Living With Your Neighbours

We can't always love our neighbours. Often, we don't even know who they are. So things can get tricky if there are problems. Follow Bristol Mediation's tips below for ways to nip problems in the bud.

If you would like to discuss a specific problem, Bristol Mediation offers a free* and confidential service. Call 0117 9415379 or email casework@bristol-mediation.org. More information about our service can be found at www.bristol-mediation.org (* dependant upon your housing status and/or the area which you live).

Things you can do to limit problems:

• It may sound obvious, but introduce yourself (it's never too late). If you know each other by name, it's going to be much easier to talk if problems do arise.

• Tell your neighbours anything useful. For example, if you need your TV volume up loud because you are hard of hearing, or if you work nights and need peace and quiet in the day.

• Think about your own behaviour. If you play loud music at night, it could make you unpopular with your neighbours

• Respect other people’s right to enjoy their own home, but remember that you have this right too.

What you can do if problems do arise:

• Think about the best way to tell your neighbours if they have done something you aren’t happy with. Consider how you would want to be approached. Do you want to talk to them, write to them or get outside help?

• Remember to keep yourself safe at all times. You will know best whether it is safe to approach your neighbour. If in doubt, don’t. You can get help to approach them from Bristol Mediation, your housing office (if you have one) or, in extreme circumstances, the police.

• If you’re going to approach them face to face, choose a good time and think about what you want to say beforehand. First, tell your neighbours you need to talk to them about a problem, then ask if you can do it straight away. If not, agree a time to suit you both.

• Don’t tell everyone else in the street first, bang on walls, throw things, shout abuse or point fingers. All of these might make you feel better but probably won’t help the situation or set a tone for talking to your neighbours later.

• Do give your neighbours a chance to tell you their side (even if you don’t agree).

• Do give them enough time to deal with the problem.

• If your neighbour says they have a problem/complaint about you, take a deep breath and think about it. Do they have a point? Try not to be offended by their approach and think about anything you would be happy to do differently. If you think they are being unreasonable, tell them why.

• If you resolve things, don’t forget to thank your neighbours for any changes they have made. Let them know what a difference this has made to you.

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