

## Is your dog barking too much?

Barking and howling comes naturally to dogs. If this is happening regularly, it can cause a disturbance to neighbours and may amount to a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

### Why do Dogs Bark?

Dogs are not by nature solitary animals; they require the security of a family group. Dogs regard their owners as a substitute family and can soon become distressed when left alone.

Dogs may be barking for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Loneliness
- Boredom or frustration
- Attention seeking
- Defending territory
- Anxiety
- Being unwell
- Feeling neglected
- Hunger/thirst
- Lack of shelter

### Communication is Key

If you are approached by a neighbour who is being disturbed by your dog, this is a positive step.

Please remain calm, listen to them and attempt to understand their view point. Bear in mind that you might not know how significant the problem is if your dog is barking when you are not at home.

If speaking with your neighbour has not resolved the problem, then the Council may be contacted to provide further advice or to investigate the complaint.

Where an investigation does show that there is a problem, and the evidence shows a Statutory Nuisance exists, enforcement action will be taken.

### Understanding the Problem

Ask your neighbours to tell you exactly when your dog is barking, and for how long. If you are out a lot ask them to note down the times when the barking happens. Think about using a web cam or video camera to find out what your dog is doing when you are not home.

### Importance of Training

Training is fundamental so that your dog does not bark at everything that moves. A well trained dog should be able to distinguish between visitors allowed into the house and intruders.

Good training is essential at an early age. This, combined with affection and companionship, should mean that your dog will not develop these bad habits.

### Simple Things to Try

Get your dog used to the idea of being left alone with some of the following suggestions:

- Some dogs will settle only if they can hear a human voice. Leaving the radio or television on at a low volume may help.
- Leave things to amuse your dog, such as toys and treats that will keep them occupied.
- Try to leave your dog somewhere that barking is less likely to disturb neighbours
- Exercise your dog regularly.
- Try not to leave your dog for long periods of time. If you must, see if there is someone who can look in during that time or consider 'doggie day care'.
- Provide consistent praise. Every time your dog is quiet when usually they would have barked, give praise and/or a treat.
- Consider using a 'bark breaker' collar which will spray water at your dog every time they bark. This is not dangerous and encourages your dog to keep quiet.

### What Not to Do!

Never punish your dog when you return home. They will not understand why they are being punished.

Do not allow your dog to consistently follow you from room to room around the house, as this can increase separation anxiety at the times they need to be left alone.

### Tackling Common Problems

#### **Your dog is clingy, and howls or whines when left alone.**

A vet, animal behaviourist or dog warden may be able to tell you how to help your dog get used to being on its own.

#### **Your dog is frightened. It might look scared, have trouble settling, or keep trying to hide.**

If your dog likes hiding, make a den for it. If it's scared of noise, mask it by putting the radio on quietly. If it's frightened of other people or animals, shut the curtains or doors

#### **Your dog is barking to get attention.**

Look at your dog then look away to show you are not going to respond. Don't give it any attention or anything else while it is barking.

Try deliberately ignoring it for 20 30 minutes two or three times a day, and get everyone in the house to do the same.

Doing this for 15 minutes before you go out can help stop your dog barking when you leave.

It will reassure your neighbours if you tell them the steps you are taking to resolve the problem.

This leaflet is indented to provide general advice only. If you have serious concerns over your dog's behaviour or health please seek advice from a specialist such as your local vet.

### If the Problem Doesn't Get Resolved

If you do not take steps to resolve the problem, and your Local Council receives complaints about the noise your dog is making, the Local Authority will investigate the complaint.

If the Local Council is satisfied that the noise amounts to a statutory nuisance, an Abatement Notice will be served requiring the noise to be reduced to an acceptable level

If you fail to comply with an Abatement Notice, you could face prosecution and, if convicted, a fine of up to £5,000.