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Neighbourhood watch in the Netherlands



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NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Lessons of Six Projects:
A Summary

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This summary gives a brief description and comparison of six neighbourhood watch projects in the Netherlands. Neighbourhood watch does work in the Netherlands, although some schemes are more successful than others.

Success appears to be determined to some extent by certain characteristics of the neighbourhood, but the way in which the projects are prepared and implemented is also very important. The effort and expense which police and the local authority need to invest depend heavily on the support which the neighbourhood itself is willing to provide.

The experiences, conclusions and recommendations are important for those who need to agree on a standpoint concerning the introduction of neighbourhood watch, or for those who are or will be involved in the implementation of projects.

The study reports and summary were prepared on commission from the National Crime Prevention Bureau by A.G. van Dijk and P.M. de Savornin Lohman of "Bureau Criminaliteitspreventie". The Neighbourhood Watch Working Group, made up of regional coordinators for crime prevention and members of the National Crime Prevention Bureau, provided guidance and comments.

With thanks to the authors, the working group and the interview subjects in the project municipalities, I warmly commend this report for your attention.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A brief history

Like many reports on crime prevention, this brief history begins in America. When large numbers of American cities faced a wave of (petty) crime in the 1960s, people began to consider new ways of dealing with the problems which had arisen.

One of the (many) solutions put forward was to make use of the capacities of potential victims by involving them more closely in crime prevention in their immediate surroundings. So the first neighbourhood watch schemes were born: the civilian population was used to help reduce crime, usually in the neighbourhood in which the members lived.

Developments in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, interest in neighbourhood watch schemes did not develop until the 1980s, when the 'hot issue' of petty crime opened the doors to the underlying ideas: that the public should be involved in and is (jointly) responsible for crime prevention.

During this period, the National Crime Prevention Office (LBVM) ordered a survey of what had already been done abroad, what the effects were and what had gone wrong (through a review of the literature in the field of neighbourhood watch schemes, known as the Neighbourhood Watch Literature Study). Building on these experiences, a guide was prepared, showing what neighbourhood watch should and should not entail in the Dutch situation.

This was the publication entitled 'A Framework for Neighbourhood Watch' (1985), in which neighbourhood watch was described as follows:

"Neighbourhood watch is a small-scale crime prevention programme supported and actively carried out by local residents, in which preparatory measures are chosen in consultation and close cooperation with the police, the judiciary and government officials.

The objectives are:

- To reduce crime in the neighbourhood.
- To reduce the material and intangible damage caused by crime in the neighbourhood.
- To reduce local residents' fear of crime.

Although the term 'neighbourhood watch' might lead one to assume otherwise, both preventive and suppressive methods can be used in a neighbourhood watch project aimed at reducing crime. If local residents are more willing to report crime and come forward as witnesses, this will offer good prospects for a more effective suppressive approach to crime."

Since the publication of 'A Framework' (and to a limited extent in the period immediately before), experiments with the neighbourhood watch concept have been carried out in a number of places in the Netherlands. Neighbourhood watch projects are in preparation or underway in Amsterdam, Arnhem, Laren, Zwolle, Groningen, Wijchen, Roelofarendsveen and Roosendaal. The projects involve different types of neighbourhood: from inner city districts to outer suburbs, from low-rise residential estates to tower block areas, from small neighbourhoods to larger districts.

1.2 Study of six neighbourhood watch projects

Some three years have now passed since the guide appeared. It would therefore seem useful to review the experience gained with neighbourhood watch in that time.

The main questions here are:

1. In what **types of neighbourhood** has neighbourhood watch been tried so far? Were there differences in approach between the different types?
2. What **activities** have been developed so far in the different projects? What was successful and why? What proved difficult and why?
3. How were the projects **organised**? Which groups were involved in their initiation and/or implementation? How were the different tasks divided? Were there organisational problems?
4. Last but not least: what has been, or is likely to be the **outcome** of the projects? And what were the costs involved?

The answers to these questions will provide important lessons for future projects and at the same time offer an opportunity to assess the value of the Framework as a guide to neighbourhood watch schemes.

Six Dutch neighbourhood watch projects have been selected, which operate in different types of neighbourhood and on which a reasonable amount of written information is available.

These projects are located in:

- Arnhem
- Laren
- Roelofarendsveen
- Roosendaal
- Wijchen
- Zwolle

The written information on the six projects was coordinated and any gaps identified. These gaps were filled as far as possible through interviews with one or two key people in each project.

This publication summarises the most important results of the study which appeared under the same title.

1.3 Guide to other chapters

Chapter 2 briefly discusses the most important features of each neighbourhood and the preparations, progress and effects of the projects. The projects are then compared in Chapter 3, devoting particular attention to the question of why some projects work better than others. Chapter 4 deals with the most important lessons learned during the implementation of the projects. Finally, Chapter 5 contains the most important conclusions and recommendations for future projects, referring back to the 'Framework' guide.

2. THE SIX PROJECTS

2.1 The Arnhem neighbourhood watch project

General

The Arnhem project officially began on 6 March 1987. It operates in a neighbourhood with over 900 residents and about 400 homes. This is one of the 'better' areas with a fairly high proportion of family homes (semi-detached) and a few flats.

The local residents form a fairly homogenous group (middle to higher socio-economic status). Most have lived in the area for a long time and the elderly are therefore quite strongly represented.

The neighbourhood watch project was started at the request of the local residents' association, which had already formed a residents' neighbourhood watch working group. The reason for the project was the relatively high proportion of burglaries at homes in the neighbourhood and the accompanying feelings of insecurity among the residents. The project is aimed specifically against home break-ins.

The costs are borne largely by the LBVM, as this scheme is regarded as a national pilot project.

Further preparations for the project were made in close cooperation between the police, specifically the Crime Prevention Officer (AVM), the local beat officer, the Gelderland East Regional Crime Prevention Office (RBVM) and the residents' association working group.

Preparation and organisation

Important parts of the preparation for the project included an assessment of interest among the residents in participation, internal briefings in the police force and recruitment and training of neighbourhood contact persons.

- A written questionnaire sent to all households attracted an 82% response; 80% of the respondents were interested in taking part in the project (this amounted to 65% of the total population).
- The police departments which were to be most directly involved in the project (control room, (district) patrols and central reception desk) were briefed about the scheme through a number of group meetings at which neighbourhood watch was explained and the departments were told what was expected of the officers concerned. All members of the force were informed through the internal house journal, video news programme and collection of newspaper cuttings. A folder entitled 'Attention, Neighbourhood Watch' was also distributed throughout the force.

- The neighbourhood contact persons were nominated by the neighbourhood council. The nominees then attended six training sessions organised by the police, at which the following points were covered:
 - . introduction to the organisation of the force
 - . marking property
 - . preventive technology
 - . administrative prevention
 - . victims aid
 - . civilian arrests.

The project neighbourhood has five neighbourhood contact persons who - in contrast to the five other projects - are not assigned to a specific street or block of houses.

Representatives of these contact persons have regular meetings with the police (Crime Prevention) on the progress of the project. Action involving other organisations (including other municipal services) is organised through this 'central forum.'

Activities

- Using 'Attention: Neighbourhood Watch' stickers;
- Reporting suspicious situations and persons to neighbourhood contact persons and/or the police;
- Marking goods with the help of marking cases kept by the neighbourhood contact persons;
- Encouraging residents to seek advice (from the Crime Prevention department, neighbourhood contact persons or security firms) on security in the home;
- Encouraging residents to make arrangements with their neighbours when they are to be away from home (for long periods);
- Improving situations which are conducive to crime (overgrown areas, poor public lighting) in cooperation with the local authority;
- Police include the project area in their patrols: 'Don't just drive past it, drive through it as well;'
- Two information meetings held for residents; the first before the project began and the second six months after the start;
- Written information on the progress of the project in the local paper.

Results

The project is going well, as the following evaluation data (obtained partly from a questionnaire sent to all households, with a high response rate) shows:

- 98% of respondents were aware of the neighbourhood watch project;
- 30% had made one or more reports to the police and/or the neighbourhood contact persons since the project began;

- 17% had marked valuables since the start of the project;
- 26% had obtained advice on securing their homes since the start of the project;
- 75% were using the 'Attention, Neighbourhood Watch' sticker;
- 40% had contacted the neighbourhood contact person on one or more occasions.

There were also some positive side-effects:

- 37% said they had had more contact with other residents since the start of the project;
- The residents were more satisfied with police action against crime in the neighbourhood (63% before the project started and 78% afterwards).

Finally, it was notable that residents were less satisfied with police action on the reports they made. They appear to have harboured expectations which the police are unable to meet.

There was a positive effect on the number of burglaries. Police records show that 47 burglaries took place between 1 January 1986 and 1 March 1987 (the starting date); between 1 March 1987 and 1 May 1988, 8 burglaries were recorded.*

The second questionnaire showed that residents regarded burglary as less of a (serious) problem than when the first was sent out (more than 50% with the first questionnaire, 25% with the second).

2.2 The Laren neighbourhood watch project

General

The Laren project was one of the forerunners of neighbourhood watch: a group of Laren residents began using a neighbourhood watch approach as early as 1984. The neighbourhood involved holds about 130 detached homes, some privately owned, and about 380 residents. The residents have a high socio-economic status. The project is aimed at preventing break-ins and burglaries from dwellings. It was initiated and is implemented by a group of residents.

* Police data will tend to have a negative rather than a positive bias regarding the effects on crime. After all, one may expect that willingness to report crime would not, in any event, be lower after the project began. Obviously, this applies not only for Arnhem but also for the other projects.

Preparations and organisation

No assessment of interest levels was held in the preparatory phase. As the police were not expected to play an active role in the project, no internal briefings for police officers or training for the contact persons were organised.

The police were consulted at the start of the project. The force appointed a permanent liaison officer to give the residents advice and support. There are 12 contact persons, each responsible for a limited number of homes (12 to 14).

After a year of neighbourhood watch the residents formed a Neighbourhood Watch association with a small charge for membership. This enables it to be self-supporting.

Activities

- Residents can report suspicious persons or situations to the police and/or neighbourhood contact persons;
- Residents can mark valuables with pen sets kept by the neighbourhood contact persons;
- Residents can notify the neighbourhood contact persons if they plan to be away for long periods;
- Residents are encouraged to secure their homes;
- Efforts are made to improve conditions conducive to crime (street lighting).

Results

As in Arnhem, the Laren project appears to be proceeding well. However, as it was not evaluated, fewer data are available to support this claim. There are two clear indications of its success:

- 93% of the residents have joined the Neighbourhood Watch association;
- The number of burglaries has fallen sharply. In 1984, 29 break-ins were reported to police; in the year in which the scheme started (1985) this fell to 2 and the number of reported burglaries has remained very low in subsequent years.

Moreover, the interview subjects had the impression that social contacts in the neighbourhood had improved.

2.3 The Roelofarendsveen neighbourhood watch project

General

The project in Roelofarendsveen officially began in February 1987. The project neighbourhood consists of six streets with about 120 state-subsidized private family homes, primarily occupied by families with children. A fair number of teenagers live in the area. The residents belong to the lower socio-economic classes.

The project is aimed at preventing burglary, vandalism and thefts of and from vehicles. The scheme also devotes attention to nuisance caused by youths (and their motor cycles). The project was initiated by the State Police (Alkemade Division).

Preparation and organisation

The project neighbourhood was chosen because it had high rates of the above types of crime. Residents' interest in taking part was then evaluated through a written questionnaire sent to all households. The response rate was 60%, with 100% of the respondents interested in taking part (60% of all households). All members of the Alkemade divisional office were briefed on the goals and content of the project and the tasks expected of them.

The control room staff of Leiderdorp district, where reports are received when the divisional office is closed, were also informed about the project.

Recruitment of neighbourhood contact persons took place through a residents' questionnaire: six contact persons were selected from the (surplus of) volunteers and were each assigned one street.

Before the start of the project, the police organised three training sessions for the neighbourhood contact persons. These focussed on two subjects:

- the tasks of the neighbourhood contact persons;
- citizens' powers in respect of criminals.

After the start of the scheme a number of other meetings were held, covering:

- the progress of the project;
- marking goods;
- security inspections at homes.

Activities

- Using the 'Attention, Neighbourhood Watch' stickers;
- Reporting suspicious situations and persons to neighbourhood contact persons and/or the police;
- Marking valuables with the help of marking sets kept by the neighbourhood contact persons;

- Residents can notify neighbourhood contact persons and/or police when they are to be away from home for long periods: extra checks will then be made on their homes;
- Residents are encouraged to secure their homes;
- Improving situations which are conducive to crime (lighting, overgrown areas);
- Police patrol the area more frequently and give priority to reports from the project area;
- The Public Prosecutor's Office consults the State Police and does not dismiss any cases in which criminals are caught in the district.

Results

This project too has proceeded well so far. However, it should be remembered that the following evaluation data is based on a small and select sample of 22 residents who attended the residents' meeting.

- 18% had made reports since the project began;
- 85% had taken preventive measures since the project began;
- 29% had contacted the neighbourhood contact person;
- 63% had used information supplied by the police (folders etc.).

A police report also showed that stickers were being used on 118 of the 123 homes (96%).

There was a considerable fall in reports of crimes which the project aims to prevent: from 134 in 1986 (before the start of the project) to 22 in 1987.

The interview subjects also said relations between the police and the public had improved.

2.4 The Roosendaal neighbourhood watch project

General

The official start of the Roosendaal project was on 17 November 1987. The project neighbourhood is an inner city area consisting of ten streets with about 1,800 residents. There are high proportions of young single people, unmarried couples (in their thirties) and the elderly (50 and over). The residents are of middle-level socio-economic status.

The neighbourhood consists mainly of low-rise and medium-rise buildings, about three quarters of which are privately-owned homes. It is not a purely residential area: there are also shops, catering facilities and - to a lesser extent - offices. The neighbourhood has a wide variety of problems: vandalism to cars and public property, thefts from vehicles, violence around entertainment centres (street fights) and trouble caused by customers in bars and cafes are common problems. This leads to fear among the residents. The project is aimed at reducing vandalism, thefts from vehicles and the fears of residents.

The municipal police force initiated the project; the idea was taken up by the municipal Society and Crime Project Group which was formed in the same period.

Preparation and organisation

Before the start of the project a written questionnaire was sent to all residents aged over 18 (in contrast to the other locations, where questionnaires were sent to each household). The response rate was 59% and the proportion of respondents interested in taking part 89% (amounting to 52% of all residents aged over 18). Internal information in the force was confined to the district team operating in the city centre. Most of the contact persons were recruited through the residents' questionnaire sent out before the project began. There was no real advance training for contact persons, but a number of 'update' meetings were held. There are now two neighbourhood coordinators and eight street contact persons who each take responsibility for one street.

Activities

- Residents can use the 'Attention, Neighbourhood Watch' stickers on their homes and/or cars;
- Residents can report vandalism to the neighbourhood contact person;
- Residents can report suspicious persons/situations to the police;
- Residents are encouraged to keep an eye on each other's homes;
- Residents are encouraged to take preventive measures;
- Street meetings are organised.

Results

The project is not yet properly off the ground; at present, too few activities are being pursued for and by residents. The police and local authority are now seeking ways to give the project a boost.

2.5 The Wijchen neighbourhood watch project

General

The Wijchen project officially started on 5 June 1987. This is a fairly large-scale project on a new housing estate with 570 homes. The buildings are mixed (low, medium and high-rise), with 80% rented properties and 20% privately-owned homes, including state-subsidised ones. The socio-economic status of the residents is low to lower-middle. The vast majority (90%) live in families, about 70% of them with children. The neighbourhood can be classed as a dormitory suburb with few community facilities and little community life.

Crime rates in the area are not significantly higher than in the rest of Wijchen. The problems lie more in the psychological sphere: i.e. feelings of fear among the residents which at one point led to vigilante initiatives.

The project is therefore aimed specifically at calming these fears and channeling residents' responses. The actual project activities are also aimed at reducing burglaries, thefts from vehicles and - more indirectly - at reducing vandalism and lawless conduct.

The initial ideas for the project were developed by the Wijchen municipal police force, which opened talks on the matter with Gelderland South RBVM.

These ideas gathered momentum when feelings began to run high in the project neighbourhood over a wave of thefts from cars. To prevent excesses, the leadership of the force promised residents a neighbourhood watch project, provided that the neighbourhood showed enough interest in taking part. The Municipal Executive supported this decision.

Preparation and organisation

The preparation phase was kept short, as the residents wanted fast action. A written questionnaire was first sent to all households. The response rate was 58% and willingness to cooperate among the respondents was 90% (amounting to 52% of all households).

Neighbourhood contact persons were selected for each street/block through this questionnaire (over 20 in all). The contact persons were coordinated by two neighbourhood coordinators who were offered their position by the police.

Training of neighbourhood contact persons did not take place until the project had already started. Six meetings were held.

The objectives were:

- To train/brief neighbourhood contact persons and neighbourhood coordinators;
- To teach them how to pass this knowledge on to other residents.

According to interviewees, the first objective was achieved but the second was not.

Internal information in the police force amounted to the screening of a film on neighbourhood watch and a brief explanation of the plans to all members of the force.

With hindsight, the interview subjects felt this form of internal briefing left something to be desired: the officers actively involved in the project, and the members of the relevant district team in particular, should have been involved earlier and more intensively in the preparation of the scheme.

Activities

- Residents can use the 'Attention, Neighbourhood Watch' stickers;
- Residents can report suspicious persons/situations to the neighbourhood contact persons and/or the police;
- Residents can mark valuables using a marking case kept by the two neighbourhood coordinators;
- Residents are encouraged to secure their homes;
- Police patrol the area more often.

Results

Police data indicate some positive effects, although these are far less clear than in Arnhem, Laren and Roelofarendsveen.

The number of reported thefts from vehicles fell from 16 in 1986 to 6 in 1987 and the number of reported break-ins was down from 8 to 3* in the same period. No change has been found in the rate of other crimes at which the project is aimed. The RBVM has conducted an interim evaluation among a small group of residents and some members of the force (Wijchen municipal police).

Among other things, this indicates that there has been a positive side effect in that residents feel the police have become more active.

However, the evaluation also shows that the project is not yet operating satisfactorily; the RBVM made a number of recommendations for improvements. These recommendations were adopted in full by the leadership of the force and the municipal police. Work on implementing them began in the second half of 1988.

* However, it is disturbing to find that the data for 1987 are not divided into the period before and after the start of the project.

2.6 The Zwolle neighbourhood watch project

General

Like Laren, Zwolle was one of the pioneers of neighbourhood watch. As long ago as 1983, the Overijssel West RBVM and Zwolle municipal police were toying with the idea of using neighbourhood watch in Zwolle. The plans remained on the shelf until the end of 1984, when a residents association asked the local authority for help in dealing with problems of crime and disturbances in their neighbourhood.

This request was picked up by the official local Vandalism Control Working Group, which rechristened itself the Neighbourhood Watch and Vandalism Control Working Group. The neighbourhood watch plans drawn up by the RBVM and the police were dusted off and the working group secretary was appointed as neighbourhood watch coordinator. With the approval of the police, the Mayor's Office was made responsible for the scheme, and after a brief preparatory period, action was taken in May 1985: the first Zwolle neighbourhood watch project began. Since that time, four other neighbourhood watch schemes have started (in 1987). These four schemes are jointly regarded as the second project.

All the project neighbourhoods lie in two new estates in Zwolle North: Holtenbroek and the Aa-landen.

Holtenbroek holds a large amount of cheap rented housing (flats) and parts of the area have fairly serious problems which go beyond crime alone: unemployment, nuisance, administrative difficulties and so on are genuine problems in the neighbourhood. The Aa-landen is a better area, largely made up of family homes (rented and privately owned), and has many families with children.

One of the objectives in Zwolle, besides reducing crime and fear of crime (which were also included in the goals of the other projects), is therefore to improve living conditions.

Preparation and organisation

No preliminary evaluation was made with the first project in Zwolle, but one was conducted with the second. The average rate of interest in participation among respondents in the four neighbourhoods was more than 80% (amounting to almost 50% of all households).

In project 1, neighbourhood contact persons were recruited through a large neighbourhood information evening.

In project 2, the contact persons were recruited through residents' meetings and the residents' questionnaires.

The aim was to find one neighbourhood contact person for each block of 20 to 30 homes. So far this has been only partially successful: some of the residents who initially came forward later proved unwilling to take part.

There is also a fairly high turnover of residents because of the frequency with which people move home (particularly in Holtenbroek). Experience so far shows that about a third of the residents who express an interest will ultimately stay with the project.

Recruitment is still in progress through the neighbourhood watch newsletter, which is distributed in the project neighbourhoods several times a year.

After the start of the first project, a number of training sessions were organised. The themes were the organisation of the local authority, negotiating practice and observation and reporting. This approach did not prove to be effective. The neighbourhood contact persons felt they were being swamped with information, and it was not clear to them exactly what they ought to do with it.

Using the experience gained in project 1, a more phased approach was used in the second project. The idea was to do something concrete first (e.g. to organise an engraving day for bicycle frames) and then to supply the appropriate information. As this approach has only just begun, it not yet clear whether it will prove more successful.

In 1985/86 an internal information programme was held for the entire force on plans and activities relating to Crime Prevention on local level (including neighbourhood watch). The neighbourhood watch coordinator and an AVM then provided an internal briefing on neighbourhood watch specifically for beat officers and (district) patrolmen.

The next information programmes will be provided by the AVM at the neighbourhood watch coordinator's request.

Activities

Many of the details of the projects were left to the contact persons themselves. The activities pursued so far are:

- An information poster in the flats of one project neighbourhood;
- Meetings for the residents of a block of flats, organised in their own homes;
- Engraving campaigns (for bicycles and other valuables);
- Information campaigns on home security;
- A Neighbourhood Watch newsletter;
- An appeal to report certain situations/offenses to the contact persons.

Results

It proved difficult for residents to work out the details of the project for themselves. Many contact persons have a fairly hesitant attitude. An interim evaluation of showed that the projects are not as widely known as one could wish.

According to the interview subjects, social contacts between the residents do appear to have improved.

One of the municipal neighbourhood watch coordinator concludes is that in neighbourhoods where the problems go far beyond crime alone, broader interest group activities need to be organised too. It is difficult to organise residents to deal with one part of the problem (crime).

3. COMPARISON OF PROJECTS

On the basis of the preceding chapter, the projects in Arnhem, Laren and Roelofarendsveen can be said to be more successful than those in Roosendaal, Wijchen and Zwolle.* In the first three projects, activities by and for the residents have developed more fully and positive effects can also be (more clearly) identified.

Obviously, an important question is why one project should work better than another. Judging by the study results, the causes must be sought on three fronts:

- Characteristics of the neighbourhood;
- Organisation of residents;
- Internal information.

Differences in neighbourhood characteristics

The following table shows how each project scored for a number of characteristics which are considered relevant.

Table 1: Characteristics of the project neighbourhoods

Municip/ neighbhd.	Size of neighbhd (homes*)	Residents associat in exist.	SES of resi- dents	Ratio of rented/ priv.**	Type of probl.	Origin of of- fenders	Popul. struc- ture	Primary func- tion
1 Arnhem/ Molenbeke	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2 Laren/inner area	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
3 Roelofarends- veen/Eur.weg	+	-	-	+	-	0	0	+
4 Roosendaal/ inner city	-	-	0	+	-	+	0	-
5 Wijchen/Homberg	-	0	0	-	-	+	+	+
6 Zwolle								
- project 1 Holttenbroek	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
- project 2 Holttenbroek	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
- AA-1	+	0	0	0	-	-	0	+
- AA-2	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	+
- AA-3	+	0	0	0	-	-	0	+

* + = up to 200; 0 = 200-400; - = more than 400

** - = less than 40% private ownership; 0 = 40-60% private ownership; + = more than 60% private ownership.

* It should be noted here that this statement applied at the time of the study (Spring 1988). Obviously, the situation could have changed since.

If the symbols in Table 1 are added up* and the projects divided into those which are successful and those which are moderately successful, the following picture emerges.

Table 2: Neighbourhood characteristics and project progress

Successful	Neighbourhood Character- istics score	Moderately Successful	Neighbourhood Character- istics score
Arnhem	+7	Roosendaal	-2
Laren	+6	Wijchen	0
Roelofarendsveen	0	Zwolle/ Project 1	-3
		Zwolle/ Project 2 (average)	-1

Naturally, these totals should not be regarded as highly precise: they merely provide an indication. The Table shows that the neighbourhood characteristics mentioned can be reasonable indicators of the success of projects.

Roelofarendsveen and Wijchen are borderline cases in this Table: although they score the same for neighbourhood characteristics (0), one project is doing better than the other.

However, interest in participation, as shown by the preliminary research, also appears to be a good indicator of success. This is higher in Arnhem and Roelofarendsveen than in Roosendaal, Wijchen or Zwolle.

Organisation of residents

An important problem with the projects in Zwolle, Wijchen and Roosendaal is that contacts between the neighbourhood contact persons and the residents have not yet been properly structured**:

* The plus sign is counted as (+1), the minus sign as (-1) and the zero as (0). Potential differences in the significance of the different characteristics have not been taken into account.

**However, this problem also occurs in Roelofarendsveen. Here it is resolved through fairly intensive efforts by police officers; i.e. personal guidance provided for neighbourhood contact persons by police during house calls etc. Naturally, this amount of effort (in a project of fairly modest size) will not be feasible everywhere.

- The idea that neighbourhood contact persons would organise their own meetings for the residents in their street or block is not working well;
- Neighbourhood contact persons are not clear about their precise role within the project;
- Cooperation and consultation among neighbourhood contact persons is not going well; consultations are not structurally organised and/or are not frequent enough.

If we attempt to explain these problems, one difference between the successful and the moderately successful projects strikes us immediately. This is the difference in the amount of time and attention devoted to the (advance) training of the neighbourhood contact persons.

In Wijchen and Roosendaal, it is explicitly stated that external circumstances created pressure to keep the preparation time short, which meant that action was taken too soon. The result was that (advance) training of the neighbourhood contact persons was postponed until after the start of the project.

In Zwolle the situation was slightly different: some training sessions were organised in the first project (after it had started).^{*} This approach was abandoned because the neighbourhood contact persons felt they were being swamped with information that they did not really know how to use.

The disadvantages of postponing training for neighbourhood contact persons until after the start of the project - usually the result of hasty and (therefore) incomplete preparations of the actual project activities - are as follows:

- Residents do not see anything happening after the project starts, which increases the risk of an early loss of momentum;
- Group-formation by the neighbourhood contact persons is delayed and independent cooperation between them is postponed indefinitely;
- There is also the risk that the problem of incomplete preparations for the content of the project will be shifted to the training sessions for neighbourhood contact persons.

^{*} The content of these sessions clearly differed from that of the training sessions organised for most of the other projects: apart from factual information about the organisation of the project and the local authority, the sessions involved training in negotiating skills through role-playing.

There is a high chance that an attitude will develop of 'Let's for heaven's sake do something - it doesn't matter what,' which will risk turning the project into a disorganised series of ad hoc activities. This will certainly not improve the continuity of the overall scheme or the motivation of those involved.

Internal briefings

Another difference between the preparations for the successful and the moderately successful projects lay in the internal briefings in the police force.*

This aspect clearly received more attention in Arnhem and Roelofarendsveen than in Roosendaal and Wijchen. In the latter two locations, the police officers who had a role to play in the implementation of the project were not involved closely enough in the preparations.

This means that the police are not (yet) fulfilling their intended role in the schemes.

A great deal of consideration was devoted to internal information in Zwolle. The problem here was that there was a certain mistrust of the police in the neighbourhood itself.

* Laren is not included here: the police had no active role in this project and therefore no internal briefings took place.

4. LESSONS FOR PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND ASPECTS OF THE PROJECTS

4.1 Preliminary research

In the lessons to be drawn with regard to preliminary research, a distinction can be made between:

- Preparing crime figures
- Listing neighbourhood characteristics
- Assessing local interest in participation.

Crime figures

- When preparing crime figures, it is important to ensure that a distinction can be made in the area chosen as the project neighbourhood between the number of crimes reported before the project starts and the number reported afterwards. The officers who keep the records of these reports should be consulted as how this can best be done.

List of neighbourhood characteristics

- According to the Framework guide, the following information on neighbourhood characteristics is important:
 - . Demographic information: age structure of the population, types of household.
 - . Socio-economic features: status of the neighbourhood (working class or middle class area etc.), rented or privately-owned accommodation, moving frequency.
 - . Physical features: types of building (high-rise or low-rise etc.), building density, purposes.
 - . List of existing community organisations.

Experience has shown that local authorities often have information on population structure and the ratio of rented to private accommodation.

Information on other neighbourhood characteristics is often unavailable or requires a highly labour-intensive effort to track down. In these cases, it is advisable to work with less precise information which can be supplied by people who know the neighbourhood well.

Assessing interest in participation

- When assessing the level of interest among residents, it is advisable to:
 - . Pay particular attention to interest in taking part in specific parts of the project;
 - . Calculate all interest percentages for the entire neighbourhood, to avoid giving an over-optimistic picture of the willingness to cooperate;

- . Include questions relating to interest in taking some steps in cooperation with the police, the judiciary and the local authority;
- . In deciding whether questionnaires will be returned in pre-paid envelopes or collected by police officers, one should ask whether the advantages of a (slightly) higher response rate and the creation of goodwill outweigh the investment of time.

4.2 Reporting

The greatest amount of experience has been gained with the most important part of neighbourhood watch: reporting suspicious situations.

1. Report cards are rarely used. Residents prefer to pick up the telephone to make a report.
2. A great deal of attention should be devoted to informing residents about:
 - The value of reporting and in particular, the use that the police make of the information;
 - What are suspicious situations/persons?
 - What should residents take note of when observing these situations/persons?
 - To whom should they report (what)?

Ideally, instruction materials should be prepared, making clear with the aid of examples - e.g. for each type of crime - what is suspicious, what people should watch for, etc. A combination of materials for residents' meetings (films/videos/slides) and a more detailed version of the Arnhem instruction card for residents might be considered.

3. The role of the neighbourhood watch contact persons as the 'reporting centre' should be encouraged as much as possible. In non-urgent cases, residents should contact these persons, who will then decide whether the report should also be passed on to the police, the local authority or another organisation. The advantages of this approach are:
 - The police control room is not burdened or over-burdened with tasks which are not its responsibility, such as passing on complaints about street lighting etc. to the local authority;
 - By acting as a reporting centre, the neighbourhood watch contact person gains a better understanding of what is happening in the street or neighbourhood and has more contact with residents.Important prerequisites for this approach are:
 - The neighbourhood contact persons must be easy to reach (by telephone).

- Neighbourhood contact persons must be well-informed about, and given guidance on responding to reports. The contact person must know what information should be passed on to which authority. Moreover, clear agreements should be reached in advance about what can be expected from the organisation that they call (in Arnhem, residents proved to have excessively high expectations about how the control room would handle reports). Finally, the contact person should know something about 'on the spot action' in certain situations.
 - At the other end of the line, the receipt of reports passed on by neighbourhood contact persons also needs to be prepared: the relevant organisations (municipal services, housing associations, police) should at least be aware of the project and the purpose of the reporting procedure.
4. If police handling of reports requires additional action (and therefore extra time), the risk of something going wrong increases: agreements on separate records of reports and feedback to residents on every case do not appear to work well.
Agreements relating to qualitative aspects of the work (client relations) raise fewer problems.
5. Feedback on incidents and/or the closure of cases reported by residents is an important element of the neighbourhood watch approach. If feedback does not work efficiently, those involved lose motivation: they do not see any results of their efforts.
As it has proved very difficult to provide feedback on every case, the following solutions could be used:
- . the supply of a regular incident review for the area to the neighbourhood contact persons;
 - . regular publication of incidents in the area in a local paper or newsletter;
 - . giving residents an opportunity to request information themselves concerning the action taken on their reports (Laren).
- The question of what kind of information should be passed on to the residents concerned is difficult to answer in general terms. The privacy of the residents - whether they be victims or offenders - should in any event be sufficiently protected. Clear agreements should also be made on this point before the project starts.

4.3 Other aspects of neighbourhood watch

The following experiences are important with regard to other aspects of neighbourhood watch projects:

- The idea behind the neighbourhood watch stickers is that the neighbourhood becomes a recognisable neighbourhood watch area. The use of stickers does not appear to be an essential prerequisite for the success of a project. It is advisable to allow the neighbourhood itself to decide whether it wishes to use them, through the assessment of interest levels.
- If marking of valuables is left to the initiative of individual residents, the level of participation remains fairly low.
- Agreements with neighbours when residents plan to be away (for long periods) appear to work better than reporting absences to neighbourhood contact persons.
- Security inspections of homes by neighbourhood coordinators can lead to complaints that coordinators hesitate to tell fellow residents when their security measures are inadequate. It is probably better if the coordinators confine themselves to providing advice on preventive measures when residents ask for it.
- Collective residents' activities serve several important functions in a neighbourhood watch project:
 - . Residents are kept informed about the situation;
 - . The project is kept alive by residents;
 - . Residents can ask questions, make comments and air grievances etc.;
 - . The organisers get an idea of what is going on in the neighbourhood;
 - . Residents can contact each other easily in this way.
- Newsletters can also be useful for some of the purposes mentioned above, particularly for informing residents and keeping the project alive.
- Finally, it should be mentioned that participation by older residents in various parts of projects is generally high in comparison with that by other age groups, even though older residents do not stand out as a category with a high degree of willingness to take part when interest levels are assessed.

It seems that (some) older people tend to be cautious in advance, because it is not clear to them whether they can undertake activities as part of a neighbourhood watch project. Once the project is planned in detail, it is precisely for older residents that many of the activities prove attractive.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The possibilities offered by neighbourhood watch

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the study of the six projects is that neighbourhood watch projects organised along the lines of the principles set out in the Framework guide can be successful. The three neighbourhood watch objectives defined in 'A Framework ...' (the reduction of crime, material and intangible damage caused by crime, and of fear) appear to be feasible in successful projects. This certainly applies for the first two targets. Recorded crime and the damage caused by it fell considerably in three projects. The 'evidence' provided by the study of the feasibility of the third objective is less clear, mainly because the prevalence of fear is more difficult to measure than actual crime. The study also showed that there are a number of positive side effects:

- In some projects, residents have a greater appreciation of police action on crime in their neighbourhood.
- According to some police officers in Arnhem, the quality of the reports police receive from the project neighbourhood has improved. In other projects, this aspect was not considered in the evaluation.
- In various projects social contacts in the neighbourhood appear to have improved.

Moreover, neighbourhood watch projects cost little or no extra time for police officers responsible for implementing particular parts of the scheme (patrols and control room staff).

However, a major investment of time is required by those involved in preparing the project (including preliminary research, internal information and training of neighbourhood contact persons), who act as the 'driving force' for the neighbourhood contact persons.

The fact that there are plans in four of the six locations to expand the projects to other neighbourhoods also demonstrates that neighbourhood watch is seen as a good idea.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that neighbourhood watch is no magic remedy: in some neighbourhoods, particularly problem areas, it is difficult to get projects off the ground (we shall return to this below).

Moreover, if clear results are to be achieved with a project, its preparation and the resulting organisation must match each other very closely.

The following conclusions and recommendations therefore relate to preparation and organisation.

They are sub-divided into conclusions and recommendations on preparation and organisation within the neighbourhood and those within the three most important bodies involved: the police, the local authority and the Public Prosecutor's Office.

5.2 Preparation and organisation in the neighbourhood

- When selecting areas for neighbourhood watch schemes, the following points should be taken into account:
 - . Certain types of crime (e.g. vandalism, burglary and theft) and the fears connected with them occur relatively more frequently than in other similar neighbourhoods.
 - . The existence of a residents' association offers opportunities for links with a project.
 - . Not too high a frequency of moving: this makes it easier to achieve a certain degree of organisation among the residents.
 - . The ratio of rented to private accommodation. The higher the proportion of privately-owned homes, the easier it will be to organise a project successfully.
 - . Internal versus external offenders. The higher the number of offenders living in the area itself, the more difficult it will be to start a project.
 - . Structure of the population of the area (as an indication of the amount of time spent away from home): neighbourhoods with a relatively large number of families with children are better suited for neighbourhood watch schemes than those with relatively high numbers of (young) single people and couples who are both working.
- Only the first point should be regarded as an essential prerequisite for the selection of neighbourhoods. With the other points, the lower the neighbourhood's score, the greater the effort that will be required on the part of police and/or the local authority to make a project successful.
- Another very important selection criterium which, moreover, is 'controllable,' is the size of the neighbourhood. If a neighbourhood has negative scores for the above characteristics, it will certainly be important to start on a modest scale (to give an idea: not more than 250 homes). If possible in a geographical sense, it would be wise to keep the neighbourhood as small as possible (and therefore not to use the formal boundaries of an area as defined by, for instance, the police or the local authority).
- An important question is whether it is wise to start neighbourhood watch projects in areas with a wide range of problems, with aims which not only include a reduction in the crime rate but also improvements in living conditions. Experiences in Zwolle indicate that caution should be exercised here. Improved living conditions as such do, of course, form an excellent goal in areas with a broad range of problems.

The difficulty here (and according to the Neighbourhood Watch Literature Study the same problem has been encountered abroad) is that in neighbourhoods of this kind, it is precisely the typical neighbourhood watch activities in which the police play an important role that are difficult to organise successfully, partly because there is often a certain mistrust of the police in these areas. Moreover, the organisers of projects aimed at both crime and a wide range of deprivation problems quickly risk biting off more than they can chew and expecting too much initiative from residents.

- However, it is recommended that the leading role be given to residents in the course of the project as much as possible. To facilitate this, it is important that:
 - . The police provide good training for neighbourhood contact persons **before the project begins**, clarifying their future activities in the project as much as possible.
 - . The neighbourhood contact persons hold regular discussions on the progress of the project from the start: if necessary with a police officer and/or council official who will organise these meetings.
- Recruitment and selection of neighbourhood contact persons can take place in different ways: through a preliminary residents' meeting (before the project begins), with the help of a community organisation (for instance a neighbourhood council) or through preliminary research among residents. The following recommendations are important in this respect:
- Preferably, neighbourhood contact persons with the following qualities (included in the LBVM Neighbourhood Coordinators Guide) should be sought:
 - . Contact person should be seen as a representative of the neighbourhood and should be accepted and respected as such by residents and other participants;
 - . Should be enthusiastic, with a strong personality in order to actively recruit other residents and to arouse/retain their enthusiasm;
 - . Should possess organisational skills, for the organisation of campaigns and meetings;
 - . Must possess good verbal and written communication skills.
- It should be emphasised during the recruitment process that women are equally eligible to serve as neighbourhood contact persons.
- It is not always necessary to appoint a neighbourhood contact person for each street, as the positive experiences in Arnhem show.

5.3 Preparation and organisation in the police force, local authority and the Public Prosecutor's Office

General:

- The preparations for a project should not be allowed to suffer through pressure to take action too quickly, for instance in order to nip undesirable vigilante initiatives in the bud.
- It is recommended that the police, local authority and Public Prosecutor's Office reach agreement in the preparatory phase of the project on how they will share the project tasks.

A particularly important question here is who will take the 'lead' in the start-up phase (preparing plans, maintaining contacts with neighbourhood representatives and encouraging activities for residents). After all, in most cases it will not be possible for the neighbourhood itself to take the leading role immediately, except where residents have considerable organisational capacities and negotiating skills. The initial lead can be taken either by a police officer (for instance an AVM, a beat officer or the chief of a district team) or by a local authority official or community worker.

Whoever plays the leading role, the police, the local authority and the Public Prosecutor's Office will all have to contribute towards the project. These contributions are discussed below.

Police

- As part of the preparations for the project, the police will have to play an important role in the training of neighbourhood contact persons. The police force is the organisation best able to explain what is expected of neighbourhood contact persons in respect of reporting suspicious situations, providing information on preventive measures, etc. However, it would be advisable for the local authority to provide part of the training programme; particularly in order to explain what can be expected from the local authority in the project.
- At the same time it is necessary to provide internal briefings on the project to members of the force. It is important that these briefings offer the officers who will be directly involved in implementing certain parts of the project (control room and/or patrol officers) more than just a film and some written information on neighbourhood watch. It must be clearly explained to these officers what is expected of them in the project, and they must be given scope to put forward ideas of their own.

- The neighbourhood watch activities to be carried out by the police can generally be classed as 'client-oriented': it is not a question of doing more for a particular area, but of making clear to residents what the police do with information received from the neighbourhood and of demonstrating that the police are concerned about crime in the neighbourhood. If the police want to take part in neighbourhood watch, the leaders of the force will also have to aim for a client-oriented approach within their organisation. This is an important prerequisite for the continuity of a project.
- It is also important for continuity to keep police officers informed about the project after it has started.

This can be done by regularly including the progress of the project in team meetings. In addition, the results of the project must be made known to the entire force.

Local authority

For the local authority, the same in fact applies as for the police: neighbourhood watch implies a client-oriented approach. In concrete terms, this means it is recommended that:

- The local authority - if necessary - provides part of the training programme for neighbourhood contact persons;
- The local authority is prepared - if necessary - to help conduct some preliminary research in the neighbourhood. Apart from an assessment of interest levels, this could include listing 'danger spots' in the neighbourhood and the possibilities for doing something about them;
- The local authority is prepared to make certain improvements to the neighbourhood as part of the project (e.g. street lighting, greenery).
- In each municipal department which is involved in the project, a permanent liaison officer be appointed who will act as a contact for the police and neighbourhood contact persons. It is of course also possible to set up a central contact point within the local authority for the police and neighbourhood contact persons; the information received here could then be passed on to the liaison officers in the relevant departments.

Public Prosecutor's Office

The role of the Public Prosecutor's Office in neighbourhood watch will generally be a fairly modest one, but is certainly not unimportant.

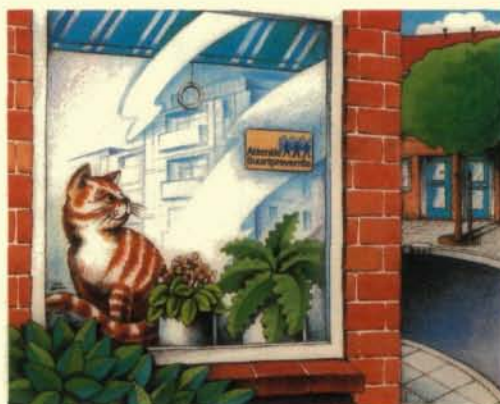
- Firstly, agreements can be made between the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office on the way in which the office will handle statements taken from offenders caught in the project area. It might be agreed, for instance, that the office will deal with such cases quickly and will dismiss as few as possible.
- Secondly, the Public Prosecutor's Office should ensure that in cases affecting the project neighbourhood, the victims are informed - for instance by the police or a neighbourhood contact person - about how the case is handled and settled. This could help to encourage residents to report suspicious situations and persons to the police.

Conclusion

Neighbourhood watch is a suitable means of reducing certain common types of crime and public fears about crime. The recommendations clearly show that if neighbourhood watch is to succeed, contributions are required from residents, the police, the local authority and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The contributions from the police, local authority and Public Prosecutor's Office can be classified as client and neighbourhood-oriented methods of working.

Before the Mayor, Chief of Police and Public Prosecutor give the go-ahead for a project, they must be sure that this method of working is possible, or better still, is already being used.

Meedoen aan buurtpreventie



Aankomst XXXX voorbeelden 1986



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