

## **COVID-19 NOISE UPDATE**

Everyone is going to be experiencing difficulties and stresses because of the current restrictions on movement, with most people being confined to their homes and where available, gardens, for most of the day for the foreseeable future. A considerable number of people will need to work from home and children will be doing school work at home. The pandemic situation will also be resulting in increased anxiety for many people.

These restrictions are clearly essential to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect everyone's health and save lives. However, that means we will probably be seeing and hearing more of our neighbours than we are used to. In some situations, this may lead to frustrations or annoyance with noise we do not want to hear.

With this in mind, we would urge everyone to be considerate of their neighbours by thinking about how noise from your home could be causing problems and upset to others. For the same reason, we would urge everyone to be more tolerant and patient with noise and activity that they won't be used to hearing. There is a real need to show some good will at this time.

Below is some specific advice on reducing noise and some common noise problems:

### **Reducing noise**

Everyday household living generates noise, whether that's the washing machine, doors closing, or the TV. However, disputes can occur when people are inconsiderate to others in how much noise they create and the time of day or night this occurs. It is important to acknowledge the noise your household creates, and think about the impact it might have on your neighbours.

Consider the lifestyle of your neighbours; e.g. are they retired or do they have young children? With this in mind, be mindful of the effects noise from your property may have on them, as well as the types of normal living noise you may hear from their property (for example from children playing).

If you are approached or contacted by a neighbour and asked to keep your noise down please react positively. Respect their right to enjoy their home without hearing all that is going on in yours. Keep in mind the need to maintain a 2 metre distance from any of your neighbours.

### **Stereos, TV and Music**

These are the most frequent causes for complaint. What is considered entertainment for one person can be distressing for someone else. Avoid playing music so loud that your neighbours can hear it, and keep the bass level down.

Try to position any speakers away from adjoining walls, floors and ceilings. Standing them on an insulating material can also reduce the transmission of sound and keep windows and doors as closed as possible. Loud music in the garden is more likely to cause a problem to your neighbours - try to keep it at or below conversation level or wear headphones.

It is a common misunderstanding that anyone is allowed to play their music as much, and as loudly as you like up to 11pm. This is completely wrong, so please do not make that mistake. Noise nuisance can be caused at any time of day or night.

Some of us play musical instruments; the solution to this, is to keep musical instrument practices as short as possible and at reasonable times. If you can, do it in a room furthest away from your neighbour. If you are a neighbour who can hear someone practicing, be prepared to be patient.

### **Parties**

The current Government restrictions on socialising means that you should not be socialising with anyone, that you don't live with, including in any outdoor areas. Any complaint concerning noise from a party, or a social gathering will be investigated, as this may not only amount to a noise disturbance but also a breach of the Governments Coronavirus social distancing requirements. This is not in any way acceptable behaviour, or behaviour that is likely to be tolerated.

Given the circumstances, you may be tempted to have 'online' parties in your home. If you do, please keep the volume down, particularly the bass, or use headphones. Avoid any loud, late night parties. Homes aren't the place to replicate a pub or night club environment. If someone complains, be prepared to accept you are probably disturbing quite a few others too. Turn the music down or use headphones.

### **Banging doors and stamping feet**

Sound can travel quite easily through walls and floors, so be aware of what is next door. Avoid slamming doors and running up or down stairs especially if you live in a flat or terraced house. Shut doors gently and use the handle, don't push it closed.

If you have laminate or wood flooring consider the use of rugs in areas with high footfall or where children play.

### **Late night deliveries**

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak the government has extended delivery hours to include night time deliveries for supermarkets and other food retailers.

### **DIY noise**

Some people may choose to complete those DIY tasks that they have been meaning to get around to during this period of restriction. Whilst you may enjoy putting your

time at home to good use, your neighbours will not enjoy long periods of drilling, sawing or hammering.

The impact this could have on your neighbours during this difficult time could be greater than you think.

If you can do so whilst maintaining social distancing of a minimum of 2 metres, talk to your neighbours about the works you want to do and any parts of it that might be noisy. Most people will understand and be accommodating but you should be prepared to compromise, if there are times that your neighbour asks you to avoid for a genuine reason.

In any situation, unless it's an emergency, don't do this sort of work in the evening or early morning, particularly at the weekend.

### **Construction noise**

The construction site next door or opposite your home might be finished for the day when you return home from work, but now you are home during the day you might hear the work taking place on the site. Construction work is inherently noisy but as long as the site is managed well, keeps to the hours of 8am - 6pm Monday to Fridays and from 8am -1pm on Saturdays (for noise generating work), and locates noisy activities as far away from neighbours as is reasonably practicable, as well as taking all reasonable precautions to reduce noise, they are working within the terms of the law and their planning conditions.

### **How we can help**

The Council will continue to run a Noise Service. You can still call to report ongoing noise by calling 01827 709445, during normal office hours. In many instances you will be offered advice and we will endeavour to resolve the problem by initially contacting the source of the noise in writing (please note; there may be a delay as printing has to be timetabled). You can also use our general online web reporting form. We will also where appropriate ask you to complete log sheets to give us a better picture about the frequency and duration of the noise you are experiencing, please provide an Email address, as this is the quickest way we can get it to you.

Please be assured that we are keeping the service under review and looking at alternative options to replace face to face visits at this difficult time.