RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To understand the attitudes and behaviours of noise makers and to refine a segmentation which brings to life the contrasting attitudinal groupings

IN DETAIL:

- What is the nature of the problem, and is there a spectrum of intensity?
- How does the noise making fit into their daily lives?
- How do they feel about their neighbours, and how has the noise situation affected their relationship?
- What advice would they find easiest to act upon? Do they want help in tackling the problem themselves, or would they like outside assistance? If so, what type of help and from whom? Or would they rather just live with it?
METHOD AND SAMPLE

Stage 1 of the research identified 8 main Noise Maker segments:

- **Live & Let Live** (good relations with neighbours, can empathise with others)
- **Tit for Tat** (poor relations with neighbours, make noise to retaliate)
- **Persecuted** (poor relations with a single neighbour, who has unreasonable expectations of what noise level is acceptable)
- **What Can I Do?** (blame noise making on other members of their household)
- **What’s Aloud?** (low awareness about what noise level is acceptable)
- **Just Having Fun** (try to think of neighbours, but forget them sometimes when having fun)
- **I’ve Got A Right** (prioritise their own right to make noise over their neighbours’ right to a quiet life)
- **Neighbours From Hell** (antisocial across a range of issues, some taking pleasure in making deliberate noise)
METHOD AND SAMPLE

- 10 standard length focus groups recruited by Noise Maker segments identified in Stage 1
- This Stage 2 concentrated on the five segments considered to be the most in need of, but also amenable to, changes in behaviour:
  - What Can I Do? *(quotes in blue)*
  - Just Having Fun *(quotes in purple)*
  - What’s Aloud? *(quotes in green)*
  - Tit 4 Tat *(quotes in red)*
  - Persecuted *(quotes in black)*
- Research undertaken during June 2005 in Birmingham, Bristol and Slough
- All research conducted by Carolyn Bird, Simon Strutt and Jackie Weaver
Findings

How do Neighbours Complain, and how do Noise Makers Respond?
HOW DO THEIR NEIGHBOURS COMPLAIN?

- Respondents reported a variety of neighbour reactions to their noise making.
- The fact that many neighbours cultivated a degree of distance from each other meant that complaints about noise were often oblique rather than direct.
- Some were relatively polite: “They didn’t actually say the goats were too noisy but they did it in a round about sort of way.”
- Some were frosty: “The neighbours didn’t complain, just gave me a bit of a frosty reception.”
- And some reverted to angry, ‘tit for tat’ behaviour rather than complaining directly: “[My child] can be in the garden playing and he is quite loud. She goes in and the door will really slam hard. She has never said anything to me.”
HOW DO THEIR NEIGHBOURS COMPLAIN?

The way in which direct approaches were made by neighbours depended largely on the kind of relationship they had with each other:

Polite direct approaches were possible if they knew each other well:

“She's quite okay about it but did say ‘do you realise the children were banging on the wall at 7am?’ It was nice she felt comfortable to come up to me and speak to me to say about it”

“I was having a party, the next door neighbour came round and had a go at me, threatened me. She said it was my attitude towards it all – then she said ‘you’d better shut up or I’ll punch you’”

But bad neighbourly relations could lead to angry confrontations:
NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

Oblique approaches

• One or two said oblique approaches from neighbours had worked: “I was aware for a period he wasn’t really saying anything to me. You were thinking ‘something is the matter here’. I suddenly thought I wonder if [son’s noise] is anything to do with it. I said something to my son. It’s calmed down now”

• For most, though, oblique complaints could be at best confusing: “He doesn’t tell me, sometimes he says I hear people next door but it’s nice to hear there’s someone in. I don’t know if he’s being polite or not”

• Some treated them with contempt: “He doesn’t get aggressive about it, just makes a point. ‘Andrew was in at 3.30 last night, we heard him.’ Get a life”

• And ‘tit 4 tat’ behaviour could simply provoke further retaliation
NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

Direct approaches
• Most Noise Makers said they preferred their neighbours to tell them directly if they were bothered by their noise
• With noisy social gatherings, a friendly word early on was better than an angry confrontation later – or a frosty reception the next day:
  – “I would prefer them to come and talk to us, as the day wears on and you have more and more to drink you lose sense of what's reasonable or not”
  – “Being direct with me would be far better, if at the time he’d stuck his head over the fence and said ‘Sheila you're being a bit loud’, that's fair enough”
**NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS**

**Direct approaches**

- Likely reactions to direct complaints depended on a number of factors including the perceived reasonableness of the complaint:
  - “It depends how legitimate the complaint was. If I’m being noisy, but it's 9.30 in the evening, I'm sorry I'm going to listen to my music”
  - “If they did [complain] I'd be a bit miffed if it was during the day”
  - “If it happens more than the odd occasion, then yes. But if it only happens when the sun came out, or if you're having a party once a year, I don't think they need to [complain]”
  - “I would want them to tell me, but if it's a reasonable time I can't see it's a problem. Not at all. You can make as much noise as you like up until about 9 o'clock, I think the law says”
NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

Direct approaches

• However, some noise makers have definitions of ‘reasonable’ which may not be shared by sufferers:
  – “All right I had a disco, but I wasn’t going to have it low, it was her 40th birthday party”
  – “11 o’clock, I turned it down a bit but we weren’t going to turn it right down. He came around at 12 o’clock and I told him to go and get stuffed. It was once a year. It wasn’t excessive”
  – “If I’m going to have a party and I think it might go on until 1–2 am I’ll invite the neighbours from both sides a week or two in advance. They can come and join in or they can sod off”
NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

Direct approaches

• The demeanour of the complainant is also important:

  "If you approach somebody in a nice manner I think you will get a lot more respect back. Obviously I went straight up and told her to turn it down, if not off”

  "There's been a few complaints, neighbourly manner, like 'I've got a headache would you mind turning our your music down?' That's fine with me, I turn it down. If I was them, I'd probably do the same”

  "He will come around and say when he's not happy or shout over the fence, but never in a manner I feel I want to say 'yes you’ve got a point’. It's because of the way he does it, it just makes my blood boil and I give back as good as I get”

  "If someone says 'I'm really sorry but my little boy is not well. Is there any chance you could turn it down’, you would. If they said ‘turn the music down or I will call the police,’ you'll turn it up”

  "if she was confrontational I'd slam the door, tell her to get lost. If she was polite about the children I’d try and do something about it”
NOISE MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

Direct approaches

• Some acknowledged that they were *insincere* when responding to complaints from neighbours they did not get on with

  “I find myself being really nice to her when she comes out. I’m like, ‘no problem I’ll sort it out, I’ll deal with it, don’t you worry.’ And I think, you silly old bat”

  “It’s said to me in a barbed sort of way, ‘the kids were having a lot of fun today, they were quite noisy.’ You think ‘oh shut up’, but you can’t say anything, you say ‘was it a problem? Oh dear’”

  “I always say sorry. Don’t want to be offending anybody. But I’m also not very happy, she keeps on finding little things. I did mean sorry the first time, but after that, no”

• And others that any action they took could be *short-lived*:

  “My daughter turns it down, half hour later it goes up again”

  “Obviously the neighbours do hear it, and on the odd occasion they have asked me to get him to turn it down – which I do, but 5 minutes later it’s up again. But they’ve got dogs that bark”
HOW NOISE MAKERS RECEIVE THE COMPLAINT

+ In the context of a good neighbourly relationship
  - Reasonable request
    - Reasonably explained
      - Good chance of positive reception
        - But may not always lead to change in Noise Making behaviour!

- Poor or non-existent relationship
  - Unreasonable request (perceived)
    - Angry/unfriendly/hostile approach
      - Very little chance of positive reception
        - And likely escalation
We asked respondents to draw how they thought someone might feel when suffering from a noise problem – and how they themselves felt when making noise.

Images of the noise problem
PSYCHO-DRAWINGS

Respondents’ drawings reflected a range of situations. The noise maker could feel:

Empathy with the sufferer

“I wish my son would be quiet. I know if it was me on the other side I’d be really annoyed”

“I'm not happy because I didn’t like the noise either. [Neighbour] would be more unhappy than me because it's for my benefit not his”
"Me just embarrassed that the neighbour has come around to tell me off. I was embarrassed, all my mates were in the background"

"She's looking over the fence intimidating me. I'm very small and she is very big. You can imagine she's very used to being in control of her own little world, she's not interested in anything else"
“the guy frowning, he's thinking no sleep again tonight. Me puzzled: what the hell is going on. I wasn’t aware my lad was making that noise”

“My neighbour has an unsmiley face, spiky standing up hair because he wasn’t a very happy bunny, and me with a big smile. I just wasn’t aware, I was having a good time”

“I’d had a few drinks and was a bit oblivious to what was going on. Neighbour is pulling her hair out”
PSYCHO-DRAWINGS

Don’t care

“The neighbour with steam coming out of his ears. I've not exactly got a smile, because I really couldn't care less. It's a generally unconcerned expression”

“I'm having a good time, my neighbour is sitting next door getting a bit angry. As you go on you just don’t really care do you”

“That's me dancing around the bedroom, he's asking me to turn it down, the kids are in bed, I'm just saying 'yeah, whatever’”
Several depicted very poor neighbourly relations:

“Mr Grumpy next door, angry, fed up. I'm happy, slightly drunk, probably very drunk and I'm saying 'you move house, I wish you'd never moved in’”

“me thinking ‘tough’, because I don’t really care that my friends have parked and we’re having a party and there's noise, and then there's my neighbour thinking revenge, maybe not now but next week”
Some were dismissive of their neighbour’s feelings:

“Me happy, drinking having fun, he’s sitting down watching telly. He’s got no life, never goes anywhere”

“She is a bit of a miserable cow really, she doesn’t like people who have barbecues. She is evil”
PSYCHO-DRAWINGS

Though most recognised it could be difficult for their neighbour:

“My boy with his Bob the Builder hammer, that's the neighbour's little girl crying because she's been woken up early”

“That's me getting my groove on, that's my neighbour quite angry”
And there was recognition that the situation could be miserable for both sides:

"It makes me unhappy that she is moaning about our noise. We’re both unhappy"
PSYCHO DRAWINGS

MAINLY NEGATIVE FEELINGS

- Unaware
- Don’t Care
- Poor Relations
- Dismissive of Neighbours

Underlying territorial selfishness

SOME POSITIVE FEELINGS

- Empathy
- Embarrassment
- Understanding the Neighbours situation

Some hope to build upon
REFINING THE SEGMENTS

The Persecuted segment seemed more minor and may exist as a sub-segment of Tit 4 Tat

They shared many attitudes with other segments, especially Tit 4 Tat

Some of them described persecution from one neighbour, but this felt as if they were passing the blame rather than describing their dominant attitude

What’s Aloud came over as more of an excuse, and actual segment membership lay elsewhere. Many of them responded like a sub-segment of Just Having Fun

There is a fair degree of overlap between the Tit 4 Tat and the Live & Let Live segments, depending on their relationship with individual neighbours

Many respondents, by their own accounts, can behave like Live & Let Lives with one set of neighbours, and Tit 4 Tats with another
REFINING THE SEGMENTS

Live & Let Live

Just Having Fun

What Can I Do?

Tit 4 Tat

I’ve Got A Right

Neighbours from Hell

**Live & Let Live may be Tit 4 Tat with neighbours they do not get on with**

**Tit 4 Tat may be Live & Let Live with neighbours they like**

**I’ve Got A Right**

**Just Having Fun**

**What Can I Do?**

**Tit 4 Tat**

**Live & Let Live**

**WILLING TO CHANGE**

**NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS GOOD**

**NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS POOR**

**UNWILLING TO CHANGE**

Live & Let Live may be Tit 4 Tat with neighbours they do not get on with

Just Having Fun may be Live & Let Live with neighbours they like
**TIT 4 TAT**

**Relationship with neighbours**
- *Tit 4 Tat* appeared to be a widespread segmental behaviour (qual caveat), which **operated on different levels** according to the precise nature of the relationship with the neighbour.
TIT 4 TAT

Relationship with neighbours

- One or two claimed they liked their neighbours, but that they were so noisy that being noisy back was the only way to deal with them: "I don't think I could annoy my neighbour with any noise because they're so noisy, I don't think they'd notice. He's very pleasant, I like him, but so noisy"

- In many cases retaliation was a substitute for approaching the problem directly, especially if they do not know each other well: "I put a CD on the other night, I can hear next door's when they do the same. I was turning it up a bit to get my own back"; "I'm sure the neighbours can hear it, they never say anything, but every so often you just get a huge volume of TV from them"; "My neighbour used to carry on until 3 am. I used to turn my speakers around to face their wall at 8 am"; "7 o'clock this morning, my 2 kids had a row. It was very quiet next door until just after this and then I heard them. We can tell when they're annoyed, they come down the stairs really stomping"
TIT 4 TAT

• Noise retaliation was often used as a **weapon in long-standing disputes**: “We don’t speak to our neighbours at all, we've had a big falling out. Sometimes if I shut the wardrobe door, if they happen to be in the bedroom they bang theirs. So then I bang the door harder and they will bang. That's how it goes on”

• Or simply to **drown out noise** from next door: “I actually turn my telly up because I can hear them running up and down the stairs, I turn it up to drown out their noise. Tit for tat”

• Many seemed not to have thought about the **effect on other neighbours** of these **Tit 4 Tat** feuds

• One or two already had **issues with other neighbours** as well

• And a few claimed that the **other neighbours were supportive** of them
TIT 4 TAT

Justifications/excuses

- Although they did not admit it, the way they talked about their Tit 4 Tat behaviour indicated that they recognised it might be rather childish
  - Several said that it had turned into a kind of game:
    
    "I can hear theirs and they can hear mine, sometimes we play games, she puts it on loud because I had it on loud the night before"; "I do feel it's become a bit of a game. They complain about the music, the noise and then they will have a barbecue a week or two later and we complain about their parking and noise"
TIT 4 TAT

- They were happy to label their neighbour as childish: “We put our telly on and they can hear it, so they turn theirs up really loud. It's the childishness and pettiness really”; “It's childish isn't it, it's like tit for tat. I think, I'm 38, she's probably 68, I'm not going to stoop to her level. If she wants to be miserable about it just let her be. She can go along her wall and flick all her sockets on and off”

- And they felt their neighbour’s behaviour (noise-related or otherwise) absolved them of responsibility for their own noise-making: “It's a case of I don't care, I'm not even going to consider [turning down noise] because the amount of noise they make, I'm really not bothered”; “I can't get into my drive, I can't reverse my car out so I just think well stuff you, if you can't give me room to get my car out, I'm not going to worry about a bit of noise”; “The neighbours next door are so noisy I don’t even stop my daughter doing it anymore. I think fine you go and make as much noise as you like. So I don’t feel any responsibility for making a noise”; “When I'm at home he deliberately goes out and bangs the car door just to wind me up sometimes. So I'm not bothered when I'm playing my music on Saturday night”

We found a great deal of Tit 4 Tat anecdotes and behaviour
The **Persecuted** sub-segment claimed that the problem lay entirely with the neighbour, who had **unreasonable expectations**:  
- "It's not just me, it's anyone up the street. She is so unreasonable"
- "She doesn’t speak, not just to me, not to anybody in the road anymore. That's her choice. Her children have grown up and she must have forgot about what her kids were like"
- "I do early starts sometimes, my radio alarm clock kicks in at 3am, I admit that. I came back from work to be greeted with ‘turn that f***ing noise down in your bedroom’, out of the window. Apparently he was already known for it in the street"

But we do not regard this as an underlying attitudinal group that could be addressed individually, and many of them displayed other segment attitudes (notably Tit 4 Tat)
WHAT CAN I DO?
WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Lifestage/circumstances:**
  - Typically have children (babies; older children; teenagers)
  - And/or pets (especially dogs)

- **Type of noise:**
  - Babies crying; children playing; teenage music/parties
  - Dogs barking

- **Justifications/excuses:**
  - ‘I don’t hear it’: “It's not really that much of a problem, when we’re home she's fine, it's just during the day”
  - ‘I don’t like it either’: “it is irritating the sound of balls bouncing, it does my head in as well”; “he does play loud music, sometimes it’s terrible. I hate it as much as they do”
  - ‘I do try to get them to stop’: “I can understand them getting cross if you’ve done nothing about it. But at least if you say look can you hear me telling him be quiet, at least they know you're trying”
  - ‘It’s just part of life’: “They can't have a go at you about your kids having fun in the garden during the day. All kids have fun”; “People tend to forget as they get older how loud young kids are”; “I feel a bit guilty but there's not much I can do really, dogs are territorial”
JUST HAVING FUN
The What’s Aloud sub-segment justify their actions with the excuse that ‘No-one has complained’

- “I put music on when I have a few mates around. I wouldn’t like it to be done to me, but then nobody has said anything to me. It's difficult, how do you know when you can and can't do something?”
- “Loud music. I cranked it up to do the housework. I think they would have heard, in a terrace, I can hear them and I'm sure they can hear me. But they don’t mention it”
- “I play my guitar 3 or 4 times a week, guitar. The woman next door can probably definitely hear, but no one has said anything. If they did I'd accommodate them slightly...”

They talked very much like Just Having Fun
Their ‘uncertainty’ about what was aloud often turned out to be a thin excuse
In reality, most were well aware of the likely impact on their neighbours – they just didn’t worry about it!
JUST HAVING FUN

• **Lifestage/circumstances**:  
  – Mainly (but not exclusively) young singles or couples  
  – Gregarious, enjoy parties, or just socialising at home  
  – And/or like to ‘wind down’ with music after work and at weekends

• **Type of noise**:  
  – Parties, barbecues, general socialising  
  – Music, TV
JUST HAVING FUN

• Justifications/excuses:
  – **Noise is one-off, not continuous**: “If it happens more than the odd occasion, then yes. But if it only happens when the sun came out, or if you're having a party once a year, I don't think they need to [complain]”
  – **They sometimes don’t realise they’re doing** it: “You're never so loud with the first glass of wine, but by the time you’ve had 2 or 3 the volume automatically gets cranked up. It’s not until you think about it the following day”; “If you’ve had a drink I don't think you think, it's not until the following day when someone says something, you don’t realise how loud you actually were”; “It's when you’ve got your music on and you all try to talk above it. It gets higher and higher and you don’t realise it's getting like that”
  – **No-one has complained**: “I put music on when I have a few mates around. I wouldn’t like it to be done to me, but then nobody has said anything to me. It's difficult, how do you know when you can and can't do something?”
Respondents were shown four sets of stimuli presenting different approaches to the problem of neighbourhood noise.

1. Messages to Encourage Dialogue
DIALOGUE 1a: ‘Let me know if we’re too noisy’

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Let me know if we’re too noisy”

Sometimes we can disturb our neighbours without meaning to - and without even knowing how much distress we are causing. Why not ask next door whether they can hear you, and if it ever upsets them

- Opinion tended to be polarised depending on respondents’ own relationship with neighbours
- Those with good relationships were most positive; many who were at the Live & Let Live end of the spectrum said they already did this

- However, this would not help where relationships had already broken down: “I don’t speak to mine anyway so I wouldn’t bother going around”; “If they don’t speak to you at all, you're not going to suddenly speak”
- Several respondents were wary of giving their neighbours too much ammunition: “It's encouraging them to moan about everything”; “I think you're opening yourself up for all sorts of abuse”; “That's asking for trouble that is, she’d be sticking her nose in all day every day”
DIALOGUE 1a:
‘Let me know if we’re too noisy’

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Let me know if we’re too noisy”

Sometimes we can disturb our neighbours without meaning to - and without even knowing how much distress we are causing. Why not ask next door whether they can hear you, and if it ever upsets them

• Though it could work both ways: “Ultimately it means you can let them know if they’re too noisy, it works two ways. It opens up the dialogue”

• It might be a good idea for new neighbours: “Introduce yourself and say we might be a bit noisy sometimes. Tell us if you think we’re being a bit over the top”
DIALOGUE 1b: ‘Tell your neighbours if you plan to be noisy’

- Generally well received in all groups
- Again, many said this was something they did already
- One or two still expressed doubts about taking this approach with neighbours with whom they had a very poor relationship:
  
  “We don’t speak to them at all. I would feel as if I was lowering myself going around and saying that”

- Though others felt that doing so might give them the upper hand: “It would be a good move surely, with people you don’t get on with, you’re reinforcing your own power position. You’re not saying it, but the implication is, ‘you made a racket last week and you didn’t tell us’”

- It was also pointed out in one group that sometimes noisy parties just evolved: “Sometimes things aren't planned, people just turn up”
DIALOGUE 1c: ‘Noise from next door can be a real problem’

• The idea of a ‘friendly chat’ about noise nuisance was alien to some: “Would you like a beer, come in I'm going to complain about you”; “If they’ve upset you I think it would be very difficult to go around and say come around for a beer, it's not human nature to be nice to somebody that's upset you”

• Most said they preferred not to enter into ‘coffee and chat’ relationships with neighbours they did not know well: “You keep your distance”; “That would be the wrong thing to do with them, invite them in for coffee. You may never get rid of them again. Not that I'm not friendly, but I have my friends for coffee”; “You wouldn’t necessarily want to become that pally with them”

• The whole concept – including friendly chats over coffee, and the idea of a mediator – was considered, on the whole, to be ‘not very British’: “That's too American. Fancy calling out a mediator to talk to your neighbour”; “It’s a bit group huggy to me”
DIALOGUE 1d:  
Like 1 home in 3, I suffered from noisy neighbours…’

1d

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Like 1 home in 3, I suffered from noisy neighbours for years

"Then one day I plucked up the courage to mention the problem. And do you know, the neighbours were mortified, didn’t realise it was a problem, they stopped making the noises straight away. Now they check with me every few weeks to make sure I’m OK. And when they do make the occasional noise, you know I don’t really mind”

• Generally a luke-warm response
• One or two cited examples where they themselves had ‘plucked up courage’ to mention a neighbourhood noise problem, with successful results

• But most found it uninspiring and unrealistic:
  – “There's a pig just flown past. I just don’t believe it. I'm not buying that”
  – “It's a bit wishy washy”
  – “It's ever so lovely but not realistic”
  – “If you're in dream world, yes”
DIALOGUE 1e: ‘41% of Noise Makers would willingly change their behaviour...’

This was generally well-received – and tied in with respondents’ own experiences as noise makers:

- “I would agree with that. If they don’t come to you on the defensive straightaway then you are more inclined to try and sort the problem out with your neighbour. But if they come up to you and are full in your face then no”

- “Try not to be angry is definitely the right approach, in my situation if he had never got angry in the first place, if he had mentioned things calmly all this [Tit 4 Tat behaviour] would never have happened”

- “As soon as you go angry to somebody, that's going to put your back up. If you're not angry and go and explain in a nice way how it is affecting you then people will be understanding”

- “I'd say more than that [would change behaviour], I'd say it's probably 60% - 70%”
There were considerable barriers to this approach, especially where neighbourly relations were already poor. This was partly due to ‘British reserve’ which likes to keep neighbours at arm’s length. However, communication was seen as the key (especially where neighbourly relations were better) to tackling the noise problem: “Once you’ve lost that communication you’re knackered really.” Some appealed to particular segments: ‘Let me know if we’re noisy’ (1a) was best for What Can I Do? Advance warning of one-off noise (1b) appealed to Just Having Fun and Tit 4 Tat. The ‘Noise from next door can be a problem’ approach had no supporters.
### DIALOGUE PREFERENCES

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Respondents were shown four sets of stimuli presenting different approaches to the problem of neighbourhood noise

2. Messages about Official Intervention
The consensus on this seemed to be ‘it’s a nice idea but…’

Though many saw the point of trying to establish good neighbourly relations early on, there were several criticisms:

It was unlikely to be read, especially as house-moving is a busy time:

- “You’ve got enough stuff to read when you're moving in”; “that would be put in the drawer, especially if you're moving house there's so many other things going on”
Some resented the idea of being told what to do:

- “Big Brother-ish”; “We’ve become too politically correct, I think that kind of thing verges on it”; “all these new things coming in, you’ve got to do this, do that”; “It sounds snobbish”

And were sensitive about being thought of as problem noise makers:

“Tarring everyone with the same brush, everyone getting a letter when they move in, you can’t do this and that. We’re completely different to problem people”

However, many thought this was the best approach of the three, and the Top Tips leaflet, shown later in the discussion, was well-received
Respondents found it hard to grasp this concept, with difficulties centring on how ‘official’ the proposed warden would be, and what powers he/she would have: “How can somebody who is not in authority be given the go ahead to fine somebody £50?”;

“Warden/Neighbourhood Watch

They will try to resolve the situation amicably. However they could also fine persistent offenders £50, and alert the authorities

“It's not going to work, who is going to say somebody is offending. You would need the process of law I would have thought”; “Would they get a petition and ask all the residents in the street or just take [the warden’s] point of view?”; “Do the local wardens make the rules up? They could say right you're not allowed to have a barbecue after 7pm, we’re fining you £50”
 Levels of Intervention 2b: Warden/Neighbourhood Watch

• Their other main problem was the kind of person they envisaged taking on such a role:
  – “You’re going to get someone going a little bit power mad”
  – “Someone old and out-dated, with a hearing aid, is going to come around and tell you it's too loud”
  – “I've a lady across the road, I could see her doing it. She’d love it”
  – “It's very Captain Mainwaring”

• The idea of fining persistent offenders did appeal to some, however
Levels of Intervention 2c: Official complaint routes

- Several respondents had had experience of using official complaint routes against neighbours, with varying degrees of success.
- (None admitted that such routes had been used against them)

- Although useful for extreme noise nuisance, official complaint routes were felt to be less suitable for constant daily noise at a lower level, which could be equally debilitating: "It's the constant every day isn't it? That's what seems to get at you"
Levels of Intervention 2c: Official complaint routes

- The point was made in a number of groups that these measures were more suitable for those in rented accommodation than for owner-occupiers: “That would be easier if you weren't a homeowner. If you've had any legal dealings you've got to be really careful if you want to sell your house”;

“If you want to sell the house you're not going to turn around and say anything about next door are you”

- However, most agreed that it would be a good idea to publicise the measures that were available as a last resort: “If someone was at their wits end”; “if you’ve tried all other avenues, you’ve come to a stop and don't know what else to do”; “I think they should tell people what they can do. Rather than going around there with a meat cleaver or something”
LEVELS OF INTERVENTION: OVERALL REACTIONS

- Many caveats about using the warden/Neighbourhood Watch approach

- Fairly even split between those who liked the new neighbours’ guide, and the official complaint route
  - New neighbours’ guide liked because it could act at a preventative level
  - Official complaint route valued because of its perceived impartiality

- A combination of the two could work well

"That impartial neutral judgement between someone that's being ridiculously noisy and someone else who is just a miserable old git"

"If they've got that sort of thing in place in the beginning it might nip it in the bud before it gets bad. Then if things aren't moving then you do have to make an official complaint"
LEVELS OF INTERVENTION PREFERENCES

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- **2a** "New Neighbours Guide"
- **2b** "Warden/Neighbourhood Watch"
- **2c** "Official complaint routes"
Reactions to stimuli

Respondents were shown four sets of stimuli presenting different approaches to the problem of neighbourhood noise

3. Messages encouraging Self-examination
SELF-EXAMINATION

Many respondents felt they recognised themselves in the ‘live & let live’ scenario: “That's what I tend to do”; “Most people try and do that don’t they?”; “It's right. Everyone makes noise”; “That makes you think if they're doing it, am I doing it?”;

“That is me. If you can get a happy medium and an understanding you're going to live a lot easier together”

A small proportion admitted that they took the opposite approach: “I am tit for tat. They start banging, I turn something up”

It was acknowledged that neighbourly relationships (on all matters, not just noise) were the key: “It depends on how well you get on with your neighbours. If they're horrible then you're going to be horrible to them”; “I don't know what being reasonable is. I think it depends on the person”
Self-examination 3b: ‘They think we’re neighbours from hell’

Some (especially in the What’s Aloud segment) felt there might be some truth in this, and that it might make them think: “I quite like that. There's often times I'm thinking I'm just playing [music], but your ears get in tune with the noise you're making. It's only when you turn it off and you get the silence you think about it”;

“I was so embarrassed - I didn’t realise they heard our noise at all!”

“If you're a family living next door to a single person, you might not realise how much noise you're actually making for them. They're single and don’t make any noise”

Others were more sceptical: “I think you must know about it — if someone is classing you as neighbours from hell”; “it's a small percentage that don’t realise they're being noisy, and a big percentage that do realise and don’t care”; “I don’t believe that. If you’re noisy you know what level of noise you’re making”
Self-examination 3b: ‘They think we’re neighbours from hell’

“They think we’re Neighbours from Hell”

“I was so embarrassed - I didn’t realise they heard our noise at all!”

- An alternative view was that it communicated a ‘meek and mild’ impression which was unlikely to have any real effect: “I don't know whether that's strong enough to make you start thinking, ‘is that me?’”; “It's watery isn't it – ‘what, me? I didn’t think...’”
On the whole, noise makers preferred the message that reminded noise sufferers to see both sides of the question.

The groups were split between ‘Are you being reasonable’ and ‘neighbours from hell’.

But overall preference for ‘Are you being reasonable’.
# SELF-EXAMINATION PREFERENCES

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3a “Noise from next door? Are you being reasonable”

3b “They think we’re neighbours from hell”

(✓) (✓) (✓) (✓) ✓
Noise Sufferers wanted us to test some tougher messages on Noise Makers

4. Messages about Respect

Findings

Reactions to stimuli

*Noise Sufferers wanted us to test some tougher messages on Noise Makers*

*4. Messages about Respect*
Respect 4a: ‘For pity’s sake...’

- Respondents in all segments felt insulted by this:
  - “A bit too finger wagging”; “like being told off by the priest”
  - “I’d think somebody was having a go at me”
  - “It’s a bit rude. Nobody is going to associate it with themselves are they?”

- “It's a bit condescending”
- “It's not very encouraging it's quite negative”
- “It's tarring everyone with the same brush. We’re not all like that”

- Some respondents approved of it for being ‘to the point’ – including those in one Tit 4 Tat group, for whom it emerged as the unanimous favourite in this set: “That's actually what somebody would say in that situation”
Respect 4b: ‘Please turn it down…’

- There was a mixed reaction to this
- Around half felt it was over-dramatic (with one or two even finding it amusing):
  - “Too strong”; “Depression and despair yes, but the suicide just kills it, it's overkill and then you don’t take it seriously”
  - “That's a bit drastic”; “That just makes me laugh”
  - “It would make people take notice, but it's a bit too strong”; “I think it's a bit below the belt”
Respect 4b: ‘Please turn it down...’

“Please turn it down. Neighbour noise causes depression, despair and even suicide”

- “I think that's nice, it's making a point to say that's what could be happening to your neighbour without you actually being aware you could be doing that”
- “If you thought you could cause that by your noise, I think you'd turn it down”

• While for the other half, it was an effective, hard-hitting message:
  - “It is very true that, I have nursed people who have come into hospital because of neighbour noise”
  - “It's a bit dramatic but it's true”
Respect 4c: ‘Have a heart...’

- The ‘softly softly’ approach was generally appreciated:
  - “light hearted and friendly”
  - “It's not offensive, it's just trying to educate”
  - “It's asking you to be reasonable without telling you off”

- And could change behaviour:
  - “It would make you think wouldn’t it”
  - “It's not having a go at somebody, it's just making people think”

- One or two felt it could be more hard-hitting:
  - “It's not bold or direct enough”

- Several had the impression it referred only to shift workers:
  - “It could apply, a lot of people work shifts”
  - “I like that one, for people working shifts”
Respect 4d: ‘If you don’t turn it down you could be fined…’

- Generally seen as too harsh
- Likely to upset those whose noise making was at a lower level
  - “It’s threatening”
- And could antagonise those to whom it was directed:
  - It makes them think ‘sod it, I’ll turn it up, fine me, prosecute me, take it away, it’s my mum’s anyway”
  - “I think very noisy people would say ‘yes bring it on then’, they’d see it as a challenge”
  - “If it's got to that stage they won't give a damn anyway”
- Some with teenagers had already tried this tack:
  - “I had that with my daughter, I told her to keep the music down or you could end up getting prosecuted, but it didn’t sink in. You go out and the music is up again”
  - “If you were to tell your teenager that they'd just laugh at you”
Respect 4e: ‘Think!’

- Short and to the point
- Appealed to individual consciences: “There's no onus on anybody but yourself on that one”; “It's respect for the neighbours”
- Though perhaps subjective: “no one necessarily thinks before they realise they are making a noise”; “You don't know you're driving them mad either”
- And perhaps not very useful for those in the What Can I Do group: “If it was just down to us individually, but not when you’ve got other members in your family that won't think first”
RESPECT: OVERALL REACTIONS

NOISE MAKERS WERE GENERALLY HAPPY TO BE REMINDED OF THE EFFECT OF THEIR ACTIONS ON NEIGHBOURS

But they did not want to be made to feel they were being persecuted

The direct, but relatively restrained approaches of Have a Heart and Think were most popular overall

Please Turn it Down had some supporters, though the suicide reference was off-putting for many

For Pity’s Sake was liked only by one Tit 4 Tat group

And most were not impressed by the You could be Fined approach

“I think some of them are a bit pushy, definitely, having stuff confiscated, that would wind me up”

“if 4b didn’t have suicide in it, I'd choose that”
## RESPECT PREFERENCES

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"Tit 4 Tat" means take the action. "Persecuted" means ignore the request. "Just Having Fun" means enjoy the situation. "What’s Aloud" means it can be said aloud. "What Can I do?" means the appropriate action to take.
### WHICH APPROACH IS BEST?

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Findings

Reactions to stimuli

We showed some existing literature from Leeds and Stoke on Trent
EXISTING APPROACHES

Top Tips (Leeds)

- Some of the individual tips were dismissed as ‘just commonsense’: “If you're considerate you would naturally do most of these anyway”

- And some as unrealistic: “you're not going to completely reconfigure your kitchen just to move the washing machine”

- But most were impressed with it (several wanted to take one home with them): “Can we take one home and put it through [neighbour’s] letterbox?”; “You could leave it for your teenagers to read”
EXISTING APPROACHES

Top Tips (Leeds)

• It was well laid-out: “It's clear and they’ve kept each little bit quite small, you haven't got to read through reams”

• There were some doubts about whether the leaflet would be read if it came through the door

• They suggested it might make more impact as an insert in local free newspapers; or could be placed in local libraries

Overall, very well received
EXISTING APPROACHES

Individual Noise Leaflets (Stoke)

• Useful if there was a particular problem: “The Council people would probably have them. If you had a problem you could ring up and they would send you that leaflet”

• To help inform the noise sufferer: “It can take some of the anger out of the situation. People read about it before they go around [to complain]”

• Or the noise maker: “You'd go and get the leaflet first and then put it through [noise maker’s door] anonymously”; “I think they'd be good if you could pick them up and push it through the offender’s letterbox”

• This could lead to repercussions: “You can't push them through the neighbours doors, you'd cause another problem”
  - But there were ways round it: “If they targeted people they’ve got on record, councils or Housing Associations, that have had complaints made about music, dogs”; “if my neighbour wanted to complain about me, she could ask the Council to post them to me. I don’t have to know it's from my neighbour”
EXISTING APPROACHES

Individual Noise Leaflets (Stoke) cont

- They could be distributed through relevant channels as a preventive measure: "you could give the dog to dog breeders, pet shops, to give to new owners"; "Stereos, you buy a hi-fi and they give you a leaflet"
- But a bit long-winded (especially compared to Top Tips)

Complaining about Noise Leaflet (Stoke)

- More luke-warm reaction than from Noise Sufferers
- Useful, but again distribution would need thinking about
- Not door drops
- Possibly:
  - Online
  - Post Offices, libraries
  - Leisure centres, community centres
  - Through Neighbourhood Watch schemes
  - Printed in telephone directories, Yellow Pages
WHICH APPROACH DO THEY THINK IS BEST?

The consensus was that a range of approaches was needed

- Encouraging dialogue
- Appealing to conscience
- Raising awareness of resources for sufferers, and consequences for makers

“Something to encourage you to communicate with your neighbour first directly, then if it fails, [official complaints route]”

“Do it progressively starting at one and working through it. The first is non-confrontational, have a chat about it, say ‘am I making too much noise’? Then to make people aware of what could happen if they carry on. Then trying your conscience, make people aware of what it is like”

“A mixture of them all. Then you're addressing every single angle, people might think a bit more about it”
REFINING THE SEGMENTS

- We came across evidence of ‘Live and Let Live’ for those in the ‘Tit 4 Tat’ segment who had good relations with other neighbours.
- We also witnessed some ‘Neighbours from Hell’ and ‘I’ve Got a Right’.

Persecuted

What’s Aloud

Tit 4 Tat

What Can I Do?

Sub-segment of Tit 4 Tat

Sub-segment of Just Having Fun

Plus
NOISE MAKER: SEGMENT SUMMARY

Tit 4 Tat
- Break the cycle or it will escalate!
- Try to provide feedback rather than just revenge

What Can I Do?
- Understand their problem
- Work it out together

Just Having Fun
- Understand the cycle of their noise making
- Can you live with it? Can you join in the fun?
THE COMPLAINTS ESCALATOR

Start building a relationship first...

The quiet word: gentle, friendly, light-hearted

The heavier word: explaining impact on the household

Dialogue with teeth

The warden

Official channels

The courts
SOFT TARGET RELATIONSHIPS

Tit 4 Tat

Live and Let Live

What Can I Do?

Just Having Fun

(Noise Sufferer)
NOISE SUFFERER SEGMENTATION

RESEARCH STAGE 2
METHOD AND SAMPLE

- 10 standard length focus groups
- All ‘noise sufferers’ - personally suffering a noise problem
- Recruited according to segments defined from Stage 1
- All high density housing, mix of male/female, all BC1C2D
- Groups split by segment:
  - ‘Don’t want a drama’ - quotes shown in brown
  - ‘The Vigilante’ - quotes shown in red
  - ‘Resigned Victim’ - quotes shown in blue
  - ‘I want to do something’ - quotes shown in green
  - ‘Nothing worked for me’ - quotes shown in black
- Locations: Greater Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol
- Research undertaken in June 2005
- All Research conducted by The Marketing Works – Carolyn Bird, Simon Strutt and Peter Arnold
NEXT STEPS: STAGE 2

- Verify Segments identified in Stage 1
- Understand more about them
- Test actions with each segment

**Issues**

- Which Segments to Explore in more Depth
  - All?
  - Those we can help?
  - Leave the Extremes?
- Which actions to test
  - Borrow from respondent ideas
  - Generate further ideas
  - Mock up actions as stimuli
WHAT NOISE PROBLEM DO THEY SUFFER FROM?

Our sufferers supported the finding from last time regarding the type of neighbourhood noise experienced...

The three big problems were:

- **Loud Music** - either as a single issue or in combination with **loud behaviour/shouting/TV** - was the most commonly suffered problem, for all 5 segments. At least 2 in each group had suffered this type of noise “Whenever the parents are away, the kids play music until 3-4 am”; “2 lads live next door, get in late at night and release energy - one of the kids rooms is next to their music”; “She brings friends back at 2-3 am, all the sounds come through the wall”

- **Barking dogs** were an issue for several within each segment, usually due to the animal being left on its own or ‘shut out’ “They let the dog out in the back and it yelps all the time”; “If they go out shopping they lock the dogs in the house and they are barking, barking all the time”
WHAT NOISE PROBLEM DO THEY SUFFER FROM?

- Children/teenagers (aside from those who were playing loud music) were a problem in various guises: playing football against wallsdoors, shouting in the gardenhouse, running quadmotorbikes up and down roads, shouting withat their parents “2 kids playing football, use the gates as a goalpost”; “...Some little idiot on a motorbike”; “She’s at work and the kids are left to fend for themselves - always arguing, fighting, slamming doors, swearing”
WHAT NOISE PROBLEM DO THEY SUFFER FROM?

Others, in order of mentions:

• **Outdoor parties - and in particular barbecues** - were a problem for around 1 per group “*Barbecues and music into the night*”

• **Revving cars and motorbikes** were a problem for several “*They all have cars, all loud*”

• **Partners arguing/shouting** - especially late at night - were cited by some “*Constantly arguing couple, verbal abuse*”
WHAT NOISE PROBLEM DO THEY SUFFER FROM?

• A handful suffered from the following:
  – DIY - early am or late pm “The DIY king next door, at it with a hammer drill, late on”
  – Alarms “It had been going on for 5 hours”
  – ‘Deaf’ neighbours (loud TV/Radio/Music) “One must be deaf, the TV is constantly on loud”
  – Slamming doors “For some reason at 5.30 he slams every single door in the house including the wardrobes”
  – Late night housework (hoovering, washing) “Hoovering and washing at all hours of the night, and a really annoying sneeze”
  – Laminate flooring/floorboards “The noise is horrendous”
  – Musical instruments “The single mum’s boys next door has formed a band”
WHAT NOISE PROBLEM DO THEY SUFFER FROM?

Single mentions were mostly of the more bizarre variety of noise problem:

- **Brushing teeth** “Sounded like he was juggling a dice in a cup, it was him brushing his teeth and scrubbing his tongue”
- **Praying to Mecca** “I don’t want to sound racist, but he has to play his prayer music late at night and early morning - drives me barmy”
- **Lovemaking** “She goes out most weekends, comes home in the early hours and we have all night sessions of howling”
- **Learning lines** “He’s into amateur dramatics, you’re in the garden, you’ve got Hamlet going on and he’s talking to the cats”
- **Lawn mowing** “Mows the grass early mornings”
HOW DO SUFFERERS FEEL?

Respondents were asked to draw how they felt when suffering their particular noise problem. The overall themes within their drawings included, in order:

- **Frustration** “Here we are again - angry, frustration”; “Frustrated, tears”
- **Anger and symbols of anger (steam out of head, angry faces)** “Steam going out of my head and agh! Anger”; “It’s anger, frustrating to be angered by a gang of youths - you feel wound up as you walk away”
- **Sadness** “Feeling sad, a headache, tired, here we go again”
- **Pulling hair/desperation** “Wanting to pull my hair out, so unhappy”; “Me ripping my hair out”
- **Wanting sleep** “Wide eyed, the weekend disturbed”
- **Covering ears to block out the noise** “I’ve drawn myself with 3 arms - 2 covering my ears and the other pulling my hair out”
HOW DO SUFFERERS FEEL?

- There were several single drawings associated with violence/weapons/uncontrolled rage:
  - Breathing fire
  - Kicking someone “Bulldog for England kicking them out - sod off back to your own country”
  - Dagger
  - Hammer and a gun “I feel like a murderer”
  - Boxing glove
  - Fist “Punching the wall”
  - Thunder
- In addition, there were a couple of mentions of feeling afraid “I’m like a mouse, cornered by a cat”; “Getting scared from both sides of me”

Similar feelings overall to previous research, however some slightly more ‘disturbing’ imagery than usually revealed
HOW DO SUFFERERS FEEL - VARIATIONS BY SEGMENT

There were subtle variations in the psychodrawings and feelings expressed by the different segments, in addition to the commonalities

• Don’t want a drama tended to be sad, angry or frustrated
• The vigilante expressed a great deal of anger and frustration - none were sad, although violent imagery was rare
• Resigned victims expressed images of sadness, tiredness and a general inability to control their problem
• I want to do something were on the whole the most aggressive segment, with more symbols of violence and harm than the others
• Nothing worked for me were also quite aggressive, and expressed considerable frustration

Subtle differences in attitude to noise suffered by segments
SUFFERERS’ PSYCHODRAWINGS
(LESS AGGRESSIVE)
SUFFERERS’ PSYCHODRAWINGS
(MORE AGGRESSIVE)
SUFFERERS VIEWS OF THE NOISE MAKERS

Respondents were asked to draw what they felt the noisemaker would be thinking when making noise

• The majority felt that the noisemakers were simply oblivious to their suffering: “Not a care in the world, doesn’t even enter their mind that it’s a problem”; “Lying down, chilling out, not remotely aware that he’s causing problems”

• Almost as many felt that the noise maker was not thinking of others, and in that respect - was selfish or had no consideration for others “A toilet - he couldn’t give a s**t”; “Totally thoughtless”; “Yes, yes yahoo! She has a big smile on her face, not worrying about me, not an ounce”; “No regard for their neighbours...sod it, turn it up”

• A handful felt that the noisemaker was simply carrying out a routine, being totally oblivious to others “Thinking this is what I do, I always do my washing at night, part of my routine”

More of a feeling that neighbours are not only oblivious but are unthinking and selfish
SUFFERERS VIEWS OF THE NOISE MAKERS

- There were, however several who felt that the noise was *deliberate* - these were mainly from the Nothing worked for me, Vigilante and Don’t want a drama segments
- Deliberate and provocative “Hee hee, they won’t do anything”
- Enjoying the misery of others “Doing it on purpose...a big smile”
- Offensive “Up yours”
- Selfish yet aware of the problem “Big smile, don’t give a toss”

Feelings that the noise making was *deliberate*, and therefore hostile, especially amongst certain segments
SUFFERERS’ PSYCHODRAWINGS OF THE NOISE MAKER (NOT DELIBERATE)

"NOTHING!": They are oblivious to anyone else. They’re too wrapped up in their world.

me

Screaming inside
sad.
angry.
upset.
frustration

me

frustrated.
helpless.
annoyed.

me

no cloud.
not thinking.
don’t care.

me

frustration

angry

neighbour

no brain to think with in first place.

neighbour

not a care in the world!
doesn’t enter their mind that there is a problem.
SUFFERERS’ PSYCHODRAWINGS OF THE NOISEMAKER (DELIBERATE)

me
neighbour
neighbour

neighbour
neighbour
neighbour

Enjoying themselves, bugger the neighbours we’re only resting.
ARE ANY TYPES OF NOISE ACCEPTABLE?

- Findings mirrored those from previous research, with no differences in attitude by segment - all had pre-determined and very similar views on acceptability
- **One off noise** (parties, DIY) were generally accepted, as most felt that they too were ‘guilty’ of such noise and could not therefore complain “One offs are acceptable, it’s when it gets continuous that it’s a problem”
  - Many stated that they forewarned their neighbours as “It is the decent thing to do”
- **Weekend** noise was more tolerable than in the week, as fewer were working and more were just relaxing “You expect people to stay up later at weekends...you adjust yourself to that”
- **Summer** noise - at least not too late into the night - was also more tolerable “People are a bit happier in the summer, the weather’s nice, you have a few beers, listen to a bit of music, it’s ok to a certain extent”
ARE ANY TYPES OF NOISE ACCEPTABLE?

- **Late night noise** was deemed to be unacceptable - most felt that after 11pm was starting to become anti-social "You’re talking about 11 o’clock"

- The key defining factor of noise becoming unacceptable was when they had to do something ‘different’ because of the noise, or when their **space/sense of peace** was shattered by the intrusion of noise "If it’s really disturbing your peace"; "When you start altering your life around it"; "When it’s going on and on"; "Noise waves going into our house, into our world, invading our space"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General agreement as to what is/is not acceptable and why</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standards/benchmarks are similar across segments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of having own personal space violated by noise</td>
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</table>
SENSITIVITY TO NOISE

- One off parties
- Late night noise
- Combination of noises

MIILDLY SENSITIVE
- Summer noise
- Weekend noise
- Early morning noise

HIGHLY SENSITIVE
- Repetitive noise e.g. music, dogs

Repetitive noise e.g. music, dogs
Findings

Complaining About The Noise:
- Action and Inaction
REASONS FOR INACTION

There were certain key reasons why sufferers chose not to speak to their noise maker neighbours, each receiving around 4-5 mentions:

• Some had an underlying concern that the situation may become worse by mentioning it “I’m concerned that if I say something they will do it more on purpose, louder and later”; “You don’t know what trouble you are going to cause”

• Only living in the area for a short amount of time was another reason, as some felt that they were not established enough to be able to pass judgment on their neighbours “I haven’t said anything yet, we’ve only been here 6 months”; “I’ve only been here 3-4 months, he’s been longer than anyone else and I don’t want to rock the boat”

• A few were afraid of their neighbours, and what may happen should they speak to them “Not the sort of people you want to get on the wrong side of”; “She’s the sort that would put me in hospital if I said anything”
REASONS FOR INACTION

- Some stated that they generally had reasonable relations with their neighbours and that the noisy behaviour was out of character - they didn’t want to spoil the times when they weren’t being noisy “He’s actually quite a nice guy, I haven’t said anything as I want to avoid confrontation”; “They’re nice people, that’s the funny thing about it, you don’t really want to upset them”

- In a similar vein, parents of noisy children were not spoken to as they did not want to ruin the relationship with the parents “I haven’t spoken to his parents about it, they are all so nice”; “It’s difficult because the mum is a lovely person, I don’t want to rock the boat with her”

- There was also the realisation that any ‘official’ disputes would have an effect on their ability to sell the house. Indeed, a couple were in the process of selling their houses for that very reason “You have to start filling these forms in because of neighbourhood disputes, I don’t want to say anything”; “We had to do it like that, we had to get away”

- Worries about anonymity held others back “It’d be fairly obvious who had complained”
REASONS FOR INACTION

• Some knew **other neighbours who had spoken to the noisemaker** and had seen that either it achieved nothing, or it had provoked retribution: "The older chap opposite them said something and they pulled all the plants out of his garden”

There were a couple who mentioned:

• A realisation that **they were noisy too** “I have a trampoline in my garden and we make a lot of noise - I feel reluctant to say anything because he’s good about my kids”

• A general feeling of **despair and cynicism** “It’s pointless saying anything, we just keep stumm and put up with it”
BARRIERS TO COMPLAINING

FEAR

- Of retaliation
- Social embarrassment
- Of not being able to sell house
- Of worsening the situation

Thinly disguised by what are often excuses

“I haven’t lived here long enough”
“I like their parents”
“Nothing will happen...”
ACTIONS TAKEN

- **Don’t want a drama** were least likely to have done anything about their noise problems.
- **Nothing worked for me** had tried more avenues and approaches than any other segment.
- Overall, for those who had tried anything, there were 4 approaches:
  - Speaking directly to the neighbour
  - Knocking/banging on walls without direct contact
  - Other retaliation
  - Official (council/environmental health and or/police)
- All of these different approaches resulted in one of two possible outcomes:
  1. **The noise problem continued** with little or no effect on the attitude of the noise maker to the sufferer, and little or no escalation of the noise problem.
  2. **The noise problem and/or relations with the noise maker worsened** (especially for **Nothing worked for me** and to a lesser extent **Vigilante**).
1. THE NOISE PROBLEM CONTINUED

Situations where the noise problem remained after some form of contact included the following:

- **Subtle/quiet/calm words** “A subtle word did nothing...when it’s bad now I put earplugs in”; “I’ve had a quiet word about their music and it stops - but the next time it’s exactly the same”

- **Asking the noisemaker round for a drink/meal and subtly mentioning the issue** “I have a drink with him and drop a few hints but he forgets that the next time”; “We invited them to dinner but nothing transpired from it”

- **Banging on walls/knocking on doors** “We bang on the floor”; “The kids party when the dad goes to work, I’ll knock on the door, it’ll go quiet and then it’ll creep up again”

- ‘**Reverse psychology**’ “I said to this deaf guy ‘my TV isn’t too loud is it?’ - and he said ‘oh no it’s fine’, but didn’t ask if his was too loud”

- **Empty threats** “I’ve threatened them with going to the authorities, but I don’t want to push it and get the police involved”; “We threatened to go to the council...but we haven’t”
1. THE NOISE PROBLEM CONTINUED

- Those who had **contacted environmental health/citizens advice** but decided not to take it further because they did not wish to jeopardise their future house selling plans “I spoke to the council but I’ve been told if you want to sell your house you have to say about this”; “We rang Citizens Advice, they told us that if we did report it and go down that route, we’d have to divulge it when we sold the property”

- **Subtle threats** “General chit chats with them to drop hints - you do it to me, I’ll do it to you”

- **Retaliation** generally led to escalations of the problem (see next slide) but for a few, it was simply a means for them to get ‘revenge’ whilst not actually achieving any improvement to the situation “I’ve retaliated - early morning parties for the kids and we don’t encourage them to be quiet”; “I get my own back…I’m quite often banging and mowing lawns early on”; “It got to a point, I had a drill and would go next to their bedroom wall and drill against a piece of wood to try and wake them up”
2. NOISE PROBLEM WORSENED

Situations where the noise problem and/or relations with the neighbour worsened included the following:

• **Gentle/calm approaches leading to neighbours retaliating in ways other than the noise problem** “They started complaining that our dog was barking - and we don’t even have a dog”; “We explained to him that it wakes up the kids, but he does it anyway - we speak to him and he retaliates, parks his car on our drive so we can’t get out”; “We had a word with his son...and he poisoned all our plants”

• **Quiet/polite word met with aggression** “I had a quiet word but got the door slammed in my face”

• **Angry words leading to conflict** “A friend of theirs outside called my husband a knob head when he asked them to be quiet - my husband had him by the throat and I had to pull him back - and he’s a policeman”; “It’s got to the point of being physical now”
2. NOISE PROBLEM WORSENEDE

• Those who had gone down the ‘official’ route talked of a far worse and more aggressive situation as a consequence – this was true of Nothing worked for me more than any other segment

• Police involvement “We’ve had the police go round a couple of times when it’s been really late and told them to keep it down…it’s got to the point now where they have to be officially told”; “It all started with her noise...we reported her to the police”

• Environmental health “We phoned the council...they asked us to keep a log for 4 weeks”
TAKING ACTION - WHAT HAPPENS?

THE RESULTS OF ACTION

It gets better for a short time, but then reverts

The problem simply continues with no change either way

The problem gets worse

In our sample there was no example of how tackling the problem brought a positive result

This lack of success is likely to have coloured reactions to the ‘solution’ stimuli
DIFFERENCES OF SITUATION/ATTITUDE

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<th>AVERSE TO ACTION</th>
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<th>HAVE TAKEN ACTION</th>
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<td>Resigned victims</td>
<td>The vigilante</td>
<td>Nothing worked for me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t want a drama</td>
<td>I want to do something</td>
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These differences of situation significantly affect what kind of advice they will find useful.
NOISE SUFFERERS: ATTITUDE MAP
FROM STAGE 1

GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBOUR

POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBOUR

UNLIKELY TO TAKE ACTION

LIKELY TO TAKE ACTION

‘But we’re mates’

‘Let’s be reasonable’

‘Resigned Victims’

‘Don’t want a drama’

‘I want to do something but I don’t know how’

‘Nothing worked for me’

‘The Vigilante’
THE SEGMENTS

• We recruited the 5 segments most likely to be receptive to messages and help

• ‘But we’re Mates’ and ‘Let’s be Reasonable’ were felt to be
  – Unlikely to take official action
  – Not suffering extreme hardship
  – Confident in their relationships with the neighbours already – and hence more able to handle the situation

• At Stage 2 we therefore recruited Noise Sufferers who identified with five main attitudes
  – ‘Don’t want a drama’
  – ‘The Vigilante’
  – ‘Resigned Victim’
  – ‘I want to do something but I don’t know what’
  – ‘Nothing worked for me’

• While there were overlaps between these segments, the main attitudinal and behavioural themes were broadly confirmed by this stage
DON’T WANT A DRAMA

1. 6pm
   - Man waving goodbye to his neighbor

2. BOOM BOOM
   - Man leaving for work
   - Neighbor playing loud music

3. 8am
   - Man arriving home
   - Neighbor still playing loud music

2am
   - Man still trying to sleep
   - Neighbor still playing loud music

SCREECH CRASH
   - Man encouragement from his wife

KING
   - Man's peace with his neighbors

DON’T WANT A DRAMA
   - Man's desire for peace and quiet
DON’T WANT A DRAMA

• Quite a few were **first time home owners**, or on the lower ‘rungs’ of the property ladder, so they were often in mid-terrace properties (sometimes ex-council), and therefore were in some cases ‘hemmed in’ by noise on both sides

• They had **done very little to communicate with the neighbour**, as they were concerned of the consequences. Several had seen first hand what noise makers were capable of when other neighbours had approached them and preferred to let sleeping dogs lie

• If they did anything, it was generally by way of retaliation – they would make noise of their own to ‘get their own back’

• They were not only saddened by their noise problem but many were also frustrated that they were seemingly powerless

• They tended to **welcome ideas that informed their neighbours** that people were noisy and that it upset others – and wanted the **system** to offer them ways of reporting noise without being ‘found out’ by the neighbours
THE VIGILANTE

- They tended to have **very definite views about right and wrong**, and felt that poor upbringing/parenting was in no small way to blame for their noisemakers behaviour.

- They tended to **view the noisemaker as people with no manners/social skills or decency** – thus any dialogue with them would largely prove to be futile, in their eyes.

- They **saw themselves as being ‘decent’ people**, and could not see themselves as being responsible for noise in any way – they would always do the ‘decent’ thing or ‘what’s right’.

- They were very frustrated and/or angry people, as their key frustration lay in the difference between themselves and their neighbours.

- They were ‘waiting’ for the system to be able to support them, but at present felt that the law fell firmly on the side of the noisemaker or was simply ineffective.
RESIGNED VICTIM
RESIGNED VICTIM

- They felt that the noise problem was somehow ‘out of their control’
- Their **personality** allowed the situation to get on top of them
- They had in a few cases approached the neighbour but the problem remained (generally not often experiencing rudeness or threats as a consequence) and if they had found out ‘official’ means (e.g. environmental health) they were put off as they would not then be able to sell their houses
- They were on the whole reluctant to speak to neighbours and **welcomed ideas that would inform everyone** that noise was an issue – by doing so, they hoped that the neighbour may realise the error of their ways
- They were waiting for the system to be into place and to act on their side
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING (but I don’t know what)
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING (but I don’t know what)

- They had quite extreme cases of noise, that had often spilled over from other neighbourhood arguments (parking disputes and similar)
- They had tried a few approaches (talk to neighbours, ring environmental health) but nothing seemed to work, and they had a poor view of the system and its lack of support with their problems
- They were very frustrated, and were ‘waiting’ for something to be offered to them that could help them and put their noise problem to bed once and for all. They also welcomed any awareness campaign that could impact on their neighbour’s behaviour
- Few actually felt that the noise was deliberate - most saw their neighbours as thoughtless, selfish people
NOTHING WORKED FOR ME
NOTHING WORKED FOR ME

- They had **done more to try and conquer the problem** than any other segment, yet **in most cases things had become worse** and worse, the more that they tried to do.
- Consequently, they had a very jaded view of ‘the system’, and of other potential solutions to the problem.
- However, they had proved by their past behaviour that they have the personality to **take action given the right advice**.
- Their views of the noisemaker became worse the more they tried to do, (whereas Vigilantes had ‘dehumanised’ their neighbours from an early point) – they tended to now view the noisemaker in the same way that Vigilantes do, with the benefit of actual experience.
NOISE SUFFERER SEGMENTS

1. Don't want a drama
2. Resigned Victim
3. I want to do something
4. Nothing worked for me
5. Vigilante
CURRENT COMPLAINT CHANNELS

- Almost all claimed to be aware of one or more of the official channels open to them (environmental health/council, MP, police)
- Few had any faith in any of them, however. Especially for Vigilante, Nothing worked for me and Resigned Victims, where bitter first hand experience had jaded the views of many, and others had low expectations

1. Environmental health/council
- Diaries were seen to be time consuming and ineffective “I know there’s a process you can follow with environmental health, but I could never see myself doing it on the basis that it wouldn’t get me anywhere”
  - Those who had taken this approach agreed “I spoke to the council, had a nice little diary to fill in...it’ll take months and months, it’s a daft idea”
  - For some homeowners, there was a reluctance to make any complaint ‘official’ as it could jeopardise selling their house
CURRENT COMPLAINT CHANNELS

2. Police

- Several **Nothing worked for me** had experienced - and had little faith in - the police “*The police are just ‘never mind let’s go knock on the door’ - but they don’t listen anyway’*; “*The police are always coming all the time to them, but there’s nothing they can do*”

- The other segments had a similar lack of faith “*They say it’s not our job*”

3. MP

- One **Vigilante** had dealings with an MP - again to no avail “*We had their tenancy threatened, the council spoke to them and then they got really aggressive towards us - we spoke to the MP and they did nothing about it*”

- Others also saw them as ineffective “*A waste of time*”; “*Don’t know who he is*”

Overall there was a **lack of faith in the ‘system’** - “*You’re on your own*” compounded by media portrayal of ‘Neighbours from Hell’ “*Only what I’ve seen on telly*”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

This dialogue approach received the most votes within Approach 1

It was seen as a subtle message, in that it did not involve angry confrontation. Many referred to it as ‘Reverse Psychology’ “It might work, it’s not confrontational”

However, many stated that such a subtle approach would only be suitable with reasonable people “It may work with decent people”; “With normal people that would probably work”; “Only affecting the nice ones”

Resigned victims in particular felt that they would have to be still talking to their neighbour for the approach to have any merit “Depends on how well you know your neighbours - if you have dialogue it may work then”

They - and some Don’t want a drama - stated that they would have to ‘judge’ their neighbours’ likely reactions first “Depends what the tone of their voice was like, gauge their reaction”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Let me know if we’re too noisy”

Sometimes we can disturb our neighbours without meaning to - and without even knowing how much distress we are causing. Why not ask next door whether they can hear you, and if it ever upsets them?

- Vigilante and Don’t want a drama in particular were concerned about a negative response from the neighbour, in that they may be told that they are making noise “Too much of an angle to leave yourself open”

- Some began to question whether they were indeed making noise, and were worried about the response that they may receive “I go to the toilet in the night and if they said ‘yeah we don’t like that noise’ I don’t know what I would do”; “What if I said ‘am I noisy’ and they said ‘yes you’re really noisy?’”

- A few Nothing worked for me and one Vigilante spotted that they actually were making noise, and that it could be a two-way problem “That’s not a bad idea, our kids may have loud music - maybe it works two ways”; “Yes, I think it’s a good idea - I don’t know whether I am"
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Let me know if we’re too noisy”

Sometimes we can disturb our neighbours without meaning to - and without even knowing how much distress we are causing. Why not ask next door whether they can hear you, and if it ever upsets them

• As the debate over this approach continued, a couple of I want to do something became quite negative “I’m not going to try and apologise for something I haven’t done to make someone else feel better about something they did”

• Overall, this option was particularly popular amongst Nothing worked for me, Resigned victims and Don’t want a drama. However, the starting point was a need to be facing a decent, reasonable person. The other 2 segments tended to reject it for this reason “Too subtle for idiots”; “Certain people that cause problems aren’t social people”

A couple of Don’t want a drama stated that they had tried this ‘reverse psychology’ without any success

“Asked him if he could hear my music and he said ‘no you’re alright’ - that didn’t work”; “I’ve said to him ‘oh sorry the match was too loud’ - but he didn’t get it”
**ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE**

**ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE**

• This was joint second in voting, regarded as a good way to create dialogue

• Many from all segments said that they did this “A house warming party, I did tell my neighbours”; “Always done that”

• Unfortunately, many then commented that their neighbours didn’t reciprocate “I’ve done that when I’ve been doing DIY but they haven’t”

• The same basic starting point was raised again - in that reasonable, decent people would do this anyway “Reasonable neighbours like us do this already”; “That may work for people like us”

• Vigilante in particular branded their neighbours as the opposite “The selfish non-decent people we’re talking about would do nothing”

• I want to do something and Nothing worked for me felt that the approach was only possibly effective for ‘one off’ events - regular noise making could not be alleviated “He’s not going to stop on his way from the pub to the house and say...”; “Not regular noise”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

1b
ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

Tell your neighbours if you plan to be noisy!

Advance notice of one-off noisy events - especially parties and DIY - can help neighbours prepare for them - and keep relations friendly.

- When voting for this option, the key lay in whether or not they thought their neighbours were reasonable people.
- Overall, none of the Don’t want a drama gave this their vote.
- Of the others, a few in each segment and a couple of Vigilante chose this, but only for ‘reasonable’ neighbours “It’s not too bad, I think generally people do apart from the people you really don’t get on with”; “It may help but they’ll always be some people who won’t”.
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

Like 1 home in 3, I suffered from noisy neighbours for years

“Then one day I plucked up the courage to mention the problem. And do you know, the neighbours were mortified, didn’t realise it was a problem, they stopped making the noises straight away. Now they check with me every few weeks to make sure I’m OK. And when they do make the occasional noise, you know I don’t really mind”

• This was joint second in voting
• Again the noise maker had to be a reasonable person for the idea to have any chance of success “Only for reasonable people”

• This option did serve to promote debate and agreement about the whole issue of neighbourhood noise, in that many agreed that it was a common problem and that people may be unaware “That’s a problem for probably 80%”; “There must be lots of people out there causing a nuisance and they just take it as the norm, until they are made aware”

• Many then suggested that this would be effective as a TV/poster ad for a national campaign, so that everyone was exposed to this message. They saw it as a means to get the noisemaker to think, not themselves “A good train of thought - take something like that to trigger their thoughts”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

“Like 1 home in 3, I suffered from noisy neighbours for years

“Then one day I plucked up the courage to mention the problem. And do you know, the neighbours were mortified, didn’t realise it was a problem, they stopped making the noises straight away. Now they check with me every few weeks to make sure I’m OK. And when they do make the occasional noise, you know I don’t really mind”

• However, Vigilante and Nothing worked for me in particular saw this as unrealistic - their issues were not as simple “That’s written by somebody on drugs, who has not got a noisy neighbour”; “In an ideal world”

• For a few, talking to the neighbour was not an option “I wouldn’t dream of going downstairs and saying something if he does that to her”; “Only if you’ve got the courage to go round”

• Overall, this option was the most popular for Don’t want a drama - provided that it was communicated to everyone (thus giving them the strength to talk to a neighbour, knowing that they had been exposed to this message and may react more reasonably) “If I mentioned it in a reasonable way then it may work”. A few Resigned victim and I want to do something voted for this also. None of the other 2 segments voted for this option
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

- This was a close third in the voting
- Again, the starting point was that the outcome depended on how reasonable the neighbour was “Civilised conversation only works with civilised people”

According to research, 41% of noise makers would willingly change their behaviour if you make them aware of the problem in the right way

- Try not to get angry - mention it when you are feeling calm
- Point out how it affects you
- Try to be understanding
- Ask if they can hear your noise

- What was most off-putting was the fact that 59% were not accounted for “But 59% said it wouldn’t help”; “So 59% wouldn’t - a bigger proportion of people and it goes the wrong way”

- However, a few did feel that if the neighbour was reasonable and that they did approach it calmly, it may well work “If you go round to them using that sort of approach it would work”; “Some are so unreasonable that it won’t work”

- A couple of Nothing worked for me did state that a gentle approach had at first been positive for them “With my neighbour the more I talked to him...the more he tried to respond to it”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

1e

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

According to research, 41% of noise makers would willingly change their behaviour if you make them aware of the problem in the right way.

- Try not to get angry - mention it when you are feeling calm
- Point out how it affects you
- Try to be understanding
- Ask if they can hear your noise

- A few I want to do something felt that the calm approach wouldn’t work “The trouble is you don’t approach them until it happens, by which time you’re angry”; “No point going round the next day after an all-night party”

- Overall, this option received a few votes from Don’t want a drama, Vigilante and Nothing worked for me, alongside one I want to do something. None of the Resigned Victim chose this
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

This received only 3 votes and was the least popular

The main drawback was that only a couple were willing to consider inviting someone into their home “Maybe if they’re in my house and just chatting...maybe they might be decent”

For the others, the idea of having them in their home was unacceptable “You’d have to be really sure about someone”; “If you have awful people you’re not going to invite them in for a coffee are you”

- A couple of Don’t want a drama were wary as any confrontation may lead to an escalation “I don’t want to start anything off, just keep the peace”

The idea of a mediator was particularly disliked, as many felt that it would be almost ‘too official’ to bring in at an early stage of negotiation “A mediator is so confrontational”; “Mediation is making a bigger issue of it”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE

1c

ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE

"Noise from next door can be a real problem
And the best way to sort out a problem is to
talk about it."

Why not ask them round for a coffee or a beer,
and chat about the problem. Or if you would
like some advice on how to approach it, send
for the leaflet ‘Noise Disputes and how to stay
friends’. And if you need help from a mediator
just contact XXX

• Vigilante in particular stated that
neighbours would not agree to meet
up with a mediator “The people that
cause you aggravation would never
agree to it”

• Only a couple of Nothing worked
for me could see a possible benefit
in mediation “If it was someone they
had more respect for, it may work”

• The few who had tried to have a drink and a chat with their neighbours
saw no benefit in trying again “I’ve approached it and it didn’t work”

• The idea of a leaflet or a helpline received a couple of positive
comments. “If there was a helpline - but not to meet up”; “I might stick
a leaflet through the door but I wouldn’t invite her in”
**ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH ONE**

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<th></th>
<th>Don't want a drama</th>
<th>Vigilante</th>
<th>Resigned Victim</th>
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ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

2b

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

“Warden/Neighbourhood Watch

They will try to resolve the situation amicably. However they could also fine persistent offenders £50, and alert the authorities”

• This was easily the most popular for all of the segments, with certain provisos.
• All segments liked the fact that ‘someone else’ became responsible for dealing with the problem “You’re not doing it, you’re ringing someone and they are coming round and doing it”

• However, the key to the success of this scheme lay in the power and authority that could be exerted.
• Very few felt that Neighbourhood Watch had enough authority “If they were volunteers, they’d be 80 year olds”; “Neighbourhood watch isn’t authoritative enough”; “You’d have to have danger money to do it”
• The idea of a Warden with the backup of the Police was more credible “They need that clout”; “They’ve got to be backed up by the law”; “If it’s done properly, if they are linked to the police”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

“Warden/Neighbourhood Watch

They will try to resolve the situation amicably. However they could also fine persistent offenders £50, and alert the authorities.”

- Many were wary of having to ‘record’ the activities of their neighbours and the Warden was thought to take the pressure off them “If you call them and they come out, with their meters and listen to the noise”

- The fact that the Warden was acting on information, gave some the reassurance that anonymity would be preserved “With the warden, no one neighbour has complained, the Warden’s just doing their job”

- The idea that a fine could be levied gave the scheme even more ‘teeth’ “If they go round my house at 3am and he’s slamming the music, he can issue them with that”; “If I was going to pay a £50 fine it would make me stop”

- Despite all of the positives, there were still a few - notably Don’t want a drama and Vigilante - who felt that any situation may become worse “Makes it worse if others interfere”; “What if you were found out and they retaliated?”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

• This was 2\textsuperscript{nd} most popular, with around half the votes of the Warden option.

• It served to inform those that had little or no idea of the procedures “A lot of people aren’t aware that things are in place.”

• Most however saw this as ‘the last resort’ and felt that other approaches should be encouraged/tried beforehand “That’s the last line, you want to talk first then you have to push it if you need to.”

• The idea of having to keep a diary was still of concern, as was the danger of being ‘found out’ “You take all these notes about them, surely at some stage they can ask to see it”; “I wouldn’t want someone to know that I was complaining about them.”

• The **Nothing worked for me** who had used the official routes felt that their use of this ‘system’ had not resulted in a satisfactory outcome “Being on the record isn’t that good for us”; “It’d be a good thing as long as when you come to sell your house you haven’t got a mark against you.”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

2c

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

“

Official complaint routes

If the problem cannot be resolved, you may ring the environmental health officer at your local Authority. Depending on the nature of the problem, they may use a combination of a letter to the culprit, ask you to keep a diary, and listening to, measuring or recording the noise. They may then enter and confiscate the equipment and/or prosecute

”

• The Don’t want a drama had very little faith in the ‘system’ - one of whom had first hand experience in a previous area “Nobody ever does anything about it”

• Overall, this option was voted for by Nothing worked for me and Vigilante, with a couple of I want to do something.
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

2a

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

New Neighbours Guide:

Tips for new neighbours on how to have a good neighbourly relationship from the start. This will include Noise Dialogue tips. To be given to new residents by estate agents/housing associations/landlords.

- This received the least votes within Approach 2
- They felt that reasonable, decent neighbours would not need to be given such a guide. “For some people, but not for those who already behave themselves.”

- The criticism was that if a neighbour was making nuisance noise, then they would not react to the guide. “The bad neighbour would think that they don’t have to read it”; “If they haven’t got the common sense to think that music at 4am is unreasonable, I don’t think a guide will do a lot”; “They’d just bin it”

- A few Resigned victim liked the fact that the leaflet ‘removed’ them from an actual confrontation with their neighbour. “Noise is confrontational, this helps to make it non-confrontational.”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

2a

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

• Unfortunately, the majority felt that as they were ‘civilised people’ they would be unlikely to read it themselves either “It’s good manners isn’t it - if you were brought up well you don’t need a guide”

• A few felt that it would only be effective if they were suffering then and there - otherwise it would probably be lost/discarded “I’d have probably thrown it away, unless I was having a problem at the time”

• As an aside, several stated that when they received the government ‘anti-terrorism’ booklet a couple of years ago, hardly any read it - or kept it “That emergency thing - I thought ‘oh I’d have a read of that’ but I never got round to it”

• Overall it was only a few Resigned victims who voted for this along with a couple of I want to do something
## ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH TWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Don't want a drama</th>
<th>Vigilante</th>
<th>Resigned Victim</th>
<th>I want to do something</th>
<th>Nothing worked for me</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2a</strong> “New Neighbours Guide”</td>
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</table>
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH THREE

3a

SELF-EXAMINATION

“Noise from Next Door? Are you being reasonable?

Over 80% of Noise Makers are Noise Sufferers as well. Can they ever hear YOUR noise too? Should you just live and let live?

• This received slightly more votes than the other option

• The main issue lay in the definition of what was **reasonable noise** “It’s a question of what people class as reasonable”

• For around one or two of each segment, it did serve to make them think about their **own noise generation** “I’m always accused by my sons that I’m noisy with my hearing aid, they’re always saying the TV is too loud”; “I suppose we all do at different times for different things”

• The **Resigned victims** however, did not like the ‘tone’ of the message and found it to be too accusatory “Sounds a bit like you’re accusing everybody of being noisy, no”

• It was felt that **reasonable people** would take notice of such a message. Coupled with that, reasonable people would ensure that they didn’t intrude on others “I’m reasonable and I’m thoughtful. I try to be considerate because I suffer from noise”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH THREE

3a

SELF-EXAMINATION

“

Noise from Next Door? Are you being reasonable?

Over 80% of Noise Makers are Noise Sufferers as well. Can they ever hear YOUR noise too? Should you just live and let live?

”

• **Vigilante** in particular felt that any decent person would not need to be told “Teaching people to be considerate - isn’t this all about upbringing?”. Some **Don’t want a drama** tended to agree “People who are that way inclined don’t give a damn”

• Overall, around half of all the groups across all segments voted for this choice, with the notable exception of only one **Resigned Victim** group - they did not like the accusatory note of the message
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH THREE

- This received slightly fewer votes
- The argument against this was that many felt they were not ‘guilty’ of making unreasonable noise “We don’t make any unusual noise - it has to be loud to be unreasonable”.

Don’t want a drama in particular disliked the ‘blaming’ message and none of them voted for this option “No, that’s blaming yourself”

- The message again relied upon the noisemaker being a reasonable, decent person - which few thought was the case “Some of these people aren’t approachable and they just don’t care - if only they were people like us we’d be able to approach them”; “My daughter lives in a semi and puts headphones on when watching TV at night, to be considerate, because she was brought up by me”

- Despite this feeling, the message did hit home to a handful “My mum asked next door and said ‘could you hear my son’, she said ‘yes I do actually’, I didn’t realise”; “It’s a double edged sword, I have 3 kids, maybe there is something in it after all”
ENCOURAGING ACTION: APPROACH THREE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don't want a drama</th>
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<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>“Noise from next door? Are you being reasonable”</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>“They think we’re neighbours from hell”</td>
<td>✓</td>
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OVERALL CHOICE

2b
“Warden/ Neighbourhood Watch”

THE WARDEN IDEA WAS THE MOST POPULAR

Dialogue
- Two or three segments ready to try dialogue
- Nothing Worked for Me - comfortable with talking about the problem, but now need teeth to back up this chat
- Don’t Want a Drama - cautious about the dialogue approach, they don’t want any escalation
- I Want To Do Something - need reassurance that this is worth the effort

Official Routes
- Someone else taking action
- Anonymous (potentially)
- Immediate

- Warden most popular but...
- Three segments interested in formal complaints procedure
- Resigned Victims welcomed New Neighbours Guide

Self Examination
- Less popular – do not want to deflect the blame
BUT THE OVERALL CHOICE IS DEPENDENT ON...

- What segment you’re in – your broad attitude
- How ‘bad’ the noise is
- How long the problem has been going on
- The type of noise
- What you’ve done about it so far
- The time of day and duration of the noise
- Your relationship with your neighbour

And depending on where you are along the mildly sensitive to highly sensitive axis will affect your approach at any given time

WE MAY THEREFORE NEED MORE THAN ONE SOLUTION
LEAFLETS: LEEDS ‘TOP TIPS’

- Initial reactions were positive, and many found it useful, and read it with interest
- There were some (from all segments) who felt that anything which increased awareness was a positive step “May make people think”; “At least it could make everyone aware”; “Anything that brings it to your attention...has to be a good thing”
- Some said that ‘decent people’ would not need to be told - for them, it was simply ‘common sense’ “Common sense to people like us”; “It’s all to do with consideration, not this”
- Several felt that they would not bother to read it should they receive it - and that if they wouldn’t, then there was little hope that noisy neighbours would either “If you like your music use headphones - what on earth is that crap about”; “Means nothing to inconsiderate people”
- The size of the document and the amount of points/suggestions were criticised by a few “I don’t think anyone would get past the first side”; “Too tiny - just bin it”
LEAFLETS: STOKE ‘NOISE REDUCING’ SEPARATE NOISES

- The idea of separate leaflets for different noise issues received mixed reactions
- **Don’t want a drama** and **Vigilante** in particular disliked the idea, as they questioned how an individual noise problem would be targeted by an appropriate leaflet “Noise is noise, regardless of what it is”; “You’d be found out”

- A few of the other 3 segments saw the idea as having merit, as it was a way of politely but clearly spelling out to someone that there was a noise issue “Good to put through someone’s door anonymously”

- A couple of **I want to do something** and **Nothing worked for me** suggested ways of distributing the leaflets “If you’ve got a block of flats with a music issue, mail it to the whole area”; “Put a leaflet in with a stereo or a washing machine to remind people how to behave”

- Overall, however, the idea of one leaflet covering all eventualities (see next slide) was preferred

**N.B MANY IN OUR SAMPLE EXPERIENCING MORE THAN ONE KIND OF NOISE**
LEAFLETS: STOKE ‘NOISE REDUCING’ GENERAL LEAFLET

- This was the preferred choice for most, as it covered all the issues on the one leaflet “All the problems on the one leaflet, and how to go about it”

- It was suggested that the leaflet should be distributed to everyone - as opposed to being targeted at either makers or sufferers “Give it to everyone, put it in with bills or council tax”

- They liked the fact that sufferers would see what steps could be taken - and that makers could see what could happen to them “If the noise makers read it, they know what could happen to them”; “If you get a problem you can look at that and get ideas”; “That’s what you need, some advice…”

- A few Resigned victims felt that the leaflet could be delivered by a warden, thus preserving their anonymity “Wardens could deliver it and say ‘this is your first warning’”

- Overall though, the key to the leaflet - especially expressed by Vigilante - was that they wanted proof of effectiveness “Proof - do they listen to the noise, do they come out, do they stop them”
Conclusions
CONCLUSIONS

UNLIKELY TO TAKE ACTION
- Resigned Victim
- Don’t want a drama

LIKELY TO TAKE ACTION
- I want to do something
- Nothing worked for me
- Vigilante

NEED A LOT OF HELP WITH INITIAL DIALOGUE
- All would like Warden to take the pressure off them

NEED DIALOGUE WITH TEETH
- And reassurance that they are not alone

All need information about the official process
# Towards a Solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>Start with dialogue</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the problem is young</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Before it escalates</td>
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<td>While relations are good/rescuable</td>
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<tr>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>Mediation/warden</th>
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<td>When the problem is more ‘mature’</td>
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<td>When it has escalated</td>
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<td>While relations are deteriorating</td>
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<tr>
<th>STEP 3</th>
<th>Official routes</th>
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<td></td>
<td>When the problem is ‘extreme’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When the situation is explosive</td>
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<td>When relations are beyond redemption</td>
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</table>
Start building a relationship first…

- The quiet word: gentle, friendly, light-hearted
- The heavier word: explaining impact on the household
- Dialogue with teeth
- The warden
- Official channels
- The courts

THE COMPLAINTS ESCALATOR
NOISE SUFFERER – SEGMENT SUMMARY

Nothing worked for me

Vigilante

Resigned Victim

Don't want a drama

I want to do something

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Find out the legal options

Dialogue with teeth: use knowledge of options to increase pressure on neighbours

Move up escalator as appropriate

Wait till you’ve calmed down

Dialogue – then with teeth

Or start high up the escalator (dependent on situation)

Try to establish friendly relations with neighbour

Try to enter dialogue about the problem

If this doesn’t suit, consider escalator options

Gather information (literature)

Consider escalator options
RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR NOISE SUFFERER

- Depends on Relationship with Neighbour
- Depends on complaints made so far

BUT IMPORTANTLY DEPENDS ON...

- What is Attitude/Personality of the Noise Sufferer?
- What is Attitude/Personality of the Noise Maker?

Which segment is the Sufferer in?
Which segment are the neighbours in?
SOFT TARGETS RELATIONSHIPS

(Noise Maker) —> Nothing worked for me

(Noise Maker) —> Vigilante

(Noise Maker) —> Don't want a drama

(Noise Maker) —> I want to do something