

Asbo TV helps residents watch out

Steven Swinford

RESIDENTS of a trendy London neighbourhood are to become the first in Britain to receive "Asbo TV" — television beamed live to their homes from CCTV cameras on the surrounding streets.

As part of the £12m scheme funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, residents of Shoreditch in the East End will also be able to compare characters they see behaving suspiciously with an on-screen "rogues' gallery" of local recipients of anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs).

Viewers will then be able to use an anonymous e-mail tip-off system to report to the police anyone they see breaching an Asbo or committing a crime.

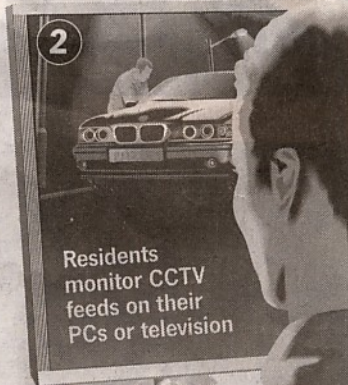
The area, home to celebrities such as Rachel Whiteread, the artist, has been picked because it is among the country's poorest.

The CCTV channel is part of a network being set up in the area as part of John Prescott's New Deal for Communities to regenerate poor districts.

"The CCTV element is part curiosity, like a 21st-century version of Big Brother, and partly about security," said



Network of 500 CCTV cameras keep watch over streets



Residents monitor CCTV feeds on their PCs or television



They report criminal activity or those breaching Asbos to police

Atul Hatwell, of the Shoreditch Digital Bridge project. "This is a much more intensive neighbourhood watch, where everyone can be involved in the fight against crime."

All 20,000 borough residents will be offered a free set-top box, which will enable them to access 55 digital channels, and a high-speed internet connection.

In addition to conventional channels and the CCTV, services include a health channel that will provide online diagnoses and allow residents to book GP appointments, and an education channel.

Residents are being asked to pay about £3.50 a week for the full service, including

local phone calls. A total of 1,000 residents on the Haberdasher and Charles Square estates will be offered the system next month before it is expanded across the area.

Luke Evans, 27, a marketing adviser who lives on the Charles Square estate, believes the scheme will help deter criminals. "If residents can report crime from the safety of their own living rooms it's got to be a good thing," he said.

However, Andrew Duff, a Conservative councillor, raised concerns about the system being adopted by burglars to check unoccupied properties. "It could be used by dishonest people as well," he said.