

The Good Neighbour guide

Good neighbours are considerate, tolerant, and understanding of others and their different lifestyles, and they help build successful communities. Despite this, there are different behaviours that can cause problems for neighbours and some are more serious than others.

Different lifestyles and one-off incidents

We are all different and you should respect that. Often people do not realise they may be disturbing others. One-off incidents can be annoying, such as a loud party, but if they are not frequent then you should try to tolerate it. If they occur on a regular basis, and the disturbance causes you a problem, it is often a matter of making your neighbour aware in a friendly manner and seeking to work out a solution together.

What you can do if your neighbour is causing problems

- We recommend talking to your neighbour as soon as possible about anything they are doing that's affecting you. This is often the quickest and easiest solution.
- Some tips on approaching your neighbour:
- Choose a time that's convenient for everyone
- Plan what you are going to say
- Be polite and explain the problem and how it's affecting you
- Listen to what they have to say
- Be understanding of different ways of life
- Be open to suggestions
- Come to an agreement that suits everyone.

Do not:

- Approach your neighbour if you don't feel safe
- Go around when you feel angry or very upset
- Be argumentative or use threatening behaviour.
- If you feel you cannot approach your neighbour yourself, consider whether you have a friend or relative who could act on your behalf.
- Alternatively, you could write them a friendly letter or send them one of our Dear neighbour cards to highlight the issues you are concerned about.
- If you are too scared to do any of these then please contact us and we can discuss your options.

What you can do to be a good neighbour

Here are some tips on how you can be a good neighbour to prevent problems arising:

Noise

- As part of everyday living, and the fact that no home is totally soundproof, we all must expect some noise from the people living around us. Common everyday living noise includes TVs and stereos, DIY, dogs barking, intruder or car alarms, slamming doors or simply walking around the property
- Recognise that your neighbours do not want to hear noise from your home, particularly late at night, or for long periods
- Keep noise at a reasonable level at all times e.g. from the TV, stereo, radio
- Noise carries through walls, floors and doors. Laminate flooring (particularly in flats), and other hard surfaces, can amplify noise. To help reduce it, put down rugs and fit felt or rubber pads to movable furniture
- Warn your neighbours if you are going to do anything noisy e.g. having a party or doing DIY
- Co-operate with your neighbours if they ask you to reduce noise. For example, you can position your TV or stereo away from the walls you share with your neighbours.

Being a responsible dog owner

- Dogs are great companions but make sure they don't whine or bark for long periods of time
- If your dog fouls in a public space, you should clean it up
- Always keep your dog under control e.g. use a lead when walking the dog
- Get your dog microchipped so it can be traced back to you if it ever goes missing.

Gardens and communal areas

- Do not block communal areas with prams, bicycles or your other personal belongings
- Do not allow your garden to become overgrown and unkempt. Keeping it tidy and free of rubbish helps improve the look of the area. Where gardens look neglected, they can sometimes encourage fly-tipping
- If you share a communal door, make sure it's always kept closed and you don't let anyone in that you don't know. This way everyone's homes are kept secure
- If your neighbours' trees or hedges are a problem, you may be able to prune or remove anything that comes over to your side of the boundary as long as you offer any clippings back to your neighbour. But some trees are protected and it's best to check first with your neighbour before you take any action.

Bins

- Recycle your waste as much as possible and make sure you use the right bins
- Make sure you put your bin out for collection no earlier than 6pm the night before and always bring it back in after collection
- See our large waste collections if you have any bulky household items that you no longer want and need advice on how to dispose of them appropriately [Large item collections - East Devon](#)
- If you have a communal bin area, dispose of your rubbish correctly in the bins, and make sure the area around the bins is kept tidy - [Which container do I use? - East Devon](#)

Bonfires

- Do not light a bonfire if your neighbour has washing out, is using their garden or has their windows open
- Do not light the bonfire close to your neighbours' property to prevent the risk of the fire spreading
- Instead of having a bonfire you could consider other methods of disposing of rubbish, such as using the local household waste recycling centre or composting garden waste.
- Having frequent bonfires could be causing a 'statutory nuisance' and we have the power to issue 'abatement notices' to stop them happening – see our bonfire information page [Bonfires - East Devon](#)

Parking

- Park considerately
- Recognise that you don't have the right to park outside your home. Anyone can park on a public road if they adhere to any restrictions imposed by way of signs and markings and it is not causing an obstruction
- Avoid blocking entrances, dropped kerbs, garages or pavements.

Children playing.

- Be tolerant of children playing outside - However, if you're a parent, consider how the noise of your children playing outside may affect your neighbours. Consider if there's a safer place to play such as a park or skateboard area
- If a child accidentally throws or kicks a ball into your property, you should either hand it back or allow it to be collected
- If children harass, intimidate or disturb others then complaints are justified, and parents must respond reasonably.