

There's a complaint about noisy neighbours every 80 seconds

In 2019, nearly 424,000 noise complaints were made to local councils across the UK – the equivalent of one every 80 seconds.

Music and parties (28 per cent), domestic (14 per cent) and animal noise (13 per cent) were the top three causes for complaints over the past three years.

London is the noisiest region, but Belfast, Newport and Coventry all make the top 10 noisiest local authorities.

The figures are revealed in research from Churchill Home Insurance (1).

The noise makers are getting away with it

Despite the frequency of complaints, however, only one in every 54 resulted in a noise abatement notice (2) being issued. That's just a fraction over 2%. Some complaints can be resolved through a conversation with the neighbour. And some noise makers will stop after a warning. But this low figure must mean a lot of noise makers are escaping scot free. Local authorities can be reluctant to issue noise abatement orders because they need quite a high level of proof. Some have used anti-social behaviour orders instead since the process is simpler and quicker. But, nevertheless, it does seem that noise sufferers are not being well served.

We have a noise crisis on our hands

We hear a lot about the climate crisis. Nothing about a noise crisis. Yet, with a complaint every 80 seconds, this can only be described as a crisis; even an epidemic. It should not be left to local authorities to deal with this. Government needs to tackle the underlying causes. Government should also ensure that local councils have adequate resources to tackle the crisis.

Government action required

Music and parties account for a huge 28% of complaints. There will undoubtedly be persistent offenders. Motorists who break the rules get points on their licences, leading to a ban. Why not introduce a similar scheme for those who persistently annoy with their music. Three offences and you are banned from playing music for three years. Extreme? I think not.....given how widespread the problem is and the suffering it causes.

Unless we are willing to impose these sorts of measures, we have no chance of tacking the epidemic of noise that is causing a complaint to be made every 80 seconds. Let that sink in. A complaint every 80 seconds. If you can't handle your music, you lose it. If you can't stop your dogs barking, you lose them.

Indeed, we may need to go further to conquer the epidemic. Just as there is pressure on governments to ban the noisiest planes and oversize cars, oughtn't they to look at banning the most powerful sound-systems? It only seems extreme because we are not used to thinking about neighbour noise in this way.

Business as usual = acceptance the noise epidemic will continue

We can continue to kid ourselves that a complaint every 80 seconds doesn't signal an epidemic. Or we can take the radical action required.

The pandemic lockdown emphasised the noise epidemic

Noisy neighbours have had a significant negative impact on people during lockdown (3). Consumer omnibus research conducted by Opinium showed nearly half (24 million) of Britons believed neighbours' antisocial noise has had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing during the first lockdown.

What further evidence are we waiting for?

References: (1). Freedom of information Act request issued to all UK councils on 24th January 2020. A total of 313 out of 382 local councils (81.9%) responded, of which 297 (77.7%) provided usable data. The

councils that provided usable data accounted for 80.1% of the UK population. **(2)**. A noise abatement notice is an official notice² given by a council to those responsible for causing a disturbance, telling them to either stop the activity or limit it to certain times to avoid causing a nuisance. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-nuisances-how-councils-deal-with-complaints#abatement-notice> **(3)**. Consumer omnibus research conducted by Opinium between 29th May and 2nd June 2020. A nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults were polled, of which 914 stated that neighbour noise of some form had had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing

More detail: <https://www.directlinegroup.co.uk/en/news/brand-news/2020/09062020.html>

by Cut Noise