

# Neighbourhood Watch Members' Booklet



## Staying safe together in Hertfordshire

Neighbourhood Watch is a great way to keep your community safe

- Strengthening communities
- Sharing information about crime and safety
- Bringing people together to keep our county safe



HERTFORDSHIRE

CONSTABULARY

**Pre**vention First

**LOOK INSIDE**  
for our top tips for  
staying safe

# Thank you for joining Neighbourhood Watch in Hertfordshire

Neighbourhood Watch is one of the most successful crime prevention initiatives ever. It is based on the simple idea that you and your neighbours can help to reduce crime and create a better place to live, work and play.

As a member, you will receive regular alerts, crime prevention advice and other updates from your local policing team. We will also alert you to emerging scams, and how to avoid them.

We work with a range of local and national partners, including Action Fraud, Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue, Age-Uk, and the NHS to bring you the latest crime and safety advice.

## How does it work?

**As a good neighbour, you can help to make your community more secure by:**

- Looking out for your neighbours, watching out for their homes while they are away, keeping an eye on those who are elderly or vulnerable, and reporting anything suspicious to police.
- Receiving our regular OWL updates about what is happening locally and how you can help.
- Sharing our alerts and advice to help you and your neighbours to stay safe and keep your homes and property secure.
- Working with your neighbours to keep your street safe.





## OWL (Online Watch Link)



OWL is our secure, award winning website and communication system. Created especially to support Neighbourhood Watch, it enables you to receive alerts and community messages from your local team by email. **After joining, please check you are receiving OWL emails and they are not being diverted to your junk/spam folder.**



If you don't have email, you can receive OWL voice messages to your telephone. When your phone rings, it will tell you it is an OWL message. The message will play twice. You do not have to press any keys or speak to anyone to hear the message. When the message ends, simply hang up.



## OWL App

You are also invited to download the OWL app to keep up to date with local police news on the go. No registration is needed. To get the app, search the App Store or Google Play for 'OWL crime alerts' or use the QR on the back cover.

The app also allows you to see information and contact details for your local policing team and other local services; view your local policing priorities; join other watches; and contact police online or via the webchat facility.

Alerts are based on your postcode, or current location if your settings are on. Important alerts, such as a nearby burglary or missing person, will arrive as an instant notification, while less urgent messages will be inside the app to read at your leisure.



## How can I help?

Members can do as much or as little as they like. You could volunteer to be a Street or Ward Coordinator. More people looking out for their locality helps to generate a greater sense of security. Coordinators help their neighbours stay informed by inviting them to join OWL and ensuring that their details are updated if they change or move. Coordinators can also liaise with their local PCSO, alerting them to local issues or attending community events. Please email **WLO@herts.police.uk** for more information.

## Who should I contact?

**If you see suspicious behaviour in your neighbourhood, please report it to police:**

- In an emergency, or if a crime is in progress, call 999.
- Call Hertfordshire Constabulary's non-emergency number 101, or visit **www.herts.police.uk/contact** to report a non-emergency crime or incident online or to chat to a police operator live via our web chat service.
- If you have information about a crime you can tell Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555 111 or at **www.crimestoppers-uk.org**.

You can use our community voice platform 'Echo' to let your local policing team know what you think we should be prioritising in your area. Visit **www.bit.ly/herts-echo**.



For information or enquiries about Neighbourhood Watch in Hertfordshire, please contact the Watch Liaison Office at **WLO@herts.police.uk**.





## Protect Your Home

Ensure ground floor windows and doors are closed and locked when you leave the house or go to bed. Lock upstairs windows when the house is unoccupied.

Use a door bell camera, internal camera and/or monitored burglar alarm.

Keep keys, phones and other valuables out of sight. Don't leave them on display in hallways or on window sills.

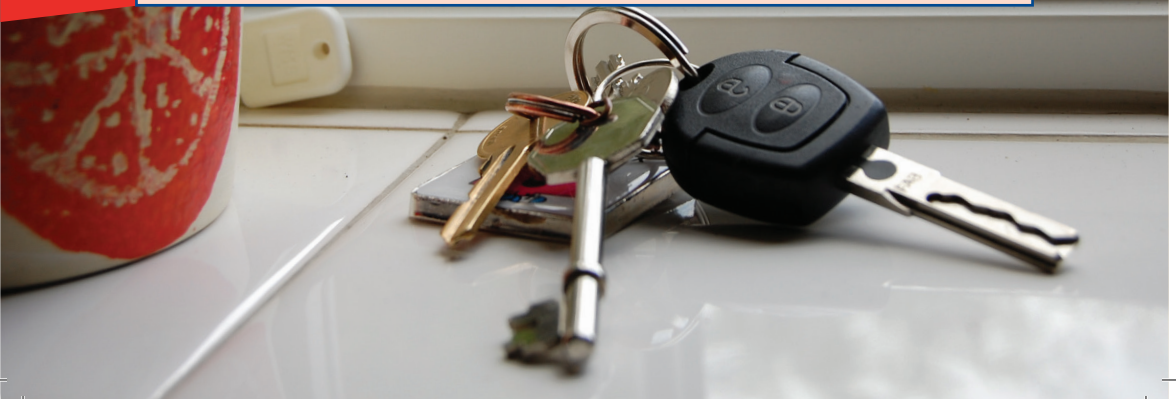
Install 'dusk to dawn' exterior lighting and fit timer switches to indoor lights so burglars will think someone is in. Leave a radio on a speaking channel and consider using a simulated TV light, which emits flashing ambient lighting to give your unoccupied home a lived in look.

Don't keep large amounts of cash at home. Photograph your valuables and store photos and receipts separately from the items. Postcode mark your property with a UV pen and register with an accredited database such as Immobilise.com

When making improvements to your home security, look for products that have reached Secured by Design (SBD) standards. Visit [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com) for more information.

Visit [www.owlprotect.uk](http://www.owlprotect.uk) for discounts on security products.

For more information, visit [www.herts.police.uk/protectyourhome](http://www.herts.police.uk/protectyourhome) or follow us on Twitter [@HertsPolice](https://twitter.com/HertsPolice).



## Secure your shed and garage

Ensure rear garden fences are secure and in good condition. Thorny plants, or trellis on top of perimeter fences, will help to deter intruders.

Try to not have side gates recessed back, have them flush with the front of your property. Lock rear gates with a padlock. Reinforce with sliding bolts, Cays Locks and/or suitable secondary lock.

Walking on gravel is noisy, so can help to deter intruders.

Always lock shed and garage doors: Secure metal doors with extra locks to either side and/or a floor mounted locking T bar with a closed shackle padlock.

Secure wooden doors with two hasps and staples and closed shackle padlocks or an alarmed padlock.

Most bicycles are stolen from home, so consider installing ground anchors if you have a concrete floor, or look for security rated products specifically for wooden or metal sheds. Take extra security precautions for storing expensive bikes, we recommend they are security marked and registered with [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com).

Lock ladders, tools and other equipment away after use, or they could be stolen or used to break into your home. Don't leave ladders, bins or garden furniture where burglars could use them as climbing aids.

Property marking your items is advisable and some tools can be painted with your name or postcode.



## Unexpected Callers

It is a good idea to display a “no cold callers” sign on your door. You should receive one with this booklet.

Avoid opening the door to unexpected unknown callers.

They may be smartly dressed or claim to be from a reputable company, but treat them as suspicious and try to deal with them without opening the door. Call the police if they won't leave.

Never let an unexpected caller into your home.

You can sign up to a password scheme for your utilities, so you know if a person calling to read your meter is genuine. If they don't know the password, they don't come in. Contact your utility company to set this up.

Don't deal with doorstep traders, and never agree to a visit by someone who says they are working in the area or they want to give you a no obligation quote.

Find a trustworthy, local trader at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/goodtrader](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/goodtrader) or call 01707 292429.

When having work done, if a small job, like fixing a roof tile, becomes a large one, like replacing the whole roof, don't feel obliged to use the same trader, even if it seems to make sense to get it done while the trader is working there. Get another trader to confirm the work is really needed and what a reasonable price would be.

If you look after or visit an older person, help us to protect them by receiving and sharing messages as part of Hertfordshire's Senior Watch. Senior Watch messages aim to advise older residents about scams and other local issues affecting them. To join visit [www.owl.co.uk/herts/senior](http://www.owl.co.uk/herts/senior).



## Secure your vehicle

**Lock it:** Always lock your car and close the windows. Even if you're only leaving it unattended for a short while, your vehicle and valuables are at risk of theft.

**Hide Valuables:** Don't leave anything on display - it's too tempting for a thief. Leave your valuables at home if possible.

**Secure Parking:** If your home has a driveway or a garage, use it. Cars parked off-street are less likely to be targeted. If you need to park on a road, choose a well-lit, busy area if possible. When away from home, try and leave your car in a secure car park.

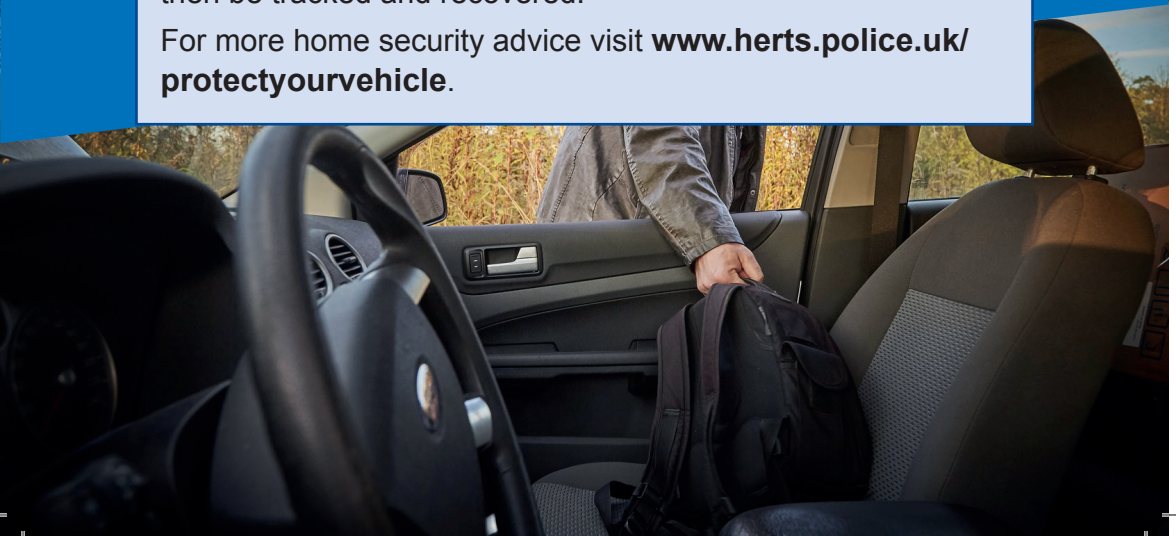
**Vehicle Alarm:** Most modern cars come pre-equipped with an alarm. If you drive an older vehicle, getting an alarm professionally fitted will help secure it and could result in cheaper insurance.

**Steering Locks:** These tough metal locking devices prevent the steering wheel, gearstick or handbrake from being used when the car is not in use.

**Signal Blocker:** If you have a vicinity key, keep it in a police approved 'Secured by Design' signal blocking pouch.

**Vehicle Tracking System:** Tracking systems require a transmitter to be hidden in your car. If stolen, the vehicle can then be tracked and recovered.

For more home security advice visit [www.herts.police.uk/protectyourvehicle](http://www.herts.police.uk/protectyourvehicle).





## Protect yourself online

Use different passwords for each online account in case one gets hacked. Protect your email with a strong, unique password. Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) where possible.

Don't leave mobile devices unattended in public places, protect them with a pin or passcode, and use a tracking app.

Ensure you always have internet security software loaded on your devices, kept updated and switched on. Remember that smartphones and tablets can get compromised too.

Don't use insecure or untrusted public Wi-Fi hotspots (cafes, airports, hotels) for anything confidential, e.g. banking. If you must, then use a reputable VPN (Virtual Private Network). If you don't have access to one, use mobile data.

Remember that online or on the phone, people aren't always who they claim to be. Fake emails supposedly from reputable organisations is how criminals often approach their victims.

Avoid providing personal or financial information in emails, social networks, dating sites, or in person. You never know who might see it, or use it.

Never open attachments or click on links in email, text or social media unless the source is 100% known and trusted (even if it appears to be sent by a trusted individual). Bad links and attachments can connect your device to a criminal who can then try to steal your data, money or identity. Always visit your bank's site via your browser, never via an emailed link.

Beware online romance fraudsters who target people of all ages. They aim to gain your trust and then your money.

Regularly back up your data, securely, to a portable hard drive or online. This will prove vital if your device is lost or compromised.



# Protect your money

## Commonly reported frauds include:

Online purchases that never arrive, or online sales where the buyer shows you a fake banking app as proof of payment.

Bogus Police Officers or bank staff calling you with convincing stories and asking for your bank cards, account details, or telling you to withdraw cash or purchase high value items.

Text messages claiming to be from a family member asking for money urgently.

Phoney technicians phoning and trying to gain access to your computer "to fix it".

Doorstep callers offering work that is unnecessary or over priced.

Investment opportunities that are worthless or don't exist.

Callers posing as your phone provider offering you a new phone. They then use your details to order one for themselves.

## Top Tips:

- Think twice - is this contact genuine? They may not be who they say. Fraudsters often use urgency to trick you.
- Neighbourhood Watch messages will alert you to current and emerging frauds and scams.
- Never send payments by cash, bank transfer or money transfer services to people you don't know. Credit card payments offer greater protection.
- Don't give any personal information or bank details to anyone before verifying their credentials.



- Be careful when buying, selling or banking online. Ensure you use secure sites and safe payment methods. Visit [www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org) for advice.
- Remember - the police or your bank would never phone to ask you to withdraw cash or give them your card or PIN.
- Beware business deals out of the blue. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Always question it.

For more information visit [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).

## Out and About

- Be aware of people around you. Don't allow yourself to be distracted if strangers approach you.
- Use a bag that can be closed properly, preferably zipped, so it is more difficult for someone to reach in. Consider using a purse bell or cable to alert you if your purse is moved.
- Never leave your bag unattended or in a shopping trolley.
- Minimise the cash you carry and keep it in a zipped pocket.
- Always look after your bank card, never let it out of your sight.
- Always shield the keypad while entering your PIN when making payments in shops or at cash machines.
- Never tell anyone your 4 digit PIN, it is only for you to use at bank or payment machines.



## Help Protect our Senior Residents



**Do you look after or visit an older person?** Please help us to protect Hertfordshire's senior residents by agreeing to receive and share messages as part of our Senior Watch. For more information or to register, please visit [www.owl.co.uk/herts/senior](http://www.owl.co.uk/herts/senior).

## Protect Your Business



**Are you involved in a business?** Join Hertfordshire's Business Watch to receive the latest alerts and crime prevention advice from your local policing team and business crime experts. Visit [www.owl.co.uk/herts/](http://www.owl.co.uk/herts/) and select "Business Watch".

## OWL App (Online Watch Link)



Download the OWL app to keep up to date with the latest news and crime prevention advice from your local policing team.

No registration required. Search the App Store or Google Play for 'OWL crime alerts' or use the QR code.

SCAN ME



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FOR HERTFORDSHIRE