Neighbourhood Watch News Bolton

November 2026



Christmas is a time for celebrating, catching up with friends and family, and enjoying the festive atmosphere. Whether you're visiting Bolton town centre, heading to Middlebrook, doing some last-minute shopping or enjoying a Christmas night out, it's worth taking a few simple precautions to help keep yourself, your belongings and your home safe.

Unfortunately, the busy festive period can also create opportunities for opportunistic thieves. Crowded shops, busy car parks, cash machines and lively nightlife areas can all present risks. A little forward planning and awareness can make a real difference.

Bolton Neighbourhood Watch is encouraging residents to enjoy everything the festive season has to offer while taking a few sensible steps to protect themselves and their property.

Protect Your Purse, Wallet and Personal Belongings

Busy shopping areas can provide opportunities for pickpockets and opportunistic thieves. When you're distracted by shopping, looking for bargains or carrying several bags, it's easy to become less aware of your surroundings.

A few simple precautions can help:

- Keep your purse or wallet somewhere secure and avoid carrying it in an easily accessible back pocket or an open handbag.
- Keep handbags closed and secured, with zips and fastenings facing towards you.
- Avoid displaying cash or counting money in public.

- Be particularly aware in crowded shops, queues, markets and on public transport.
- Keep mobile phones secure rather than leaving them on shop counters or in easily accessible pockets.
- Only carry the cards and cash you need for your shopping trip.
- Never leave bags, purses or wallets unattended in shopping trolleys.

If you use a contactless card, remember that you should report it to your bank immediately if it goes missing. Keep a separate note of important contact numbers so you can quickly cancel lost or stolen cards.

Don't Make Your Car a Target

Car parks can be particularly busy during the Christmas shopping period, and vehicles containing shopping bags, presents or other valuables can attract unwanted attention.

Even if you're only leaving your vehicle for a few minutes, make sure you:

- Lock your vehicle and close all windows, even when parked in a busy car park.
- Never leave shopping bags, handbags, wallets, mobile phones or Christmas presents on display.
- Put purchases in the boot before arriving at your next destination, rather than transferring them in a car park where others may be watching.
- Remove valuables from your vehicle whenever possible.
- Check that your vehicle is locked before walking away. Don't rely solely on the sound of the central locking.
- Park in well-lit areas where possible and be aware of your surroundings when returning to your vehicle.

Remember, a coat or blanket thrown over shopping bags doesn't necessarily hide their presence. The safest option is to remove valuables from the vehicle altogether.

Keep Christmas Presents and Valuables Out of Sight at Home

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of Christmas and forget that the presents and new purchases in our homes can be tempting targets.

Large displays of wrapped presents beneath a Christmas tree, particularly where they can be seen through a window, may advertise what is inside your home.

Consider the following:

- Keep valuable presents and electronic equipment out of sight from windows and doors.
- Avoid leaving expensive gifts on display where they can be seen from the street.
- Keep doors and windows locked, even when you're at home.
- Don't leave keys, handbags or other valuables near doors or windows.
- Dispose of packaging discreetly. Leaving television, computer or games console boxes outside can advertise the new items inside your home.
- Break down packaging and put it out for collection in accordance with local recycling arrangements.
- If you're going out for the evening, use timer switches or smart lighting to give your home a lived-in appearance.
- Make sure sheds, garages and outbuildings are secured, particularly if they contain bicycles, tools or other valuable items.

If you're going away over Christmas, ask a trusted neighbour or friend to keep an eye on your property and consider using a trusted Neighbourhood Watch contact to help maintain an eye on your street.

Take Care When Using Cash Machines

Cash machines can be busy during the Christmas period, particularly in shopping centres and town centres. Whether you're withdrawing money for presents, shopping or a night out, take a moment to check your surroundings.

- Choose a cash machine in a well-lit, busy location where possible.
- Be aware of anyone standing unusually close or attempting to distract you.
- Shield the keypad with your free hand when entering your PIN.
- Never allow anyone to see your PIN or share it with another person.
- Check the machine for anything unusual around the card slot or keypad.
- Put your cash and card away immediately rather than counting money in public.
- If something doesn't feel right, cancel the transaction and use another machine.
- If your card is retained or the machine behaves unusually, contact your bank using an official number.

If someone approaches you offering assistance, be cautious. Genuine bank staff will never ask you to disclose your PIN.

Planning a Safe Christmas Night Out

Christmas parties, festive gatherings and evenings out are a highlight of the season, but it's important to think about your safety before heading out.

One of the most important things to consider is how you will get home. Don't leave it until the end of the evening to decide.

Before you go out:

- Plan your journey home in advance, including how you will get back if your original arrangements change.
- Make sure you have enough money for your journey home.
- Arrange to travel with friends where possible and look out for one another.
- Let someone you trust know where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Keep your mobile phone charged and make sure you can contact someone if needed.
- Know where you are going and familiarise yourself with your route.
- If using public transport, check the last bus or train times before you leave.

While you're out:

- Keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your phone, purse, wallet or bag unattended.
- Be mindful of how much alcohol you consume. Know your limits and remember that alcohol can affect your awareness and decision-making.
- Never leave your drink unattended or accept drinks from people you don't know and trust.
- Look out for friends and don't leave anyone alone if they are unwell, vulnerable or need help.
- If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, speak to venue staff, security or someone you trust.

Taxi Safety – Getting Home Safely

If you're using a taxi or private hire vehicle, make sure you're getting into the right vehicle.
A few simple checks can help you avoid unnecessary risks:

- Always use a properly licensed taxi or private hire vehicle.
- Pre-book private hire journeys through a reputable operator, app or booking service. Private hire vehicles must be booked in advance and cannot legally pick up passengers who hail them in the street.
- Hackney carriages (black cabs) can be hailed in the street or picked up at designated taxi ranks.
- Check the vehicle registration, make and model against your booking details before getting in.
- Check the driver's identification and licence details where displayed.
- Never get into a vehicle simply because the driver claims to be a taxi or offers you a cheaper fare.
- Where possible, sit in the rear passenger seat and keep your phone accessible.
- Share your journey details with a friend or family member, particularly if travelling alone.
- If anything doesn't feel right, don't get into the vehicle.

If you have booked through an app, use its journey-sharing and safety features where available. Trust your instincts – you are under no obligation to get into a vehicle if you feel uncomfortable.

Look Out for One Another

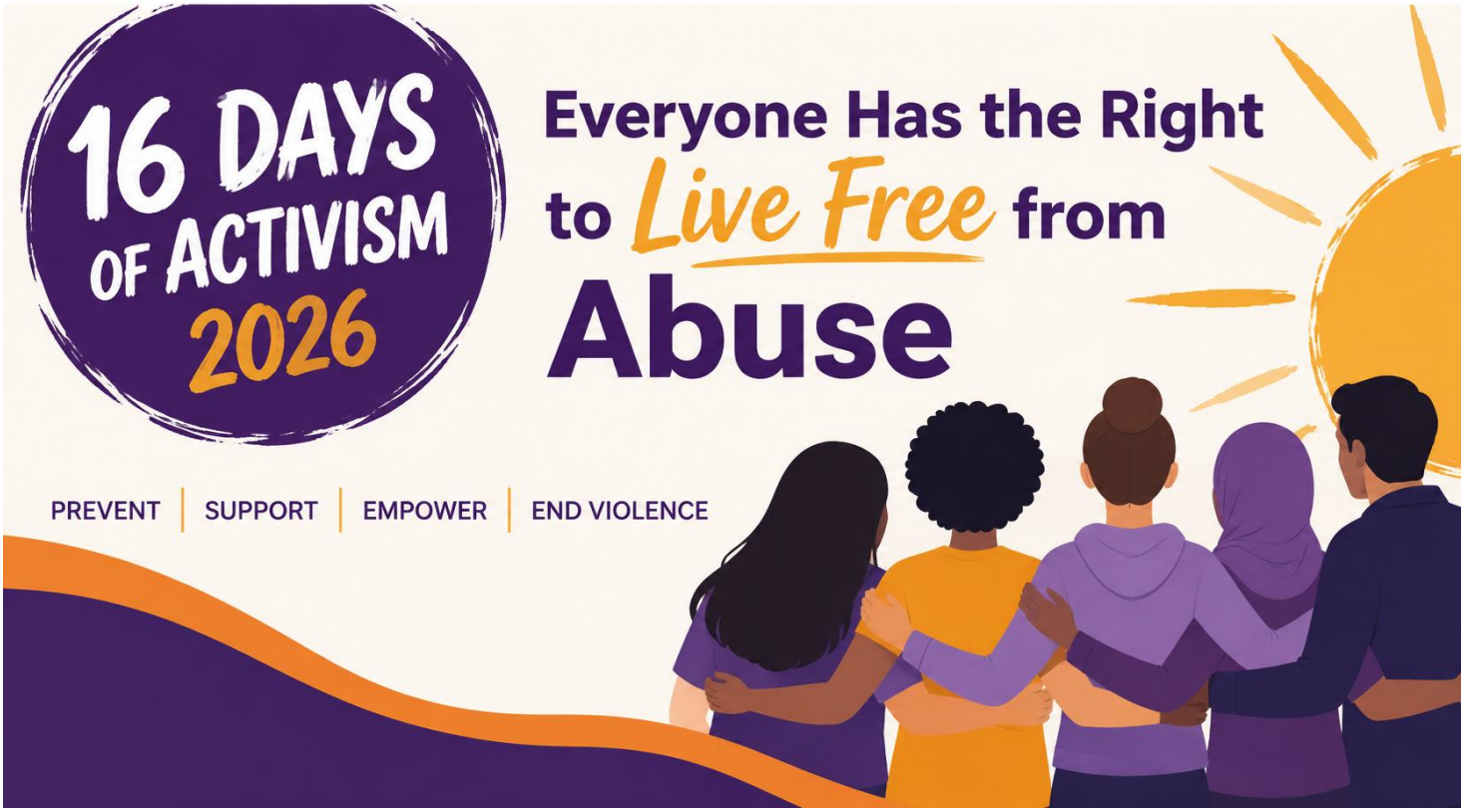
Christmas is also a time when we can make a difference by looking out for those around us.
If you see someone who appears vulnerable, distressed or in need of help, don't simply assume someone else will step in. Where it is safe to do so, offer assistance or alert venue staff, security or the appropriate authorities.
Check in with elderly or vulnerable neighbours, particularly those who may be spending Christmas alone. A friendly conversation or a little extra support can make a real difference.
Neighbourhood Watch is about people, not just crime. By being aware of our surroundings, sharing information and looking out for one another, we can help create safer, stronger and more connected communities.

If you see something suspicious, report it. In an emergency, or where a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger, call 999. For non-emergency police matters, contact Greater Manchester Police on 101 or report online.

Have a Safe and Happy Christmas

Enjoy the shopping, the celebrations and the time spent with family and friends. A few simple precautions, a little forward planning and consideration for others can help make the festive season safer for everyone.

Follow our social media channels for daily tips and advice on how to keep yourself, your family and your property safe on the run up to the Christmas holidays. Links to our social media channels are below.



Every year, from 25 November to 10 December, the international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign brings people and organisations together to raise awareness, challenge harmful behaviour and call for action to end violence and abuse.

The campaign begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and concludes on Human Rights Day. Its purpose is to highlight the scale of violence, encourage meaningful action and promote a world where everyone can live safely, free from intimidation, exploitation and abuse.

While women and girls experience gender-based violence disproportionately, it is important to recognise that abuse is not exclusive to one gender. Men and boys can also be victims, and their experiences deserve to be recognised, understood and taken seriously.

At Bolton Neighbourhood Watch, we believe everyone has the right to feel safe, respected and protected, regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, background or circumstances.

Abuse isn't always visible

When people think about abuse, they may picture physical violence. However, abuse takes many forms, and not all leave visible injuries.

It can include:

- **Domestic abuse:** Physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual abuse within relationships or families.
- **Coercive control:** A pattern of behaviour designed to dominate, intimidate or restrict another person's freedom.
- **Stalking:** Repeated unwanted attention, following, monitoring or contact that causes fear or distress.
- **Harassment:** Threatening, intimidating or unwanted behaviour, whether face to face or online.
- **Sexual violence:** Sexual activity without freely given consent, including sexual assault and rape.
- **Online abuse:** Threatening messages, cyberstalking, image-based abuse, impersonation and digital harassment.
- **Exploitation and grooming:** Manipulating, deceiving or taking advantage of someone for personal, financial or sexual gain.

These experiences can affect anyone. Men experiencing domestic abuse, for example, may feel particularly reluctant to speak out because of stereotypes about masculinity or fears that they will not be believed. Similarly,

people in LGBTQ+ relationships may face additional barriers to seeking help.

We must challenge the misconceptions that prevent people from recognising abuse or accessing support.

Abuse is never acceptable, whoever the victim or perpetrator may be.

Recognising the signs and looking out for one another

Sometimes the first indication that someone is experiencing abuse is a change in their behaviour.

They may become withdrawn, anxious or isolated, appear frightened of upsetting someone, lose contact with friends and family or seem unusually concerned about their movements, finances or communications being monitored.

There may be no obvious signs at all.

Friends, relatives, colleagues and neighbours can sometimes be the first people to notice that something isn't right.

If someone confides in you, listen without judgement, take their concerns seriously and reassure them that the abuse is not their fault. Avoid making assumptions, asking why they stayed or pressuring them into decisions they may not be ready to make.

You don't need to be an expert to make a difference. Sometimes being approachable, listening and helping someone find the right support is an important first step.

However, never put yourself at risk by confronting someone you suspect of being abusive or attempting to investigate the situation yourself.

Speaking out and seeking support

One of the biggest barriers to tackling abuse is the fear of speaking out.

People may worry about not being believed, being judged, facing further abuse or not knowing where to turn. Others may not recognise that what they are experiencing is abuse.

It is important that everyone knows help is available, regardless of gender or circumstances.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, there are organisations that can offer confidential advice, guidance and practical support.

Some useful contacts include:

- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline (Refuge):** 0808 2000 247
- **Men's Advice Line:** 0808 801 0327
- **Galop LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Helpline:** 0800 999 5428
- **Rape Crisis England & Wales:** 0808 500 2222
- **Victim Support:** 0808 16 89 111
- **Childline:** 0800 1111

You can also contact Greater Manchester Police on 101 for non-emergency matters. If someone is in immediate danger, always call 999.

You do not necessarily have to be ready to make a police report before seeking specialist advice.

What can we do as a community?

Ending abuse is not solely the responsibility of the police, government or specialist organisations. We all have a part to play.

We can help by challenging harmful attitudes, promoting respectful relationships, recognising warning signs, supporting those affected and encouraging people to seek help.

As a Neighbourhood Watch community, we understand the importance of people looking out for one another. Our role is not to investigate incidents or intervene in situations that could put someone at risk, but to help raise awareness, share information and encourage people to access appropriate support.

We also have an opportunity to challenge the idea that abuse is simply a private matter. Violence, intimidation, harassment and exploitation affect individuals, families and entire communities.

Building safer neighbourhoods means creating environments where people feel comfortable raising concerns, where victims are not judged and where abusive behaviour is not ignored or excused.

16 days of activism – 365 days of action

The 16 Days of Activism campaign is an important reminder that awareness must lead to action.

Over these 16 days, we are encouraging residents to think about the different forms abuse can take, challenge misconceptions and consider how they can help make their communities safer.

But this conversation should not end on 10 December.

At Bolton Neighbourhood Watch, we believe safer communities are built through awareness, understanding and collective action. Looking out for one another, recognising concerns and helping people find support are things we can do throughout the year.

Everyone deserves to live without fear. Everyone deserves to be heard. Everyone deserves support.

Let's continue working together to make Bolton a safer, stronger and more connected place to live.



Another way to stay informed, connected and involved in your local community

Bolton Neighbourhood Watch is pleased to announce the launch of its new WhatsApp Channel, providing another convenient way for coordinators, members and residents to keep up to date with news, community safety information and Neighbourhood Watch activities across the borough.

The launch is part of our ongoing strategy to modernise our communication channels, improve our reach and responsiveness, and encourage greater community participation. By introducing WhatsApp alongside our existing communication methods, we hope to reach more people, including those who may not be registered with Neighbourhood Alert or regularly use Facebook.

Why a WhatsApp Channel?
WhatsApp Channels offer a simple way for organisations to share information with an unlimited number of followers. Unlike traditional WhatsApp groups, they operate as one-way broadcast channels, meaning only administrators can publish updates.
We intend to use our channel to:

- Share important messages, news and alerts that coordinators and residents might otherwise miss.
- Circulate crime prevention advice, community safety information and topical campaigns.
- Share news, activities and updates normally published through our social media channels.
- Reach people who may not regularly use our other communication platforms.
- Provide another convenient way for people to stay connected with Bolton Neighbourhood Watch.

The channel will complement, rather than replace, Neighbourhood Alert, our newsletter and existing social media platforms. Each has an important role in helping us communicate with different audiences across Bolton.

Your privacy and how it works
If you have not used WhatsApp Channels before, there are a few things worth knowing:

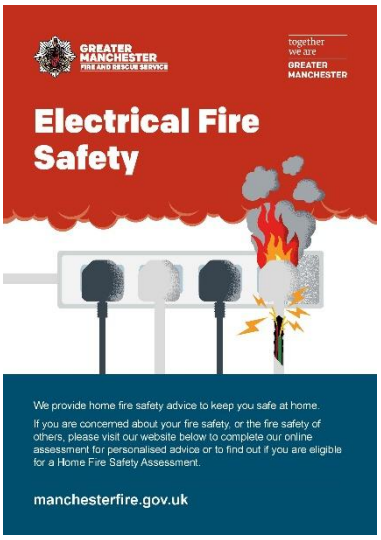
- **Your privacy is protected:** Other followers and channel administrators cannot see your phone number, profile name or profile picture simply because you follow the channel.
- **One-way communication:** Only administrators can publish updates. Followers can react to posts using emojis and participate in polls where available.
- **Separate from your chats:** Channels appear under the Updates tab in WhatsApp and do not sit alongside your private conversations.
- **Notifications:** Notifications are muted by default. You can switch them on if you want to be notified whenever a new update is published.
- **30-day history:** Channel updates are stored for up to 30 days before disappearing from WhatsApp's servers.
- **Public information:** Channel updates are not end-to-end encrypted by default, so we will only share information intended for public distribution.

Join our WhatsApp Channel
We would love you to join us during this initial soft launch and help us establish this additional communication route for Bolton.

You can find the channel by opening WhatsApp, selecting the **Updates** tab and searching for **Bolton Neighbourhood Watch**. As this is a newly launched channel, it may not immediately appear in search results.
The easiest way to join is to use the link below:
https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VbDlscy0AgWGSPp4j633
Once you have opened the link, select **Follow** to receive our updates.

Stay connected – follow us on social media
Our WhatsApp Channel is just one part of our wider communication network. You can also keep up with Bolton Neighbourhood Watch through our existing social media pages:
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BoltonNeighbourhoodWatch
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/boltonneighbourhoodwatch

Please help us spread the word by sharing our WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram links with your scheme members, neighbours, friends and local residents.



Lithium batteries power many of the devices we use every day, including phones, tablets, e-bikes, e-scooters, vapes and power tools. While they are generally safe, a failing battery can quickly lead to a serious fire.

The good news is that lithium batteries do not usually fail without warning.

Please look out for these key warning signs:

- Excessive heat
- Swelling or bulging
- Unusual or strong smells
- Hissing, popping or cracking noises
- Smoke

If you notice any of these warning signs, stop using or charging the battery immediately if it is safe to do so.

If a lithium battery starts smoking or catches fire:

Get out, Stay out and Call 999.

Never put yourself at risk by attempting to tackle a lithium battery fire yourself. These fires can develop rapidly, produce toxic smoke and reignite without warning.

Knowing the signs and acting quickly could help prevent a serious fire and keep you and your family safe.



www.ourwatch.org.uk or email info@boltonneighbourhoodwatch.org