

Devon, Cornwall and Dorset Watch Schemes in the spotlight

17 - 23 June is National Neighbourhood Watch Week. Devon, Cornwall and Dorset have thriving Watch associations and would like to update you on the amazing work that is carried out.

On 18 June Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police are hosting a regional meeting at Police HQ in Exeter for County Association Chairs and police leads of Neighbourhood Watch which will also be attended by representatives of the national organisation. The aim of the gathering is to identify best practice and disseminate it across the region.

In Dorset Neighbourhood watch has approximately 780 schemes under the umbrella of the Association of Dorset Watches (ADW). In Devon and Cornwall it has 68,000 households.

Neighbourhood Watch is light years away from the once common, and inaccurate, perception that it is nosy neighbours twitching curtains. Far from it, it is a genuinely useful and active community intelligence tool for the blue light services and a force for reassurance and cohesiveness in communities.

For instance in Dorset, Corfe Mullen Home Watch have set up crime prevention teams, which has also been taken up by Wimborne and Colehill Home Watch, a great initiative that is hoped to roll out to other areas of Dorset under the title of Neighbourhood Reassurance Team.

When a crime occurs in an area that the neighbourhood policing team think residents need to know about they contact the Watch for volunteers. The volunteers are split into groups and knock on the residents doors and, tell them briefly what has happened and also provide them with relevant crime prevention advice, encourage them to register for Dorset Alert and sign up new members. In Devon, DaCCWA (Devon and Cornwall Community Watches Association) in partnership with the police oversees a number of Watch schemes such as Boat Watch, Farm Watch and of course Neighbourhood Watch. Analogous additional specialist schemes for example Hotel Watch are also available in Dorset, also under the ADW. Information about all of this can be found on this page of the Devon & Cornwall Police website www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/your-community/your-watch-schemes/daccwa and here in Dorset www.dorset.police.uk/help-advice-crime-prevention/safety-in-your-community/watch-schemes

On 26 April this year Watch member Mrs Mary Shead was awarded with a British Empire Medal for her voluntary services in St Ives, Cornwall, in recognition of her dedication to the local community.

Anyone who thinks that members of Neighbourhood Watch stay behind the net curtains should think again...

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator Syd Green was returning home to Morcombelake from Bridport in September of last year and on reaching Chideock could see a large fire on Hardown Hill.

He rang 999 from home to be told that it had already been reported and that the Fire and Rescue Service were on their way. Using his Neighbourhood Watch area lists Syd ascertained which members were most at risk and informed all of those that were at home. Syd contacted 999 again to emphasise that the fire was definitely a heath fire and so would spread rapidly, he also advised them that because of the terrain on the hill they would require special equipment to get up the tracks.

Other Neighbourhood Watch members then pitched in to help by spreading the word to neighbours, showing fire officers the route to the hill and directing them to the water reservoir by the radio mast.

Fire officers worked tirelessly and were at the scene until the morning of the third day when they were satisfied that the fire was out.

District Commander for West Dorset, Jason Rogers stated: "I was extremely impressed and grateful for the local knowledge shared and proactive actions taken by the Morcombelake Neighbourhood Watch. Residents clearly take great pride in their local area and their efforts to assist Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service were much appreciated."

Neighbourhood Watch organisers and both police forces recommend that everyone, even if not in a Neighbourhood Watch area, sign up for free community alerts and news delivered by email, text or phone through Devon and Cornwall Alert here <https://alerts.dc.police.uk/> or Dorset Alert here www.dorsetalert.co.uk

Message Sent By

Linzi Berryman (Police, DC Alert Officer, Devon & Cornwall)