

Privacy online myth buster

The importance of registering with National Neighbourhood Watch:

Registering with National Neighbourhood Watch is important. It means that if someone goes to the national website looking for their local scheme, the right one will show up. Not being registered will mean that inevitably you will miss the opportunity to get new members on board.

There are many fears around registering for different websites, but as national NHW is a community crime prevention and public protection website you can be assured any data you enter is safe. National NHW follow data protection laws, and have a section on their website explaining all this.

National Neighbourhood Watch does not store 'cookies' which help them determine a user's location so they can find their local group for longer than the time you are on the website. They also assure that any other information entered, such as your name, email address, phone number, will be stored securely and will not be shared with anyone else.

Your data online is really like a needle in a haystack, and you are probably just as likely to be subject to identity theft online as you are to be a subject of fraud in real life. There is always a risk, but it is minimal, and online there are more ways to protect you than there are in real life, and more ways to resolve any situations that occur.

The Data Protection Act (DPA) was originally introduced in the 1980s and it was updated and strengthened due to the increase of online data in 1998 and again in 2003. The DPA covers personal data which includes when you put in your name, email address and phone number to register on online forms. It covers how this information can be used and requires organisations to ask you if they can share with third parties –

NHW do not share data with anyone.

You have the right to ask organisations what data they are holding about you, and to get rightful compensation should your data be used in a way other than for what you agreed to.

The Information Commission also has lots of advice and information.

So although there will be horror stories, the system is geared to protect you and your data. When it comes to registering on National NHW, making sure it is as easy as possible for as many to get involved as possible is crucial, as this will inevitably make our neighbourhoods safer.