Your guide

to being a good neighbour

We want everyone to live their lives peacefully and get on with their neighbours. Good neighbours are considerate, tolerant and understanding of others and their different lifestyles, and they help build successful communities.

This leaflet gives advice on how you can be a good neighbour and how to resolve problems with your neighbours if they arise.

When there may be problems with neighbours

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 other people may not live their lives in the same way as you live yours.

Often people do not realise they may be disturbing others and are not doing it on purpose. For example, someone vacuuming late at night may not be aware it can be heard by their neighbours and is disturbing them.

One-off incidents can be annoying at the time, such as a loud party or BBQ. But if they are part of every-day living, and 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.

L&Q staff will encourage residents to try to resolve matters around different lifestyle issues and minor nuisance, because involving us or other agencies before talking to your neighbours, may lead to hostile feelings and make the matter worse.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) involves unacceptable behaviour by residents that causes nuisance and annoyance, and can include threatening, violent or criminal behaviour. It is more serious and some examples include harassment and hate crime, domestic violence and abuse, selling drugs, criminal activity, being threatening or intimidating and noise nuisance.

If you are tenant at L&Q, it is a breach of your tenancy agreement to cause ASB. You are also responsible for the behaviour of the people living with you and visiting. If we receive a report of ASB we will assess the problem and, where appropriate, take firm action to stop the behaviour. If you are affected by ASB you should report it to us through the contact details at the bottom of this guide.

You can find more information on how we deal with ASB in our leaflet ‘Anti-Social Behaviour’.

What you can do if your neighbour is causing problems

We recommend that you speak to your neighbour at an early stage about anything they are doing that may be affecting you. This is often the quickest and easiest solution.

Talking to your neighbour

Some tips on approaching your neighbour:

- Talk to your neighbour 'face to face' if possible
- Choose a time that is best for everyone (e.g. avoid meal times or late at night)
- Plan what you are going to say beforehand
- Be polite and explain the problem and how it is affecting you
- Listen to what they have to say as they may have a reasonable explanation
- Be understanding of different ways of life
- Be open to suggestions for resolving the problem
- Come to an agreement that everyone is happy with.

Try not to:

- Approach your neighbour if you do not feel safe. If you fear they could become aggressive then its best not to approach them
- Go round when you feel angry or very upset about the problem
- Be argumentative or use threatening behaviour. This can escalate matters into something far worse than the problem you first started with.

If you feel you cannot approach your neighbour yourself, contact us and we will consider what your options may be to assist you.

If the behaviour escalates to ASB, we will deal with it under our ASB procedures. We can also put you in touch with other agencies that will give you advice and support.

Mediation

Mediation is a way to resolve disputes between neighbours, particularly when there is a desire to find a solution and communication between parties has become difficult. Both parties must be willing to talk with a trained mediator.

The mediator listens to both sides of the story and seeks to reach a mutually acceptable solution. It would not be imposed against the wishes of anyone involved, and you can meet the mediator without the other party being present.

We can put you and your neighbour in touch with an independent mediation service.

Diary sheets

Keeping a record of the times, dates and a description of what has happened can be useful to show the type of problems you are having, its frequency, severity, and whether there is a pattern to the behaviour. They are also useful for recording reference numbers given by the police or the local authority environmental health department. Diary sheets help us to decide what action, if any, we can take to help.

Diary sheets are available from L&Q Direct, online and at your local L&Q office.

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 have to expect some noise from the people living around us. Common every day living noise includes TV's 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 (e.g. from the TV, stereo, radio) at a reasonable level at all times of day
- 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.

If you are affected by noise then you can contact your local authority and ask them to investigate the problem. If the noise is unreasonable they may decide to take action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Being a responsible dog owner

Dogs are great companions but to keep a dog you should contact us first to check you are allowed one.

- If you are allowed a dog, make sure it doesn't whine or bark for long periods of time
- If your dog fouls in a public space, you should clean it up
- Keep your dog under control at all times. Use a lead when walking the dog. Dogs running around freely, particularly on the streets or in communal areas, can be intimidating for other people
- Behaviour classes help to teach your dog to be obedient and get them used to being around other dogs
- Get your dog micro-chipped so it can be traced back to you if it ever goes missing
- If you are aware that an L&Q resident has a dangerously out of control dog or banned breed, you should report this to us as well as the police.

Communal areas

You may share communal areas with your neighbours, such as staircases, balconies, corridors, lifts or fire exits.

- Do not block communal areas with prams, bicycles or your other personal belongings
- 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
- If you have any bulky household items that you no longer want, your local authority can usually take them away for you (often they provide this service for free)
- If you share a communal door, make sure it's always kept closed and you don't let anyone in you don't know. This way everyone's homes are kept secure
- Do not allow main entrance doors to slam shut, especially at night, as this is a common source of noise complaint.

Gardens

If you have a garden it can be a cause of problems if it's not cared for properly.

- 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 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
- If you are elderly or disabled and unable to maintain your garden, contact us and we will consider what action to take
- Many people enjoy seeing wildlife in their gardens, such as foxes, squirrels and badgers, but some people see these as a nuisance. If you wish to discourage wildlife from your garden then you need to restrict access to any food supplies they have, remove any possible places of shelter, and deter them from coming in. For information and advice you could contact the RSPCA on **0300 1234 999**.

Local authorities have responsibility for dealing with untidy gardens and land in some situations. For example, where material is rotting and causing a nuisance or attracting rats or mice. Contact your local authority if there are problems.

Bonfires

There isn't a law that says you cannot have a bonfire in your garden but the main cause of annoyance from bonfires is the smoke.

- Let your neighbours know that you plan to have a bonfire and see if you can agree an acceptable date and time

- Choose the time of day and weather conditions that will cause the least inconvenience to neighbours

- Do not light a bonfire if your neighbour has washing out, or if their windows are open, or they are using their garden

- 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 the local authority has the power to issue 'abatement notices' to stop them happening. Contact your local authority for further information and advice. The local authority could also fine you if you light a fire and you allow the smoke to drift across the road and become a danger to traffic.

Parking

Unless you have a designated parking bay or driveway, most people like to park their cars on the road outside their own home for convenience. However, due to the volume of cars on the road and limited parking available, it isn't always possible to park outside your home.

- Show consideration and regard to other residents when parking your vehicle

- Recognise that no one has an automatic right to park directly outside their home. The law allows anyone to park on a public highway as long as the vehicle is taxed and the Highway Code is followed

- Do not block entrances, or park at dropped kerbs, or outside garages, or in a way that prevents wheelchair users and prams from using the pavement. Also, do not block access for emergency services.

L&Q will take action in respect of abandoned vehicles and nuisance parking (e.g. parking outside designated bays, vehicles left to advertise their sale, or carrying out repairs or maintenance on a road).

Children playing

No one wants to stop children playing outside, as it's healthy and a good way to get regular exercise.

- Sometimes children playing ball games in the street can cause concern for neighbours that their cars might get accidentally damaged. Be aware of this and consider if there is a safer place to play

- Consider how the noise of children playing outside may affect your neighbours

- Think about other places more suitable to play, such as a park or a skateboard area

- If a child throws a ball into your property accidentally, you should either hand it back or allow it to be collected. Withholding balls can lead to neighbour disputes.

If children harass, intimidate or disturb others, then complaints are justified and parents must be reasonable in their response.

Contact us

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3 Maidstone Road
Sidcup
DA15 0AJ

Phone
0800 015 6536
0208 045 4011 (local rate)

E-mail
LQdirect@lqgroup.org.uk

L&Q is an exempt charity