



Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
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Title: ShopWatch

Index: [Introduction](#)
[Purpose](#)
[Initial Enquiries](#)
[Introductory Meeting](#)
[Administration](#)
[Communication](#)
[Consideration to Ban](#)
[Disclosure of Information](#)
[Disclosure Process](#)
[Guidance on the Supply of Photographs/Electronic Data/Information](#)
[Information Security](#)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ShopWatch is a national initiative, which is a community based crime prevention scheme involving retailers and the police.
- 1.2 It relies on accurate and efficient communication of details about potential problems involving incidents linked to retail premises. The scheme enables better communication between retailers and police and provides a forum for discussion and solutions to problems relating to retail premises.

Please Note: This scheme should not be confused with the Employer Supported Policing Scheme aimed at recruiting retail staff as members of the Special Constabulary, which was previously known as ShopWatch.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The main aims of the ShopWatch scheme are:
 - To prevent/detect crime and apprehend and arrest more offenders.
 - To reduce the shoplifting losses from retail stores.
 - To develop an effective partnership between police and the business community and encourage members of ShopWatch to work with police.
 - To ensure an effective system is in place for the sharing of information and intelligence in relation to offenders.
 - To facilitate the disclosure of electronic data and/or photographic images and/or information, in order to assist members of approved ShopWatch schemes to identify named offenders who:
 - i. Are excluded from retail premises by court order.
 - ii. Pose a risk of carrying out criminal acts, or disorderly conduct likely to lead to criminal acts, against customers, staff, retailers, particular retail premises or other persons or property, in, or directly associated with, particular retail premises.

**Document
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OFFICIAL



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PROCEDURE

**Document
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OFFICIAL

- 2.2 Information could be shared with members of an approved ShopWatch scheme in neighbouring areas provided the Disclosure Protocol and Disclosure Agreement have been signed by the members of that scheme. The decision to share information with other schemes will be made by the Disclosure Officer, who will be an officer not below the rank of Inspector and would normally be the SNT Inspector for the scheme area.

3 Initial Enquiries

- 3.1 Requests from retailers to set up a ShopWatch scheme will be dealt with by their local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) Single Point of Contact (SPOC) who will be responsible for:
- Providing guidance on the scheme,
 - Distribution of introductory letters to eligible ShopWatch members,
 - Organising ShopWatch Launch Meetings,
 - Ensuring relevant documentation is completed,
 - Setting up initial ShopWatch Meetings.

4 Introductory Meeting

- 4.1 A letter of invitation should be sent by the SNT SPOC to all local retailers inviting them to attend an introductory meeting where the benefits of setting up a ShopWatch scheme and what it involves will be explained. It may be that due to geographic or other reasons more than one scheme will need to be set up.
- 4.2 These meetings should be held, if possible, at locations other than police stations and be chaired by a police representative who would normally be the SPOC from the SNT. Meeting organisers must ensure meeting venues are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), e.g. wheelchair access, hearing loops.
- 4.3 At this meeting retailers would be asked whether they wished to participate in the scheme, the viability of the scheme would then be assessed by the SNT SPOC who will make the final decision on whether the scheme should be set up.

5 Administration

- 5.1 Once a ShopWatch scheme has been established it is recommended that ShopWatch meetings should take place on a quarterly basis. Police should help organise the first meeting, after which future meetings should be self-administered and arranged by ShopWatch members.
- 5.2 The members of the scheme will need to elect a suitable Chairperson as well as a group of people to be on the Banning Committee. The number of members on the Banning Committee will be dependent on the total

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Classification:**

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Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
Classification:**

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membership of the scheme but should not normally be less than five members. The banning committee should, where possible, be made up of a representative group of people, e.g. mixture of young and old, male and female and different ethnicities.

- 5.3 A representative from the SNT SPOC, who must be either a regular officer, member of the Special Constabulary or a PCSO in whose area the scheme operates, will be nominated as the ShopWatch Designated Officer. They should attend ShopWatch meetings to provide support, information and advice only. They should not, under any circumstances, participate in ShopWatch decision-making. This is especially important in decisions about whether a particular person should be banned from any premises. No information is to be provided for civil banning purposes.
- 5.4 The structure of the ShopWatch meetings, and any subsequent committees, will be decided by the scheme members. The SNT SPOC will not be a member of any committee.
- 5.5 All ShopWatch scheme members are required to display window stickers in their retail/business outlets indicating that they are members of the scheme. The Community Safety Department of Suffolk Constabulary will be responsible for the supply of these when the scheme is initially set up.

6 Communication

- 6.1 Effective communication is the essence of a successful ShopWatch scheme and communication should be encouraged as a regular agenda item at ShopWatch meetings.
- 6.2 The main form of communication between police and retailers will be Police Connect:

Police Connect is a free messaging service provided by Suffolk Constabulary and is available to everyone in Suffolk. It enables police to circulate messages to registered members by email or SMS text messaging.

7 Consideration to Ban

- 7.1 As part of the scheme, members of ShopWatch are able to decide whether an offender should be prohibited from entering their premises for a set period of time. ShopWatch bans will need to be decided case by case. A retailer proposing a ban will attend a ShopWatch meeting to provide facts of the incident that the offender has been involved in. The SNT SPOC should take part in the meeting by providing, if requested, advice and legal guidance but must not participate in the final decision making process. No information is to be provided for civil banning purposes.

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Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
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- 7.2 The decision to ban must be agreed by a ShopWatch Banning Committee and be documented in the meeting minutes.
- 7.3 A decision to ban must not be based upon prejudices or stereotypes.
- 7.4 If a decision is made not to ban an offender but it is felt that a photograph/information may assist to prevent criminal acts, or disorderly conduct likely to lead to criminal acts, against customers, staff, retailers, particular retail premises or other persons or property, in, or directly associated with, particular retail premises, the ShopWatch Chairperson can still request a photograph/information of the offender by completing form [Shopwatch 3](#), and sending it to the Disclosure Officer.

8 Disclosure of Information

- 8.1 Section 29(3) of the Data Protection Act 1998 provides an exemption from the non-disclosure provisions of that Act. This allows those who hold personal data to disclose it in circumstances where it is necessary to prevent or detect crime.
- 8.2 The Chairperson of each ShopWatch scheme will be required to sign a Disclosure Protocol, this will be signed on behalf of the Chief Constable by the Disclosure Officer, who will be an officer not below the rank of Inspector and would normally be the SNT Inspector for the scheme area. A copy of this signed protocol needs to be forwarded to the Force Information Compliance Manager, PHQ for central collation. The protocol can be found [here](#) (Shopwatch1 and Shopwatch 1a).
- 8.3 A representative of each premise who is a member of a ShopWatch scheme will be required to sign a Disclosure Agreement ([Shopwatch 2](#)). A copy of this signed disclosure agreement needs to be forwarded to the Force Information Compliance Manager, PHQ for central collation.

9 Procedure to Disclose

- 9.1 Application for disclosure of information will be made to the Disclosure Officer using the form [Shopwatch 3](#).
- 9.2 Decisions to disclose electronic data, photographic images or information must be on a case-by-case basis. It must be relevant, proportionate, necessary and demonstrate substantial grounds for suspecting the likelihood of commission of criminal acts.
- 9.3 In making the decision, the Disclosure Officer must consider:

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Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
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- The offences previously committed by the subject of the photograph and/or information. Before a photograph can be supplied the person must have been convicted of a shoplifting offence within the last three years.
 - The likelihood that a further offence may be committed by that person or the likelihood that the person's conduct may lead to a further offence being committed;
 - Whether it is necessary to disclose identifying information to enable the appropriate preventative action to be taken in respect of that further offence or conduct;
- 9.4 The Disclosure Officer will authorise the supply of electronic data, photographic images and/or the information to retailers who are members of an approved ShopWatch scheme and who have signed a disclosure agreement, via the Designated Officer. Information will be supplied using the form [Shopwatch 4](#).
- 9.5 Electronic data, photographic images or information will only be disclosed to a nominated officer/employee of the retail company. A list of those nominated persons will be maintained by the Sergeant in charge of the SNT within whose area the scheme operates.
- 9.6 A record of electronic data, photographic images or information that have been circulated will be retained. The Sergeant in charge of the SNT within whose area the ShopWatch scheme operates will be responsible for the record using the form [Shopwatch 5](#).
- 9.7 Any electronic data, photographic images or information supplied or circulated will remain the property and the copyright of the Suffolk Constabulary at all times.
- 9.8 In order to monitor the disclosure of information for equality purposes, the Record of Information Circulated to ShopWatch Members form needs to be checked for disproportionality regularly. This is the responsibility of the SNT Inspector for the scheme area. Any issues of disproportionality that come to light should be discussed with the Community Safety Department. The regularity of checks will depend upon the frequency that information is disclosed and should be set accordingly.

10 Guidance on the Supply of Photographs/Electronic Data/Information

- 10.1 Photographs/electronic data/information will only be disclosed in relation to persons who have been convicted of a shoplifting offence within the last three years and who are known to be actively shoplifting, or of those where there is substantial real grounds to believe they are actively shoplifting and likely to commit any further offences in the vicinity of retail premises.
- 10.2 Where necessary the name of the offender will be supplied with the photograph by using details extracted from Athena. The Police National Computer (PNC) will not be used to obtain offender details.

**Document
Classification:**

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Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
Classification:**

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- 10.3 The photograph must be a good likeness of the offender.
- 10.4 Photographs will only be supplied to those shops that are active members of an approved ShopWatch scheme. Photographs can be supplied to neighbouring schemes as long as the supply is necessary and proportionate. The decision to supply to other schemes will be made by the Disclosure Officer.
- 10.5 Photographs of persons 17 years and under, and of persons 65 years or over, must not be circulated.
- 10.6 Consideration must be given to whether or not possession of the photograph would be of substantial assistance to the persons to whom it is being circulated. The modus operandi of the suspect should be considered.
- 10.7 The photographs or information must be collected when it is no longer necessary or proportionate to circulate, which should be fixed by the Disclosure Officer at the time of distribution. Photographs and information must not be left in circulation for more than six months. Should an identification using a photograph be made which results in legal process, then that photograph must be collected and presented as evidence in the usual manner.
- 10.8 Where large-scale circulation of the photographs of a suspect in a major crime is being considered (by TV, Press etc.), then authority from the Head of Protective Services must be sought.
- 10.9 The receiving scheme member must accept responsibility for the safekeeping and return of the photographs at all times. They will also ensure that the photographs are not used for any purpose outside of the purpose for which the Force initially supplied it. A central location point will be established within the retailer's premises to facilitate the exchange and storage of information. Where information is stored, it should be within a secure and locked container. Information supplied to members must not be openly displayed.
- 10.10 Any computers used to receive electronic information/data/images by ShopWatch members must be password protected, and this password must be a mixture of upper/lower case letters and include punctuation type characters and must not be shared. When the computer is due for disposal, the hard drive must be formatted and securely disposed of by a suitable secure disposal contractor. The Information Security Unit should be contacted for further information.
- 10.11 Any breach of these conditions will result in the membership of the scheme being withdrawn.

11 Information Security

- 11.1 Information obtained/disclosed via processes outlined in this procedure will be considered as (at least) OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE as per the Government Security Classification (GSC) Scheme and therefore must be treated as such.

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Classification:**

OFFICIAL



Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
Classification:**

OFFICIAL

For further information refer to the Government Security Classification policy and/or contact the Information Security Unit.

Department: Community Safety
See Also:

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