



## Practice Note 8

**Project Name: East Renfrewshire Domestic Noise Wardens Service**

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**Topic Areas:** Offending Management, Partnership Working, Public Space Safety

### Project Background and Aims

In late 2006 and early 2007 East Renfrewshire Council carried out a Strategic Best Value Service Review of its CCTV and security services. One of the recommendations of the review was to overhaul the procedure for dealing with domestic noise complaints from residents. At the time of the review this was a limited service provided by a neighbouring local authority, outwith office hours to just 2am. It was decided to bring the system in-house to provide a more comprehensive and cost-effective service.

The best value review recommended piggybacking a receive-and-response system onto the existing, confidential 'Ring and Report' antisocial behaviour helpline. The helpline was run from the CCTV Control Room, which operates 24 hours a day, all year round.

The new Domestic Noise Wardens system was implemented in April 2009, with the Community Wardens section taking on responsibility for providing a 24-hour domestic noise service for East Renfrewshire residents.

### Resources

**Funding:** The service is resourced through existing departmental budgets.

**Partners:** The core partners include East Renfrewshire Community Safety Unit, East Renfrewshire Council Environmental Health and Strathclyde Police.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monthly data is collected on the number of complaints attended and warning notices and fixed penalty notices served by Community Wardens. This data and evaluation reports are available on request from the Investigative Researcher within the Community Safety Unit.

## Activities

Prior to the launch of the new out-of-hours service, all nineteen of East Renfrewshire's Community Wardens received training in noise measurement at the University of the West of Scotland. Each Community Warden consequently obtained a certificate of proficiency in noise measurement from the Institute of Acoustics.

To implement the new Domestic Noise Wardens Service and allow it to enforce Part Five of the Antisocial Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004<sup>1</sup>, a service level agreement was established between Protective Services and the Community Safety Unit. Furthermore, a protocol was established with Strathclyde Police to allow for the referral of domestic noise calls.

Residents in East Renfrewshire can now either telephone the 24 hour 'Ring and report' ASB hotline where they can speak directly to an operator or they can contact Strathclyde Police. In either case, the protocol is for Community Wardens to action the response and attend the source of complaint.

The standard operating procedure for the service incorporates key safety protocols and Community Wardens have been provided with personal safety training, which includes self-defence. The Operational Procedure Manual contains a risk assessment and Community Wardens always attend incidents in pairs. Moreover, Police Officers attend incidents with Community Wardens if there is a threat of violence or if a fixed penalty is required due to excessive or repeat violation of the noise legislation.

The service works within a partnership framework which includes:

- Environmental Health , on whose behalf the service is run;
- Strathclyde Police, who refer complaints and attend incidents with Community Wardens as required;
- The CCTV Control Room who direct Community Wardens to incidents;
- The Antisocial Behaviour Team, who carry out follow-up investigations as required;
- Victim Support,
- East Renfrewshire Council's Mediation Service and Housing Department; and

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<sup>1</sup> Part Five of the Antisocial Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 covers the summary procedure for dealing with noise from certain places, including domestic dwellings. The relevant sections of the legislation can be accessed at:

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2004/asp\\_20040008\\_en\\_6](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2004/asp_20040008_en_6)

- Registered Social Landlords.

### Impact

The Domestic Noise Wardens service is innovative as complainers receive the services of officers qualified in noise measurement and equipment with noise measuring technology. Also, the service has freed up time for both Police and Environmental Health Officers to deal with other matters.

From the launch of the service on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 until July 31<sup>st</sup> 2010, Community Wardens have attended 784 domestic noise calls. The majority of these calls were dealt with by way of advice or a verbal warning; in only 31 cases a warning notice was served. The warning notice was adhered to by all but four cases which then required a fixed penalty of £100 under Section 45 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004. Thus far, no case required the issue of a second penalty notice. Further, police presence was only required at the four incidents where a fixed penalty notice was served.

As part of the service level agreement, Community Wardens must attend all Part Five calls within one hour and all other domestic noise calls within four hours. The average time taken to attend the source of the domestic noise complaint is 27 minutes for Part Five calls, well within the set targets.

The rapid response time of the Community Wardens deals with antisocial behaviour quickly and reduces the stress of the reporter/complainant, thus providing an efficient, effective service. Moreover, as the system is 24 hour, the level of service is consistent irrespective of the time of day or night. From June 2010, the service was expanded to provide a 24 hour domestic noise facility. During the period June 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010 the Community Wardens attended 47 domestic noise incidents during office hours. These would previously have required the services of Environmental Health Officers and or police Officers.

### Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

The Domestic Noise Wardens Service was set up in recognition that the previous system could be improved upon in terms of cost-effectiveness, efficiency and comprehensiveness. Instead of contracting out an out-of-hours domestic noise service, an in-house system was developed utilising existing resources.

The service has benefitted from the excellent pre-existing working relationships within East Renfrewshire, principally between Environmental Health, the Community Safety Unit and the East Renfrewshire subdivision of Strathclyde Police.

The Community Wardens section is placed within the Community Safety Unit and therefore able to draw upon other key services such as CCTV, the Antisocial Behaviour Team, the Mediation Service and Victim Support. All these services operate out of the same office, allowing for instant sharing of information and coordinated response to the concerns of residents.

## Summary

The Domestic Noise Wardens Service is a system put in place by East Renfrewshire Council to respond effectively to domestic noise calls from local residents. The service is run without additional expenditure as it draws on a range of existing resources. Under the system, Community Wardens respond rapidly to domestic noise incidents thereby freeing up the time of the Police and Environmental Health to respond to other matters.

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