

Noise Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Recommendations from the Spotlight on noise complaints report

Are there any recommendations in the Spotlight on noise complaints report around cost?

The [Spotlight on noise complaints report](#) provides recommendations that could help. Being clever with opportunities and using them to take action should be considered.

For example, the void period is a good opportunity to look at making some of the recommended changes, same with net zero. There is no hard and fast rule, just try to find ways to be as cost efficient as possible with what we are recommending. Try and demonstrate by quantifying the impact of the investment, especially in dealing early with such reports so they don't become something much bigger.

Also try and horizon scan for initiatives from the Government and whether social housing can take advantage of these.

Good practice noise examples

Do you have any good practice examples from other social landlords regarding noise complaints?

In our research for the [Spotlight on noise report](#) we found several good examples.

One landlord always put new carpets into a property before it was let, this made it feel more like home to new tenants. The tenancy agreement also made it clear that hardwood flooring wouldn't be allowed.

There were also good examples of the use of mediation where residents' expectations were managed from the outset, this is about working out how to manage the relationship going forward. We saw some great examples of communication, leaflets given to new tenants which covered messages such as 'if you are going to have a party,

let your neighbours know beforehand when it will take place and when the music will be turned off.

When new residents moved in, they were also given top tips on the neighbourhood with advice on how to interact with others for example.

Are there any examples of good noise policies or neighbourhood management policies?

There are some examples in the full [Spotlight on noise report](#).

However, as part of the follow-up report on this we naturally look at examples of how the recommendations in the original report have been implemented and will be included in the follow-up report. Alongside the follow up report which will be released in early 2024, we will be creating some learning and development resources through the [Centre for Learning](#) which will include case studies and examples. In the meantime, there is a section on good practice in the noise report, about the community and good neighbourhood management strategy.

Is there good practice guidance for landlords about creating a policy for noise?

We are engaging with landlords around this currently, and once we can share examples they will be published through our [Centre for Learning](#).

We published the original report in October 2022, and we will shortly be beginning our evaluation and follow up report which we hope to be published in early 2024.

Neighbourhood management policy

The good neighbourhood management policy has been recommended to be distinct from the ASB policy. Should landlords develop a guidance document for colleagues and residents?

In terms of the guidance document, it this should be available for residents as well as colleagues, although it is up to you as the landlord whether this should be 2 separate documents or the same for both. The [Spotlight on noise complaints report](#) also mentions the importance of involving residents in developing the strategy.

It is for you to decide what should be in the guidance, however, you may wish to consider:

- the purpose of the guidance and policy
- your approach to good neighbourhood management and what a resident can expect
- where and where not it is appropriate to deal with a matter under this policy and how to provide feedback

Would the Ombudsman look at drafts of good neighbourhood procedures from organisations and provide comments?

We can review up to a point, but we won't 'endorse' a particular approach. We get this a lot with our code compliance work where we get sent lots of policies and strategies, so we can provide an initial view, but we can't be going into detail.

If you would find it useful for us to have an initial check that is something we can do.

Responding to noise complaints

What should landlords do in a situation where 2 neighbouring residents fall out, then start complaining about the noise each other is making?

The quicker you nip something in the bud the less potential it has to be pursued past the point where it becomes unreasonable.

If you have a set of neighbours who have fallen out and now are starting to report each other for things that would be considered reasonable/would be tolerated ordinarily, it is a warning sign that it is not necessarily about what they are reporting, but more about the relationship.

Mediation is not often explained well when it could be an option in these types of disputes. Credibility should be given to mediation techniques, and it has to be done well. Sometimes, using someone to facilitate the mediation who is independent can help. For example, we saw that one Police and Crime Commissioner set up a bank of trained mediators from across all the public bodies in that region. By using a completely

impartial mediator it takes the heat out of the situation and ensures there is no other ulterior motive on the mediator's part. However, residents shouldn't be forced into mediation if it is not something they wish to do.

Why is mediation often unsuccessful? Is it because it is more about property than behaviours?

We saw a disparity in how successful the landlord thought the mediation was versus how the resident felt it went.

We also found that where mediation was being offered via an ASB policy rather than a noise policy this is where the issues tended to arise, partly because the relationship may have already broken down, or whether it is an ASB matter rather than a noise matter. By offering mediation as part of the ASB process, it is already quite 'loaded' in terms of already saying it's an ASB, whereas when offered as part of more of a noise strategy there are indications that mediation would be more successful because the individuals involved would be more receptive to it as an idea. Consider how you are presenting mediation and what process it is being presented for as well as how you are explaining the benefits to the residents.

Noise apps

Are noise apps effective and do they feature in the Spotlight on noise report?

Noise apps feature in the case studies in the report.

Some people found the app itself wasn't fit for purpose in terms of recording, others found it restrictive in terms of how it can record. We also found instances where the app itself was fine and worked, but the information recorded wasn't used in the way it should have been.

We have seen them applied and be very effective but also seen that maybe they weren't the most appropriate course of action in certain circumstances. Some residents were quite frustrated when they were asked by their landlord to use this app and do some recordings, then they are told it is daily household noise, it doesn't meet the statutory levels of noise nuisance.

If they are going to be used, landlords must give clarity around the purpose or how the recording is going to be used, in what context are you going to ask residents to use the app and managing the resident's expectations.

Following up on the Spotlight on noise report

Once a Spotlight report is released what evaluation do you do on the impact and satisfaction afterwards?

We do an evaluation of all our Spotlight reports 12 months after publication.

The evaluation into the [Spotlight on noise report](#) will be starting at beginning of 2024, and as part of this we will look at the impact and the satisfaction of those organisations with separate policies. The follow-up report will then be released in 2024, and we will provide some learning and development resources around this through our [Centre for Learning](#), including webinars, virtual workshops, examples of good practice.

Early in 2024 we will be contacting via email randomly selected landlords to ask what changes have been put in place, thoughts on the [Spotlight on noise report](#), and whether you've self-assessed again the recommendations.