



## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH NETWORK (NWN)

### GUIDANCE ON MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT MEMBERS' BEHAVIOUR

**Author:** NWN Head of Partnerships and Projects

**Approved:** May 2020

**Next review due:** May 2021

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Neighbourhood Watch members are part of a diverse group of people from all walks of life, each with unique skills and experiences, who are united by a mission to support and enable individuals and communities to be connected, active and safe, which increases wellbeing and minimises crime.
- 1.2. This mission is supported by the [Neighbourhood Watch Ethics and Standards Guidelines](#) which set out the standards of behaviour that Neighbourhood Watch promotes, and expects from all its volunteers.
- 1.3. Neighbourhood Watch is occasionally faced with the challenging situation of having to manage a complaint or a concern about a member's behaviour, and the need to investigate and take appropriate action. This Guidance outlines the role of the Force Area or Borough NW Association Chairs (hereinafter shortened to Association Chairs), in managing these situations, and how Neighbourhood Watch Network Central Support Team (NWN CST) can support them to do so.
- 1.4. This guidance has been developed to support Association Chairs, or their nominated representatives, to handle these potentially difficult situations professionally and sensitively. The following are not instructions or Policy but are suggested good practice on managing and investigating complaints or challenging behaviour.

#### 2. Managing Concerns

- 2.1. Neighbourhood Watch is a family of local organisations, and as such, any disputes are best dealt with locally and informally, if possible and appropriate. NWN CST are available to give general advice and guidance to Association Chairs or their representatives, but generally will not become involved in investigations.
- 2.2. If informal local resolution is not possible, where a NW Association is in place, Association Chairs should oversee an investigation into the complaint - either appointing a member or members of the local Executive, referring the matter to an Area or District Chair or requesting a local agency to investigate. There have been examples where the local police or a local

Neighbourhood Watch Guidance on Managing Concerns about Members' Behaviour May 2020

Page 1 of 4

community organisation have agreed to do this. If there is no other local option then Association Chairs should be prepared to take on the investigation themselves.

- 2.3. If possible, it would be helpful to agree a small pool of people from the Association Executive who are willing to investigate complaints in advance. This would enable Executive members who were not directly involved in the incident to be selected from the pool to investigate and make a suitable decision on action. It would also leave the Chair to remain impartial and ensure the process was followed properly, including arranging for any subsequent appeal.
- 2.4. If local action has been tried without success, then as a last resort a local Association Chair could refer the complaint to the NWN Chair for support. The NWN Chair will appoint a suitable person to support or undertake the investigation. This could be a Trustee, another Association Chair, CST staff, etc.
- 2.5. In these circumstances the NW Association remains responsible for deciding on the action to be taken and any potential sanctions based on the evidence from the investigation. Possible sanctions are indicated at para 4.
- 2.6. If there is no Association in place, then a complaint can come to the NWN CST, who will try to get a suitable local NW person (Area coordinator, Police SPOC or other) to try to manage the complaint informally. If this is not possible, they will refer the complaint to the NWN Chair, will appoint a suitable person to support or undertake the investigation. They will decide the outcome.
- 2.7. If the member complained about is a NW Association Chair or Committee member and the Association Chair determines that the matter is not suitable for local investigation, they can request the support of the NWN Chair, who will appoint a suitable person to look into the matter.
- 2.8. Should concerns be raised about the conduct of an NWN Trustee, these will be looked into by the NWN Chair. In the event that concerns are raised about the NWN Chair, the Vice Chair (or another Trustee if there is no Vice Chair) will look into the matter.

### **3. Guidance and Best Practice**

- 3.1. Where concerns have been raised about a NW member's behaviour, the Association Chair or their representative should ensure all relevant information available is gathered to understand the specific concerns and investigate the matter.
- 3.2. Association Chairs are encouraged to advise NWN CST of any investigations where they believe that the behaviour of a member has impacted on, or may impact upon, the reputation of Neighbourhood Watch, or concerns are raised about a member's access or use of personal data. Where required under Data Protection legislation, unauthorised use or access to personal information by a member must also be reported to the ICO within the statutory timescale in line with the [NWN Data Breach Policy](#).
- 3.3. Concerns related to Adult or Child Safeguarding issues must always be referred to the local police force and / or Local Authority in accordance with [NWN's Safeguarding Policy and](#)

Neighbourhood Watch Guidance on Managing Concerns about Members' Behaviour May 2020

Page 2 of 4

Procedure. Any allegations of criminal behaviour should be referred to the local police force. Association Chairs are strongly advised to inform the NWN CST of these referrals.

- 3.4 In other, less serious circumstances, it is good practice to arrange to discuss the concerns with the complainant as soon as possible.
- 3.5 It is good practice to give an honest and fair summary of the concern to the member complained about, in writing if possible, and enable them respond. If they refuse to speak with you or to respond in writing, write to them to confirm this.
- 3.6 Every effort should be taken to ensure the identity of the person raising the concern is not revealed to the member they are concerned about without their consent, though it may be that the nature of the allegations or evidence indicates their source.
- 3.7 You will usually contact or talk with all parties who may be involved or have witnessed the behaviour complained about for their account.
- 3.8 Make notes of any meetings or discussions with the complainant, the member complained about and any witnesses and follow them up with an email or letter confirming what you discussed.
- 3.9 Give the member complained about an opportunity to respond to the issues raised, such as to explain their behaviour and/or provide any evidence they may have to refute an allegation, in writing if practicable.
- 3.10 Based upon the findings of an investigation, concerns may be dismissed or upheld. The member who is subject of the investigation should be provided with any evidence relied on in the decision-making process (where appropriate) and informed about what will happen next. This doesn't mean that the full original concern, complaint or any witness details will be shared, however, a summary of the nature of the evidence should be provided.

#### **4. Outcomes of a Complaint**

- 4.1 Where concerns about a member's behaviour are upheld, one or more of the following could occur at the discretion of the Association Chair or nominated representative or other party. This is not an exhaustive list and there may other local outcomes that Associations feel are more appropriate to the circumstances: -

##### **4.1.1 Formal Notice**

Formal notice may be given about behaviour which the investigation concludes is unsatisfactory.

##### **4.1.2 Suspension of NW Role**

A suspension from a role with Neighbourhood Watch is a temporary measure during an investigation into a more serious concern - for example, that a child, young person or

vulnerable adult are in danger or at risk of harm, or where there is a risk of harm to the reputation of Neighbourhood Watch.

#### 4.1.3 Restrictions on NW Role

Restrictions may be time limited or permanent and include specifically limiting the role, activities or responsibilities of the member or changing their role, for example, stepping down as a Multi Scheme Administrator or NW Area Association member.

#### 4.1.4 Relevant Action

Action to address the behaviour that has given rise to the concern may be agreed with the member. This could include apologising to the complainant, etc.

#### 4.1.5 Membership Withdrawal

Membership withdrawal may be applied where the investigation concludes that there has been a serious breach of the [NW Ethics and Standards Guidelines](#) or other relevant NW policies, or where the member has not complied with restrictions or sanctions applied previously.

- 4.2 Ensure the outcome is communicated to the member complained about and the complainant. Request that this is acknowledged by them to show agreement/ commitment to any actions agreed, in writing if possible, e.g. emailed confirmation.

## 5. Appeals

- 5.1 It is good practice that anyone complaining about a NW member and the member who is subject of a complaint should have the right to request an appeal following the outcome of the complaint if they are not satisfied.
- 5.2 Appeals should be handled locally and by a neutral person not involved in the original complaint/investigation.
- 5.3 If there is no other option, then an appeal may be made in writing to the NWN Chair at [enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk) within 30 days of the result of the first complaint so it can be considered by the NWN Chair or a nominated Trustee on the Chair's behalf.