



September 30, 2014

New Neighbourhood Watch scheme launched in Three Rivers

A new Neighbourhood Watch scheme aimed to protect older people living in Three Rivers has been launched.

'Senior Watch' was created in the wake of a large number of scam phone calls made to residents. Officers based in the Oxhey Safer Neighbourhood Team needed to find a way to disseminate essential safety information to their older residents in order to arm them with essential advice to prevent them from falling victim to crime.

The scheme will run similarly to Neighbourhood Watch, where messages and information are shared to members through the 'Online Watch Link' portal (OWL).

Sergeant Luke Mitchell who leads the Oxhey Safer Neighbourhood Team said: *"We came up with the idea following a number of phone scam incidents which occurred in the area. We noted there had a communication gap in getting information to elderly people quickly about scams and incidents which may affect them. OWL and social media is an excellent way to communicate with the public but we needed to think of better ways of supporting those who don't use these platforms."*

A PCSO from each of the three Safer Neighbourhood Teams in Three Rivers took on the role of specialist 'liaison officer' for the scheme and over recent weeks they have been busy building up contacts for all key people who may live or work with older people living in Three Rivers, such as people who manage care homes, social clubs, sheltered housing or retirement complexes.

All contacts have been loaded on to the system and can now be contacted with essential crime prevention advice at the click of a button, which they can then share with their residents or service users.

Sergeant Mitchell added: *"Typically crimes which affect the elderly can include phone based scams, and doorstep crime such as distraction burglary or rogue traders. Now, if we have a spate of crime which we need to communicate to people urgently, we can send out an email to these contacts or attend local clubs and have the information shared to hundreds of potential victims."*

The scheme was launched at the Clitheroe Club in South Oxhey last Monday (September 22). Sergeant Luke Mitchell and PCSO Michelle Russell were joined by Kerry James from Age UK Hertfordshire which supports the Clitheroe club.

In addition to the creation of the new watch, each PCSO has been given specialist training. They will be working closely with our Operation Manhunt team based at Police Headquarters who investigate

distraction burglary and rogue trading, to ensure that when elderly people are victims of crime the PCSOs will attend to give vulnerable victims an enhanced level of service.

They have also created a database of information about the different housing schemes, clubs, meetings and events, so they can be shared with the wider Safer Neighbourhood Teams so that PCSOs can attend these locations to carry out meetings and crime prevention talks.

In addition, the PCSOs have teamed up with Hertfordshire Community Meals in Three Rivers to accompany delivery drivers and visit every recipient of the service to provide crime prevention advice, Neighbourhood Watch stickers and timer switches. If a resident has been found to be particularly vulnerable to crime, referrals have been made for additional help or security measures.

Sergeant Mitchell added: “The PCSOs have done a great job in working closely with a number of organisations, such as housing associations, Age UK, Three Rivers District Council and the Five Way Friends Club, to build better contacts and create new relationships. We’ve also received funding from Three Rivers District Council and Thrive Homes in order to make this possible, so we thank them for their support.”

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, David Lloyd said: *“I am fully supportive of voluntary schemes, like Neighbourhood Watch, that help to make communities safer and using it in a way that gives additional support to older and more vulnerable people in the community is commendable.”*

Kerry James from Age UK Hertfordshire said: *“We’re pleased to be working with the police on this project and welcome the additional support they can give both the staff and our clients, this will enable the police to sign post vulnerable people to our services and allow us in turn to raise concerns to them.”*

If you would like to sign up to the scheme, have an elderly neighbour and would like to join the scheme to pass on messages to them, or work for an organisation which may benefit from being involved, please contact the PCSO which covers your area:

- **Oxhey Safer Neighbourhood Team** – Michelle Russell michelle.russell@herts.pnn.police.uk
- **Rickmansworth and District Safer Neighbourhood Team** – Jenny Stredwick
Jennifer.Stredwick@Herts.pnn.police.uk
- **Abbots Langley Safer Neighbourhood Team** – Marijke Stevens-Keijzer Marijke.Stevens-keijzer@Herts.pnn.police.uk

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Notes to editors: A photo of the launch event can be obtained by contacting Corporate Communication on the number below.

For further information please contact Hannah Georgiou, Senior Press and PR Officer, on 01707 806918.



