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A Neighbourly Nation: Through the keyhole

A report from Co-op Insurance and Neighbourhood Watch





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Executive summary



Caroline Hunter
Head of Home Insurance, Co-op



Neighbourly behaviour has always been the foundation of a strong community, from having someone over for a cup of tea to helping out with odd jobs. But, with busier lives, the rise of social media and virtual relationships, has what we class as a truly good neighbour changed?

To understand what makes a great neighbour, Co-op asked its members to determine what qualities people look for in a good neighbour in today's society.

This revealed four characteristics that are the main indicators of a good neighbour: looking out for each other, being sociable and friendly, being practically helpful and showing you're kind, caring and respectful.

This report from Co-op Insurance and Neighbourhood Watch takes a look through the keyhole at the nation's attitudes towards neighbours.

At Co-op Insurance we strive to play a key role in communities, while working closely with Neighbourhood Watch to promote and improve safety. By encouraging people to get to know those living nearby to them, we want to help create more friendly communities, which we hope will help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.



David Huse, OBE
Chair of Neighbourhood Watch



As a grassroots organisation with 2.3 million member households, similar to Co-op Insurance, our aim is to create safer communities where local people look out for each other.

While the research illustrates plenty of good examples of people looking after their neighbours on a daily basis, perhaps more can be done to strengthen the meaningful relationships that form the cornerstone of a close-knit community.

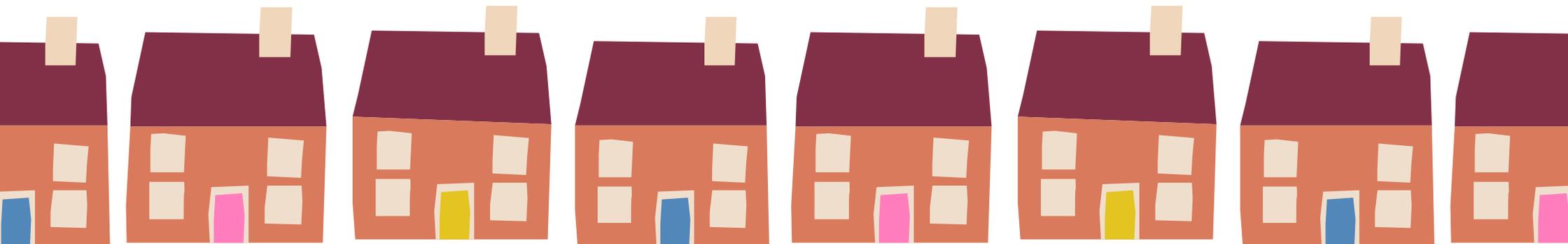
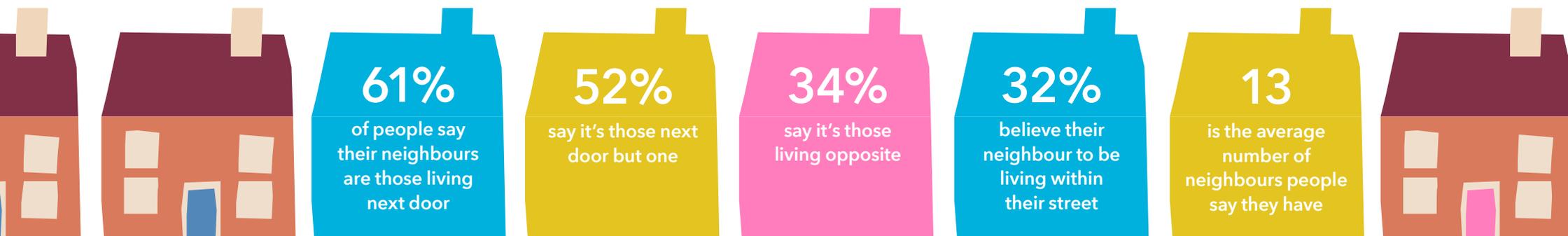
This report reveals that just 15% of people have invited their neighbours over to their home and almost a quarter (24%) think they're a good neighbour because they keep themselves to themselves.

Through asking the question of what really makes a good neighbour, we want to bring neighbours together to create strong, friendly, and active communities. Ultimately creating a more caring society.

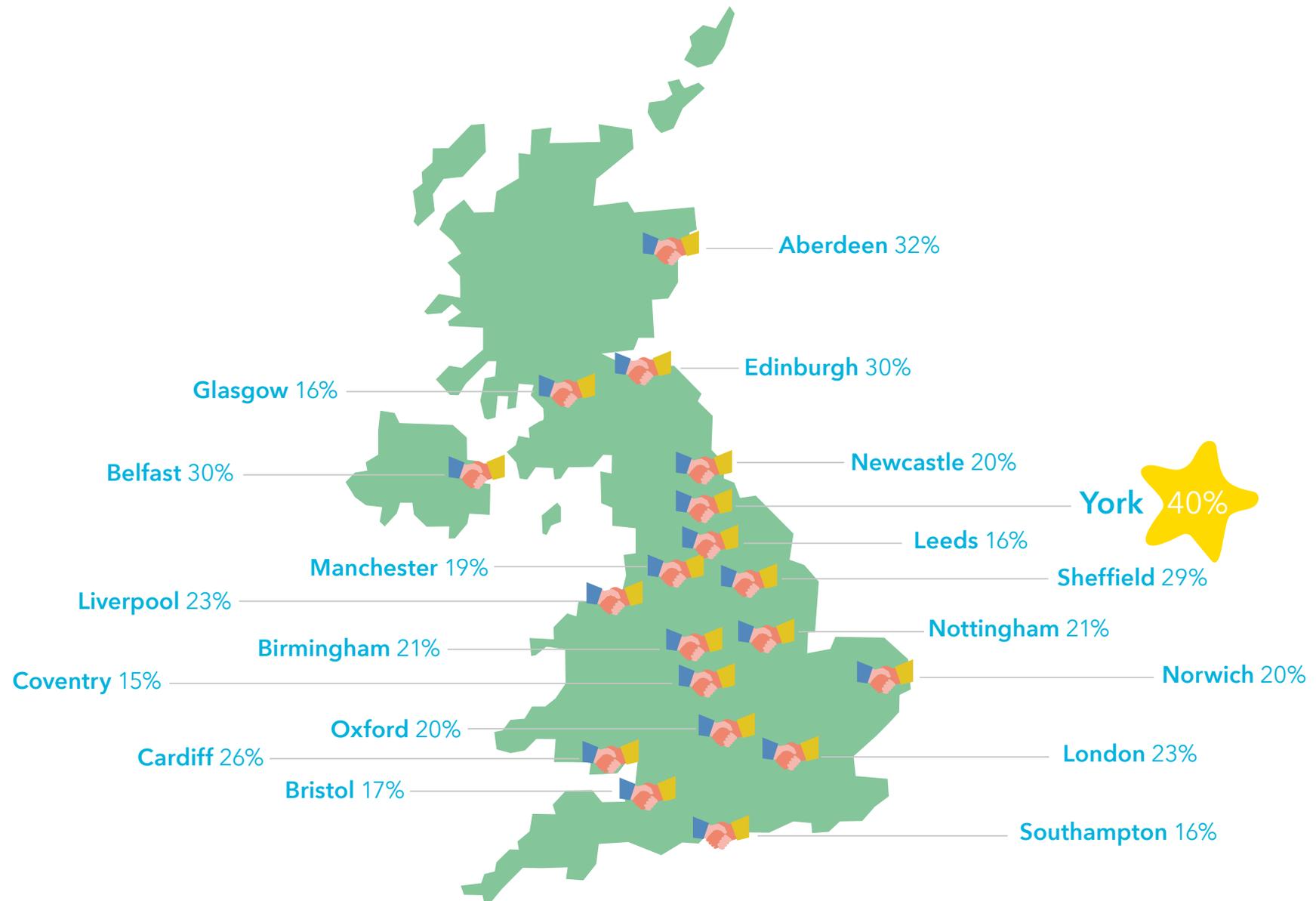
Who's your neighbour?

Whether it's living in a row of terraced houses or having someone who's a field away, 37% of homeowners and renters in the UK say they know most of their neighbours, 22% know all of their neighbours and 34% know just some of those close by.

Who do we consider to be our neighbours?



How many households know all their neighbours?



Traits of a modern neighbour

When asked what type of relationship people would like to have with their neighbours, 36% said they'd like them to look out for each other.

According to Co-op members, the top traits of a good neighbour include:

- Looking out for each other
- Being sociable and friendly
- Being practically helpful
- Being kind, caring and respectful

In days gone by, neighbourly behaviour was typically seen as having a chat over the garden fence or popping round to lend a hand. However, with the rise of working families, today's qualities of a good neighbour are shifting more towards offering practical help with aspects of modern life - such as taking in parcels for people or keeping an eye on their property while they're out in the day time.

Two in five people (41%) think they are a reasonably good neighbour and only 2% do not think they're good neighbours.

What does the UK public say makes a good neighbour?

63%

Taking in parcels for neighbours



51%

Being quiet and courteous



49%

Keeping an eye on neighbours' property when they're not there



38%

Not being nosy



38%

Being courteous about where you park your car



34%

Taking bins out for your neighbour



31%

Checking everything's okay if an alarm is going off

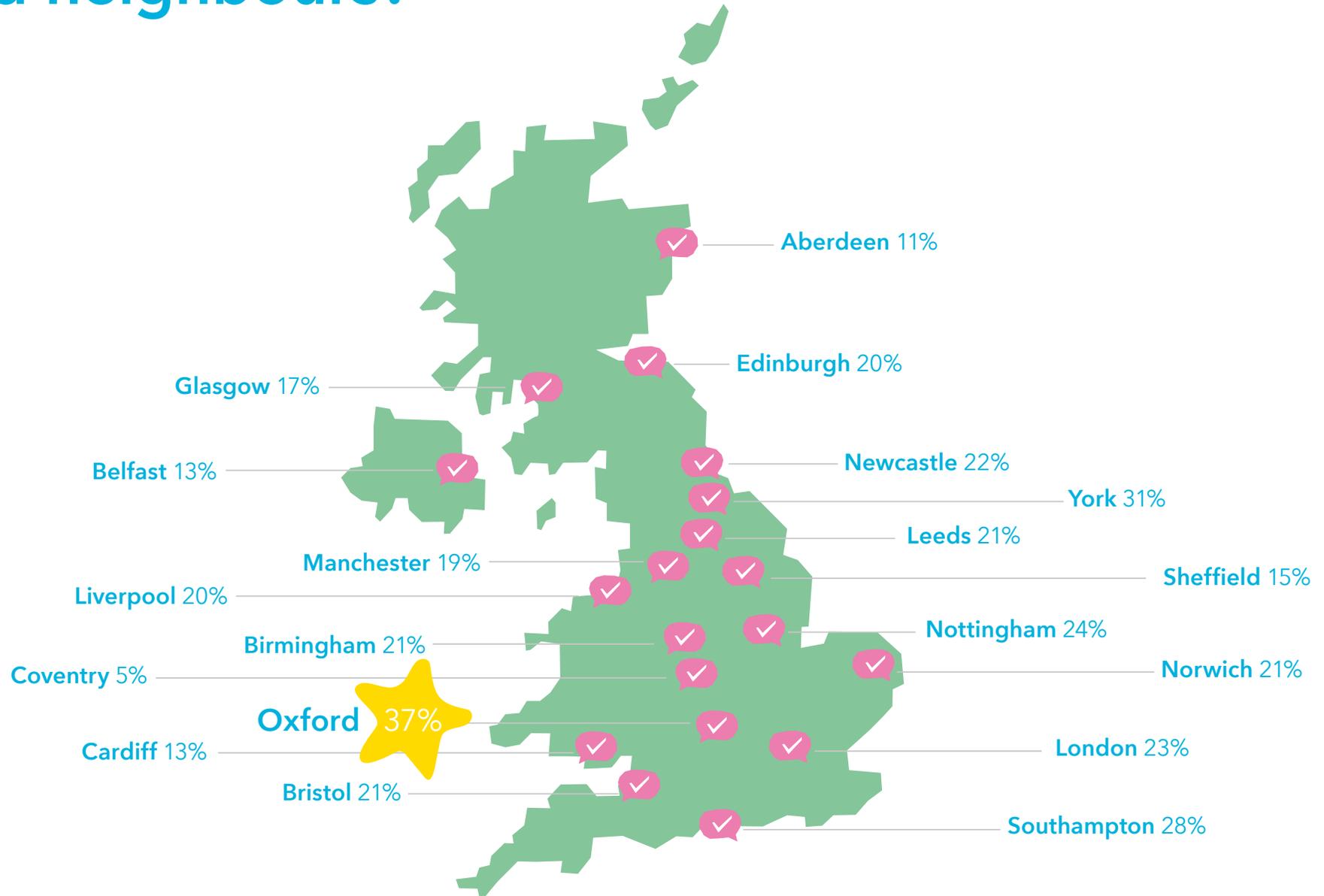


26%

Looking out of the window to see which house or car an alarm is coming from



Where have people been told they're good neighbours?



Neighbours or friends?

More than half of UK homeowners (54%) know most of their neighbours by name with more than a quarter (29%) trusting their neighbours with a door key.

However, a third of people, (31%) want to be friendlier with their neighbours even though roughly the same amount (35%) say they are already good friends with those who are living close by.

One in 10 (10%) believe they have a worse relationship with their neighbours than they did five years ago, with a quarter of these (26%) saying that their neighbours are less courteous.

While communities appear to be looking out for each other by doing daily tasks such as taking out the bins or minding parcels, as a nation, perhaps we could focus more on strengthening meaningful relationships?

54%

know most of their neighbours

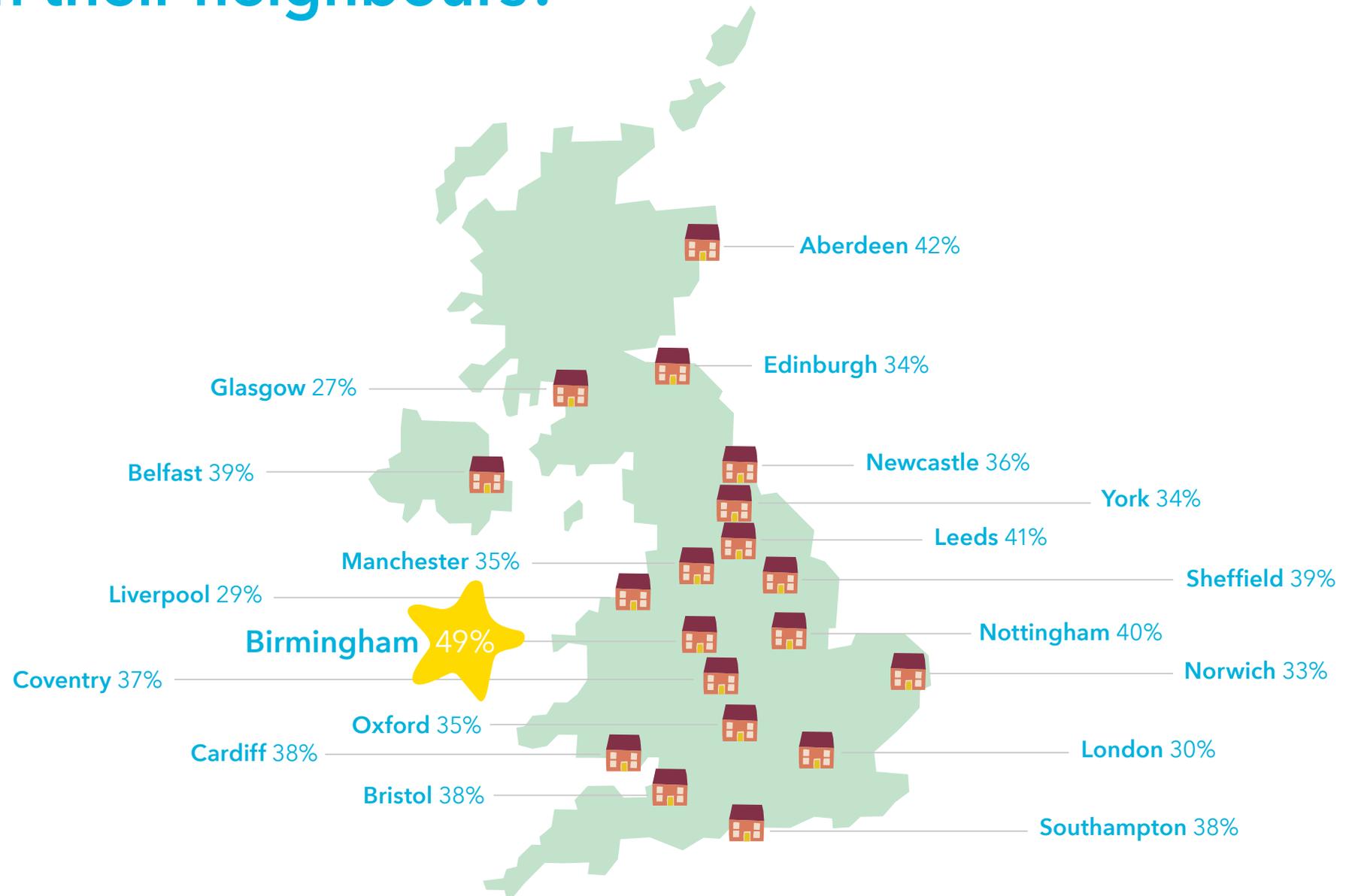


31%

want to be friendlier with their neighbours



How many households say they're good friends with their neighbours?

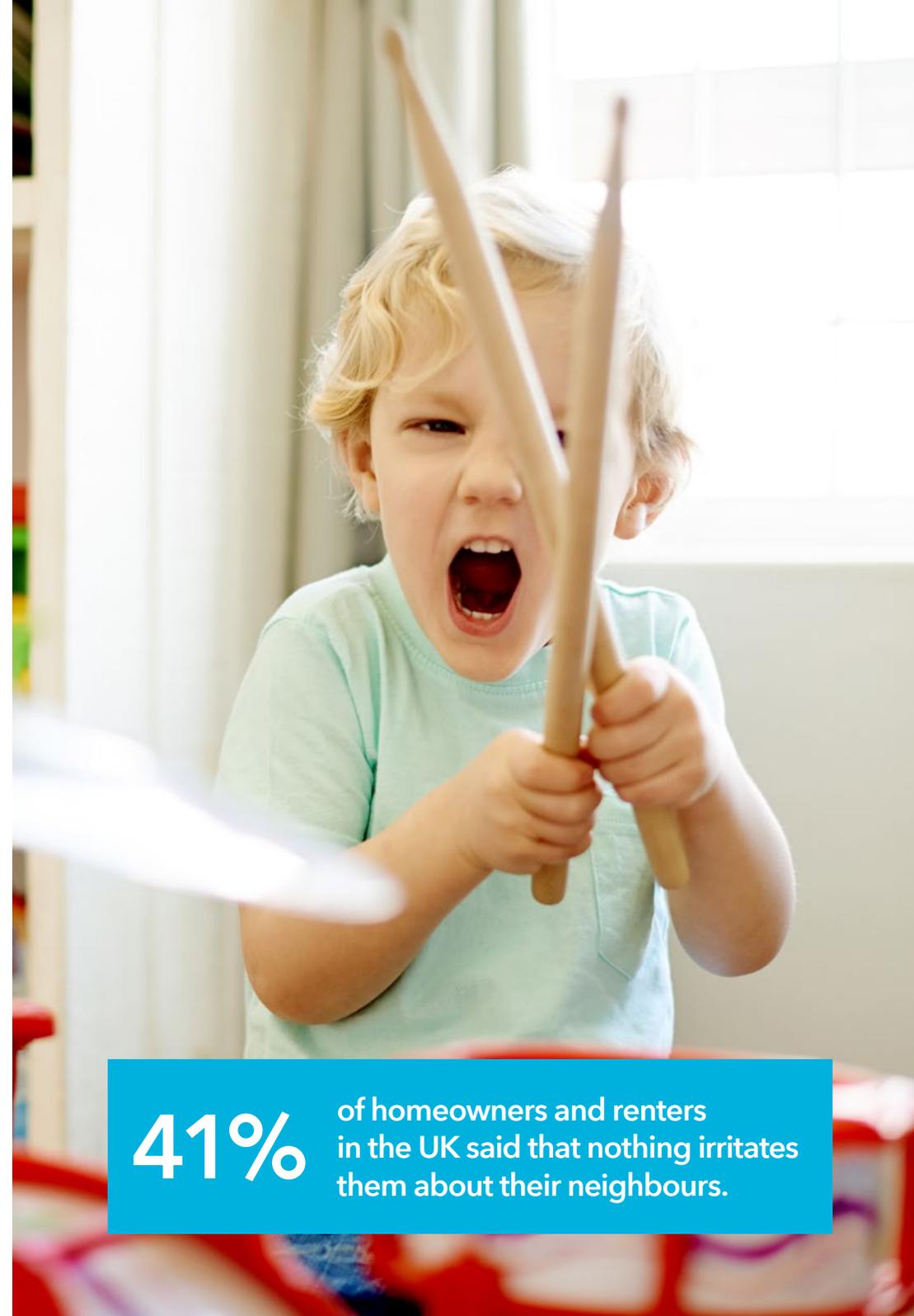
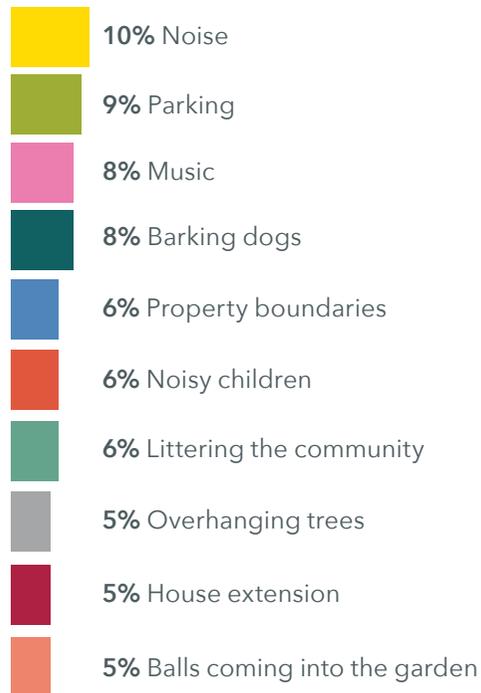


Neighbour disputes

As the report has revealed so far, neighbour relationships across the UK are generally positive, however this is not always the case.

In fact, two in five people (45%) have had a disagreement with their neighbour. Not everyone is neighbourly all the time; more than a quarter of adults have had a party and played loud music after 11pm (28%). The thing people find most irritating about their neighbours is where they park their car (14% think this). However, 41% of homeowners and renters in the UK said that nothing irritates them about their neighbours.

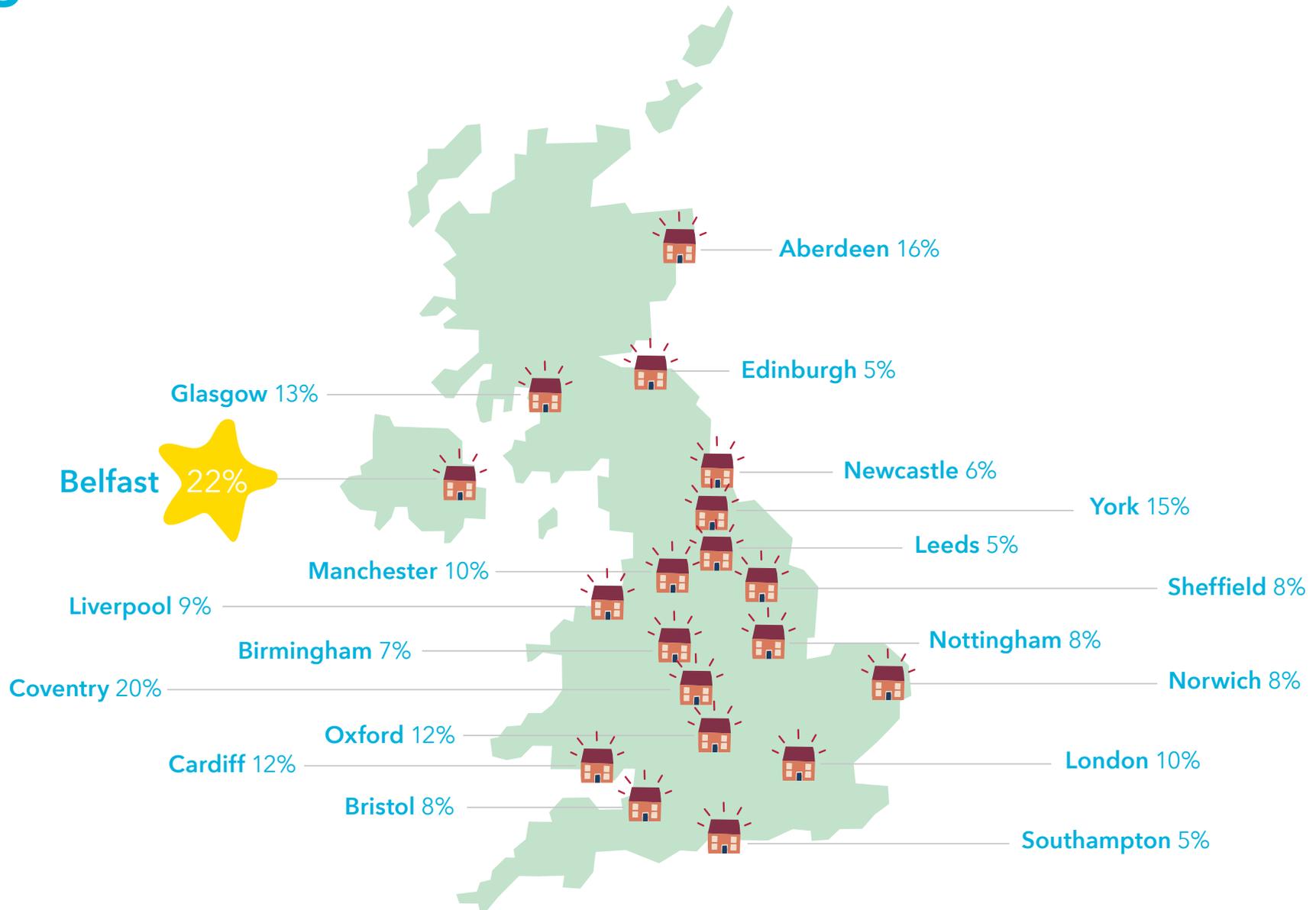
Top 10 neighbour disagreements:



41%

of homeowners and renters in the UK said that nothing irritates them about their neighbours.

How many households have had disagreements over noise?



Broadening your neighbour network

Brits may think that they're good neighbours, but what about the wider community?

Communities thrive when people come together, so we asked how many figures in the local community people are actually aware of.

The difference between how well we know our neighbours and how well we know the people who make up the foundations of communities around us is vast.

Perhaps a sign of the times, with people leading increasingly busy lives, the vast majority of adults don't know the names of people in their community outside of their close neighbour groups.



Neighbourhood Watch Area

Those who live in Neighbourhood Watch areas appear to be more interested in creating a friendly community.

Neighbourhood Watch Area		Non-Neighbourhood Watch Area
43%	Said they'd love to be friendlier with their neighbours	16%
20%	Have had neighbours over for dinner	11%
45%	Have had a street party with their neighbours	12%

24% of UK adults do not know the names of the main figures in their local community.

90%

don't know the name of their milkman/woman

86%

don't know the name of their nearest baker

85%

don't know the name of their local Mayor

82%

don't know the name of their local butcher

82%

don't know the name of their school head teacher

76%

don't know the name of their postman/woman

74%

don't know the name of their local shopkeeper

62%

don't recognise the name of their local MP

Are neighbour relationships affected by renting or owning a property?

Over a fifth (22%) of homeowners have been told they are good neighbours, as have a similar amount of renters (20%)

So what are people's perceptions of themselves as neighbours?

Homeowners

16%

3%

31%

9%

Admit to complaining to their neighbour

Think they are a bad neighbour because they play loud music

Think they are a bad neighbour because they don't speak to those living nearby

Think they're bad neighbours because they're not courteous towards their neighbours

Renters

8%

13%

54%

21%



Neighbours create community

Being open to improving neighbourly behaviour can impact the strength of communities.

We want to highlight what makes a good neighbour to have a positive effect on communities across the UK, encouraging a more connected, happier, stronger, and ultimately safer nation-wide community.

Here are our top tips on how to be a good neighbour:

- **Look out for each other** – Keep an eye on your neighbours' home when they're out, or on holiday
- **Be sociable and friendly** – Welcome new neighbours to the community, and try to be warm and friendly when you can
- **Be practically helpful** – Take parcels in, or put bins out for your neighbours when they're not around. And, if you've got the skills, help your neighbours with things like DIY or gardening
- **Be kind, caring and respectful** – Be thoughtful and think about the impact of your actions on your neighbours. Be friendly, without being nosy



Rebecca Birkbeck,
Director Community
Engagement, Co-op

“We care about wellbeing in our local communities and want to help people create stronger, happier, healthier places to live.

“Community isn't just about giving back money, it's about understanding what our communities need and helping people get actively involved to make them stronger.

“Both our Local Community Fund and Member Pioneers programme bring together people who share our passion to make great things happen. Through these initiatives, our colleagues, members, and local causes come together to find new ways to co-operate and get things done in our communities.

“This report highlights not only our attitudes towards our neighbours, but it shows that community isn't just about knowing who lives next door, it's about nurturing a place where we care about our neighbours and enhance the wellbeing of our communities.”

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Additional Information

We have a range of case studies available for media purposes. These include examples of one-off acts of neighbourly heroism, where neighbours have gone above and beyond being a good neighbour.

We've worked with our Co-op members to understand what they think makes a good neighbour and what being neighbourly is to them, whilst also carrying out consumer research to reveal what the nation really considers as a good neighbour.

Research conducted on behalf of Co-op Insurance by Atomik Research among 2,000 homeowners and renters across the UK in July 2018

About Co-op

The Co-op is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives with interests across food, funerals, insurance, legal services and an online electrical store. It has a clear purpose of championing a better way of doing business for you and your communities. Owned by millions of UK consumers, the Co-op operates 2,600 food stores, over 1,000 funeral homes and it provides products to over 5,100 other stores, including those run by independent co-operative societies and through its wholesale business, Nisa Retail Limited. It has more than 63,000 colleagues and an annual revenue of £9.5bn.

About Neighbourhood Watch

- 2.3 million households in England and Wales now identify as members of Neighbourhood Watch – the largest crime prevention community in Britain
- Neighbours join together to keep a watchful eye on the homes within their watch area and be a good neighbour to their vulnerable and elderly neighbours. Increasingly, with the emergence of cybercrime and fraud, members are becoming the frontline in raising awareness about practical steps to protect themselves and others from a variety of new and emerging crimes.
- Since it was first established in the UK from America in the 1980s the movement has expanded and now the distinctive, round yellow signs have become one of the best known brands within the crime prevention sector.
- The organisation works in partnership with volunteers, the police, local authorities and other relevant organisations to offer advice, guidance, support and resources.

