



Plymouth Neighbourhood Watch

Background:

In Plymouth during the 1990's the Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) office was covered every day 9-5 by 2-3 volunteers with a Police Sergeant overseeing the whole service. Around 10 years later the post was civilianised which was seen as a negative move by NHW whereby most of the key people resigned and many watches folded. The civilian post eventually morphed into the Community messaging post. This meant that most of the contact with co-ordinators was by email and not the telephone contact they have previously experienced. The numbers around 2006 were at the 800 mark; although there were over 800 watches it was believed that only around 80 were actually active.

During the past 4-5 years the Plymouth Executive Committee (PEC) for NHW has still been meeting regularly, but not as active or inclusive as they may have been previously. In recent years there has been a breakdown in communication between the PEC and the Devon and Cornwall Community Watch Association (DACCWA). DACCWA hold quarterly meetings at venues across our Force area but no one from the PEC has attended.

Current situation:

There are currently a number of schemes in Plymouth although due to illness within the NHW itself there has been no office function which has been to the detriment of the service of the NHW. Plymouth BCU appointed a Citizens in Policing officer (CIP) in the summer of 2014 whose responsibility is to develop Special Constables, Cadets and Police Volunteers (PVP), NHW falls under this role. It was soon identified that the relationship between Plymouth NHW and DACCWA had broken down over previous years however it was important that this relationship. The CIP officer worked closely with the PEC to promote themselves including facilitating driving them to DACCWA meetings and supporting the concept of a new booklet being produced to promote their scheme.

Plymouth NHW have been allocated an office at Devonport Police Station within the Community Safety Team which has a force terminal available to them on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons with a landline telephone solely for their use. The PEC have an office volunteer who has returned from sick leave who will complete the office function. Unfortunately there is only 1 volunteer at this time to complete this role. The Police are supporting trying to recruit someone else to assist but this has also been identified and agreed that this is the responsibility for the NHW themselves to find an additional volunteer. The CIP officer is the single point of contact for the NHW.

NHW is not being promoted throughout neighbourhood teams at this time as it is not felt they are in a position to take on any new members or watches whilst they are unable to support the office function that is imperative for the Watches to work.

During March 2015 all 200 co-ordinators were contacted via their email address to confirm their interest in continuing to be part of the scheme. To date there have been only 12 responses. The rest of the list will receive a personal visit from Police Neighbourhood teams to see if they want to

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continue in the scheme and update contact details. Work is continuing between Police, PEC and DACCWA to redesign the focus for Neighbourhood Watch and what they need to achieve, working in the safeguarding principles adhered to by Police and other agencies. The expectation is that the visits will all be completed by mid May and the results be reviewed by the PEC and office manager.

Expectations from the Executive Committee:

An Executive Committee meeting was held on the 11th February and was attended by the CIP officer and Community Safety Officer. The NHW had 5 committee members at the meeting which was held at Beacon Park Police station. There was a long discussion around the role of the office function and how the Police could support trying to explore the options of another volunteer to assist. The CIP officer agreed that they would send community message out to all members as the PEC stated they were unable to contact their co-ordinators direct without the office been staffed (their volunteer is currently on leave for 5 weeks). It was agreed that until this function is staffed effectively they would not be able to develop as they would like. The agreed that the resources that have been allocated by the Police means that they are in a position to increase their reach into the communities greatly.

The relationship between NHW and the Police (through the CIP) has improved and when asked the specific question “What are your expectations from the Police”, the response was **“You’ve given us everything we need, we just need to find someone to staff the office. All we want now is two way timely information to give to our co-ordinators”**.

The Police have agreed that as soon as this is in place then we will support a re-launch of NHW through neighbourhood teams, social media and engagement with partner agencies.

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