Neighbourhood Watch can have an important role to play in supporting community cohesion. According to a Neighbourhood Watch survey, members are less likely than non-members to feel isolated; they are more likely to know their neighbours, to help them and to volunteer for other things within their community.

Lots of people want to see more of their family and friends, but mobility or transport problems make this difficult. Neighbours however, are close by and have huge potential to make a difference to people's lives.

People worry about being thought of as nosey. No one wants to be intrusive and Neighbourhood Watch members in particular are understandably averse to being labelled "curtain-twitchers". Without talking to them there's no easy way to tell whether your seldom-seen neighbour feels lonely, is seething with fury at your leylandii, or simply prefers their own company.

However, it was clear from the survey that many people wish their neighbours were chattier and feel that more contact with neighbours would help them feel less isolated. A significant number of respondents said that "knowing neighbours better", "getting to know other people on my street", "a brief chat with neighbours" and "more friendly neighbours", would help mitigate feelings of loneliness.

People don't always see the value of a quick visit or chat. They think that once they have gone, their neighbour will be alone again and that their company doesn't really do any good. But the evidence shows that people absolutely do value those small interactions. Every friendly word adds up to a feeling of being part of a community and being surrounded by people who care about you.

Neighbourhood Watch is not purely about crime prevention but also includes a social aspect – people getting to know their neighbours and forging a sense of community. Where a community cares about its members it is difficult for crime to flourish.

Neighbourhood Watch doesn't magically make people neighbourly, of course. It attracts people who are neighbourly by nature – those who want to have good relationships with those around them and make their area a nice place to live. And it is very effective at reducing crime.

The result of this is that areas with an established Neighbourhood Watch scheme tend to have low crime levels, which is great because Neighbourhood Watch is all about keeping people safe where they live.

We need to think about what we can do to encourage people to reach out to those who live near them; not to force this, but to consider what motivates people. A key part of this is proving that people really can make a difference.

If you don't know your neighbours' names or rarely speak to them, why not reach out today.

Alresford and District Neighbourhood Watch Association website-
www.neighbourhood.watch.alresford.org
e-mail – contact.adnwa@gmail.com

**CRIME IN PROGRESS — 999
NON URGENT – 101
CRIMESTOPPERS – 0800 555 111**