

Environmental Health

Noise Policy

Draft

Environmental Health
Pollution, Housing and Health Section
Noise Policy

1.0 Policy Intent

The making, creation or maintenance of excessive and unreasonable noise can adversely affect the health and wellbeing of people in Rossendale. The intention of this policy is to ensure the protection of people from existing noise nuisance and to take action to reduce the likelihood of nuisance being caused.

2.0 What is Noise ?

The definition of noise nuisance is 'an unreasonable and significant emission of noise that causes significant and unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of your premises'.

For reference here are some familiar sounds and their average decibel level (volume)

Whisper/bedroom at night	30dB*
Library	40dB
Rainfall	50dB
Normal conversation/laughter	50-65dB
Washing machine	75dB
Lawnmower	85dB
Shouting	90dB
Train	100dB
Chainsaw	110dB
Thunderclap	120dB
Jet taking off	130dB

* dB-decibels are the units for measuring sound

3.0 Health Effects of Noise

Noise is often described as unwanted sound and can affect the quality of people's lives. The main health risks of noise identified by the World Health Organisation are:

- Sleep disturbance and all its consequences on a long and short term basis.
- Hormonal responses (stress hormones) and their possible consequences on human metabolism (nutrition) and immune system.
- Cardiovascular effects
- Interference with social behaviour (aggressiveness, protest and helplessness)

4.0 Policy Context

The Government recognises that noise is generally a constraint on people and a possible cause of problems in relation to peoples enjoyment, health and wellbeing. The Department for Food and Rural Affairs and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) have produced a guide on noise titled 'Neighbourhood Noise Policies and Practice for Local Authorities-a Management Guide'

Rossendale Borough Council Environment Strategy also recognizes the importance of noise as a constraint and sets an objective to minimise the effects of noise on quality of life.

5.0 Sources of Noise and Action We Can Take

Please refer to appendix 1

For each type of noise complaint we receive there are measures to deal with them and more detailed procedures on the action we can take can be found on the Council's website www.rossendale.gov.uk.

Press releases, participation in Noise Action Week and attendance with a display stand and leaflets at various fairs and festivals within Rossendale are ways in which we give advice on minimising noise issues and promoting the service we provide.

The Council does not have powers to deal with aircraft or road traffic noise and complaints in relation to those should go to:

Civil Aviation Authority Tel: 020 745 36599

Lancashire Highways Partnership Tel: 0845 053 0011

6.0 Service Standards

We promise that you will:

- Always receive respectful, courteous and fair treatment
- Be told the name of the person dealing with your enquiry or problem
- Be given clear and correct advice
- Be kept informed at key stages throughout your enquiry
- Receive the best help that we can give to help resolve your problem
- Receive a response to your enquiry within 3 working days either verbally or in writing, or as soon as practicable if the noise is happening during normal working hours.

7.0 Performance Monitoring and Reporting

Monthly output reports are produced detailing the number of noise complaints dealt with on a monthly basis. Customer satisfaction forms are sent out following the closure of a complaint and comments received back on the forms are acted upon, if applicable, to continue to improve the service.

The annual number of the complaints dealt with is detailed in the Council's Annual Environmental Health Report and figures are sent on an annual basis to the CIEH who collate statistics on noise data nationally.

The Principal Officer regularly audits complaints to ensure that each case is dealt with promptly, professionally and fairly in line with the Council's procedure. The Principal Officer also attends quarterly meetings of the Lancashire Environmental Protection Officer's Group to benchmark, compare and share working practices to ensure consistency Lancashire wide.

8.0 Contact details

If a member of the public is aggrieved by a noise nuisance then contact to the Council can be made by any of the following:

- By telephoning 01706 252556 or 01706 217777
- In person by visiting the One Stop Shop, located in the Town Centre Offices, Rawtenstall
- In writing to the Environmental Health Department, Stubbylee Hall, Stubbylee Lane, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 0DE
- By fax to 01706 870447
- By the internet by completing a request for service form on the Council's web site www.rossendale.gov.uk
- Via the local ward councillor

The complainant must provide their own name, address and a telephone number as well as details of the complaint and the address of the premises at which the noise nuisance is alleged to exist. A description of the noise, when and for how long it occurs, the way in which it affects them and anything they have done to try to resolve the problem must also be given. Anonymous noise complaints will not be investigated because the effect of the noise needs to be assessed at the complainant's property.

Details of the complainant are kept in strict confidence unless otherwise agreed. Only during legal proceedings would these details be released, and the complainant's agreement to this position is normally secured at a relatively early stage during the investigation.

9.0 Partnerships

Partnerships are an invaluable tool when tackling noise nuisance and a multi agency approach allows issues to be addressed effectively and succinctly.

- SMILE Mediation: Officers can make referrals to a free mediation service where there is no other route available or it is felt that mediation between both parties could lead to an effective resolution.
- PACT meetings: Police and Community Together meetings are monthly meetings where the public can raise concerns about problems in their area. The Police refer complaints about noise to the Environmental Health Section.

- Pubwatch: This is a group of licensees along with Licensing, Police, Health and Safety etc who meet up to discuss issues relating to licensed premises including public nuisance.
- Multi Agency Problem Solving (MAPS): This is a multi agency group consisting of Police, Council, Social Services, Anti Social behaviour Officer etc who can work together to resolve problems which cover many issues.

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Appendix 1

Source of noise	Action we can take	Action we do take	Approx number of complaints per year
Domestic noise including: Amplified music, disturbance and DIY Barking dogs and other pets Intruder alarms	Informal and formal action under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990. Issuing fixed penalty notices under the Noise Act 1996	Send letters and dairy sheets, install noise monitoring equipment, carry out pre arranged out of hours visits. Offer mediation if applicable. Animal warden visits dog owners to give advice on minimising dog barking. We don't issue fixed penalty notices for night time noise because there is no out of hours service due to a low demand for the service.	Domestic noise 139 Barking dogs/pets 21 Intruder alarms 14
Stationary vehicle and street noise including: Car alarms Ice cream van chimes	Informal and formal action under the EPA 1990 and using Code of Practice on ice cream van chimes.	Try to contact the registered keeper of the vehicle and if necessary serve notice and disconnect the alarm if sounding for more than one hour. For other types of street noise we inform the person responsible and take any necessary further action.	8
Industrial and commercial noise including: Amplified music Intruder alarms Hours of operation Noisy plant and equipment	Comment on planning applications and licensing consultations. Informal and formal action under the EPA 1990.	Contact the person responsible to make them aware of the complaint and discuss ways to minimise the noise. Send letter and diary sheet to the complainant if necessary. Install noise monitoring equipment and/or carry out visits to assess the noise. Serve notice and disconnect alarms if sounding for longer than one hour. Liaise with Licensing and Planning Departments and also comment and make recommendations on planning and licensing applications	55

Construction demolition sites: Hours of work	and	Comment on planning applications and informal and formal action under the EPA 1990, Control of Pollution Act 1974 and referring to British Standard 5228: Code of practice for noise control on construction and demolition sites.	Contact the person responsible to make them aware of the complaint. We don't issue prior consents due to the amount of work involved however we would give advice to developers and respond to complaints and take any necessary further action.	7
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