

Noise Complaints Frequently Asked Questions

IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

If you are being disturbed by noise from a neighbour:

First, approach your neighbour and explain politely that you are being troubled by noise. You may find this difficult, but often people are unaware that they are causing a problem. Most will be glad to what they can to reduce noise. However, be careful or do not approach at all if you think that your neighbour might react angrily to a complaint.

If the problem continues, start a diary recording dates, times and cause of the noise, and the effects that it has on you. Write to your neighbour explaining the problem. Ask them to stop the noise nuisance, referring to any conversations you may have had and what, if anything, that was agreed. Keep a record of any conversations you have or letters you write. If your neighbours are tenants, discuss the problem with the landlord. Most Conditions of Tenancy require that tenants do not cause nuisance to neighbours.

Noise disputes are often resolved informally. Legal action should be a last resort. It is unpleasant and can sour the relationship between you and your neighbour. It is important that you do your best to resolve the problem in a friendly way.

Should your informal approaches fail to resolve the noise then you are advised to contact the Environmental Health Department of Ballymena Borough Council.

How do I report a noise complaint?

Contact the Environmental Health Department at Ballymena Borough Council if the problem relates to a noise nuisance in the Ballymena Borough. We can be contacted by telephone or e-mail on:

Tel: 028 25 660373 or 028 25 660 431

E-mail: environmental.health@ballymena.gov.uk

Anonymous complaints will not be formally investigated.

What happens when I make a complaint?

The first course of action will be to try and deal with the problem informally. The Council will contact the person responsible for causing the noise and give them advice of how to prevent or limit the noise problem. If this approach is unsuccessful, the Council will proceed with a formal investigation.

Formal investigation

The alleged noisemaker will be notified that a formal investigation is taking place.

The complainant will be asked to keep noise monitoring records for a specified period (normally 2-3 weeks). This will allow Environmental Health Officers to understand the extent of the problem.

If the records show that a problem may exist, the Environmental Health Officer may consider using noise monitoring equipment to measure and record the reported noise problem. This also allows the officer to experience the noise nuisance themselves.

If the Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that a noise nuisance exists, then he/she may serve a Noise Abatement Notice on the person responsible for making the noise. If the noise maker fails to comply with the notice they could be subject to formal action in the magistrate's court.

The Council will not investigate anonymous complaints, but complainants can be sure that their identities will remain confidential if that is their preference. However, if legal action is taken the complainant's details must be written on the abatement notice. The complainant must also be willing to appear as a witness in any legal proceedings.

What noise issues does the Council investigate?

The Council will investigate complaints about the following noise sources;

- **Domestic Noise**

Common complaints include barking dogs, loud music and DIY work

If you are concerned about the noise levels from a neighbouring property, the best course of action is normally to approach the neighbour about the problem. They may not be aware that they are causing a disturbance and will then take steps to remove or reduce the noise problem.

- **Industrial /Commercial Noise**

Noise levels from industrial and commercial premises should be controlled at a suitable level so as not to cause a nuisance to others. Businesses should take reasonable and practical steps to reduce noise levels to a minimum

- **Construction Noise**

Occasionally construction site noise can cause a nuisance for neighbouring householders and/or businesses. If a noise nuisance does occur, Environmental Health Officers can restrict the use of certain equipment, the hours of operation and if necessary set noise limits for the construction work.

- **Public Entertainment Noise**

Domestic premises close to a public entertainment venue can sometimes be disturbed by noise nuisance arising from the music within the premises and/or the patrons entering and leaving the premises. The Entertainments licence of the venue will specify conditions to ensure that unreasonable disturbance is not caused to nearby residents. Non-compliance with these conditions could result in the licence being removed

- **Others**

The Environmental Health Department will also investigate a range of other noise complaints including audible intruder alarms, off road scrambling, ice-cream chimes, and bird scarers.