



## NOISE NUISANCE AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Northampton Borough Council's Environmental Health Division and Northampton University work closely together to prevent any issues regarding noise and anti-social behaviour caused by students living in private accommodation. Whilst most students live happily in Northampton without any problems, there is a minority who disrupt the lives of others in the community and this reflects negatively on the University and others studying here.

We recommend that you introduce yourselves to your neighbours soon after moving in; friendly and regular communication often helps neighbours to be more understanding of each other's lifestyle.

This guidance contains advice regarding the main causes of noise complaints.

### **Music**

At all times the volume must be reasonable. Bass can easily cause disturbance even at low levels

You and your housemates are likely to all have your own music systems. Be aware of the cumulative effect of music played by you and your housemates upon your neighbours who may be exposed for many hours each day.

Do not mount loudspeakers on walls shared with your neighbours. If you have neighbours below you raise the speakers from the floor.

Do not be tempted to set the volume of your music so that it is audible throughout house.

Take extra special care if playing music in gardens. It is not a good idea to play your music in your house at a volume that can be heard in the garden – this is likely to disturb your neighbours.

**It is a common misconception that playing loud music is ok as long as it is not played after 11pm. Music can cause a nuisance to neighbours at any time of the day and a significant amount of complaints are concerning music being played loudly during the day.**

## **Musicians**

If you play a musical instrument be mindful of the time of day and duration that you practice at home. Some students will reach an agreement with their neighbours about when it is a good time to practice.

Music students can book somewhere to practice at the University. Band practice is best kept within the University.

Control the volume of any electronic instrument, such as keyboards and guitars. Brass instruments should be fitted with mutes where available

Traditional drums present significant problems due to their loudness. These are best avoided but in certain circumstances the use of hot rods, drum pads and very restricted playing may be ok with your neighbours.

## **Parties**

We receive a lot of complaints about parties in student houses especially housewarming parties at the start of term.

Holding a party every now and again is generally acceptable however if you're planning a party remember the following advice -

Give your neighbours lots of notice and a contact telephone number.

Remember, as tenants you are responsible for the party and your guests. Keep to manageable numbers. Do not allow your guests to spill out into the street.

Hold it at a weekend to minimise disturbance. Specify an end time and keep to it.

By 11pm ensure that guests are indoors and not in the garden; close windows and doors.

By midnight ensure that music volumes are substantially lowered.

At the end of the evening, ensure your guests are considerate to neighbours and leave quietly.

## **NOISE AT NIGHT**

Socialising with housemates or guests late night is a common source of complaints. Your neighbours will be trying to sleep and may have to get up early for work the next day.

Playing music is best avoided. If you do play music it should be at a low volume and without strong bass.

Be considerate when watching TV or playing computer games, especially if you have friends with you, as this can get noisy.

Voices - it is extremely easy to unintentionally raise your voice, particularly when there are a number of you. Think hard before inviting friends back on a regular basis, remember it is your tenancy, your responsibility!

Stairs & Footsteps - you may be surprised but running up and down stairs is easily audible across neighbouring walls and floors especially if you have laminate flooring. It may be best to remove shoes indoors, especially those with heels to reduce noise.

Cars - Ensure your car stereo is not being played loudly and your car windows are closed. Turn the volume down just before arrival and ensure visitors do too.

## **COMPLAINTS FROM NEIGHBOURS**

If a neighbour complains to you about the noise you are making be sympathetic to their concerns and take all reasonable steps to address the problem.

Remember your neighbour will experience cumulative noise from all housemates and you may not be aware of the noise that is being caused in your absence.

Consider setting up a meeting with your neighbours to discuss their complaint and try and reach agreement. This often goes a long way to reducing tensions and increasing understanding on both sides. Talking to each other may avoid the need for intervention from the Council that may lead to formal enforcement action.

## **YOU MAY ALSO BE A VICTIM OF NOISE DISTURBANCE**

If you are suffering from noise disturbance consider approaching your neighbour to 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 do what they can to reduce noise. However, approach the matter carefully if you think your neighbour might react angrily to a complaint. It is recommended that you make contact with neighbours during the day rather than at night during a party when people may be under the influence of alcohol.

Accommodation Services and the Student Union at Northampton University can help you with support and advice. The Student Union can be contacted on 01604 892351 and Madie Patel at Accommodation Services on 01604 892482 or by email [madie.patel@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:madie.patel@northampton.ac.uk).

You could also talk to your Landlord or Managing Agent.

## **IF COMPLAINTS ARE RECEIVED AND INFORMAL ADVICE IS IGNORED**

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives everyone the right to complain to the Council about noise disturbance and there is a duty to investigate all noise complaints. In situations where problems persist and where it is found that a 'Statutory Nuisance' exists, an Abatement Notice will be served upon **ALL** occupants in the household. The Notice would require the person(s) upon whom it has been served, to prohibit the recurrence of the nuisance.

Failure to comply with the requirements of such a Notice is a criminal offence and upon summary conviction Magistrates may impose a fine of up to £5000. Any criminal conviction may have implications on those students studying, particularly for professional qualifications.

**The Council also has the power to seize any equipment which could be used to cause a noise nuisance. This could include any music playing equipment e.g. televisions, radios, laptops, tablets and even mobile phones.**

Equipment will be held for a minimum of 28 days and a charge has to be paid before it will be returned.

Where formal action is taken by the Council this information will be shared with the University.

**If you would like any advice about noise or are experiencing problems from noisy neighbours please contact the Environmental Health Division on 0300 330 7000.**