which you may want to inform your members of, to help them get the most out of the website.

This toolkit also tells you how you can access promotional materials to help you promote the website to people in your community, so they can visit it to find information about the action you’re taking to tackle crime in their area.

Introduction

About the police.uk website

The police.uk website was launched in 2011 to provide the public with street-level crime and anti-social behaviour data for their local area. Police.uk has crime data for all police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since its launch, it’s had over 60 million visits.

The website was re-designed last year and has a range of new features which aim to inform the public about crime in their area, and the action taken by the police to tackle it.

Key features of the site include:

- Interactive crime maps which users can personalise to focus on a specific area.
- A film that demonstrates the role people can play to help the police during the investigation of a crime.
- Information on crime prevention measures.
- Users can register for e-mail alerts informing them when crime data for their area is updated.

Users can also find details of their police and crime commissioner, and neighbourhood policing team, together with details of upcoming neighbourhood policing meetings.
In 2013, the Home Office surveyed people visiting police.uk to find out their views of the site. The top three reasons for visiting the site were:

- to find out more about how their local police force is performing.
- to find out how their local area compares with others when it comes to crime.
- to track the status of a crime they had reported or witnessed, and whether an outcome had been reached for that case.

How people use police.uk

The public are keen to find out about crime data and criminal justice outcomes, proven by the popularity of police.uk since its launch. Every month the website receives over 450,000 visitors. Feedback from people who regularly visit police.uk shows that most users visit the website at least once a month.

Research shows the public are keen to know the progress of a case. Seeing the crime data on police.uk may encourage a member of the public to attend a Neighbourhood/Home Watch or local police ‘beat’ meeting and ask what action is being taken on a specific case. You may find it useful to familiarise yourself with the information about your area on police.uk so that you are as well-informed as possible and can work effectively with your local policing team.

“ I check our local crime map each month against the incidents that I am aware of through our village Neighbourhood Watch scheme and from police reports. I also check the crime maps for neighbouring villages as sometimes a problem or crime trend in those areas may come our way later in the year.

(Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator)
Police.uk features

Crime maps

Since the website’s launch the public have responded positively to the crime maps and justice outcomes. The information is presented in a way they find easy to understand and they like being able to see crime recorded to street level.

“It helps us to identify crime hotspots so that we can target where Neighbourhood Watch needs to expand its coverage to.”

(Neighbourhood Watch member)

Crimes are recorded to one of 750,000 snap points (a location on or near where a crime has occurred). The use of snap points provides a degree of privacy, so the public can’t identify either the potential victim or perpetrator (which could jeopardise an investigation), whilst allowing the public to see roughly where a crime has been committed and the police action taken.

As well as being able to see crime data for either a town, neighbourhood or postcode, crime maps are now interactive and allow users to draw an area on the map allowing them to see crime and justice outcomes for their own personalised areas such as Neighbourhood/Home Watch schemes.

The data process

Every month, each police force in England, Wales and Northern Ireland uploads information about crimes and incidents in their force area to police.uk, together with any police action for these crimes. Police.uk received around 490,000 visits each month, so the public have easy access to this data.

The data is collated and verified by the Home Office before being published on the website. In cases where the police charge a suspect, the data is also sent to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) who then match it to a court outcome using the Police National Computer. Where matches are made, the information is sent back to the police.uk processing area for publication on the website.
The diagram below shows the process.

1. Police forces send their crime data to police.uk
2. Police.uk processes the data
3. If a case has an outcome, it is sent to MoJ
4. MoJ matches the data to a court outcome

Verified data

Police.uk publishes all crime and justice outcome data each month

Verified data
Crime investigation in action

To illustrate the police response once a crime has been reported and to encourage more people to come forward to the police with evidence, a short film has recently been published on police.uk.

The film takes the viewer through the stages of a burglary investigation and features an officer on the scene, a CSI, and a detective inspector talking about their work in the investigation.

By bringing a police investigation to life, the film encourages people to think about how they might help their local force with an investigation, such as not tampering with the scene of a crime, or coming forward with evidence. It demonstrates the important role that individuals can play in helping the police solve a crime.

The film also helps improve people’s understanding of how the police arrived at the case outcome which is shown on police.uk.

You can find the film here: www.police.uk/information-and-advice/court-service/in-action/

Crime prevention information

Police.uk also provides crime prevention advice including simple measures that everyone can take to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Feedback shows that after visiting police.uk people are more likely to make sure their belongings are secure or take other steps to improve their personal safety.

Visitors to the website can now choose the type of crime they’re particularly interested in to learn the best methods of preventing that crime happening to them. There is also specific advice for victims of crime, together with links to victim support organisations, as well as information on how you can report crime that’s happening in your area.

You can find the crime prevention advice here: www.police.uk/crime-prevention-advice/ that you may want to share with your members and others in your community.

Local policing team information

To encourage residents to get more involved in local policing, and crime prevention, police.uk has contact details of local neighbourhood policing teams, together with details of local ‘beat’ meetings. This information has proven very popular – during the site’s first two years the “Meet the team” pages received 887,000 views.

When people ring our office, wanting to speak to their local police, we advise them to visit police.uk, enter their postcode and use the details provided.

(Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network)

If a member of the public has information relating to a crime, they would be more confident about contacting the police if they can ‘put a face to a name’. Therefore, as well as officers’ names and phone numbers, where they have been provided, the site also shows photographs of each neighbourhood officer, to encourage the public to engage with them.
Performance data

A wide range of statistics is published on police.uk, allowing you to see the outcomes of crimes and the actions taken by police. As well as the outcomes of crimes, visitors can now see the average time a case took, from the offence being reported to the outcome.

Police.uk uses data from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), which allows you to see how your local force performs against similar police force areas. You'll also see historic crime data, allowing you to compare crime levels in a particular area over 10 years, to see if crime has increased or decreased.

Promoting police.uk

This section of the toolkit provides a range of information and resources to help you promote police.uk to your members and other residents in your community, so they can see the action the police are taking to tackle crime.

The Home Office is already encouraging the public to visit police.uk to see crime figures for their area, and to hold their local police, and police and crime commissioner to account.

Police.uk is three years old this year. The police are marking the anniversary throughout the Spring with promotional stories in the media, as well as launching the “Crime investigation in action” film. You might want to do some local Neighbourhood/Home Watch promotional activity to tie-in with the work the police and Home Office are doing.

The information in this pack has been designed for you to share with your members and others in your community so they're aware of the site and realise there's more to police.uk than just the crime maps. In fact, since the site launched, many features have been added as a result of public feedback. When you talk to people about keeping themselves and their possessions secure you could encourage them to visit police.uk for quick tips to avoid becoming a victim of crime.

A set of credit-card sized info cards and postcards have been produced to help you promote police.uk in your community. Details on how to order them are on page 8.
Here are some other ideas you could use to promote police.uk:

- You could put the postcards or info cards through the doors on particular streets; or include them in your crime prevention materials or welcome packs for new members or residents.
- You could display the postcards in various locations in your area such as libraries, community centres...etc.
- You could incorporate police.uk into campaigns being run by your Neighbourhood/Home Watch scheme. For example, if you’re running a campaign on preventing burglary, why not encourage local residents to visit police.uk for quick tips to keep their home safe? Speak to your Neighbourhood Policing Team to find out about upcoming campaigns which you can link in to.
- The latest official crime statistics show that overall crime is falling, yet a recent poll shows that 46% of people feel that crime levels in their local area have remained the same over the past 10 years. The Force Performance tool on police.uk shows independent crime data from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary. You could encourage local residents to use this tool so they can see how crime is falling.
- Why not discuss the crime data on police.uk at your local Neighbourhood/Home Watch meetings, and update your members on what the police in your area are doing to reduce crime.

You can order the info cards and postcards, free of charge, from the Home Office storage and distribution centre.

You can place your order by phone or email using the product codes listed below:

**Police.uk** business card (PUKNHWBC) (Max order limit: 500)
**Police.uk** postcard (PUKNHWPC) (Max order limit: 500)

Phone: 0870 241 4680 (press ‘0’ on your keypad to speak to the Home Office publications team)
E-mail: homeoffice@prolog.co.uk

Unfortunately there is only a limited budget, which is why there is a maximum order limit per order to ensure that as many of you as possible get access to the hard copy materials. However, if you do need more than the maximum order limit please email James.Gilbert13@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk stating how many you need, where and when they will be used and the Home Office will consider each application on a case by case basis.

We hope you find this pack useful, and would like to hear what you think. Please send your feedback to: James.Gilbert13@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk