

A simple guide for managing entertainment noise

This document provides a simple, non-technical guide for managers of pubs, clubs and other venues who provide entertainment, such as live music, DJs, karaoke etc., to help them manage sound and avoid noise complaints from neighbours. If you intend to hold a large-scale event or you are thinking of installing a sound system to provide regular entertainment you should obtain specialist advice, although the advice here will still be relevant.

Get the licence you need

If you provide regulated entertainment to the public on a regular basis you are likely to need a premises licence, although a licence is not required to stage a performance of live music, or the playing of recorded music if:

- it takes place between 8am and 11pm, at an alcohol on-licensed premises and provided the audience is no more than 500 people

You also do not need a licence to play:

- unamplified live music at any place between the same hours; or
- amplified live music at a workplace between the same hours, provided the audience is no more than 500 people: or
- background or incidental music

If you want to put on an event, which includes the sale of alcohol (this includes an event where tickets are purchased and alcohol is included in the ticket price), late-night refreshment or regulated entertainment and do not have a premises licence to cover the type of event, you will need a temporary event notice (TEN).

Further advice on a premises licence or a TEN can be obtained by searching licensing on the council's website www.harrogate.gov.uk.

If you play or perform music which is protected by copyright you may also need a performing rights licence. [PPL-UK](#) and [PRS for Music](#) are two licensing organisation who can organise the necessary licences designed to protect the rights of music creators and performers.

Managing noise from events

There are three basic concepts to managing noise:

- reduce noise at source
- prevent noise from escaping
- management of the noise produced

Reduce noise at source

Volume control

It sounds simple, but one of the best ways of controlling noise is to keep the volume down. The basic form of this is simply turning the control on sound amplification systems down. More complex sound control systems have sound compression systems and mixing decks and different controls for bass or treble (low and high frequency sound). It is important to control the bass levels, as this travels through building structures more easily and causes the “thump-thump” beat which can cause disturbance. If you have difficulty managing the volume control a sound-limiting device can be used to help manage the sound levels automatically.

Loudspeakers

Choose speakers that are right for the type of venue and entertainment that you wish to provide. There is no need to get an over-size powerful speaker for smaller venues, and it is often better to have more, lower-power speakers positioned and directed to achieve the best result for the audience than one or two powerful speakers.

Position speakers away from windows, doors and other openings. Do not rest or mount speakers directly on to the structure of the building and use proper mounting-stands.

Vocals

It is often the vocal element of music which can be most disturbing and so if you find this to be a problem you may need to use a compression system to provide more control over the volume and quality of the sound: specialist advice should be sought for this.

Prevent noise from escaping

Again it's simple, but containing the sound inside a premises will reduce the risk of noise complaints from neighbours. Look for acoustically weak areas in the structure: usually windows, doors, ventilation ducts and other openings, and especially ones that face residential properties.

Some simple things you can try:

- keep windows and doors closed and fit acoustic seals around them
- provide double or secondary glazing with different thickness glazing. Generally speaking the thicker the glazing and the bigger the air gap the better the reduction
- have a two-door, lobby arrangement for the entertainment room, or entrance to the premises and keep one set of doors closed
- do not prop doors open during entertainment
- control patrons opening windows and doors
- specialist “glass bolts” can help control fire exit doors being opened
- provide acoustic louvres over ventilation ducts, which allow air flow, but reduce noise
- if it gets too hot with windows / doors closed, then consider alternative cooling, such as air conditioning but be careful that its use does not add to the level of noise breakout

- consider noise escaping through the roof, as this may not be obvious if you listen for the noise at ground level, which is a particular problem with flat roofs. You may need to improve the amount of sound insulation in the ceiling or roof space
- the best sound insulation performance is gained from a high mass material with no gaps and it is a common misbelief that all insulation will help reduce sound. However, there are some insulation materials that are simply made to reflect heat and do very little to reduce sound
- if you are attached to another premises consider how the sound will travel through the structure, and speak directly with your neighbour about this

Management of the noise produced

Taking noise seriously is just another aspect of good management. Here are some simple suggestions to help manage noise effectively:

- consider the impact on neighbours before organising an event: letting neighbours know what you are planning and taking on board their views is a good idea
- do a “sound-check” before an event starts and set a volume level for the sound system that shouldn’t be exceeded. You may need to set a quieter level if the event will go on after 11pm
- make sure the performer knows what volume level has been set and what time the performance needs to end
- manage access to volume controls on the amplifier, compression system or mixing deck and consider a sound-limiting device if you have problems managing the volume
- monitor sound levels during the performance and keep a record. Our simple checklist at the end of this guide may help. But beware if you come from a noisy environment the sound may not appear as loud to you as it will to neighbours
- take quick action to reduce noise if it’s too loud and record what you have done
- avoid allowing patrons to use external areas, such as beer gardens and smoking shelters late at night
- put signs in prominent places asking patrons to be quiet when leaving the venue
- playing more gentle tracks at the end of the performance can help calm the mood and mean patrons will be less noisy as they leave
- lollipops given out as patrons leave can dumb down loud voices
- take any complaints from neighbours seriously and let them know what you have done to control the noise

Further advice

Noise council guide on noise from pop concerts.

British Beer and Pub Association guide on noise control.

Institute of Acoustics good practice guide on the control of noise from pubs and clubs.

Professional services:

Association of Noise Consultants: association-of-noise-consultants.co.uk

Institute of Acoustics: ioa.org.uk/home/default.asp

Event noise monitoring form

Premises: _____ Event: _____

Date: _____ Event start time: ____:____ Event end time: ____:____

Pre-start checklist:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Windows and doors closed | <input type="checkbox"/> Sound check and set volume | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree who will do monitoring checks and when |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check sound limiter (if fitted) | <input type="checkbox"/> Set end-time with performer | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete monitoring form |

Noise assessment guide		
Assessment	Description	Guide
A	Not audible No entertainment sound can be heard	Okay
B	Just audible Muffled sound, vocals / music not clear, easily masked by other noise in area.	Okay but lower to A after 11pm
C	Clearly audible Clear vocals / music, and likely to be heard by neighbours.	Reduce to B and not after 11pm
D	Loud Vocals / music are dominant sound and would be clearly heard by neighbours.	Never

Monitoring locations:							
Choose one or more monitoring locations as near to neighbouring properties as possible.							
Locations	1		2		3		4

Monitoring

How often you monitor will depend on how much of a problem noise is likely to be. If you regularly have the event with no problem then monitoring will be minimal, but if you have had noise complaints or it's a new event which you're unsure how much noise will be made then do more monitoring. We always recommend monitoring between 10:30pm and 11pm.

Time	Location	Assessment				Record any corrective action taken or observations at time	Initials
:_____	1	A	B	C	D		
	2	A	B	C	D		
	3	A	B	C	D		
	4	A	B	C	D		

Time	Location	Assessment				Record any corrective action taken or observations at time	Initials
:_____	1	A	B	C	D		
	2	A	B	C	D		
	3	A	B	C	D		
	4	A	B	C	D		

Time	Location	Assessment				Record any corrective action taken or observations at time	Initials
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	3	A	B	C	D		
	4	A	B	C	D		