

Noise Action Week 21st – 26th May 2018

Background

Statistics collated by DAERA have indicated that complaints relating to noise are a growing problem for Councils in Northern Ireland. Noise attributable to domestic type noise account for 80% of complaints made to Councils and of these 43% relate to loud music, parties etc and 37% to animal noise. Noise from the commercial and leisure sector make up the bulk of the remainder of complaints received to local authorities.

During Noise Action Week we are encouraging anyone responsible for inherently noisy activities to adopt a common sense approach to reduce the impact of noise on the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

The following tips for reducing noise disturbance within our Council are:

Alarms

Alarms are designed to make a noise – however misfiring alarms are one of the most disturbing and annoying neighbourhood noises.

- Ensure you choose a reliable product and make sure alarms are installed properly and serviced regularly.
- Car and intruder alarms should have a 20 minute cut out.



DIY

DIY or building jobs – such as drilling and hammering, sanding floors (or other DIY type activities) and car repairs – can create a lot of noise. This noise can be annoying to your family and neighbours – especially if they aren't expecting it. Whilst some DIY jobs are noisy, a bit of thought and consideration can reduce the impact they have on those around you.

- Warn your neighbours you are going to undertake noisy work and keep the work to reasonable hours – avoid early mornings, evenings and agree acceptable times at weekends.
- Carry out noisiest tasks in the middle of the day – if you must start early, do quieter jobs first, but get really noisy work over before everyone is home from school and work (be aware that some people work from home and some do night shifts).
- For some jobs there may be quieter tools available – can a hand tool do the job just as well without the noise?
- If replacing your kit look for noise ratings on power tools
- Keep tools well maintained/sharpened and use lower/quieter settings on power tools where feasible.



Gardens

Our gardens are a place to rest, relax and play. Like our homes, they need maintaining, and on occasions, can be used for entertaining. Remember that any noise you make in your garden is likely to be heard by your neighbours.



- Carry out noisy activities in the middle of the day and if you have a prolonged, really noisy job to do such as hedge cutting, agree the best time to do it with your neighbours.
- Where possible, use CE markings to help you purchase quieter equipment and maintain your equipment properly.
- Place water features or noise making decorations like wind chimes away from neighbouring properties and switch them off/silence them at night or if you go away
- If a child's toy or game is extremely noisy, coax them into quieter alternatives.
- If you have a barbeque or party, tell your neighbours, invite them if appropriate
- Avoid amplified sound outdoors – if you want to listen to a match or music while sunbathing/mowing the lawn, wear headphones



Loud Music

Your music might not be to everyone's taste – music in the wrong place at the wrong time can be torture for neighbours.

- With amplified sound, keep the volume down, especially the bass which can be more annoying than higher frequencies. Don't put speakers on or close to party walls, ceilings or floors.
- Don't play loud music outdoors – your neighbours may want to listen to birds in the garden not your latest favourite tunes.
- If watching clips or playing games in a laptop or phone, keep the volume down or use headphones.
- If you have a bedroom TV, keep it quiet at night – especially if your bedroom adjoins someone else's.
- If playing an instrument, practice where and when it will have least impact on neighbours. Play without amplifiers, use headphones and use mutes for wind instruments and pads and brushes on drums.
- If you really want to listen or play at loud volume use headphones – but be aware that turning it up to could damage your hearing. See [NHS guidance](#) on protecting your hearing.



People

Noise transmission between properties can present problems especially where the dwellings are attached or are within an apartment block.

- Take care when closing doors – particularly if you live in a flat with a shared entrance and particularly late at night and early in the morning. Self closing devices should be regularly maintained to ensure they provide a soft close action. Any external gates/doors should be shut or wedged open to avoid banging in the wind.
- If necessary loosen door hinges to reduce impact noise or fit a rubber or spring doorstop attached to the skirting board.
- Cupboard doors can also be annoying – particularly if they are fixed to party walls. Avoid slamming cupboard doors. When fitting cupboards to party walls the use of an isolating wall batten is beneficial.
- Noise from walking on wooden or hard floors and stairways can be reduced by use of mats and carpets.

Pets

- Dogs bark – but only bark a lot if they are not content. If you have to leave your dog alone, make sure it's well exercised and fed. Some dogs like a radio for company, or get a friend or neighbour to look in. If your dog continues to bark, consider dog training.
- Cats can wail and fight – as they are independent they can be difficult to manage – however if a neighbour complains about your cat at least try and keep it in at night.
- If you have a caged bird that likes to sing and squawk, make sure it's kept where it will least disturb neighbours, particularly at night.
- Some caged pets tend to be more active at night – chewing and rattling their cages. Consider carefully where and how such pets are housed



Household Appliances

- When buying new appliances, buy a quieter model – not all models have a noise rating – if they haven't, ask why. If manufacturers make claims about noise they must display an EU Energy or CE Label.
- For washing machines, if possible, place on an even, concrete floor; do not overload and spread load evenly; run the machine at a time when it will least disturb neighbours – remember the final spin is the noisiest bit.
- Do the vacuuming at a reasonable time – especially if you live in a flat or terrace, avoid early morning or late night cleaning sprees.
- In the kitchen, avoid banging pans and cupboard doors and don't use blenders/grinders on surfaces attached to party walls.



- If installing a new boiler, consider the noise impact on your neighbours as well as the legal distances from windows when siting it. If pipes and cisterns are making noises get your plumber to check them, they may need adjusting.
- Ensure extractor fans are securely fitted to avoid rattle, and kept them clean so they run smoothly. Fans on internal toilets should not be switched off – but it may be possible to adjust running times.
- Avoid putting your refrigerator or freezer against a party wall – vibration from these can pass through the structure. Vibration can also pass through floors – if you live in a flat avoid placing your fridge above a neighbours' bedroom.



Quieter Cars

- If you carry out car repairs at home, do not do them early morning or late evening and warn neighbours about really noisy jobs
- Avoid slamming doors, sounding horns, or playing in car entertainment at a volume that can be heard outside the vehicle
- Consideration should be exercised when driving a car fitted with a modified exhaust especially within built-up areas



Further information on reducing the impacts of noise can be found at www.noiseactionweek.org.uk

