

Noise matters

Tackling it together





What is noise nuisance?

Noise is a normal part of our daily lives, but excessive noise is not. It can be annoying for many people and a serious problem for some. Noise is the biggest single problem that our customers report to us.

A noise nuisance is, generally speaking, noise that an average person would find unreasonable taking into account where it's coming from, how loud it is, when it's happening, and the length of time it is happening.

What may be acceptable at midday may be entirely unacceptable at midnight.

There must be an unreasonable element, in the activity causing the noise, for it to be classed as noise nuisance.

Examples of noise nuisance might include:

- A television, stereo or a radio being played at a loud volume
- Games consoles being played at a loud volume
- Regular shouting and arguing
- Excessive DIY
- Excessive dog barking
- Revving the engine of a motor vehicle or motorbike
- A musical instrument being played loudly or for long periods of time
- Rowdy behaviour.



Are you bothered by noise?

Normal everyday noise heard next door would not be classed as noise nuisance and we would not usually investigate it.

This includes, for example, your neighbours:

- Going up and down their stairs
- Walking around in their property, especially if it is a flat
- Closing their windows, doors and cupboards
- Talking within their property
- Flushing toilets
- Vacuuming
- Watching television
- Using their washing machine at a reasonable time
- Mowing their lawn at a reasonable time
- Babies and young children crying.

The sound of children playing either inside or outside is not classed as a nuisance either. On the other hand, an outdoor party or regular short periods of loud music may be classed as noise nuisance. Each situation has to be looked at individually.

If you are bothered by noise, the first thing to do is to consider if the noise really is unreasonable. It may be helpful to discuss it with family, friends or neighbours other than those responsible, before doing anything else.

If you believe that the noise really is unreasonable the next thing is to think about how best to deal with it.

Most people don't mean to irritate their neighbours and are not aware that they are causing a problem. Nearly everyone makes noise from time to time which will be heard by their neighbours.

Think carefully about whether daytime noise which happens for short periods is really a problem. Prolonged loud daytime noise is another matter and if you are seriously disturbed by it the problem will need resolving.

Generally, less noise is tolerated during the evening than the daytime. Later evening noise can be irritating although you may not wish to make an issue of occasional noise which lasts only a short time.

However, noise which prevents or disturbs sleep on a regular basis is unreasonable and few people are prepared to put up with this for more than a very short period of time.



What you can do

If possible, try to resolve the problem by talking to your neighbour in a reasonable and polite manner. Make it as easy as you can for your neighbour to understand your point of view.

It is likely to help if you are able to demonstrate a willingness to listen to their point of view as well and offer some compromise in reaching a solution, for example, suggesting times when the noise would not cause you a problem.

Don't go round with the intention of giving your neighbour a piece of your mind as this could lead to an argument and will not help.

Make a note of when you contacted your neighbour and their response as this may be needed at a later date to show that you have tried to resolve the problem.



What we can do

While we encourage you to contact your neighbour yourself, we understand that this will not be appropriate or successful in every case.

If you don't feel comfortable contacting your neighbour, please let us know and we will decide what to do next under the circumstances.

If you believe that the problem should be dealt with confidentially we will discuss this with you. However, this may limit what we are able to do or if we can take any action at all.

You can report a noise problem on our website **www.placesforpeople.co.uk** or telephone our Customer Contact Centre on **01772 667 002**.

We will try to resolve the problem by writing to your neighbour and making an appointment to visit them. We will tell them what you have reported to us.

If you would prefer independent mediation, please let us know. If the noise is still a problem after we've written or visited your neighbour, or you have had mediation, we will ask you to start keeping an incident diary.

This is a written record of when the noise happens. It is important that you complete the incident diary. If you don't, the action we can take is very limited.

We might also work with the local authority's environmental health department in to try and resolve the nuisance. If your neighbour ignores our warnings then we will consider taking enforcement action through the County Court.

Received a report about your noise?

If you receive a report about your noise from a neighbour please treat it seriously. The fact that someone complains means that it is an issue for them.

If they approach you directly please be prepared to discuss the problem with them reasonably and politely. Try to listen to their concerns and discuss ways to resolve the problem. If you have points you wish to make, please be calm and polite.

Please remember that while what you do in your own home is a matter for you, it should not cause a noise nuisance for your neighbours.

There isn't a particular time of day or night up to which you can make as much noise as you want. You must think about how the noise will affect other people, no matter what time it takes place.

If we contact you about your noise this doesn't mean we agree that it is a nuisance. It is simply drawing your attention to the fact that it has been reported and asking you to think about what you can do to stop it becoming a problem. If the reports continue, we will investigate further.



Tips to be a good neighbour

Stereos, TVs, radios and games consoles

- Keep the volume down — particularly the bass — especially at night. If you must turn it up use headphones.
- Avoid putting speakers on shared walls (or on the floor in flats).
- Be careful not to disturb your neighbours if you are playing music and your windows are open.

Parties

- Consider inviting your neighbours — or let them know well in advance.
- Keep the volume of the music down, with windows and doors closed.
- If the party spreads outdoors, ensure any music outside does not disturb your neighbours.

In the garden

- Consider inviting your neighbours to an outdoor party or barbecue and keep noise levels down.
- Don't sit in your garden with music playing inside which can be heard outside.

Home improvements

- Let neighbours know beforehand if you are doing noisy jobs, using power tools or working on shared walls.
- Carry out noisy work during the day and try to agree times with your neighbours.
- Complete work as quickly as possible.
- You need written permission before you lay laminate or wooden flooring if you live in a house. Permission will not be given if you live in a flat. If your neighbour is disturbed as a result of you having a laminate or wooden floor you will need to lay carpet.

Communal areas

- If you need to pass through communal areas late at night or early in the day make sure you do so quietly — remember your neighbours might be sleeping.

In the street

- Keep noise down and avoid shouting, especially at night when other people will be sleeping.
- Try to avoid using radios/stereos out in the street, unless you can use headphones.

Tips to be a good neighbour (continued)

Cars

- Keep the volume of the music down and windows closed.
- Close doors quietly, especially late at night.
- Don't over rev the engine.
- Use horns only in an emergency.
- Keep cars regularly maintained to avoid unnecessary noise from faulty exhausts, fan belts and brakes.

Pets

- Make sure your pets are happy and quiet.
- Keep dogs indoors if they bark when left alone or disturbed.
- If your dog barks when alone, try to find someone to look after it, or visit when you are out.
- Try leaving a radio on at a low level to help keep your dog calm when you are out.





We hope these simple tips will make a difference and help build a happy community.

How to get in touch

You can contact us online:

www.placesforpeople.co.uk

or by telephone on:

01772 667 002

Lines are open Monday to Friday
from 8am to 8pm (excluding bank holidays).

Our phone service is available outside of the
above hours for emergency repairs only.

Please note: calls to local numbers may be
cheaper or included in your call package.

Always check with your provider.

