

FACTSHEET

LET'S BE REASONABLE

Anti-social behaviour is defined as a nuisance or annoyance but what is annoying to one person is perfectly acceptable to another. That's why we need to step back and think – are we being reasonable? ASB Help does not underestimate the effect anti-social behaviour has on individuals, families and neighbourhoods but you need to be reasonable. Is the behaviour really inappropriate in the circumstances?

To get action on anti-social behaviour the agencies involved need to agree the behaviour is anti-social. For legal action, the court must agree. In order to avoid wasting your time and the time of the authorities, you need to be sure the behaviour is anti-social.

Poor sound insulation is a problem in many homes. It often means you can hear domestic noise from your neighbour such as footsteps, talking, dropping objects or children playing. That can be stressful but you might have to learn to live with that noise. Legally they are entitled to go about their life creating normal amounts of noise without having to worry about how it affects you.

Example of Being Reasonable

It's a beautiful summer day. My neighbours are having a BBQ with music and lots of noise from everyone talking and having fun. Is this anti-social behaviour? If I've had a bad night with the children and the baby is trying to nap in the day, or I'm trying to sleep in the day because I do night shifts, does that make the BBQ anti-social?

In society today, we often do not know our neighbours. Keep this in mind when you experience an annoyance or nuisance. If you don't know them, they don't know you either and therefore don't know you have a sick baby or that you work nights. We also need to think reasonably in these situations. If this is the first and probably only BBQ that our neighbours have had this year, and it's the middle of the day on a Saturday, then that is clearly not something to bother the police or local authority about. There are things we can do to shut out an annoying noise – go out for a few hours, use earplugs if trying to sleep, or put the TV on.

Neighbours and Neighbourhood Watch

We live in community. Sometimes we live very close to our neighbours, for example in flats. Our neighbours will annoy us sometimes but we do need to stop and think what is the right response. Should we ignore it as a one-off incident? Should we try and tackle it ourselves if fairly minor? Or should we report it to the appropriate authorities? Stopping and thinking through this helps ensure that the police receive the right calls.

If you want to try and tackle the problem yourself – perhaps with the help of your Neighbourhood Watch or through mediation, see our factsheet Tackling the Problem for tips to help you.