

Why is this issue important?

Noise is defined as “unwanted sound”. Sources of noise can be occupational (in the workplace), neighbourhood (including noise related to anti-social behaviour), and environmental (including road traffic).

The health effects of noise can include annoyance; sleep disruption; a small increase in risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease and; negative impact on children’s learning and cognitive performance.¹

Exposure to constant or very loud noise can cause temporary or permanent damage to hearing.

Key outcomes

- ***The percentage of the population affected by noise (Public Health Outcomes Framework)²***

The Noise Policy Statement for England March 2010³ states the long-term vision to promote good health and quality of life through the management of noise.

The Noise Policy Aims are as follows:

Through the effective management and control of environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise within the context of Government policy on sustainable development:

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

Impact in Brighton & Hove

Brighton & Hove is a large cosmopolitan city and receives a cross section of complaints in relation to noise from domestic dwellings, construction sites, events held around the city and noise from licensed premises. This character and make up of complaints received is more comparable with

London Boroughs than fellow local authorities outside London in the South East.

The City Council received over 2,400 noise complaints in 2015/16 (an average of 201 a month), relating to noise from both domestic and commercial sources including construction sites, air handling units, plant and machinery, pubs and clubs, neighbours and parties. This compares to 2,706 for the same period last year.

The reduction in noise complaints compared to the same period last year is likely to be in relation to the reduction in the Council's noise patrol service. This was only operating Saturday night 10pm to 3am, instead of two nights. This time last year the noise patrol service was operating every Friday and Saturday night. At budget Council in February 2016 it was agreed that the Noise Patrol Service would be reinstated from April 2016.

In 2014/15, the rate of complaints about noise was 7.1 per thousand people in England. Compared to both 2013/14 and 2010/11 the reduction was statistically significant (from 7.4 and 7.8 complaints per thousand people respectively). The rate of complaints about noise is primarily worse in more urban local authorities; the ten local authorities with the highest rate of complaints about noise were all in London in 2014/15.²

In 2014/15, Brighton & Hove had the highest rate of noise complaints per thousand people at 11 per thousand compared with 5.3 for the South East and 7.1 per thousand people for England. However, the city is fourth highest of comparator local authorities with similar levels to Portsmouth and Southampton.²

Where we are doing well

The City Council continues to work closely with local schools in raising awareness of various noise-related issues. Safety in Action Week (held in June of each year) provides an opportunity to raise awareness among children and young people of the risk from exposure to loud music from MP3 players and similar devices.

The City Council also provides work experience for 15 year old students from local schools, and this provides an opportunity to again raise awareness of the noise service the City Council provides and the impact that noise has on local communities.

¹ Health Protection Agency. Environmental Noise and Health in the UK; 2010.

² Public Health England. Public Health Outcomes Framework data tool.

Available at: <http://www.phoutcomes.info/> [Accessed 22/08/2016]

³ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE). March 2010.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69533/pb13750-noise-policy.pdf [Accessed 22/09/2016]

The City Council also works closely with both Universities to resolve complaints about noise from students living in the city. Attendance at Fresher and Housing Fairs provides an early opportunity help students understand how they can live in local communities and not cause noise nuisance to neighbouring residents.

The City Council has started working with the Institute of Acoustics (IOA) and attending their publications working group. This focuses on ensuring that current work and papers are reviewed and have a national audience.

The City Council continues to work with colleagues in planning to provide specialist acoustic advice to inform decisions on planning applications including major projects, and further associated work with building contractors mitigating and managing noise from protracted complex construction projects

Local inequalities

There are limited local data on the impact of noise on different population groups. Groups who may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of noise include children, older people and people with hearing impairments.^{1,4} The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) mapping⁵ predicts that households most affected by traffic noise are those closest to major roads: London Road, Lewes Road and the seafront.

National research has reported that noise problems are worse in areas of high density housing, rented accommodation (both social and private sectors), areas of deprivation and areas which are highly urbanised.⁶

What we don't know

The impact of noise pollution on local people's health and wellbeing is not known.

In addition, there is limited knowledge of the impact of noise across different population groups.

Key evidence and policy

Health Protection Agency (2010) Environmental Noise and Health in the UK
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/ProductsServices/ChemicalsPoisons/Environment/Noise/>

Defra webpages, including national policy and legislation
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/noise/>

National Environment White Paper (2011)
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

Various legislation and guidance exists to manage noise in the environment, homes and workplaces:

- The statutory nuisance provision under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is a primary tool for preventing and abating noise nuisance. Where a noise nuisance exists, or is likely to exist, there is a statutory duty to serve a noise abatement notice on the person responsible, owner and/or occupier.
- The Noise Act 1996 introduced the concept of the night time noise offence, and a fixed penalty provision that enables fixed penalties to be issued to domestic and licensed premises.
- The Control of Pollution Act 1974 provides specific provisions to manage noise from construction sites and has been a valuable tool when preventing noise from major construction sites around the city.
- The Licensing Act 2003 defines one of the licensing objectives as 'prevention of public nuisance'. Noise from city centre licensed premises is a factor in the City Council special licensing policy covering the Cumulative Impact Zone. Assessment and review of noise complaints in relation to licensed premises is carried out whenever licensing policy is reviewed.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides new tools and powers to respond to noise complaints. This includes closure powers for domestic and licensed premises, and Community Protection Notices where behaviour is having a detrimental effect AND is persistent or continuing nature AND conduct is unreasonable AND affecting the quality of life of those in the locality.

⁴ World Health Organisation. Guidelines for Community Noise; 1999.

⁵ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Noise Mapping England. <http://services.defra.gov.uk/wps/portal/noise>

⁶ Cited in Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution; 2007.

The planning regime provides an opportunity to prevent and manage noise where new developments are proposed. Local and national planning policy helps influence the statutory decision-making process on whether a development goes ahead, its character and design, and/or any planning conditions that can be imposed to minimise noise, and thereby minimise the impact. The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) has been a key tool for protecting new residential developments proposed near significant noise sources. This has been reinforced by publication of further guidance relating to noise National Planning Policy Guidance – Noise (December 2014). This introduced the concept of defining impact levels.

Since May 2013 The Town and Country Planning (general Permitted Development) Order 2013 allows office accommodation to be converted to residential without needing planning permission. This deregulation could result in a sector of our housing stock having a poor standard of sound insulation and residential accommodation being introduced into areas where the surrounding noise climate is unacceptably high.

Recommended future local priorities

1. Following recent changes in planning legislation and planning policy the City Council have been formulating guidance and pre validation advice for developers and customers submitting planning applications. The City Council have been working with other Sussex authorities to make this guidance and advice Sussex wide. Training is being implemented for both planning and environmental health staff to ensure future changes are implemented consistently.
2. In relation to addressing the issue of noise complaints from accommodation rented by students the City Council are proposing to review how they engage with the student population, letting agents, and landlords to ensure all parties have advice and guidance on how to prevent noise nuisance and how not to disturb neighbours.

Key links to other sections

- Transport and active travel;
- Coronary heart disease;
- Children and young people;
- Sensory impairment

Further information

Brighton & Hove City Council - Noise and Pollution webpage <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/environment/noise-and-pollution>

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