Living in Harmony

What to do about neighbour disputes
What this leaflet is about

Most people try and be good neighbours and don’t set out to cause disputes. However, if problems do arise, this leaflet contains advice and information on:

• what you can do yourself
• when to seek help and advice from an organisation
• the different organisations that can help and what they can do
• useful local contacts

What you can do yourself if you have a problem with a neighbour

• **Try not to rush in!**
  
  If this is the first time you’ve experienced a problem with your neighbour, the right thing to do to start with may be nothing! Maybe they’re putting up a shelf, or having a birthday party. A bit of tolerance on your part might be all that’s needed to sort the problem out. If you’re too quick to complain, it might make things worse between you both.

• **Try and sort things out yourself first**
  
  Try talking to your neighbour and explaining what the problem is. They may not realise they are causing you any disturbance. If you get someone else involved at this stage, it may make things a lot worse.
It’s often difficult to approach people to make a complaint. Below are some hints you might find helpful:

**Don’t** leave it until you’re really angry, or things get out of hand, before you complain

**Don’t** lose your temper or use aggressive body language (eg hands on hips, pointing, staring, etc.)

**Do** wait till you are calm before you speak to the person

**Do** talk to the person face to face and when they are on their own

**Do** work out beforehand what you want to say and explain the problem clearly

**Do** approach the person when they are likely to have time to talk (e.g. not late at night or when they are off to work)

**Do** speak quietly and slowly; this helps keep the other person calm

**Do** be prepared to listen to their side of the story and don’t interrupt

**Do** leave straightaway if people are aggressive or threatening when you approach them. If this happens you’ll need help to sort things out from an organisation
When to seek help and advice from an organisation

Sometimes people are not willing to listen or compromise, or are aggressive or violent. If you have this problem:

- you will need to get help from an organisation. Some organisations that can help are included below. Their contact details are on the back of this leaflet. Other helpful organisations are listed in your local Yellow Pages.

- it may be helpful to keep a diary recording incidents, including times, dates and details of what happens.

Citizens Advice Bureau, Tenants, Residents & other Community Groups

Can listen to people and advise them about where to get help

Can’t sort out the problem themselves, or take sides

If you are a tenant, your Landlord

Can talk to other neighbours and tenants on your behalf, or take legal action if the tenancy agreement has been broken

Can’t evict tenants who have broken their tenancy agreement without going to Court or if there isn’t enough evidence available, or take action if people have different landlords
**Mediation Service**

*Can* work with each party involved to help sort out problems by agreement

*Can’t* work with people unless each party is willing to take part

**Environmental Health Department**

*Can* take action if there is a serious problem with noise, smoke, rubbish, vermin or abandoned cars

*Can’t* take action if the problem is not serious enough for the law to have been broken, or if there is not enough evidence available

**The Police**

*Can* advise you about getting a restraining order or injunction, or take court action themselves following an incident

*Can’t* take action if the law has not been broken, or if there is not enough evidence available
What should you do?

START HERE

Is this the first time the problem has occurred?

Yes ➔ Does the problem involve violence or criminal activity?

Yes ➔ Contact the police

No ➔ Wait and see

No ➔ Does the problem happen again?

No ➔ Problem solved!

Yes ➔ Try talking to your neighbour

Yes ➔ Does the problem happen again?

Yes ➔ Are you a tenant?

No ➔ Work with your neighbour to solve the problem

CAB ➔ Mediation ➔ Reconciling differences

Yes ➔ Contact the police

No ➔叶

Yes ➔ Leaflet template (English) 16/3/04 10:07 am Page 6

Try talking to your neighbour
## Contact telephone numbers

### Local Authority
- Housing Division
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Community Safety
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Environmental Health/Public Protection
  - Tel: [Tel]

### Citizens Advice Bureau
- Area: [Area]
  - Tel: [Tel]

### Mediation Service
- Tel: [Tel]

### Housing Associations
- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

### The Police
- Tel: [Tel]

### Tenant and Resident Federations/Forums
- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

### Citizens Advice Bureau
- Area: [Area]
  - Tel: [Tel]

### Mediation Service
- Tel: [Tel]

### The Police
- Tel: [Tel]

### Tenant and Resident Federations/Forums
- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

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  - Tel: [Tel]

- Name
  - Tel: [Tel]

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