

## **Nabohjælp - the new 'Neighbourhood Watch' in Denmark**

On 27 November 2012, the Danish Crime Prevention Council (DKR) launched the new neighbourhood watch concept, Nabohjælp, in cooperation with the Danish organisation TrygFonden (TF).

The aim of the updated concept and the supporting information campaign is to create greater awareness among Danish citizens of the benefits of organised neighbourhood watch schemes and to encourage them to take more responsibility for crime prevention and security in their neighbourhoods.

### **1. Background**

In recent years, Denmark has seen an increase in domestic burglaries. In 2009 this peaked with over 48,000 burglaries, leaving Denmark in the undesirable position of being the country with the second-highest burglary rate in Europe.

International research has documented that organised neighbourhood watch efforts can help reduce burglaries, vandalism and incidents of physical violence by as much as 26 per cent. Against this background, DKR and TrygFonden decided to launch a project that re-introduces neighbourhood watch schemes in Denmark, thus making it easier for Denmark's residents to organise them.

DKR launched the first neighbourhood watch concept in 1986. Aside from stickers for doors and windows and street signs, however, the schemes were based on informal arrangements rather than on organised neighbourhood watch programmes. Thus, Danes are familiar with the concept of neighbourhood watch on a small scale, such as arranging for their neighbours to 'keep an eye out' when they are on holiday, but the randomness of these informal arrangements diminishes their effectiveness.

### **2. Goals**

The five-year project, running from 2012 to 2016, seeks to reduce the high number of burglaries and to empower communities to prevent burglaries and create safer neighbourhoods. Besides preventing crime, organised neighbourhood watch networks can increase social cohesion in residential areas and therefore impact positively on the general sense of community safety. Participation in neighbourhood watch networks helps boost the sense of community spirit and gives individuals a positive return in the form of greater social capital.



The project has four objectives:

- Giving citizens a sense of control over their own lives
- Increasing well-being in local communities and neighbourhoods
- Acting as a deterrent for criminals by increasing the risk of apprehension
- Getting burglars to abandon their criminal activities

These elements are interdependent, and addressing all four creates a strong basis for achieving the full effect of evidence-based neighbourhood watch schemes.

### **3. The modernisation and organisation of Nabohjælp**

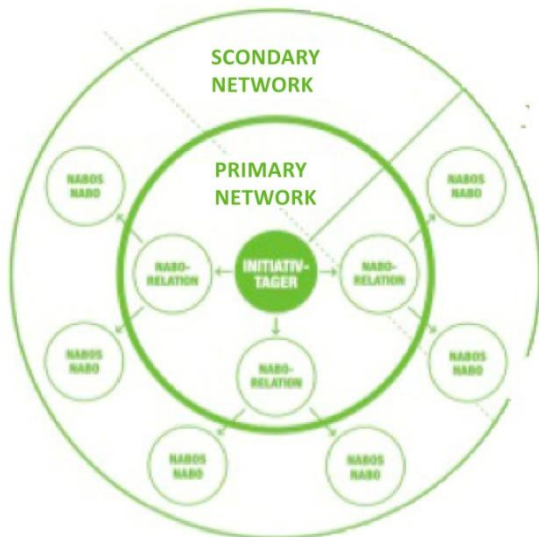
The Danish Nabohjælp campaign focuses on the benefits of active neighbourhood watch schemes. The project communicates the message that through simple tasks and general community awareness citizens can make a big difference when it comes to preventing crime and creating security in their neighbourhoods.

However, in addition to communicating general information about how to prevent crime in the home and the local community and how to start neighbourhood watch initiatives, the project pivots on modernising the neighbourhood watch concept in Denmark. This modernisation builds on making it easy for citizens to organise, participate in and maintain neighbourhood watch schemes in their neighbourhoods.

#### **3.1 A digital neighbourhood tool**

In order to do so DKR and TF developed and launched a digital tool available via the website [www.nabohjælp.dk](http://www.nabohjælp.dk) and an app called 'Nabohjælp'. Citizens can sign up for the online tool via the website or the app, alternatively via mobile phone or by calling DKR.

Users have to sign up individually and thereby gain access to two different networks – the primary network and the secondary network – a holiday planner and a local warning system. The digital platform is developed to make it easier for the users to carry out and maintain their neighbourhood watch.



*Illustration no. 1: The primary and secondary network, how they grow and how neighbours can connect in many small networks*

### 3.2 The primary network

When creating a profile on the new 'Nabohjælp' platform, the user has to start building his or her online network of 'neighbourhood helpers'. Users decide for themselves whom they want to include in their network and invite them to join via the system, using e-mail addresses or mobile phone numbers. A user's network does not exclusively have to consist of immediate neighbours - it can also include people whom the user knows and trusts in the nearby neighbourhood. DKR recommends having four to seven active helpers in a network.

### 3.3 Holiday planner

The holiday planner is part of the new Nabohjælp platform/tool. It enables users to enter holidays or other days when they will be away from home. DKR has created a secure system where users only share personal information and holiday plans with those they have personally approved. No outsiders can gain access to the planner, so these entries are shared solely with the neighbours, family and friends in the user's primary network.

Each user's network is completely individual. For example 'neighbourhood helper 1' and 'neighbourhood helper 2' in a user's network do not have to be connected, as each neighbourhood helper can create his or her own personal networks. See illustration no. 1.

When a user goes on holiday, the system sends out a message via mobile phone or e-mail to the primary network, informing helpers of the user's departure. The system automatically

sends reminders to keep an eye on the empty home, as well as providing tips on how to disguise the user's absence and ensure all is in order. These reminders are sent every other day. The system also enables neighbours to report back to the user, letting him or her know that everything is okay back home.



*Illustration no. 2: The holiday planner and the automatic message system*

Every user has to register an emergency contact so that neighbourhood helpers have someone to reach in case of problems such as a burglary or a flooded basement. This contact often has a key to the user's home and can help neighbours, police or workmen take care of things in case of an emergency.

### 3.4 The secondary network

The new digital tool also consists of a secondary network that serves as a local warning system. The individual user decides the size of this network and how it is to be used.

The system is anonymous, and the specific users that have joined Nabohjælp cannot be seen. This means that potential criminals cannot use the system to see which households are part of the organised Nabohjælp system or not. However, via the secondary network the user can see the number of households using Nabohjælp within a two-kilometre radius. Via this network the user can receive messages if another household in the network notices any suspicious activity, vandalism or burglaries in the neighbourhood. This enables users to take precautions and puts the community on better alert, thus making perpetrators easier to trace and stop.

#### 4. Dialogue and information gathering

By asking citizens to join the new system, DKR gives users access to a neighbourhood watch tool but also ensures that other relevant crime prevention initiatives and information are communicated. DKR can also register the location of neighbourhood watch networks and thereby collect information relevant to DKR, the police and municipalities – now and in the future. DKR gains access to valuable statistics on where in the country neighbourhood watch areas are located, statistics that can be compared against burglary figures.

#### 5. Official logo and materials

The modernisation of Nabohjælp in Denmark included the development of a new logo.



*Illustration no. 3: Old and new logo*

The new logo has a simpler design and is easier to read. Even though the Danish word for neighbourhood watch – ‘nabohjælp’ – has letters only used in the Danish alphabet, DKR believes it sends a clear signal internationally. When joining the system, users automatically receive a welcome letter consisting of stickers for doors and mailboxes, a brochure with further information as well as material for inviting neighbourhood helpers for whom the user might not have a phone number or email address.



*Illustration: Welcome letter: stickers, brochure and postcards*

The welcome letter and materials signal that DKR's new system is an official and exclusive tool, thus creating further reason to organise neighbourhood watch initiatives through DKR instead of continuing informal arrangements.

## 6. Cross-sector cooperation

The police and municipalities have played an essential role in re-launching the neighbourhood watch concept in Denmark. DKR has experienced significant benefits from establishing anchor networks and involving local professional stakeholders. This is primarily because they have provided DKR with valuable knowledge concerning existing activities in the field, but they have also proved to be important ambassadors for the campaign. Our contact with these stakeholders has secured local support for the campaign through their aid in communicating DKR's messages and the new concept, motivating citizens to join Nabohjælp and supporting the efforts and interests of citizens in organising neighbourhood help.

## 7. Creating awareness

When the new Nabohjælp tool was launched in November 2012 an elaborate media campaign was initiated to support it. With online ads, TV spots and an extensive press campaign, the new Nabohjælp received extensive coverage throughout 2012. DKR and TrygFonden timed the launch close to the Christmas holiday because Danes are very aware that this is a particularly active period for burglars. Again the aim was not to scare Danes with burglary statistics, but to make them aware of how little it takes to prevent burglaries. Besides continuing to use the holiday periods in Denmark as a platform for DKR's press and communication activities, the communication strategy – now and in the future – also includes the use of the new online system and the statistics it gathers to communicate directly with the user. With the data DKR collects from the system and a tool developed for dialogue marketing, DKR can communicate with users. This allows DKR to educate users regarding how to use the system and what other measures they can take to prevent crime and create security in their neighbourhoods.