

6.4.10 Noise pollution

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 antisocial 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).**

The National Noise Policy Statement² states the long-term vision to promote good health and quality of life through the management of noise.

Impact in Brighton & Hove

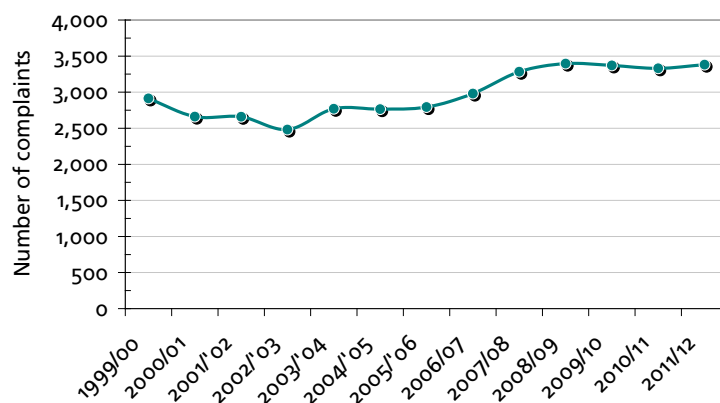
Data for 2011/12 provided by 226 out of 326 local authorities in England show that Brighton & Hove has significantly higher complaints about noise (12.1 complaints per 1,000 population) than England (7.5 complaints per 1,000 population).³

However, 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 average noise complaints for London local authorities is 19.7 complaints per 1,000 population, higher than for Brighton & Hove.³

The City Council receives over 3,300 noise complaints a year, relating to noise from both domestic and commercial sources including construction sites, air handling units, plant and machinery, pubs and clubs, neighbours and parties.

The number of complaints has increased since 2000/01, but has been stable since 2007/08. Over time the character of complaints has changed e.g. more noise complaints are received about home entertainment systems and stag/hen parties.

Figure 1: Number of noise complaints per year 1999/00 to 2010/13



Source: Brighton & Hove City Council

Where we are doing well

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

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.⁴ The Defra mapping 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.⁵

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

² <http://www.Defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/noise/npse/> [Accessed 25/08/2012].

³ Public Health England. Public Health Outcomes Framework Data Tool. July 2013. Available at: <http://www.phoutcomes.info/> [Accessed 06/08/2013]

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

⁵ Cited in Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution; 2007.

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What we don't know

The impact of noise pollution on local people's health and wellbeing is not known. 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 our 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 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) removed guidance specific to managing noise. This has been a key tool for protecting new residential developments proposed near significant noise sources.

Since May 2013 The Town and Country Planning (general Permitted Development) Order 2013 allows the 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 we have been formulating guidance and pre validation advice for developers and customers submitting planning applications. We 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 we are proposing to review how we 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; Physical and sensory impairment

Further information

Brighton & Hove City Council <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1124404>

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