

Ways to create a safer, more cohesive, connected neighbourhood

You've bought your new home, in a brand new, modern and stylish estate. The streets are tidy and the public spaces are wonderful, but there's something missing, that feeling of connectedness, a neighbourhood.

There has been a lot of research over the years, which indicates that knowing your neighbours, at least recognising them, will enhance your feelings of safety, wellbeing and mental health.

Below are some of the ideas that you can try to connect you with your neighbours and foster neighbourhood spirit;

1. Say "hi" and wave.

When you're out and about, give your neighbours a wave and a smile and say "hi". If it's a nice day, sit outside in your front yard with a cuppa and wave and say "hello" as your neighbours go by. A small interaction can really brighten someone's day.

2. Offer to help with their gardening.

You could offer to mow your neighbour's lawn or nature strip while you're doing your own. You could also help with weeding or trimming back shrubs, trees and lawn edges, especially around windows and entry ways.

3. Brighten their day with a homemade surprise.

It could be a bouquet of flowers or a potted cutting from your garden, some home-grown veggies or fruit, a plate of home-baked treats. Leave the goodies on their door step with a note. You will definitely put a smile on their face.

4. Leave a note in their mailbox offering to help.

Download and print out our "[Happy to help](#)" cards, fill them in and drop them in your neighbours' letterboxes. It's a great way to reach out.

5. Offer a regular "check-in and chat".

If you have neighbours who are elderly, live alone, have disabilities or are immunocompromised, offer to call them every few days to make sure they are doing okay. If they don't have friends or family, they may appreciate the chance to chat with someone. However, always check to see what their preferred way to communicate is – phone call, text message, notes in the mailbox, email or something else. And don't be offended if they turn down your offer – they may already have someone looking out for them.

7. Start a Neighbourhood Watch group.

Depending on local crime and the issues that are important to the neighbourhood, there are lots of different activities that a Neighbourhood Watch Group can undertake:

- Watching out for – and reporting – suspicious behaviour
- Managing an information, lost property and lost child booth at events and markets
- Creating and distributing crime prevention newsletters

The activity of any group is based on;

- what volunteers can do,
- what makes the biggest impact
- and the advice of the local police.

However you do it, make connecting with your neighbours a priority for a happier lifestyle and enhanced wellbeing.