

Environmental health: Noise

Why is this important to Bradford District?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that excessive noise seriously harms human health, and interferes with people's daily activities at school, at work, at home and during leisure time. It can disturb sleep, cause cardiovascular and psycho physiological effects, reduce performance and provoke annoyance responses, and changes in social behavior. In addition, WHO have produced **Guideline Values for Community Noise in Specific Environments** such as inside dwelling, bedrooms, etc.

Nationally, the number of **complaints about noise has increased** dramatically over the last 20 years. Noise can be a source of stress and anxiety for many people in their own homes. It is also a pollutant because it can seriously damage the quality of life and often the physical, psychological and social circumstances of those exposed to it.

Noise is now recognised as a serious public health issue, and this is reflected by an indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework, which is measured by the percentage of the population affected by noise.

Strategic Context

National Context: The [Noise Policy Statement for England](#) sets out the Government's policy on noise. The policy recognises the impact that noise can have on health and wellbeing; accordingly, good health and a good quality of life can be promoted through the effective management of noise in the context of Government policy on sustainable development.

In the effective management and control of environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise, the policy sets out a number of aims:

- to avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life;
- to mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life;
- to contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.

The Natural Environment White Paper published in June 2011, reiterated the Government's commitment to deliver the Noise Policy Statement for England. The paper also highlighted that for many people, a sense of tranquillity contributes to their enjoyment of the natural environment. The Government plans to work with local authorities to establish mechanisms for formally identifying and protecting urban Quiet Areas, so that people living in cities can benefit from access to areas of relative quiet for relaxation and contemplation.

In 2013, in order to inform the delivery of the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE), DEFRA carried out a piece of work to examine the effectiveness of policy measures since 1960 in reducing the impact of the noise problem that they were intended to address. One of the focuses of this was noise legislation; one of the conclusions it draws specifically from noise complaint data is that

reported public dissatisfaction with noise as expressed by complaints has risen rapidly since the introduction of the legislation in the 1960's, and complaints of domestic origin now predominate. While the rate may have levelled-off in the last ten years they continue to run at relatively high levels and have not fallen.

Local Context: Environmental Health responds to all of the complaints which it receives about noise. Where an investigation indicates that the noise amounts to a statutory nuisance, action is taken under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This requires Local Authorities to serve Abatement Notices to eliminate the nuisance, or reduce it to an acceptable level; failure to comply may result in legal proceedings.

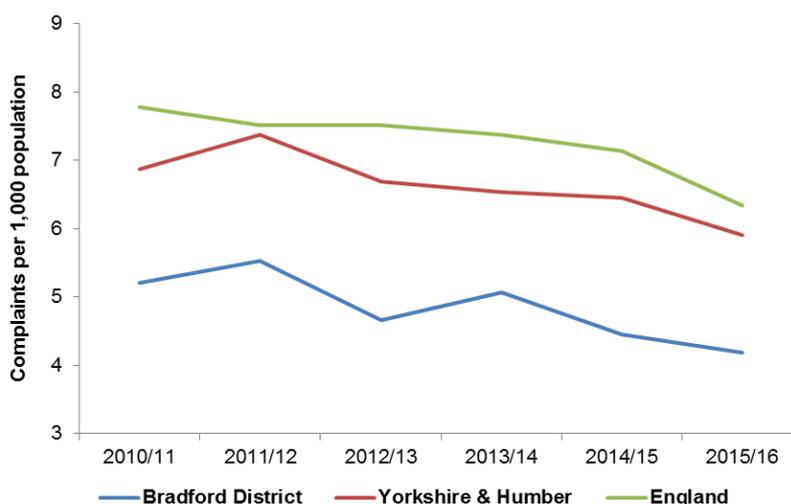
Additionally, where the noise under investigation is found to be unreasonable and to be causing a negative impact upon the local community's quality of life, Environmental Health can issue Community Protection Notices to address the problem. Again, failure to comply may result in legal proceedings.

The Environmental Health Service operates an Emergency Call Out Service which will respond to defined incidents. Some types of noise complaints fall within those defined incidents. In addition the officers on the call out service also deliver a Noise Witnessing Service. This is a service whereby specific noise cases have the option to contact an officer in order to have noise incidents witnessed outside of normal working hours.

What do we know?

- Between 2014/15 and 2017/18 the number of complaints received by Bradford District Council have **reduced by 8%**, from 2,351 in 2014/15 to 2,153 in 2017/18.
- There is a significant increase in the number of complaints received during the months of July, August and September each year.
- The majority of complaints relate to domestic noise sources. Between 2014/15 and 2017/18, 72% of noise complaints were alleged to be from a **domestic source**.
- The complaint rate for Bradford District is lower than the average for England. Using the latest available PHOF data for 2015/16, Bradford District's complaint rate was 4.2 per 1,000 population compared to the average for England of 6.3 per 1,000 population
- Formal **enforcement** activity is necessary to eliminate a statutory nuisance in approximately **50 cases** each year

Figure 1: Rate of noise complaints in Bradford District, Yorkshire & Humber and England, 2010/11 – 2015/16



Source: Public Health England

Customer surveys identify that in excess of 80% of our customers state that they are very or highly satisfied with our reactive enforcement services. Our customers expect enforcement action to be taken in accordance with our enforcement policy and expect the full suite of enforcement options to be given due consideration, including where appropriate, seizure of noise making equipment.

Our partners in West Yorkshire Police and In Communities recognise the Environmental Health Service role in reducing noise nuisance and associated anti-social behaviour. The liaison links are being strengthened through initiatives such as Information Sharing Agreements that facilitate rapid intelligence sharing.

Gaps/Challenges/Opportunities

- Bradford District has a significant number of commercial and industrial outlets which are in close proximity to residential areas, increasing the likelihood of noise nuisance.
- Bradford District has a significant number of households in high density housing areas that keep cockerels, increasing the likelihood of noise nuisance.
- Domestic equipment such as music systems, televisions and computer equipment increasingly incorporate high powered speaker systems, which unwittingly may cause noise nuisance to neighbours.

What does this information mean to commissioners and services?

Prevention of noise pollution is always the preferred strategy and Environmental Health considers that the most effective means of noise management is to ensure that new developments are sited and designed in such a manner as to minimise the impact of noise and vibration. It is therefore important that noise and vibration issues are given due consideration during the planning and licensing processes in line with national guidance. Environmental Health seeks to advise and influence the planning and licensing processes to achieve these aims by providing advice on noise and vibration issues to the Bradford District Council's Planning Department, and to applicants/prospective applicants through the implementation of the West Yorkshire Planning Consultation Guidance 'Noise & Vibration, and to the Council's Licensing Team.

It is essential that a proportionate and transparent enforcement strategy is maintained when contraventions of statutory requirements are identified. This will include the service of Abatement and Community Protection Notices and instigation of legal proceedings where necessary. In cases of severe domestic noise nuisance, seizure of noise making equipment is considered.