



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH  
ASSOCIATION



# MARCH NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the March edition of our newsletter.

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## National Neighbourhood Watch Week 2019

This year's Neighbourhood Watch Week runs from Monday 17 June – Sunday 23 June, and is aimed at celebrating NW volunteers and the work they do. The week will run under the national theme of **#MoreThanYouExpect**.

Much of the public think Neighbourhood Watch is purely a crime prevention movement – but we know that's not the whole picture, and the intention is to give people a more rounded sense of what Neighbourhood Watch is all about.

This year's theme not only allows us to highlight the traditional work our groups do around crime prevention and reporting, but also enables us to celebrate the unexpected projects our volunteers work on.

Each day of the week will have a different focus. For example, one day will focus on how our members help to prevent burglaries, and another day will look at how Neighbourhood Watch groups are tackling loneliness and social isolation.

Please think about how you might wish to participate at your local level during Neighbourhood Watch Week 2019 - and we would love to hear your stories.

Don't forget the theme - **#MoreThanYouExpect**

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## Striking back against stereotypes

You may have heard the story by Guardian columnist and comic David Mitchell who inferred that putting Neighbourhood Watch members in charge of law enforcement would result in crimes such as speeding and burglary being prioritised over online child abuse and modern slavery.

Then there was the ITV Sunday night crime drama Vera, starring Brenda Blethyn as the titular mac wearing sleuth, which featured a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator who interfered with police investigations, and is seen at one-point tracking suspects involved in a murder. The coordinator is characterised as an obvious long-standing pain in the proverbial backside for the show's fictional Northumberland and City Police Force.

Once dismissed as curtain twitchers and busy bodies, **Neighbourhood Watch is hitting back** by calling out 'lazy stereotypes' of its volunteers.

"Neighbourhood Watch volunteers are often characterized as a group of middle-class keyhole Kate's – spying on the neighbours, interfering in people's lives", said John Hayward-Cripps, Chief Executive Officer for Neighbourhood Watch. "This lazy stereotyping is harmful and does not reflect the real work of the modern Neighbourhood Watch".

"The idea that our members are only concerned with certain types of crime is baffling. Our volunteers run workshops to stop young people carrying knives, we teach older people to spots the signs of potential scams, and we have produced crime prevention toolkits that tackle human trafficking and terrorism.

"The majority of police officers embrace the local knowledge and insight that our volunteers bring with them. We are viewed as vital partners in the effort to create safer and stronger communities. Neighbourhood Watch is a grassroots movement open to anyone who wants to make their community a safer place. We would urge people to think twice before making assumptions about us."

Media outlets jumped on the story including The Times which published the news item on it's frontpage. John Hayward-Cripps took part in a series of BBC radio interviews and in a rare moment of agreement, panelists on the topical Sky News debate show "The Pledge " agreed that Neighbourhood Watch volunteers should not be undermined.

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## Neighbourhood Watch Signs - Making a Statement

Continuing on with our campaign to refresh Neighbourhood Watch street signs, here is another example for you to consider.

**From this**



**to this....**



We asked John Sones, Co-ordinator for Elmsett and Aldham, if he would be prepared to "trial" an overlay sticker, as a cost alternative solution to replacing existing metal signs, and provide us with his views on using this method. John responded as follows:

"Fading signs are a problem that we all have at some time. In April 2018, I had one that had become illegible. I contacted Tony Spall, Chair of Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Association, and he suggested that I try a new 'stick-on' type which is virtually the same size as the original metal one.

I felt that it was important to clean the surface thoroughly with white spirit or similar so as to ensure the best possible adhesion.

The new sign stuck very well and was only fractionally shorter than the metal one. My main concern was that because of the bracket fixing bolt heads, I could not get the new one absolutely flat.

Ten months later after a hot summer and with no cleaning, the sign still looks new. Hopefully it will last for many years and is certainly easy to fix to the old metal signs not requiring any tools other than maybe a ladder".

### **John Sones Co-ordinator for Elmsett and Aldham**

As part of our ongoing campaign, we highly recommend all schemes to check their existing signage, with a view to either "refreshing" signs by cleaning them, or even replacing them with new. Details on how and where to obtain signs from are given on the Co-ordinator page of our website.

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## Council Tax Refund Scams



Reports are being received across Suffolk of individuals receiving scam texts offering a council tax refund. As part of the scam, residents receive a text, claiming to be from the Council, and are asked to provide bank details under the pretence of receiving a council tax refund. These details may then be used to gain access to an individual's bank account.

If you receive a similar text message please report it to Action Fraud.

To find out how to challenge your council tax band for free, or for advice on avoiding similar scams, visit the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

# Solar Panel Scams



A Suffolk resident has received a letter from a company purporting to be a trading association for the solar panel industry, offering the homeowner a 'free solar health checks' or servicing. The letter also indicated that the homeowners' warranty is due to expire.

The information contained is false.

If you receive unsolicited letters from companies offering free services for your solar panels, we advise you to either ignore the letter completely or, if you are concerned, to contact your original installer or an MCS-accredited installer that is also a member of a consumer body such as Renewable Energy Consumer Code (RECC) or Home Insulation & Energy Systems Contractors Scheme (HIES) for advice.

If you have received a similar letter, please report it to us by calling the national Citizens Advice Consumer Service helpline on 03454 040506.

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## Telephone Scam



Suffolk Trading Standards had a report of some very concerning telephone calls, and we are being asked to help make others aware by sharing this message.

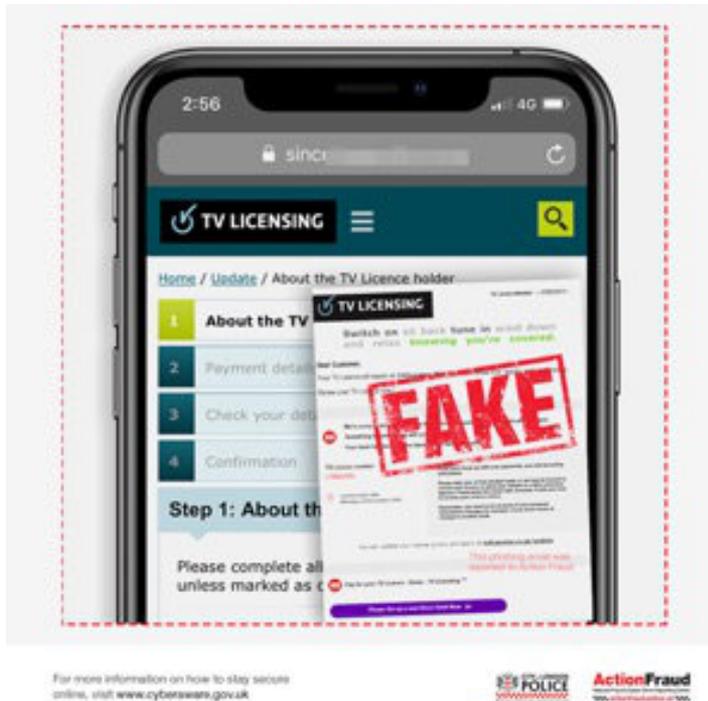
A Suffolk resident received a call from "Electrical Safety" asking questions about their fuse box, and the wiring in their property. A second call was then received offering a "free electrical safety check", with the caller offering to visit the resident's property.

The resident declined the "offer" but had already given the caller some personal details.

The message to pass on is that whenever receiving a cold call, people should NEVER reveal personal details, and the best course of action is ultimately just HANG UP!

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## Fake TV Licensing emails



### Don't get caught out

An ongoing TV Licensing phishing campaign, first identified by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) in September 2018, continues to be reported to Action Fraud in high numbers. Fraudsters are sending the public fake TV Licensing emails that are designed to steal their personal and financial information.

Since April 2018, Action Fraud has received over 900 crime reports with victim losses totalling more than £830,000.

#### How you can protect yourself:

- Don't click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails and never respond to messages that ask for your personal or financial details.
- Don't assume a phone call or email is authentic, even if someone knows your basic details (such as your name or address). Remember, criminals can spoof phone numbers and email addresses to appear as companies you know and trust, such as TV Licensing.
- Your bank will never call and ask you for your PIN, full banking password, or ask you to transfer money out of your account.

#### What to do if you've fallen victim:

- Let your bank know as soon as possible and monitor your bank statements regularly for any unusual activity.
- If you suspect your identity may have been stolen you can check your credit file quickly and easily online. Use a reputable service provider and follow up on any unexpected or suspicious results.
- If you have been a victim of fraud or cyber crime, report it to Action Fraud at [actionfraud.police.uk](http://actionfraud.police.uk), or by calling 0300 123 2040.

**Always question unsolicited requests for your personal or financial information in case it's a scam. Never automatically click on a link in an unexpected email or text.**

For more information about how to stay safe online, visit [cyberaware.gov.uk](http://cyberaware.gov.uk)