

DOMESTIC NOISE

A Guide To Being A Good Neighbour

Noise is a part of everyday life, but excessive and inappropriate noise or vibration may be a source of annoyance and can affect a person's physical or mental health.

The most widespread sources of neighbourhood noise are amplified music, people's voices, children playing, barking dogs, DIY, banging doors and neighbours vehicles. Alternatively, the actual loudness may not be the problem but the time, place and duration might make it one. For example, loud music or shouting is more likely to cause a disturbance in the evening or at night.

Contrary to popular belief, there are no specific controls for neighbourhood noise, such as time of day or decibel limits. In the absence of a clear definition of what constitutes a nuisance, Colchester Borough Council has produced the following common-sense guidelines for the public. They should help people to avoid causing nuisance and will normally be issued to both parties should a complaint be made to the Council's Environmental Protection Team.

Please note that failure to comply with this guidance will be taken into account if legal proceedings are necessary.

**What Your Neighbours Can Expect:
Not to be affected by excessive and unnecessary noise.
To enjoy an undisturbed sleep on a regular basis.**

Things to Consider

Types of Property - Complaints are more likely from flats, followed by terraced and semi-detached properties.

Time - Noise made during evening and night-time periods is more likely to affect your neighbours. If your lifestyle results in you keeping "unusual" hours, it is **you** that must take extra care.

Duration - A noise that lasts a long time may be more of a problem than one of greater volume that is only short-lived, e.g. short bursts of a loud drill are more acceptable than a prolonged muffled bass beat.

Here are some simple ways to avoid causing disturbance to others:

Music and TV – Keep the volume and bass levels down (bass music passes easily through walls, floors and ceilings). Do you have to raise your voice to hold a conversation? If so, the volume is too loud.

- Consider the time of day but still be aware that noise can cause problems at all times.
- Consider closing windows (although be aware that this does not stop sound being transmitted through walls and floors).
- Avoid playing outdoors, as this is sure to cause complaints.
- Avoid locating hi-fi speakers and televisions on or against a party wall. Isolate speakers and televisions on suitable stands – try to keep them off the floor.
- If possible use headphones (but take care not to play at such a volume that you may risk damage to your hearing).

Musical Instruments - If you play a musical instrument use a practice facility. If this is not possible, only practice for short periods during the day and tell your neighbours.

Parties - It is almost impossible not to cause some disturbance when holding a party. Although occasional events are not unreasonable, you should think about your neighbours and give plenty of warning (or invite them!). Would it be better to hire a hall?

- Notify nearby residents and Environmental Protection at Colchester Borough Council in advance.
- Start and finish at a reasonable time. Please contact us for advice on what this should be.
- Keep volume and bass levels down and don't hire a disco unit.
- Say goodbye indoors.
- Request that taxi drivers knock at the door rather than sounding the horn to get attention.
- Ask your guests to leave quietly.

DIY - Do not carry out noisy DIY before 9am or after 7pm.

- Warn neighbours if you think work will be particularly noisy.
- Avoid mowing the lawn or using power tools in the garden in the early morning or late evening

Dog Barking – If you own a dog make sure that you train it to not bark incessantly.

- Do not leave your dog alone for long periods. If you do, arrange for someone to exercise it.
- For more advice contact the Council Animal Wardens on Colchester 01206 282584.

Domestic Appliances - Try not to use vacuum cleaners, washing machines or other domestic appliances before 8am or after 9pm, particularly where neighbours are likely to be disturbed.

Floors - Carpeting helps to reduce noise such as footsteps on stairs and amplified music.

Doors and Windows - Ensure that these open and close smoothly without sticking and banging.

Burglar Alarms - If you have an old or faulty alarm, replace it with one that has a 20-minute cut-out and complies with BS4737. Ensure that it is maintained regularly and notify the police of additional keyholders.

Cars and Motorbikes - Avoid excessive revving of engines particularly early in the morning and late at night and avoid unnecessary acceleration and fierce braking. Please also remember that it is an offence to sound the horn between 11.30 p.m. and 7.00 a.m.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Environmental Protection Act 1990 S.79 - It is an offence to emit noise from premises (including your garden) which is a nuisance or is prejudicial to health.

FURTHER ADVICE

If you require any further information about noise or wish to make a complaint, please contact Environmental Protection at Colchester Borough Council on 01206 282581.

REMEMBER - IF YOU CAN HEAR YOUR NEIGHBOURS, YOUR NEIGHBOURS CAN HEAR YOU!