



WATCH OUT

the newsletter for North Kent Neighbourhood Watch members

SPRING 2021 EDITION

Your local PCSO - the link between neighbourhoods and the police

We've all seen them in our local High Streets, those fresh-faced (usually young) people in their Community Support Officer uniforms, providing a visible and comforting presence in the neighbourhood and a helping hand to the police on the front line.

They are a visible, accessible and approachable presence in the community, offering reassurance, sometimes defusing situations where there are threats of conflict, improving confidence and trust, gathering information and fostering good community relations.

Being a PCSO gives officers continued contact with a particular geographical area, which is often extensive (particularly in rural areas) and needs to be patrolled by car. They are frequently the first to identify trends in social issues, crime, and anti-social behaviour, as well as more vulnerable members of the community that may require additional support.

It's a busy job - on any day they could be...

- Dealing with minor offences
- Offering intervention and advice to prevent crimes (as simple as stop leaving your ground floor windows open/your door unlocked!)
- Street patrolling
- House-to-house enquiries
- Gathering criminal intelligence
- Guarding crime scenes
- Supporting local community beat officers, action teams and local groups
- Detaining individuals while waiting for the arrival of an officer.

While PCSOs are vital members of a team, they don't have the same powers as the police so they are not able to arrest people. But this doesn't mean they can't

stop criminals, they can carry out a citizen's arrest, use reasonable force to detain a suspect and make common law arrests to stop a breach of the peace.

The role can often lead to a permanent position within the police force further down the line.

When asked what a typical day involved, one PCSO said...

"Every day is different but generally we discuss issues that have arisen or that need looking at both individually and as a team."

"Our sergeant will ask what our daily patrol plan is? This may include any agency meetings we may have. We will also catch up with any paperwork/computer work outstanding. Apart from any tasks our sergeant or control room give us, we plan our own day but you do need to be out and about and visible wherever possible."

And abilities needed to do the job?

"Good communication skills; empathy and tact - your patience will be tried at times; and a thick skin."

How to contact your local PCSO

Ring 101 and messages will be passed on.

Or email:
CSU.gravesham@kent.police.uk
CSU.dartford@kent.police.uk

Additional community help

KCC Community Wardens help communities to build stronger, safer neighbourhoods in our outlying and more rural areas. Our next issue of WATCH OUT will cover their approach to assisting people, no matter what the issue. And if they can't help, they know a man who can!

Have you signed up yet?

It's free, it's bang up to date, it's easy to find the information that interests you, it pings into your inbox twice a week, it's strictly administered and put together by police volunteers... e-watch is the ideal newsletter for Neighbourhood Watch members who like to keep abreast of current events in their locality.



Contents include crime reports, scam alerts, policing incidents and police appeals, crime prevention advice and community news across Kent. More recently, Dartford and Gravesham now have their own specific links containing North Kent news.



For those who like to know these things, e-watch is the brainchild of Peter Rolington, Chair of Kent Neighbourhood Watch and West Kent NHW.

All you have to do is visit e-watch.co and click 'subscribe'. Simple - sorry, couldn't resist!

FRAUD ISN'T JUST A SCAM IT'S A CRIME

'Cats' thefts are on the up

Catalytic converters (known as 'cats' in the trade) are exhaust emission devices, usually located near the engine's exhaust manifold, that reduce toxic gases and pollutants in gasoline and diesel engines, including in hybrid vehicles.

Because they contain precious metals including platinum, palladium and rhodium they are also a target for thieves, who can often quickly and quietly remove the converter by jacking-up the vehicle, sliding under and using pipe cutters or similar tools.

These thefts often target vehicles with a higher chassis, such as SUVs or 4x4s. Hybrid cars with a higher percentage of precious metals are also more at risk. Last year Kent Online reported a 319% increase in thefts compared to a year earlier and more recently national press articles have suggested that such crimes have risen by 12 fold in 2020 across the UK, with over 14,600 thefts reported to police. Replacing a catalytic converter can cost well over £1000 and often involves repairing other damage to the vehicle.

Twelve actions to stop the thieves

1. Park close to fences, kerbs and walls, if possible, with the exhaust close to one or more of these to make theft more difficult.
2. Endeavour to park in well-lit areas where people pass.
3. Avoid parking half on the pavement and half on the road which makes it easier for thieves to access the catalytic converter.
4. If using a public or work car park face the bonnet towards the nearest wall which makes theft more difficult as the 'cat' is at the front of the car.
5. Use your home garage if you live in urban areas, which are more prone to catalytic converter theft.
6. If you park on your driveway or within view of your house a home security doorbell will be a useful

deterrent and warning device.

7. Invest in a vehicle alarm which will increase the likelihood of a thief being forced to abandon any attempt to steal the converter. A tilt sensor, which can often be installed by a dealership, will activate the alarm if a thief tries to jack up the vehicle.
8. Some security devices are locked to exhaust pipes rather than the

are specific to particular manufacturer.

10. Ask a garage to weld the bolts that attach the 'cat' to the car to make it more difficult to steal.
11. A unique serial number can be etched onto the converter by a garage. They will also give you a window sticker to indicate the converter is marked, and act as a deterrent.

12. If you see someone acting suspiciously under a parked vehicle, report it to the police on 999, providing as much information as you can, including vehicle registrations.

Never make an approach yourself - these thieves often operate in gangs and carry heavy tools.

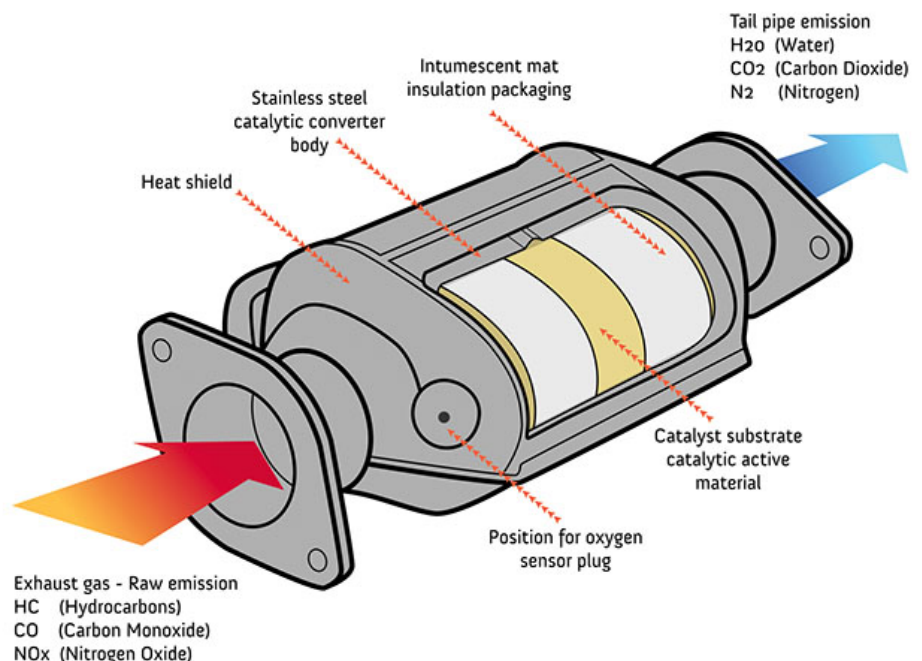
Nottinghamshire Police have produced a useful guide to preventing catalytic converter theft including details of a number of product websites approved by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

Search online for Nottinghamshire police video-catalytic theft

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converter, which minimises the risk of damage to the converter and makes it difficult to steal quickly.

9. You can also purchase devices that lock around the converter making it harder to remove. Some of these products, like Toyota's Catloc system,



Meetings paused for now

Our members have already been informed of the Committee's decision to defer the AGM (28 February) until Covid restrictions allow us to hold a conventional gathering.

At the same time, it was decided to ease some of the workload from the Chair, who is also our Secretary, by pausing meetings of the full Committee.

However, NHW business is still

being conducted by the Chair/Secretary and Treasurer, with reference to the full Committee where necessary. We also continue to have a voice with our partner agencies such as the Gravesham and Dartford Community Safety Committees and the Independent Police Advisory Committee.

At the same time, our treasurer, Chris Cook, has undertaken to overhaul our database, a revamp that will bring

us up to date with the most recently set up watches and the invaluable coordinators who keep their watches informed of police messages, alerts, and communications from the Association.

Members will be briefed on plans for the AGM as soon as Government restrictions allow us to go ahead with the type of conference we have in mind, possibly in May/June.

NHW - rooted within communities

People living in a Neighbourhood Watch area are more likely to feel part of the community than non members (87% vs 75%), the organisation's national 2021 survey shows.

Those who live in a neighbourhood Watch consistently feel safer than non-members; they are less likely to say that crime has increased than those who don't (32% vs 43%) and are more likely to think that crime has decreased or remained stable (62% vs 42%).

In praise of the hundreds of NHW volunteers who have continued

to support their neighbours throughout the current pandemic, John Hayward-Cripps, CEO of Neighbourhood Watch Network urges everyone to support in some way those who have been more economically impacted or are facing isolation and mental health concerns as a result of the pandemic. "Whether that be by sharing crime prevention advice, delivering supplies, waving through a window or something bigger, we urge everyone to step forward as much as they can", he said.

Will you join us?

The Association urgently needs three people to fill the important roles of Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary, as the current incumbents will be retiring at the AGM after many years' service in the voluntary sector.

Without anyone to take these roles, the Association will cease to exist in Gravesham and Dartford at a time when the pace of change is faster than ever before, and when a robust Committee is needed to continue to build resilient communities to tackle crime in all its shapes and forms, and to keep people safe.

If you feel you could join this small friendly Committee you will

find us to be dependable, approachable and supportive volunteers from all walks of life who are striving to keep the Neighbourhood Watch movement alive and well and with a strong voice within all the varied communities in North Kent.

We aspire to be good neighbours... will you join us?

If you would like a chat about any of the above, email our Chair, Isobel Kesby on: kesby@btinternet.com or telephone 01474 351492



Did you know?

Up to date FRAUD information from Kent Police can be found on the Kent Police Website at https://www.kent.police.uk/search?q=fraud&t_dtq=true



Local Photographer

- product/marketing
- event & exhibitions
- social & documentary



- building and architecture
- all commercial work undertaken

Digitisation

Lockdown is the ideal opportunity to sort through your old slides and negatives. Call to discuss having them digitised for posterity and sharing – give new life to your memories!



07977 268090

www.4exposure.co.uk

Who to call

In an Emergency: dial 999

Non Emergency: dial 101 or online at <https://www.kent.police.uk/services/report-online/kent-police-online-reporting>

To report anonymously: Kent Crimestoppers dial 0800 555111 or online at <https://www.kent.police.uk/services/crimestoppers>

Neighbourhood Watch: Call Michael Laidlow our Volunteer & Watch Liaison Officer (VWLO) dial 01634 792131

Victim Support Kent: Freephone 0808 168 9111

Newsletter Editor: Chris Cook email address christopher.cook@kent.police.uk