

CASE HISTORY



Date:	1 st September 2004	Ref:	UK-003
Title:	Rebuilding a city centre community		
Subject:	Plymstock, Devon		

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The Broadway has seen several improvements as a result of an overarching campaign set up by the Centre Manager, Mr Smith to help both retailers and residents. The 'Lookout Campaign' launched Broadway's inclusion in the Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC) initiative where known offenders are barred from retail locations. It also saw the introduction of Neighbourhood Watch to the area and the trial of new security technologies. Retailers have been testing walkie-talkies and six residents have been testing the AlertBox devices.

"We looked at CCTV but the cost of installation and running equated to hundreds of thousands of pounds," said Mr Smith. "Compared to that, AlertBoxes, which use the eyes and ears of residents and accurately record when an alarm was raised, are much more affordable. At the same time they give people the feeling they are able to do something positive themselves to fight crime without putting themselves at risk."

Sandra Calvert, Active Communities Co-ordinator, employed by Devon & Cornwall Constabulary and a National Neighbourhood Watch Trustee, was responsible for introducing Neighbourhood Watch as part of the 'Lookout Campaign'. She says it is the joint action of the community and the multi-agency approach, which has set the scene for the successful trial of the AlertBox technology.

"In talking to the residents, it's clear they feel there is a place for the AlertBoxes in the community and have found them very useful," said Mrs Calvert. "Importantly, they appear to be reducing the fear of crime."

"Now, because the whole community is working together and we've made it really public that this is happening, it's made a real difference. Residents are no longer afraid to report things as they can do so quite covertly. They're working quietly alongside the police, who are taking steps to identify the real offenders – rather than just kids making a noise.

“The really big difference is that, before, people didn’t know their next-door neighbours – but now they’re talking to each other.”

The AlertBox device is a robust box about the size of a paperback book, which allows neighbours to send each other simple messages of warning or requests for help. Run on mains electricity or batteries, it is operated by pressing a single button – ideal for the elderly or those nervous of technology.

Useful as a crime-prevention device, as neighbours can alert each other to nuisance callers or suspicious individuals in the vicinity, AlertBox also has the potential to save lives. When a 999 call is necessary because of an accident, fire, illness or an intruder, AlertBox can simultaneously summon a neighbour – making full use of the precious minutes before the emergency services arrive.

AlertBox-networked communities also benefit from eye-catching posters and stickers, which will work as a deterrent to troublemakers or criminals.