



NW NEWS

West Kent

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Tel No. ....

# Watchout

The Voice of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association

Issue 53

*"Security through awareness"*

Summer 2020

## Secretary Steps Down

Peter Brown has been a member of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association Executive Committee for 14 years, 13 of those as the Secretary is to step down from that role. Peter has ensured the Association has run professionally and efficiently.

His efforts have meant that the Constitution has been updated to meet our changing times and that transparency and governance has always been at the heart of our actions.

Peter Brown is to remain as a Committee member.

Stephen Rimmington who runs a very successful Neighbourhood watch scheme in Peters Village, Wouldham is to take over the role as Secretary. We wish him good luck in his new role as Peter Brown will be a hard act to follow!

The whole Committee wishes both members well in their new positions.

## Investigation into alleged exploitation of fruit workers in Medway

An investigation into the alleged exploitation of Romanian fruit workers in Medway is being carried out by detectives from the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate.

In the early hours of Friday 22 May 2020 officers carried out a warrant at a property in Chatham and arrested five people on suspicion of human trafficking and modern slavery offences.

Four were men aged between 19 and 39, and the fifth was a 41-year-old woman.

All five have since been released from custody pending further enquiries. A number of identified victims have been taken to a place of safety.

Detective Sergeant Stacey Chapman of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking team said: "Victims of modern slavery and human trafficking offences are often made to work long hours for very little reward, brought to this country on the promise of a better life

but forced to endure terrible living conditions and threatened with violence or deportation if they dare to challenge those responsible."

"Tackling this type of offending is a priority for Kent Police and we encourage anyone who suspects it may be happening in their town or village to contact us as soon as possible by calling 101 or visiting [www.kent.police.uk/report](http://www.kent.police.uk/report). You can also call Kent Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111 or the national Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700."

"Signs that someone may be held in slavery include them looking malnourished or unkept, appearing anxious and avoiding eye contact, or living in cramped, dirty and overcrowded accommodation."

"Human trafficking and modern slavery have no place in a civilised society and we all have a part to play in ensuring it does not go unnoticed."

## Stay safe from hackers when holding online meetings

Officers from the Cyber Crime Unit within Kent Police are reminding people to take precautions when using video conference apps following reports of calls being intercepted.

Since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown more people are using video conferencing apps to keep in touch with work colleagues, family and friends. Recently these calls have been disrupted with unwanted language and images from cyber-criminals.

There have been several reports in Kent where victims' calls have been hacked by an unknown person.

Whilst this is distressing, it is preventable. When using video

conferencing apps it is important to implement some basic safety measures:

- Make the meeting or call private – where possible use a password to access the call.
- Manage participants – if inviting people only send links to those individuals you wish to participate and avoid publishing the link.
- Prevent screen sharing – change your settings to prevent other participants from sharing their screen.
- Ensure you are running the latest version of the software and it is kept up-to-date.

Aimee Payne, Prevent and Protect Cyber Officer from the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate, said: "We understand that people are using video conferencing but they are opening themselves up to the possibility of being hacked if they don't take online security seriously."

"If using these apps please take the necessary precautions to prevent yourself becoming a victim."

For further information about online security and video conferencing visit the National Cyber Security Centre via NCSC

## British Transport Police

Text 61016 to report non-emergency incidents on trains or the tube. Dial 0800 405040 to give more information. A 999 call is guaranteed a quick response. For Crimestoppers dial 0800 555 111.

# More than £3.7 million recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act

More than £3.7 million in cash and assets has been recovered by financial investigators from the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate.

Specialist officers in the Financial Investigation Unit used legislation under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to strip drug dealers, money launderers and other offenders of illegally-earned funds or possessions across the 2019/20 financial year.

Successful POCA applications from the past year include:

- In February 2020, returning just under £30,000 to elderly victims following a confiscation hearing against a fraudster who posed as a police officer to steal money from victims across Kent. He used some of the funds to buy a luxury watch and a diamond ring, which were subsequently sold by police at auction. The offender was jailed for five years for the offences in June 2018.
- In December 2019, obtaining a forfeiture order against three men after more than £30,000 was found hidden in children's toys. The money was seized in February of that year following a vehicle stop at the Channel Tunnel terminal in Folkestone and, although no one was convicted as part of a criminal case, the men could not prove the money was for use in lawful conduct and a judge therefore granted the order.
- In October 2019, obtaining a forfeiture order against a Headcorn woman convicted of fraud and drug offences to forfeit £5,000. The cash had been found in her possession alongside a variety of class A drugs in February 2018. She was jailed for three and a half years in April 2019.

- In August 2019, securing a £187,000 confiscation order against a Ramsgate drug dealer. He had earned the money through a six-year period of offending, which included supplying amphetamines. In August 2018, he received a 12-month suspended prison sentence and was also ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work.
- In May 2019, getting a confiscation order which instructed a man to pay back £28,261 to a business he targeted. The offender was caught in possession of 50 counterfeit iPhones after he defrauded a number of stores by buying genuine handsets and returning a fake item to claim a refund. He was arrested after staff at a shop in Aylesford became suspicious of his activity and in July 2018, he was sentenced to two years and five months imprisonment.
- In June 2019, securing a confiscation order which instructed a convicted cannabis cultivator to repay more than £360,000. The money had been earned through the sale of a class B drug, which had been grown at sites across Sittingbourne, Gravesend, Rochester and North Walsham between 2013 and 2015. In July 2017, he was jailed for 14 years.

The Proceeds of Crime Act allows for investigators to recover money through two different channels, a confiscation order or a forfeiture order.

A confiscation order instructs an offender to pay the amount they have benefited from crime. Officers secured £2,461,344 through this means.

A forfeiture order deprives an offender of assets and property gained through

crime. Officers secured £1,263,273 through this channel.

Assistant Chief Constable Tim Smith, from Kent Police, said: "£3.7 million is a huge sum of money to be taken from criminals and this figure is a testament to the important and outstanding work that has been carried out by the Financial Investigation Unit.

"Behind every crime is a victim, many of whom have been targeted due to their vulnerability. It is not right that offenders should benefit from such activity and we will always use every resource available to bring them to justice.

"The Proceeds of Crime Act is a vital piece of legislation that helps us achieve this end. It stops criminals from continuing to reap the benefits of their illegal activities even after they have been arrested, charged and sent to prison.

"It can also be used in cases where we have been unable to prove a person was responsible for a criminal act, but when the courts agree with us that the money or property was gained unlawfully."

"There will be no let-up in our efforts to target people who bring harm to our communities and anyone seeking to benefit from criminality in Kent should be aware that we have the resources and expertise to target them and bring them to justice."

Assets recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act are distributed to operational agencies including Kent Police under the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS). Broadly, ARIS divides recovered assets between operational agencies and the Home Office which is then reinvested into policing.

If you believe someone you know has unexplained wealth or is benefiting financially from crime, please report it to Kent Police by visiting [www.kent.police.uk/report](http://www.kent.police.uk/report) or by calling 101. Alternatively call the independent charity Crimestoppers in Kent anonymously on 0800 555111.

## Cuckooing Campaign

Cuckooing is a form of crime in which a drug dealer or group of drug dealers takes over the home of a vulnerable person to use it as a base for "county lines" drug trafficking. County lines gangs use vulnerable people such as teenagers and children to transport drugs from cities like London to rural cities and towns.

Cuckooing has a significant impact on the community including anti-social behaviour and violence.

There are many signs of cuckooing and all of the Community Safety Units

across Kent have come together to create a video to help residents to identify the signs of this crime.

Please go to <https://youtube/Y4B-ewC3N60> to view video.

Please feel free to circulate this video to your Neighbourhood Watch members, family and friends. The aim of the campaign is to encourage residents to report anything they see that they don't think feels right and they are encouraged to call 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-emergencies. Residents can also

contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

This article was given to me by the Community Safety Units across Kent.

*Summer issue of the newsletter*

*Sorry folks due to the difficult times we are in at the present time, there will be no hard copies of this newsletter sent out. Please forward it to all you members via e-mail.*

# Nitrous Oxide Laughing Gas

In January 2020, the HSE warned young people through the mainstream media of the risks associated with using Nitrous Oxide 'laughing Gas' due to the increase in use within communities and at music festivals in 2019.

Soon to be published data from HSE and Trinity College Dublin in relation to drug trends last Summer at music festivals indicates that over a quarter of respondents to the survey had used Nitrous Oxide.

Nitrous Oxide is a depressant/dissociative/inhalant type drug and is also known as Laughing Gas.

Whippets (cartridges of nitrous oxide), whippet. Chargers. Bulbs. NoS, N2O, balloons, hippee crack.

The gas has a number of industrial uses and is used clinically as an anaesthetic gas for pain relieving properties when mixed with air.

It is colourless gas and some say is slightly sweet smelling and tasting. It can be found in different forms such as whipped cream chargers 'whippets' which are small silver cartridges. It can also come as crackers with balloons attached or as balloons that have been filled with gas.

If it is inhaled this is sometimes referred to as naggig.

Some of the effects of using this drug after 10-30 seconds are:

- People feel euphoric, giddy and want to giggle.
- Some feel relaxed and calm.
- Some people may get a headache,

dizziness or blurred vision.

- Loss of balance and feeling unsteady or disorientation.
- Irritated respiratory tract – the part that helps a person breath.
- Short lived paranoia.
- It can cause a change in blood pressure for some people or sudden death due to lack of oxygen.

## Some of the Long term effects:

- Mood changes and depression.
- People with heart blood pressure or mental health concerns could be at greater risk. Nitrous Oxide can cause a drop in oxygen levels which increase heart rate.
- Inhaling directly from the canister can damage the throat and lungs.
- Risk of falling or accidents after use.
- People have died from suffocation or lack of oxygen.

## Educating young people

Parents play an important role in educating young people of the risks associated with drug and alcohol use.

To help parents discuss substance use the HSE have produced a booklet to guide the conversation. You can download HSE Parents Guide.

You will then get the facts and reduce the harm to your children who may be involved in taking these drugs.

Author of this item is HSE National Social Inclusion Office.

# Dangers of Children Drowning

Did you know that 350 children under the age of five drown in a swimming pool each year, Nationwide?

The majority of deaths occur during the period of June, July and August mostly in back garden pools.

Among unintentional injuries drowning is the second leading cause of death to this age group after motor vehicle accidents.

Please secure any swimming pools you may have with fencing and a gate that can be securely locked if children are playing in the garden. I have seen on television that children can wear a band around the wrist that sets off an alarm if they fall into the pool.

Check that 'Water features' are also safe. Children can slip and fall into one, if not being supervised and drown in a small amount of water.

Have fun this Summer but please do put the safety of children first.



# Helping Your Pet to Adjust After Lockdown

As some people are returning to work the RSPCA is offering advice to help your pet to adjust to the change.

You may have changed your routine with your dog/cat if you have been home more.

Times for feeding, playing, walking and attention may all be slightly different. Your pet may get more or less of these things depending on the changes in your schedule.

Changes in routine are something a pet can adapt to. Think ahead and begin to make gradual changes before you change your routine again when you go back to work. Otherwise, when things change again suddenly, it may come as a shock to your pet, even if they handled it well before the Covid19 virus arrived. Even the most resilient of dogs can get worried sometimes.

Remember your dog is a social animal, it's normal for them to want and need to spend time with you. This means that it is important that you are not leaving your dog for too long during the day or longer than

they can cope with. Any dog left too long will struggle with or without good advice to help them cope.

## Some tips for preparing your dog.

- Gradually change timings of your pet's routine to the way it will eventually be. If the time you feed or walk your dog has changed due to lockdown, then slowly start to change it back to how it was before. Doing this can prevent your dog from experiencing frustration and anxiety when their daily schedule doesn't match what they have come to expect.
- Begin to gradually return your dog's routine before it has to change. Gradually adjust the walks to match this. Gradually decrease the amount of attention you give your dog/cat, and increase the time they will spend on their own. Do not completely ignore your pet as this will confuse them, but do give them something better

to do, like a nice comfy bed to lay on or a tasty chew to settle down with.

- Try to keep interaction time for when you will be available once your routine is back to normal, for example in the evenings after dinner.
- You may also want to think about leaving the house without your dog to help them to get used to this part of their routine again. Do please stay in the Government guidelines when doing this.
- If you are returning to using a dog walker, friend or family member to care for your dog while you are busy, your pet might be very excited or even a little apprehensive having spent time with only you. It can be useful for you to remain at home on the first walk or two, just in case your dog needs extra support from you.
- Introducing the changes in a positive way will give your pet the confidence they need to re-adjust.

# KCC Community Wardens

KCC Community Wardens have all been working exceptionally hard alongside other key workers during the challenging times we know as covid19, the global pandemic which has touched so many people's lives.

We are predominately based in the Rural and Semi-rural villages, where services may be restricted, although you will sometimes see us in the larger towns as we team up with other agencies to support with joint operations and projects.

Recently we have been delivering food parcels and medication, setting up volunteer buddy schemes, supporting the elderly and vulnerable families by keeping in touch as well as advising regarding all the awful Scams that have emerged on the back of the pandemic, which still causes so much emotional and often financial upset. It is wise to follow the ABC approach now for anything that you may not be expecting

and that includes, e-mails, door knocks, phone calls or letters:

- A** – never **A**ssume this is legitimate
- B** – Never **B**elieve this is genuine
- C** – Always **C**onfirm it is a trusted source before taking action.

If you have any worries or concerns regarding scams please contact and report immediately to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or complete the online form, alternatively call 101 or report online using the Kent Police online reporting tool.

You can find out more information regarding the Community Warden Role by accessing the KCC Community Warden page, where you will be able to identify the name of your warden and a little more about the work we carry out.

*Sandra Edmonds KCC Community Warden, East Peckham and Hadlow.*



## KNOW

During lockdown some children and young people may be being abused and exploited at home. They can be made to believe they should never tell anyone and that the abuse is their fault. Shut in with their abusers, they have little chance of escape or to tell anyone. These children need your help! As a neighbour or key worker visiting homes for any reason, you may be the only person able to spot abuse and report it.

## LOOK for:

- Guarded behaviour of a child around particular individuals.
- Sudden changes in behaviour.
- Children with bruises burns, bite marks or fractures.
- Children appearing withdrawn, anxious or frightened.
- Hearing or seeing shouting and violence to a child.
- Children seen carrying or using drugs.
- Children being late or arriving home late in different cars.
- Unaccompanied children visiting a house where only adults live.

## ACT

- Stay curious, look beyond the obvious.
- If something doesn't feel right, it might not be.
- Even if you are unsure it is better to report your concerns.
- Do not attempt to intervene yourself.
- If you have a safeguarding manager/lead within your organisation, notify them immediately.
- Call the police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.
- Call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

## Who's Who On The Executive Committee?

*Peter Rolington, Chairman.  
e-mail: peter.rolington@gmail.com*

*Stephen Rimmington, Secretary.  
e-mail: Petersvillage@gmail.com*

*Julie Walker, Editor – Tel: 01732 771075  
e-mail: julie.walker@kent.pnn.police.uk*

*Marguerite Bernard, Treasurer*

*Sue Mason, Tonbridge.  
e-mail: racarter@blueyonder.co.uk.*

*Richard Myers, Sevenoaks.  
e-mail: richardn.myers@btinternet.com*

*Peter Rolington, Tunbridge Wells*

## Committee members

*Pria Webster, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, for Kent Police – Tel: 01622 604395*

*Peter Brown*

*Jennifer Woodgate*

*Cedric Read*

## Other Useful Numbers

*Tonbridge & Malling Crime Reduction Unit  
– Tel: 01732 844522*

*Tunbridge Wells Crime Reduction Unit  
– Tel: 01892 526121*

*West Kent Special Branch – Tel: 07528 989208*

*UK Border Agency – Tel: 08435 047198*

*Kent Trading Standards – Tel: 03454 040506*

*Sevenoaks Community Safety Partnership  
– Tel: 01732 227000*

*community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk*

*Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership  
– Tel: 01732 844522 csp@tmhc.gov.uk*

*Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership  
– Tel: 01892 526121*

*communitysafety@tunbridgewells.gov.uk*

If you wish to contact a member of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee, please write to them at:

**c/o: Tonbridge Police Station,  
Neighbourhood Watch Tray,  
1 Pembury Road, Tonbridge,  
Kent TN9 2HS.**

**STAY SAFE DURING THIS  
DIFFICULT TIME!  
KEEP TO SOCIAL  
DISTANCING.**



## Make a note

***When contacting the Police in West Kent***

**Emergency only 999**

**Kent Police 101**

**Is for reporting non-urgent crime, suspicious incidents  
or to contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team.  
Calls cost just 16p from landlines or mobiles.**