

The Good Neighbour toolkit



At Irwell Valley Homes we are committed to supporting customers to build good relationships with their neighbours to help create a safe and welcoming neighbourhood for all.

This toolkit provides advice on what you can do when a neighbour's behaviour causes upset or frustration. It is designed to help neighbours work together to recognise and deal with tensions early on and prevent issues progressing into more serious anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Some of the situations covered here may also be escalated as part of an ASB case – each situation is different and we'll assess on a case by case basis.

Along with tips and recommendations about how to resolve an issue with a neighbour, this toolkit sets out how Irwell Valley Homes can support you with neighbourly challenges if you experience them.

Support resolving an issue with a neighbour

If you are experiencing an issue with a neighbour, we recommend following the approach in [step 1](#). If things don't improve, please speak to us and we can move together onto [step 2](#).

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Step 1

Nothing gets resolved without good communication and so a respectful discussion with your neighbour can go a long way.

Ahead of your chat, have a think about what you each could do to reduce the impact of the issue on you and your household.

Later in this toolkit, you'll find ideas and suggestions to help with common neighbourly issues. Have a read through to see if there are some ideas and suggestions you can take to the discussion to help it be as positive and constructive as possible.

Tips for approaching a neighbour with an issue

- Do it when you feel calm. Being angry can cause more problems.
 - Think through what you want to say and stick to it.
 - Try to deal with the issue face to face and informally first.
 - Explain what the issue is and how it is affecting you.
 - Listen to their response - they may have a good reason, or it might have been a one-off.
 - Try to reach a solution you are both happy with.
 - If anyone is getting angry – walk away.
 - If the issue involves children, speak to their parents if you can, don't approach them directly.
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If you don't feel comfortable speaking to your neighbour, you can contact your Neighbourhood Officer and they can talk you through some advice and guidance on how to approach the conversation. Visit our website www.irwellvalley.co.uk/for-customers/your-neighbourhood if you're unsure who your Neighbourhood Officer is.

If you are concerned about a neighbour's wellbeing or anxious about approaching them, please get in touch with us to discuss. Live chat with us on our website www.irwellvalley.co.uk; email contact@irwellvalley.co.uk or call us on 0300 561 1111.

Step 2

If you have had a conversation with your neighbour about the issue and how it is affecting you, but the matter is still not resolved, contact your Neighbourhood Officer for support.

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We can review the situation and offer advice on the next steps.

Ideas of how we can help include:

- Arranging mediation - which we can facilitate if both households agree - with your neighbour when further advice can be shared.
- Writing to your neighbour about your report (with your consent) with tips and further guidance.
- Providing you with a noise app that will enable you to record any noise or nuisance that is disturbing you. This can be used to escalate a report and investigate the issue. If you do not have a smartphone, we will discuss other ways to gather evidence.
- Signpost or refer you to agencies who can support you and your household. These agencies may include social services and mental health services. We may also complete a referral to our Tenancy Sustainment team if you would benefit from their support.

Although the types of behaviour described in this toolkit would not normally fall under the definition of anti-social behaviour, if the situation gets worse or the impact on you is severe, moving forward through our ASB procedure is another option open to us.

As the central purpose of this toolkit is to help build relationships between customers, it is unlikely we will be able to help if you choose to remain anonymous.

There may also be times when we cannot guarantee confidentiality, even if this is asked for. This includes situations where a safeguarding concern is identified, or a criminal offence has taken place.

General household noise

This can include everything from closing doors and windows to using white goods and plumbing - everyone can expect to hear some noise from the people who live around them.

To reduce noise in your home and minimise any disturbances, follow the tips below and share them with your neighbours...

Household appliances

- Where possible, position any appliances on an even floor and consider using an anti-vibration mat under washing machines and tumble dryers.
- Try to run the washing machine at a time when it will least disturb neighbours. Remember, the final spin is usually the noisiest bit.
- Do the vacuuming at a reasonable time. Especially if you live in a flat or terrace, avoid early morning or late-night cleaning sprees.
- In the kitchen, avoid banging pans and cupboard doors and don't use blenders/grinders on surfaces attached to party walls.
- Cupboard doors can cause annoyance, particularly if the units are fixed to party walls. Avoid slamming doors. Consider buying some inexpensive furniture pads for the inside of cupboard doors and door frames, which can be an effective way of reducing noise.

Isolated incidents of loud music

Music tastes vary so it's important not to assume your neighbour will want to hear what you like to listen to. We recommend the following:

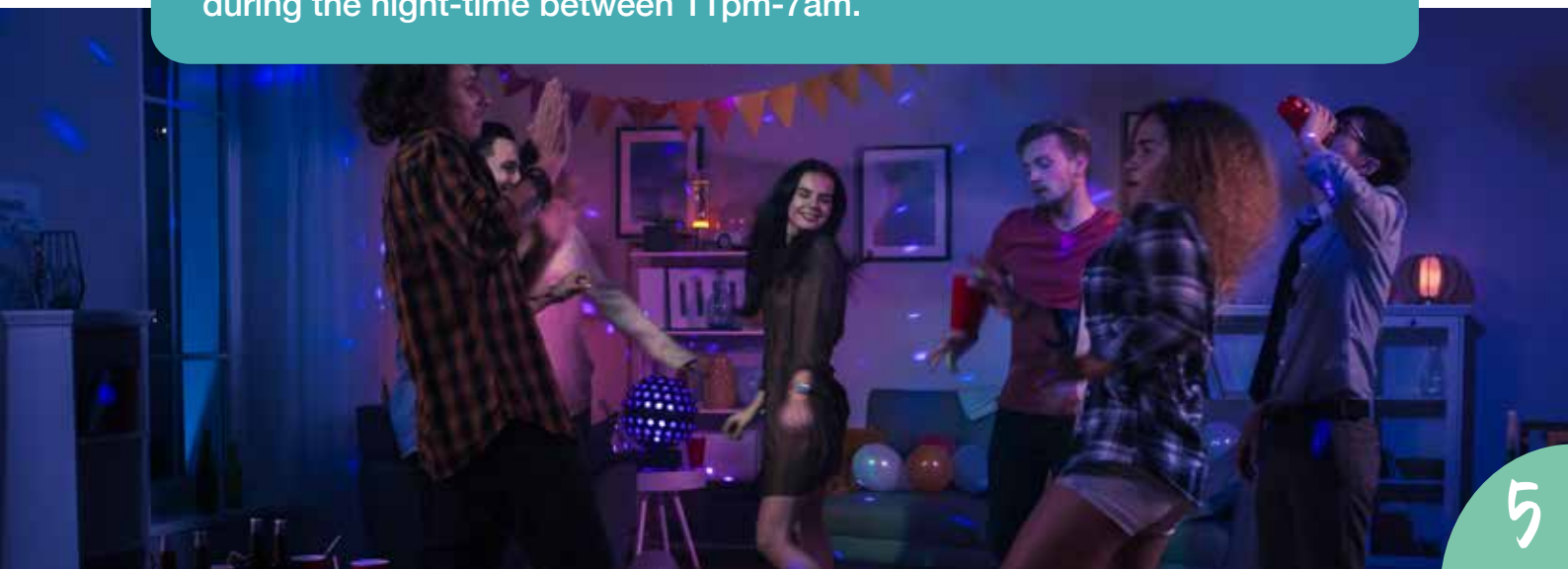
- With amplified sound, keep the volume down, especially the bass.
- If you have a TV in the bedroom, keep it quiet at night – especially if your bedroom adjoins someone else's.
- If playing an instrument, practice where and when it will have least impact on neighbours.
- Where possible, use headphones.
- Be mindful of open windows.

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We will only consider loud music to be anti-social behaviour (ASB) if it is persistent, and we will normally require you to submit noise app recordings. This means a one-off party would not typically be considered ASB.

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Persistent noise nuisance usually means the disturbance lasts for more than 30 minutes a day for at least five days within one week or it occurs during the night-time between 11pm-7am.



Isolated incidents of loud shouting or arguing

Our primary concern about shouting and arguing would relate to potential domestic abuse or a safeguarding issue.

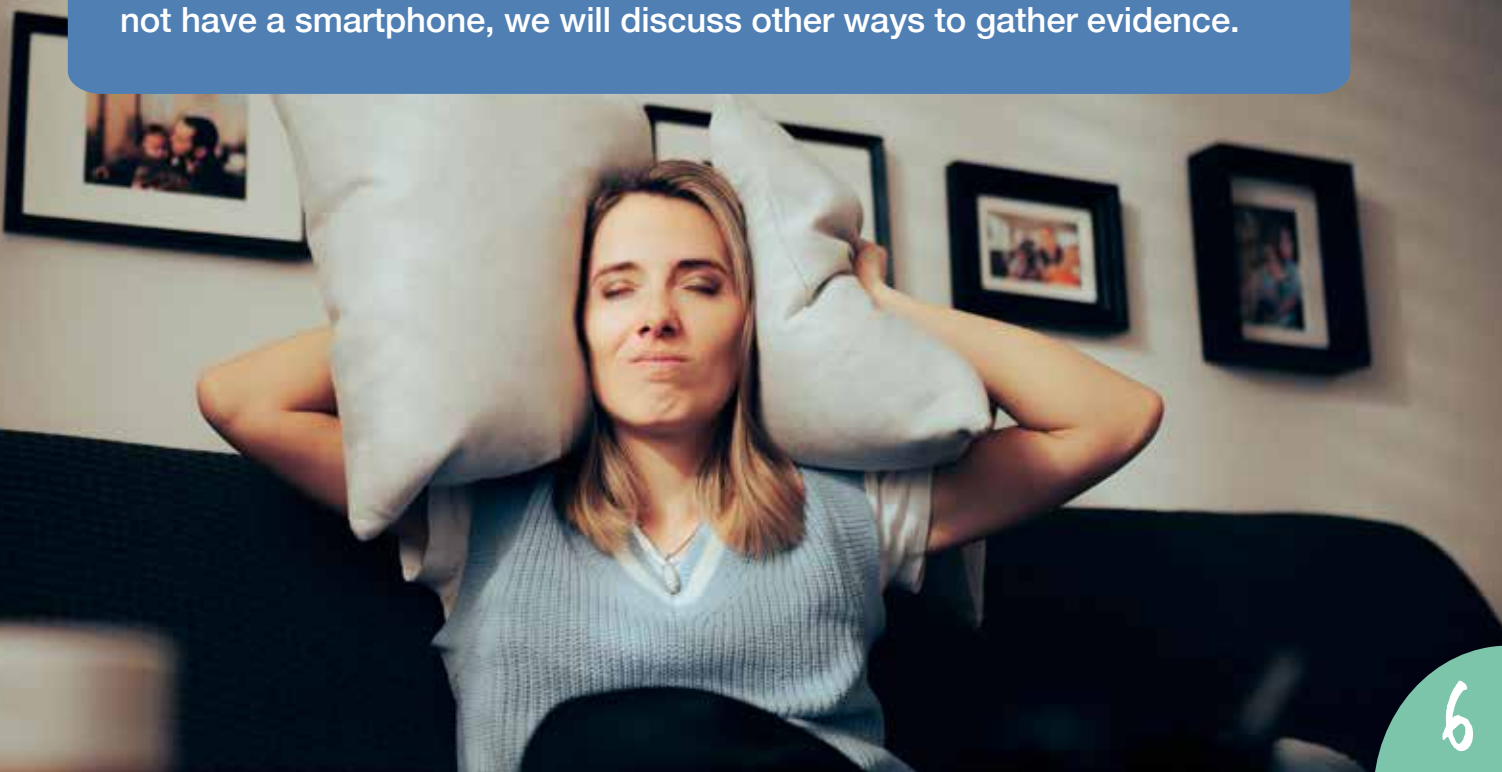
If you think it may be domestic abuse or are concerned about any of your neighbours and there is an immediate risk, please ring the police on 999. Then let us know by contacting your Neighbourhood Officer or our Customer Service and Support Team.

If it's not an emergency situation, you can make a safeguarding referral to your local council.

If you think there are any factors contributing to the shouting and arguing, please let us know when you call. In addition, we may ask you the following questions to help us better understand and assess the situation:

- Does the neighbour appear vulnerable?
- Do you think drugs/alcohol may be involved?
- Who do you think lives in the property?
- Have you noticed anyone new move into the property or any new visitors?
- Do have any concerns about anyone's welfare?
- Are there children living in the property?

To better understand the situation and whether we need to investigate the issue under our ASB policy, we may advise you to download the noise app and request that you submit recordings or other evidence. If you do not have a smartphone, we will discuss other ways to gather evidence.



Lifestyles

- Your neighbours may have a different routine based on work schedules, family needs, or personal habits. Night shifts, early morning activities or cultural practices may lead to varying levels of noise or activity at different times of day.
- It is important to approach these differences with understanding and patience. What may seem unusual to you, could be part of your neighbour's normal routine.
- Noise is often the biggest source of conflict between neighbours; however, communication, small adjustments and mutual respect can prevent issues.



One-off parties

People can host parties to celebrate various occasions including festive seasons, religious celebrations, moving into a new home, birthdays, or other special events.

To be a good neighbour, it's important to inform those around you in advance, keep noise levels reasonable, and be mindful of quiet hours. If you're attending or hosting, try to minimise disturbances to the surrounding homes.

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If you find the noise disruptive, [refer to step 1 of this toolkit](#) - approach the host politely and share your concerns.

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Most neighbours will appreciate the feedback and adjust. Open communication helps maintain a positive atmosphere and prevents future issues.

We will only treat parties as anti-social behaviour (ASB) if they are persistent, and we will normally require you to submit noise app recordings or other means of evidence. This means a one-off party would not typically be considered ASB.

Persistent noise nuisance usually means the disturbance lasts for more than 30 minutes a day for at least five days within one week or it occurs during the night-time between 11pm-7am.

Disagreements

Disagreements can stem from everything from children falling out to the positioning of bins ahead of collection.

Remember that we don't always know what's going on in someone's personal life or what may be impacting them – but it's important that we treat our neighbours fairly and show respect.

Cigarette and cooking smells

By law, internal communal areas (stairwells, lifts, and hallways) of blocks of flats must be smoke-free. Customers are legally allowed to smoke tobacco cigarettes inside their homes, gardens and communal gardens.

Similarly, customers are free to cook food of their choice in their home.

You may wish to speak to your neighbour to see if there is anything they can do to reduce the impact of these activities on your household. Below are the steps we recommend taking, as well as some tips to reduce the smell of cigarettes and cooking.

Tips on reducing smells caused by...

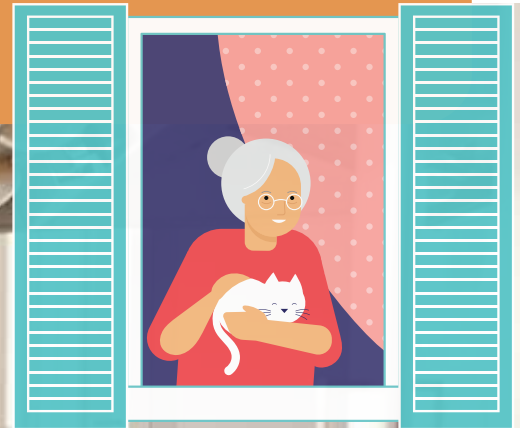
Cigarettes

- Be considerate when smoking in external areas by not smoking directly outside the building's entrance or near to your neighbours' windows.
- When smoking in your home, ventilate by opening windows or consider using an air purifier.
- Charcoal or white vinegar can help absorb the smell of cigarettes. Leave containers open and change them regularly.
- Do not litter and ensure that cigarette butts are disposed of safely.



Cooking

- Let fresh air circulate in your home by opening the windows and using your kitchen extractor fan. You can also use your oven extractor fan, if you have one.
- Clean up as soon as possible after cooking to remove any lingering smells.
- Put any food waste in a bin with a closed lid and empty it regularly.



Babies and children

Babies and young children may cry frequently, whether due to teething, sleep schedules, or other needs.

Being a good neighbour means being patient and understanding that these situations are often temporary.

If the noise becomes disruptive, consider speaking to the parents kindly. They may not be aware of how much the sound carries and they may appreciate an offer of support.

If you have genuine concerns for the well-being of neighbouring babies or children, please report these concerns to social services, who can ensure the family receives any support they may need.

Children and young people playing

Play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital for their health, well-being and development.

Although some types of behaviour can be frustrating, children playing in their gardens, in external communal areas or on the street is not ASB. Please be tolerant of children playing.

Exceptions include swearing, causing damage, or anything dangerous which could cause a nuisance to other neighbours or a danger to themselves. If children are kicking a ball against your wall or their toys are at risk of damaging your car or windows, approach a conversation with their parents using the steps outlined in this toolkit.



Parking

When parking near your home it's important that you and your neighbours remember:

- No one has an automatic right to park in front of their home on a public road.
- Do not park across a dropped kerb or driveway and remember to leave enough space either side of the driveway for a car to manoeuvre in and out.
- If possible, avoid parking opposite a driveway as it may also obstruct access to it. Before you leave your vehicle, ask yourself *"could I get in or out of that driveway?"*
- Do not park or allow your visitors to park anywhere that is not permitted and may cause a problem for other people. For example, on a pathway or blocking areas that should be kept clear for bin lorries or emergency vehicles.
- If you live in an area with allocated parking, you should not park or allow your visitors to park in someone else's bay even for a short period.
- If you live in an area without allocated parking, residents are allowed to park there on a first come first served basis, providing there is a parking space available.
- If you live in an area with non-allocated parking and have a preferred space, you can ask a neighbour if they would mind allowing you to park in a particular space. However, they are entitled to decline your request.
- You cannot park an untaxed/unroadworthy vehicle in a car park owned or managed by Irwell Valley Homes and this includes SORN vehicles (*Statutory Off-Road Notification*). We will take measures to remove these vehicles.

- In car parks owned or managed by Irwell Valley Homes where you are allowed to park commercial vehicles, they must not weigh more than 3.5 tonnes. Anything above this is considered an obstruction and a breach of your tenancy.
- If you live in an area which does not allow any work/commercial vehicles it will state this in your tenancy or leasehold conditions.
- You must only carry out reasonable minor repairs to your own vehicles in the parking areas of a car park you are allowed to use, and you must not use paint spraying equipment, hoists, welding equipment or power tools.
- Disabled parking places are for blue badge holders only. If a member of your household is registered as disabled or has any other vulnerabilities, seek further advice from Irwell Valley Homes if you or they are having problems with parking.

You can approach your neighbours using the tips and tactics from [step 1](#) if you are having parking issues with your neighbours. If you believe there are steps we could take to help, please get in touch. Measures could include consulting with residents about introducing allocated parking or the introduction of parking enforcement.



Property/garden condition

Neighbours may have different standards for maintaining their property or garden due to time, resources, or personal preferences.

Being a good neighbour means respecting these differences and understanding that factors like busy schedules or financial constraints may affect upkeep.

If you feel that a neighbour's property or garden condition is negatively impacting the neighbourhood, approach this with them through a friendly conversation, offering help if appropriate. Your Neighbourhood Officer can also help with this, taking tenancy action as appropriate if the situation doesn't improve.

If the condition poses a health or safety risk, report it to your Neighbourhood Officer or via our Customer Service and Support Team.



Animal noise and behaviour

While it is natural for dogs to bark from time to time, we understand this can become frustrating if it is continuous.

Cats have the 'right to roam' but if you are concerned about a cat in your private garden you can seek specialist advice on how to safely deter them.

If customers have a caged bird that likes to sing and squawk, we recommend making sure it's kept where it will least disturb neighbours, particularly at night. Similarly, some caged pets tend to be more active at night and are known for chewing and rattling their cages. Consider carefully where and how such pets are housed.

If you feel

- a pet is constantly disturbing you
- you have noticed a neighbour is not picking up their dog's faeces
- concerned about a neighbour not keeping their dog on a lead in a communal area, on land owned or managed by Irwell Valley Homes

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Please refer to step 1 of this toolkit.
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If you believe a pet has been abandoned or is at risk, it's important to report the situation to the RSPCA for the animal's welfare.





When might an issue with a pet become ASB?

If you are worried there is an immediate danger because of a pet, please contact the police and then get in touch with Irwell Valley Homes. We will assess whether we will investigate the issue under our ASB Policy.

If the barking or noise is

- daily
- or for continuous periods lasting for 30 minutes or more
- or for shorter periods at night which is preventing you from sleeping
- or having a prolonged impact on neighbours or the local community

this may be anti-social behaviour.

To better understand the situation and whether we need to investigate the issue under our ASB policy, we may advise you to download the noise app and request that you submit recordings or hear other forms of evidence.

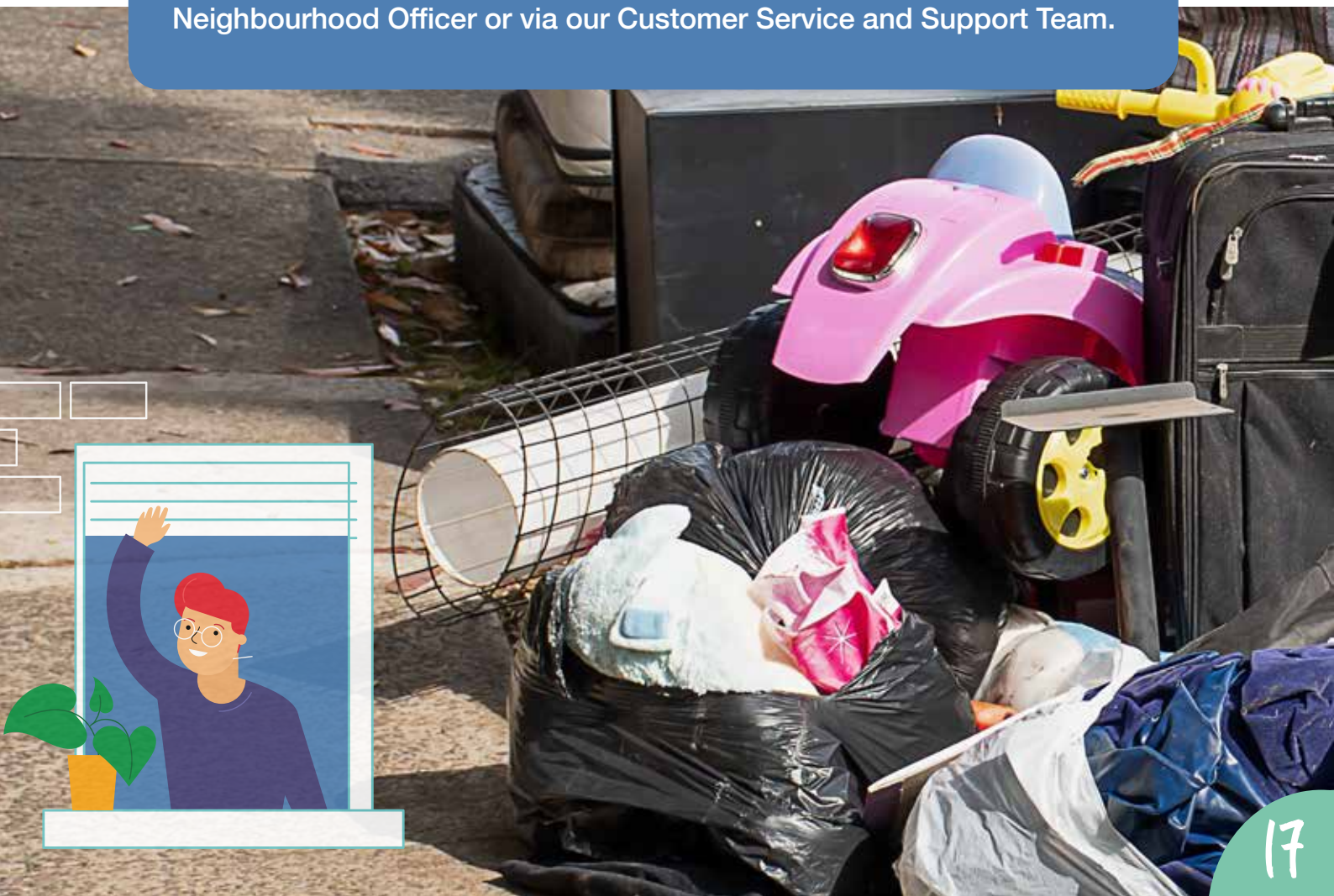
Misuse of communal areas, littering, fly-tipping and incorrect waste disposal

Communal areas are shared spaces meant for everyone's enjoyment. Occasional clutter or noise may occur in these areas.

Being a good neighbour means using these spaces responsibly - cleaning up after yourself, recycling and disposing of waste correctly, respecting others' rights to use the area and avoiding excessive noise or mess.

If you notice misuse of communal areas such as littering, obstructing pathways, fly-tipping, incorrect waste disposal, or leaving items unattended, [refer to step 1 of this toolkit](#) - and politely address the issues with your neighbour.

If the misuse is frequent or poses a safety risk, report it to your Neighbourhood Officer or via our Customer Service and Support Team.





We hope this toolkit provides
some useful tips and advice
to help our customers build
good relationships with
their neighbours and create
a safe and welcoming
neighbourhood for all.