

## How to Guide: Tackling Student Noise

### Why Do We Need to Tackle Student Noise?

Since the 1990s there has been a dramatic increase in the size of the student population. Students can bring vibrancy to neighbourhoods, boost local economies, and supply voluntary workers. However, students tend to live irregular hours and like to socialise during the week, as well as at weekends, after exams, during holidays or Freshers' Week. Therefore, areas with a higher student population can experience higher levels of noise disturbance – resulting in potential conflicts with their local communities.



### Student Facts

- Studentification is the academic term for the recent phenomena of an influx of students and their impact on their surrounding neighbourhood
- Two thirds of universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) have been confronted by communities regarding their concerns about the impact of students on the local area
- Students are aware that the noise they make can be a problem. A Unite Student Experience Report found that 54% of students thought that student noise was the biggest problem for local communities

### Noise Facts

- Noise becomes a problem when people become irritated by what they hear, usually when excessive noise is made at an inconvenient time, for example, when we're sleeping or studying
- Research shows that over a quarter of us are bothered, annoyed or disturbed by noise from neighbours, and one million people have moved because of noisy neighbours (Environmental Protection UK Noise Survey 2008)
- Prolonged exposure to irritating noise can cause physical and emotional distress, including lack of sleep, anger and increasing the risk of more serious health problems
- Noise can generate hostilities within communities (and households), and difficulties in social relationships in general

## Tackling Student Noise

People are frequently simply not aware that their activities are causing a noise problem – especially if they do not know their neighbours. So, for transient populations such as students, with irregular lifestyles, who are often not in an area long enough to become aware of their community, this can be a particular problem.

It is therefore important to make them aware that their late night (or early morning) carousing may be disrupting their housemates, as well as the neighbours, and that being a considerate neighbour does not mean you have to stop having fun!

## Forming Partnerships

In some areas where this problem has been identified, successful partnerships have been formed to raise awareness of the issues and increase the understanding of young people on being considerate members of the community. These include the HEIs themselves, landlords and letting agents, businesses that benefit from student custom, local residents and politicians. Whether you are a local authority, HEI or residents group, working in partnership with interested groups and individuals in the affected community can lead to improved relationships in the area.

- Universities and colleges
- Students union
- Local authority noise/anti-social behaviour team
- Landlords and housing providers
- Student bars, local pub landlords and nightclubs
- Community/residents groups
- Local politicians
- Police

## Raise Awareness with Students

Once you have identified possible partnership organisations, think about appropriate awareness raising activities. There are existing initiatives throughout the academic year providing opportunities to target young people:

- Noise Action Week – every May [www.noiseactionweek.org.uk](http://www.noiseactionweek.org.uk)
- Freshers' Week – normally in September or October
- Other University / community or local authority led events

Activities could include:

- Encouraging HEI authorities to advise potential students on considerate behaviour
- Encouraging landlords/letting agencies to insist on responsible tenancy
- Setting up a stall for Noise Action Week/Freshers Week or other university and local events – providing information and advice, running competitions, or demonstrating noise levels
- Drafting and distributing leaflets or posters advising students on how to be considerate neighbours; explaining the problem of noise and the penalties – the threat of laptop confiscation has been found very effective!
- Using student radio/newspapers to raise awareness
- Working with student bars, local pub landlords or nightclubs to encourage them to raise awareness of noise
- Setting up a student noise awareness group who can coordinate awareness raising activities



## Student Union Action

Student Unions (SU) can be a key player in reducing the impact of student noise on the local community. As SU representatives are the voice of the student population, and are able to engage with students, they can take an active role in raising noise awareness. They can also work with the local community to build positive relationships between students and locals.

Student Unions can:

- Assist in building student-community relations
- Promote good community relations by putting up posters or handing out information about noise nuisance
- Introduce an SU post to liaise with students and members of the local community on issues of noise and other nuisance
- Come up with ideas to actively reduce student noise – such as activities with student bars or during Freshers' Week



## Case Studies

Loughborough University introduced a senior post of Community Relations Officer, whose job is to be a point of contact to residents, advise students and monitor community relations and complaints.

Queens University Belfast and the University of Ulster came up with a campaign to raise students' awareness of anti-social behaviour with posters carrying the slogan "Do you turn into a monster after dark?" which proved effective in changing student attitudes and behaviour.

## The Role of Higher Education Institute Managers

HEI managers have direct control over the day-to-day running of the institution. It is in the interest of managers to retain awareness of the problem of student noise on and off campus, to maintain the reputation of the institution in the community. Devising an action plan to tackle noise nuisance, on and off campus might be a useful tool to help address any persistent complaints.

Managers can:

- Develop policy and guidelines encouraging students to respect the community that they live in – for example information about noise could be included as part of a welcome pack when they start university
- Work with landlords on student housing lists and provide them with information to hand out to students when they move in. If there are insufficient resources for producing information the Environmental Protection UK Neighbourhood Noise Leaflet or Sound Advice card are appropriate
- Build relations with the local community and be aware of problems/potential problems by meeting with local residents
- Work with local Police Community Support Officers to promote good community relations
- Devise an action plan to tackle persistent noise
- Provide funding for student union campaigns on noise nuisance
- Work with local authorities who may finance university projects to tackle noise

## Case Studies

In collaboration with the SU, Loughborough University hands out SSHH! campaign key rings and leaflets to students who have finished their first year in halls of residence, and also at the beginning of each year of study.

The Leeds Housing Guide 2005, released by Leeds University, advises students that “wherever you move to, you are part of that community. So be a considerate neighbour”

University of Leeds also have a community relations strategy which “outlines the role of the university in the city; considers the benefits resulting from that presence, including activity directly relevant to local communities; and outlines the action being taken by the university to improve its relations with the local community”.

Newcastle University take tough measures to ensure that students do not breach their guidelines for HARMONY between students and the local community. Students are reminded that the University will not tolerate irresponsible behaviour, and that disciplinary action may be taken. Fines of up to £100 can be asked of students for misconduct, and cases of serious misconduct may be referred to the Student Disciplinary Committee.

## The Role of Local Authorities

Local authorities can:

- Liaise with HEI managers and student unions
- Promote good practice in noise mitigation to landlords
- Provide an appropriate level of service to manage complaints – including a noise help line and out of hours cover
- Hold a stall at HEIs, perhaps at an organised event such as Noise Action Week or Freshers’ Week
- Run awareness raising campaigns on and off campus – using student media and local press
- Provide funding to university strategies and campaigns on noise

## Case Studies

Sheffield City Council is currently operating a Trial Nuisance Noise Service on weekend evenings for the registering of residents’ complaints.

Lincoln City Council carried out a range of activities for Noise Action Week 2008, including events in the city square with representatives from Lincoln University’s Student Union, helping promote their work to reduce problems with noise and anti-social behaviour from the student community. They provided advice and used noise monitoring equipment to show how loud people could shout.

Doncaster Council set up a stand at Doncaster College for Noise Action Week 2007, providing advice to students about the impact of noise from loud music and motorbikes. A prize draw was set up and students were asked to write down the song they would most miss if they lost their hearing; students could also test the volume of their MP3 player – the loudest player was played at 116dB(A) and people were advised about hearing loss if the volume was above 80dB(A).

Loud music and noisy parties were the focus of Northampton Borough Council’s summer noise campaign, launched during Noise Action Week 2006. Information packs were sent to sixth forms, colleges and universities as well as local private landlords, containing tips on how to hold a party without annoying the neighbours, facts and figures on noise nuisance as well as posters for communal areas.

## Further Information

### Universities UK Studentification Guide

[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/studentification\\_guide.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/studentification_guide.pdf)

### Studentification and Noise Nuisance, Dr Darren Smith, University of Brighton

[www.environmental-protection.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Darren\\_Smith.pdf](http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Darren_Smith.pdf)

### National Noise Survey 2008, Environmental Protection UK,

[www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noiseactionweek/surveys](http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noiseactionweek/surveys)

### Noise Nuisance information

[www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noise/neighbourhood-noise/nuisance/](http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noise/neighbourhood-noise/nuisance/)

### Noise Pollution Information

[www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noise/environmental-noise/noise-pollution/](http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/noise/environmental-noise/noise-pollution/)

## Examples of Local Initiatives and Information for Students:

### Sheffield City Council Trial Nuisance Noise Service

[www.sheffield.gov.uk/environment/environmental-health/pollution/noise-pollution/noiseservice](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/environment/environmental-health/pollution/noise-pollution/noiseservice)

### University of Nottingham Sssh Campaign

[www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/campaigns/community/sssh/](http://www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/campaigns/community/sssh/)

### Newcastle University guidance for students living in the community

[www.ncl.ac.uk/student-progress/community.HTM](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/student-progress/community.HTM)

### Southampton University

<http://suaic.susu.org/advice?aid=43>

### Exeter University

[www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8298&listid=8292](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8298&listid=8292)

### Lincoln University

[www.lincolnsu.com/content/11785/welfare/local\\_police/](http://www.lincolnsu.com/content/11785/welfare/local_police/)



## Promoting Practical Solutions to Everyday Noise Problems

Visit [www.noiseactionweek.org.uk](http://www.noiseactionweek.org.uk) or Email: [noiseactionweek@environmental-protection.org.uk](mailto:noiseactionweek@environmental-protection.org.uk)



Noise Action Week is coordinated by Environmental Protection UK

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Registered Charity Number 221026

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