



Surrey Neighbourhood Watch

Code of Practice when using Social Media for communications

1 Purpose

This Code of Practice (CoP) gives advice on how members of the Surrey Neighbourhood Watch community should use social media. It complements the social media guidelines published nationally by the Neighbourhood Watch Network which can be viewed here:

<https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/support/support-schemes/using-social-media-guidance>

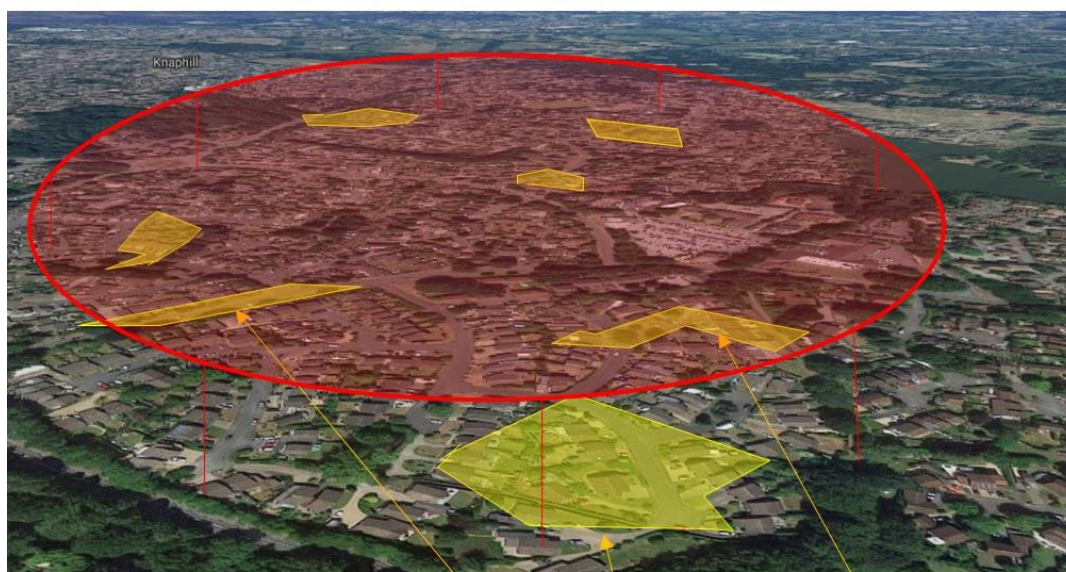
Its purpose is to ensure that all NhW social media Watches/Schemes in Surrey are managed and used in a consistent way.

2 Why social media?

Social media is an extremely useful way of communicating information around a like-minded group of people in a very timely manner. It is perfect for collecting and collating information on a local event and having the pertinent information passed to an authority (Police, local borough, etc.). The Police call this information “intelligence” and is invaluable in identifying potential crimes and problems early, or even before it becomes a crime or a problem.

Within Surrey, social media is likely to be used as a “Cover-Watch” that covers a wider community/village/estate that may already have street-based Watches. Social media can also be used within the street-based Watch, and that is a local decision taken by the Coordinator in that Watch.

**‘Cover-Watch’ for village/estate/community
Uses social-media for communications**



Street-based Watches “underneath”
Use email, social-media and paper for communications



3 Choosing a social media package and setting it up

The Surrey NhW Association Committee do not promote any particular product, but the product chosen by the NhW community or Watch needs to meet the basic security requirements as defined by the UK's GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation. Any package chosen for NhW use must have a statement saying they will not use, sell or pass on registration details for marketing purposes. Only those who are registered as a Coordinator on the InTheKnow/OurWatch system should be able to set up a social-media account branded as being approved for Neighbourhood Watch purposes. The requirement to be a Coordinator, as against just a Resident, is to ensure that the administrators receive all NhW communications – something that may not happen if they were registered as a Resident, or not registered at all.

Social media is a very useful method of providing communications between authorities and the public in a very timely manner, but not everyone is a fan and this needs to be taken into account when choosing a particular application. The three most popular applications are Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, but there is also Safeland (ex-Trygve) which is specifically for Neighbourhood Watch.

Twitter is a special case as the information is almost entirely outbound but can be picked up and re-tweeted by others which is a significant potential benefit. Thus the problem of restricting membership and the right to originate material does not arise. A useful practice adopted by Neighbourhood Watch in Tandridge is for their Twitter output also to appear on their web site so it can be accessed by non-Twitter users.

Other social media packages, where group members can originate material, may need to have an ability to block a membership – this also means that all users have to ask to become members. Otherwise there may be problems with controlling content.

Facebook is the most widespread application, with many existing users. This makes the application easy to implement and has a ready customer base. It is typically less popular with older people, but when used solely for NhW, and set up as a Private or Public Group, it can prove to be invaluable. The NhW's recommendation is to set up an NhW account in Facebook as a Group and not a Page, as this would mean that all users submitting posts would have to have a Facebook account and content is always moderated. There is advice available on the public domain on how to set up a minimised Facebook account that will considerably reduce unwanted communications from Facebook. Posts on a Private group are only visible to members. Posts on a Public Group are visible to all but only members can post or comment, and so Public groups are preferred to Private ones.

A useful alternate is **WhatsApp**. This has been likened to “email on a smartphone” and is more popular with older people than Facebook. It can post images. It is not ideal for a large user-base and so would be better for smaller groups of users and communities such as individual road Watches. As with Facebook, a WhatsApp group needs to be set up.

Safeland originated in Sweden and is designed as an NhW application. It is popular with some people as it is not a pure social-media tool and is used solely for NhW.



4 Setting up a "Cover-Watch"

4.1 The Prospective Administrator should:

- 4.1.1 Check that there is no existing Cover-Watch that significantly overlaps the chosen area. Some overlap may be acceptable at the boundaries, but each Cover-Watch should typically be centred on a defined geographic community so there should not be competition between two groups covering much of the same area.
- 4.1.2 Contact the Borough NhW organisation to seek NhW approval for the creation of the Cover-Watch and to facilitate contact with the coordinators of the street-based Watches in the chosen area. Where a nearby Watch objects the relevant Borough or Surrey organisation should arbitrate.
- 4.1.3 Select a social media tool or tools that must comply with the UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Any package chosen for NhW use must have a statement saying they will not sell or pass on registration details for marketing purposes. The tool must also have facilities for excluding users who fail to conform to the rules for posts.
- 4.1.4 Liaise with the street coordinators regarding the methods to be used for communications between the Cover-Watch and the street Watches. More than one method can be used, e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, email. An example might be that Coordinators who do not use social media might receive monthly summaries of issues relating to their road that have been reported in posts on the Cover-Watch.
- 4.1.5 Ensure that there is at least one other person who can act as an administrator when the main administrator is not available. The role needs to include the ability to monitor, mediate and remove posts if necessary.
- 4.1.6 Provide training to other administrators, and guidance to the Coordinators on how they should interact with the Cover-Watch. For example where a street Coordinator produces a regular email report for their Watch members that might be copied to the Cover-Watch Administrator.
- 4.1.7 Define a set of rules and the protocol for users of the new Cover-Watch.
- 4.1.8 Post the rules on the site so that members can view them.
- 4.1.9 Provide details of how to contact Crimestoppers where circumstances make the submitter reluctant to post details on the social media site.

4.2 The co-ordinators will:

- 4.2.1 Be actively involved in decisions on the setting up of the Cover-Watch.
- 4.2.2 Not unreasonably block or object to the creation of the Cover-Watch.



4.3 Surrey Police will:

- 4.3.1 Be notified at borough level by Surrey Neighbourhood Watch of their intention to grant approved status to a Cover Watch whose boundaries partly or completely fall within that borough. This notification would include details of the individual who will be appointed as the lead administrator for the Cover Watch. At this time Surrey Police will have the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have concerning this planned approval with Surrey Neighbourhood Watch at either borough or county level.
- 4.3.2 Periodically make reference to the existence of such Cover Watches in their own social media communications in order to help recruit members for the Cover Watch.

5 Managing the content:

5.1 The administrator(s) will:

- 5.1.1 Monitor the content of the Group/site on a regular basis, ideally once a day.
- 5.1.2 Remove any post that contravenes the rules of posts as defined by the administrator in the Setting Up section above.
- 5.1.3 Make efforts to identify issues that should be reported to an appropriate authority such as the Police, Action Fraud or the Borough or County Council. Offline communications should be used to encourage the poster to make a report if they have not already done so. If a poster is not using their own name and does not wish to identify themselves by providing a crime-related report directly to the Police, the administrator should provide them with information about how to use Crimestoppers to provide information anonymously. Where a series of posts by different individuals about the same or related incidents appear, when considered together, to warrant Police attention, then this would require the administrator to extract information from the relevant posts to provide a report via 101 mechanisms so that the Police can allocate a "P" number reference. This "P" number reference should then be published to the social media group so that any further reports that individuals might make to the Police can reference that existing number. Note the information has to be extracted from the existing social media posts because Surrey Police staff require specific authorisation to visit or monitor any social media site in an official capacity.
- 5.1.4 Add appropriate crime prevention advice when that would be helpful and relevant to any concerns or issues raised in posts.

5.2 The Group members will:

- 5.2.1 Be aware of the rules for the Group and agree to abide by those rules as part of their acceptance into the Group.
- 5.2.2 Encourage other residents to join the Group.

5.3 Surrey Police will:

- 5.3.1 Advise those handling calls to 101 that they should be prepared to allocate a "P" reference number to administrators from approved Neighbourhood Watch social media groups even though they may from time to time be providing reports about incidents that they have not directly observed themselves.



- 5.3.2 Provide the administrator with feedback concerning actions to be taken with respect to any reports they have raised as per paragraph 5.1.3. This feedback could take various forms including a request for any further information relating to the matter to be passed to the Police, a statement that the matter is not of interest to the Police, or a suggestion that the matter be raised with another authority.

6 Posting content:

6.1 The administrator will:

- 6.1.1 Monitor other social media sites and Groups for useful information. As a minimum, the Surrey Police Facebook site and the local Police "Beat" Facebook and Twitter sites should be monitored regularly.
- 6.1.2 Publish posts that are of interest to the Group members and that have originated from the sites in item 1 above.
- 6.1.3 Publish posts with notices of NhW, Police and local borough meetings to which the public are invited.
- 6.1.4 Forward Alerts from Police and NhW that are relevant to the Group members.
- 6.1.5 Ensure that there is at least one other person who can act as an administrator when they are not available. The role needs to include the ability to monitor, mediate and remove posts if necessary.
- 6.1.6 Unless specifically directed otherwise the Cover Watch administrator will be able to post links to information published by Surrey Police via social media or web sites or email alerts.

6.2 The Group members will:

- 6.2.1 Be kind and courteous.
- 6.2.2 Be pro-active in posting new messages and commenting on other posts.
- 6.2.3 Post relevant information to the site. The posts should always be positive and help to enhance the safety and wellbeing of the residents.
- 6.2.4 Avoid duplicating – check someone else has not posted the same material on the subject already.
- 6.2.5 Be responsible about the content of the posts to ensure there are NO biased comments relating to race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity. The Administrator is duty-bound to remove these posts. Foul or offensive language will not be tolerated.
- 6.2.6 Make efforts to check the validity and accuracy of any story posted that has come from other sources.



- 6.2.7 Be aware that posting details of a potential crime does not absolve them of responsibility of reporting it to the Police.
- 6.2.8 Ensure that any photographs posted of cars do not have the number plates clearly visible, unless the photograph has already been posted by the Police (this is on advice from the Police).
- 6.2.9 Not post any information pertaining to an individual that could be prejudicial in nature once proceedings by the Police have commenced.
- 6.2.10 Not use the group for buying, selling or promotion, or for commercial purposes. The only exception is to promote security equipment specifically endorsed by National/Surrey Neighbourhood Watch or the Police.
- 6.2.11 Not use the group for political purposes or for seeking to influence controversial local issues unrelated to the role of Neighbourhood Watch such as planning approvals for proposed building developments.
- 6.2.12 Group Members should note that an offence may be committed by publishing names, addresses or photographs of anyone (or their property) without their consent. In particular images captured by CCTV systems of people outside the boundary of a poster's private domestic property must not be posted. Specific allegations of criminal or anti-social behaviour should not be made against any identifiable individual or group as this can have an adverse effect on any criminal case brought the Police. The only exception is where a post has originated from a recognised authority and is already in the public domain.