

FACTSHEET

MEASURING NOISE

How do Agencies go about Measuring Noise?

Noise that is unreasonable is:

- Loud noise after 11pm and before 7am
- Loud music and other household noise at an inappropriate volume at any time

Local Authorities want to know if it is a Statutory Noise Nuisance. (A very simple definition of this is "a legal term which has been developed over many years and has come to mean something which is stopping you from enjoying your property"). If it is, the Environmental Department can issue an Abatement Notice. An Abatement Notice tells the person making the noise to either stop the noise completely or limit it to certain times of day.

To get results, noise must be seen to be a nuisance by law. This usually means it has to be damaging to your health and/or disturb your life in an unreasonable and persistent way. Put another way it must be a significant or unreasonable noise that materially interferes with the use and enjoyment of your home. Noise is measured in Decibels (Db). Unfortunately there is not a range of Decibels that say 'this noise is OK' and above this Decibel 'this is too noisy'. That is what makes things so complicated and so subjective. Agencies will take their own decision on whether the noise you are suffering is a nuisance.

They will probably look at:

- the level of noise
- how long it lasts
- when it happens
- how often it happens
- whether it is caused by normal living activities

If you don't think the noise is going to be a statutory noise nuisance but it is causing you distress, ask yourself 'is there any other behaviour also present, for example harassment?'. The Local Authority (or Housing Association where applicable) noise officers should be able to help you with this.

Statutory Noise versus Other Issues

When you report noise, some Councils just get stuck on whether it is a statutory noise nuisance. You can help them to think creatively so that you get results! For example, if it is a dog barking, is there an animal welfare issue rather than just focusing on the noise? If it is shouting and banging, could there be any domestic violence involved or risk to a child's safety?

It can be difficult to prove statutory nuisance but looking at the issue more widely could lead to other ways of dealing with the problem which are not so complex and labour-intensive.