

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND THE COMMUNITY.

People help their neighbours in all sorts of ways – shopping, cooking meals and other practical things. One of the most significant ways is by providing transport, particularly important for medical appointments, but also something that makes a big difference to people's social lives, enabling them to enjoy the human contact that is so important in alleviating loneliness.

A survey has shown that the Neighbourhood Watch movement can have a vital role to play in supporting community cohesion. According to the survey, Neighbourhood Watch 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.

The result of this is that areas with an established Watch scheme tend to have lower 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?

CONTACTING ADNWA OR POLICE:

ADNWA website: www.neighbourhood.watch.alresford.org

e-mail us at: contact.adnwa@gmail.com

CRIME IN PROGRESS: RING 999

NON-URGENT ISSUES: RING 101 (if you observe suspicious activity)

CRIMESTOPPERS: 0800 555 111