



Guidance on football nuisance



Tips for keeping the peace

Footballers and Parents

- Respect other residents right to a peaceful and safe environment. Not everyone will enjoy your game as much as you.
- Teenagers and young adults, if you're having a match then head to the park.
- If you have to play in the street, use a soft ball to prevent damage to your neighbours fences, gardens and cars. Ask before retrieving your ball or items from other people's gardens.
- Where possible play outside your house not anybody else's.
- Keep the ball down and do not let your game become anti-social.
- Don't use foul or abusive language.
- Beware of your own safety and the safety of other road users.
- Small grassed areas outside homes may only be suitable for younger children.
- Parents, check where your children are playing and make sure other residents are not disturbed.
- Compromise, talk and agree with your neighbours on a time and a place for your games.

Residents, Spectators and Passers-by

- Playing ball games is not anti-social behaviour.
- Respect people's right to play in their own neighbourhood.
- Remember parents/guardians may wish their young children to play near to home.
- Expect, within reason, the noise of the children playing after school, at weekends and in the evening, especially in residential areas.
- "No ball games" signs are a request not a bylaw.
- It is not illegal to play football on a grassed verge or open space.
- Sometimes it is better for young people to divert their energies into playing sport rather than doing other things.
- Open spaces are for the use of everyone, including children.

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Though playing football does cause considerable annoyance to residents, it is not considered that anti-social behaviour legislation, which is mainly governed by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is appropriate for dealing with this problem.

What laws apply?

With regard to balls being kicked and hitting cars and other property, the legislation that could be considered would be Criminal Damage under Section 1(1) Criminal Damage Act 1971. Criminal Damage can be a deliberate or reckless act. In cases such as this, a deliberate act could not be proved. This leaves us with the reckless possibility. In such circumstances to prove that the act was other than an accident would be virtually impossible.

Where young people then go uninvited onto property to say for example collect their football, it is "Common Trespass". All that is available is for the house owner, landlord or tenant to take action at County Court to seek an order restraining a named person from entering their property.

Can any action be taken?

The action we can take is limited when considering the above unless the nuisance is accompanied by separate and serious anti-social behaviour, however residents can consider seeking advice from their local safer neighbourhood policing teams.



Are all ball games a problem?

Ball games are a lot of fun for the young people playing them, but can become a source of disturbance for others and so can cause a lot of friction in neighbourhoods that would otherwise be very peaceful.

Children have a right to play as well as a need to enjoy physical exercise and interaction with other youngsters. Play is crucial to a child's development as a social, confident member of society and should be encouraged. However, everyone has a right to enjoy their home and know that their property is safe and have a right to be treated respectfully.

Middlesbrough is home to a lot of young people and has many open green areas that might seem ideal as a venue for a game. Many of these green spaces are in residential areas and there is often only a small distance between greenery and residents' gardens, walls and garages. This is why complaints can arise.

It is also very important to remember that even quiet residential roads are used by cars. If a moving vehicle has to swerve to avoid either a ball or a child the results could be serious or even fatal.

Football and other ball games are NOT anti-social behaviour. In most of the complaints we receive it is not the playing of ball games that is the problem, rather the manner in which they are conducted.

If you are experiencing any other incidents of anti-social behaviour or you want to discuss the matter further please contact the team on :

01642 728751/ 01642 728367

www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/communitysafety

Helpful contact numbers

Citizen Advice Bureau Middlesbrough

Unite Mediation

Cleveland Police

08444994110

01642 311633

01642 326326 or 101