

A guide to approaching your neighbour about noise

Are you being disturbed by noise from your neighbour? Barking dogs, DIY, slamming doors, loud TV, washing machine on at unsocial hours? Things like this can impact on our lives and spoil the enjoyment of our homes. What if your neighbour is causing you a problem like this? The Local Authority will investigate and can take action for unreasonable and excessive noise, but sometimes a friendly approach to your neighbour might be all that's needed. So before you involve the council, here's some tips on making contact with your neighbour.

The most important thing to remember is to be polite and reasonable with your neighbour. This can be hard, especially if you've been kept awake or the noise is driving you mad. But it's a shame to fall out with neighbours and things can get out of hand, so take a deep breath and try to keep it friendly.

There's a chance your neighbour may not even be aware that there's a problem. This is especially the case if the problem happens when they're not at home, say if their dog barks while they're at work, or their children turn up the stereo when alone in the house. Your neighbour could feel extremely guilty about their noise and genuinely not have realised what they were doing has been causing you disturbance.

So, if you would prefer to talk to them face to face, it helps to plan what you need to say first. Take some written notes and examples of their noise nuisances with you when you call on your neighbour so you don't forget what you want to say. You might be a bit nervous about approaching them, especially if they are unknown to you, are new to the neighbourhood, or you've had little prior contact with them, so prepare and be as confident as you can.

If you prefer to make contact in writing, there's some suggested wording for a letter at the end of this guide.

Try to avoid going round to your neighbour to complain about the noise when it's actually happening. Chances are if someone has been drinking or partying heavily, they're not going to want to talk to you. You may be seen by your neighbour as simply trying to stop their enjoyment, when in reality that certainly isn't the case. So go around when you know they are home, when it's quiet and always plan your approach beforehand.

Sometimes it's helpful to suggest compromises, that always goes down well with neighbours. This could be things like agreeing times for music practice, or giving notice for parties. Remember, there are times when you might want to make noise yourself so a bit of 'live and let live' goes a long way.

The best advice in these situations is to approach your neighbour as you yourself would like to be approached if they had a complaint about your noise.

And if it works – thank them!

But if it doesn't work? Then contact the Environmental Protection Team at NKDC for advice or to start a formal noise investigation. While we don't insist that you contact your neighbour before we take on an investigation, in a lot of cases it's the quickest way to resolve the problem and keep the peace!

Write a letter:

Here's some suggested wording to help you explain clearly to your neighbour what the problem is. Remember, it's a good idea to keep a copy of any letter you send.

Your Name and Address

Today's Date

Neighbour's Name and Address

Dear Neighbour [or their name]

This is a friendly note to make you aware that I am being disturbed by noise from your property [state address]. The noise that disturbs me/us/my family is [describe noise that affects you]. You may not realise it, but the noise is affecting the enjoyment of my/our home,

Please do not take this personally. I just wanted to let you know how your noise is affecting me/us and politely request that you [detail what you would like them to do i.e. turn the music down].

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this [delete this option if not appropriate].

Thank you in anticipation of your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely