

Students Living In Kingston

Welcome to Kingston University Students.

By following this guidance we hope to help you to settle into the neighbourhood, provide information on being a considerate neighbour, and prevent problems arising from differing lifestyles. Remember getting on with your neighbours can help you to move in, let you know which days to put refuse out and in what bins, and keep an eye on your home when you are away. It is also important to ensure you know about the support and advice available should you have any problems relating to neighbours, landlords and so on.

Kingston Council's Environmental Health Service and Kingston University work closely together, often with other agencies, to prevent any issues around noise and anti-social behaviour caused by students living in private accommodation. Whilst most students live happily in Kingston, without any problems, there is a minority who disrupt others' lives and this reflects negatively on their University and others studying here.

When you move into your new home introduce yourselves to your neighbours. Friendly and regular communications helps neighbours to be more understanding of each others' lifestyle. If you find that your neighbours are also students it may not follow that your lifestyles are similar – check! Once you have got to know your neighbours, think about the following as you enjoy living in Kingston.

NOISE DURING THE DAY

It is a common misconception that providing loud music is not played after 11pm then it is ok. Most action taken by Kingston Council arises from loud music being played during the afternoons and evenings.

Music

- At all times the volume must be reasonable – bass can easily cause disturbance even at low levels
- Be aware of the cumulative effect of music played by you and your housemates upon your neighbours who may be exposed for many hours, daily.
- Do not mount loudspeakers on walls shared with your neighbours. If you have neighbours below you raise the speakers from the floor.
- Do not be tempted to set the volume of your music so that it is audible throughout house.
- Take extra special care if playing music in gardens.

We receive many comments from students who are adamant that their music is not loud. Loudness is subjective with the volume of music judged from within the complainant's home. Sound insulation between properties is an important factor, too, so even relatively low level music can be too loud.

Musicians

If you play a musical instrument try to reach an agreement with your neighbours when it is a good time to practice. Music students can book somewhere to practice at the University – and there is also availability for non music students too – contact the Music Student Office. Band practice is best kept within the University.

- Control the volume of any electronic instrument, such as keyboards and guitars. Brass instruments should be fitted with mutes, where available
- Traditional drums present significant problems due to their loudness. These are best avoided but in certain circumstances the use of hot rods, drum pads and very restricted playing may be ok with your neighbours.

Parties

If you're planning a party:

- Give your neighbours lots of notice, and a contact telephone number. But remember as tenants you are responsible for the party and your guests, so keep to manageable numbers.
- Hold it at the weekends to minimise disturbance. Specify an end time and keep to it.
- By 11pm ensure that guests are indoors and not in the garden; close windows and doors.
- By midnight ensure that music volumes are substantially lowered.
- At the end of the evening, ensure your guests are considerate to neighbours and leave quietly.

NOISE AT NIGHT (AFTER 11PM)

Socialising late at night is a common source of complaints, as your neighbours may be sleeping and getting up very early the next day for work.

Playing music is best avoided unless it is without a strong bass and is at a very low level. Also be considerate when watching TV or playing computer games, especially if you have friends with you, as this can get noisier than you may appreciate.

What else causes nuisance at night?

Slamming doors

Late night guests

Voices - it is extremely easy to unintentionally raise your voice, particularly when there are a number of you. Think hard before inviting friends back on a regular basis -remember it is your tenancy, your responsibility!

Stairs/ Footsteps -You may be surprised but running up and down stairs is easily audible across neighbouring walls and floors – especially if you have laminate flooring. It may be best to remove shoes indoors, especially those with heels, to reduce noise.

Cars - Ensure your car stereo is not being played loudly, and your windows are closed. Turn the volume down just before arrival, and ensure visitors, do, too. Also ensure your car alarm is not continually going off.

COMPLAINTS FROM NEIGHBOURS

If a neighbour complains to you about the noise you are making, be sympathetic to their concerns and take all reasonable steps to address the problem. Remember your neighbour will experience cumulative noise from all housemates and in your absence you may not be aware of the noise that is being caused.

Consider setting up a meeting with your neighbours to discuss their complaint and try and reach agreement. This often goes a long way to reducing tensions and increasing understanding on both sides.

The University also provides a free mediation service, to help neighbour relations:

mediation@kingston.ac.uk

WHAT IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF NOISE DISTURBANCE?

If you are suffering from noise disturbance consider approaching your neighbour to explain politely that you are being troubled by noise. You may find this difficult, but often people are unaware that they are causing a problem. Most will be glad to do what they can to reduce noise. However, approach the matter carefully if you think your neighbour might react angrily to a complaint. Accommodation Services and the Student Union at Kingston University can help you with support and advice – details are on your website *My Kingston*. Other sources for advice – email: community@kingston.ac.uk at your University and also talk to your Landlord or Managing Agent.

Finally....If you would like advice about noisy neighbours or complaints that you may have already received from your neighbours please contact the Environmental Health Service on 020 8547 5002, email environmental.health@rbk.kingston.gov.uk or look at the following website.

http://www.kingston.gov.uk/browse/environment/environmental_health/pollution/noise_nuisance.htm

BE WARNED THOUGH!

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives everyone the right to complain to the Council about noise disturbance and we have a duty to investigate noise complaints. Where it is found that a 'Statutory Nuisance' exists, or is likely to occur / reoccur, an Abatement Notice will be served upon **ALL** occupants in the household, as you are on a joint tenancy - so choose carefully who to share with. The Notice would require the person(s) upon whom it has been served, to prohibit the recurrence of the nuisance. **Failure to comply with the requirements of such a Notice is a criminal offence and upon summary conviction Magistrates may impose a fine of up to £5000. Any criminal conviction may have implications on those students studying, particularly for professional qualifications.**

The Council also has the power to seize the equipment, which is or has been used to cause the noise nuisance. This could include any music playing equipment, televisions and radios.

Where formal action is taken by the Council this information will be shared with Kingston University.