

TOO LOUD IS NOT ALLOWED



DEALING WITH NEIGHBOUR NOISE

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Do you have a problem with neighbour noise ?

Some neighbour noise is unavoidable, but some can cause real distress. However, sometimes people need a reminder to be a little more considerate to their neighbours.

Frequently the disturbance is caused by barking dogs, loud music or TV, shouting, banging doors or DIY activities.

Maidstone Borough Council and its partners are here to help but sometimes there are a few steps you should try first.

Take a look at the neighbour noise assessment chart below to find out what your next step should be.

- 1 Start by building a relationship with your neighbour
- 2 Have a quiet word about the problem
- 3 Have another word: explain the impact on your family
- 4 Use Maidstone Mediation Services.
Tel 01622 692843
- 5 If your neighbour lives in rented or a housing association property, contact their landlord and discuss the problem
- 6 Contact Maidstone Borough Council Noise Team
Tel 01622 602202
- 7 Contact a solicitor about private legal action

Talking to your neighbour - our advice

- Approach your neighbour as soon as possible before the problem gets out of control.
- You may be nervous about approaching your neighbour, but remember that they may not know that they are the source of a problem.
- Before you approach your neighbour, plan what you are going to say.
- Keep calm and be pleasant – then they will be more likely to respond positively to your complaint.
- Avoid approaching your neighbour when the noise is actually happening. You are more likely to be angry and have an argument with them.
- If it's late at night and your neighbour is playing music loudly or having a party, they may have been drinking alcohol. If this is the case, they are less likely to understand your point of view and may think you are just trying to spoil their fun.
- Be careful - think about the risk to your personal safety and property. If you feel frightened or intimidated by your neighbour, approaching them to complain may not be the best option for you.

What is mediation?

Maidstone Mediation Service is a free, independent and confidential service specialising in resolving neighbour disputes. A trained Mediator, if you agree, can approach your neighbour on your behalf to discuss the issue(s).

Mediation can often resolve the situation amicably, preventing 'bad feeling', tension and further conflict between neighbours.



How can the Safer Maidstone Partnership help?

The Safer Maidstone Partnership brings together a number of agencies' resources to create a safe environment for everyone in Maidstone borough through a commitment to reduce crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour. This includes tackling noise as follows:

Maidstone Mediation (01622 692843, www.maidstonemediation.com) Offers a free and confidential service to resolve neighbour problems. Mediation is most successful when used at an early stage of a dispute before any formal enforcement action is taken.

Social Landlords If you live in a house owned by one of the borough's social landlords or if the problems come from one of their tenants, action may be taken under the terms of the tenancy agreement.

Environmental Enforcement (01622 602202) Maidstone Borough Council noise officers investigate complaints of noise nuisance. Nuisance is a noise that is unreasonable and significant in its effect. This is a criminal offence and penalties may include fines, criminal record and/or seizure of equipment. Evidence can take time to gather and assess and may involve the use of sound recording equipment.

Community Safety Unit (CSU) (01622 602000) Kent Police, Maidstone Borough Council and other agencies share information and work together on reports of antisocial behaviour and neighbour disputes, prioritising on those cases where significant social harm is being caused, especially to victims who are vulnerable.

It may be necessary for you to complete a incident record sheet (1-4 weeks) to assist each authority to assess the noise issue and to help determine the appropriate steps. These record sheets may be shared between partners to reduce duplication where appropriate.

We recognise that noise complaints can be motivated by a range of reasons so no conclusions will be made based solely on information from complainants without further supporting evidence.

You should be aware that while we keep your name and address confidential in the early stages of an investigation, should formal action against your neighbour be required you will be asked to complete a witness statement and, if necessary, appear in court.

Each of the agencies work together on specific problems, sharing information and evidence as appropriate to help resolve issues. However, using the SMP members does not offer a quick solution and should only be used for the most serious of cases. We encourage anyone suffering with noise to explore the options within this leaflet first.