

# CIEH Noise Survey 2019/20

## Report on findings – England



### **About the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)**

CIEH is the professional voice for environmental health representing over 7,000 members, working in the public, private and third sectors, in 52 countries around the world. It ensures the highest standards of professional competence in its members, in the belief that through environmental health action people's health can be improved.

Environmental health has an important, and unique, contribution to make to improving public health and reducing health inequalities. CIEH campaigns to ensure that government policy addresses the needs of communities and business in achieving and maintaining improvements to health and health protection.

## Overview

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Local authorities are responsible for receiving and resolving noise complaints, the single largest issue of complaint made to local authorities in England. The process of receiving, recording, investigating and, as far as possible, resolving noise complaints is carried out largely by Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs).

Local authorities must investigate noise complaints that could be a statutory nuisance, covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. For noise to be considered statutory nuisance, it must 'unreasonably and substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises' or 'injure health or be likely to injure health'.

Many noise complaints are resolved informally, without the need for formal enforcement action by the local authority. A local authority will only be able to take formal action in response to a complaint if it finds that a statutory nuisance is occurring or will occur in the future. In this case, they must serve an abatement notice, which requires whoever is responsible to stop or restrict the noise. If the party in question fails to comply with the abatement notice, they may be prosecuted and fined an unlimited amount, with further fines for each day that they fail to comply.

Local authorities also take measures to prevent noise complaints, for example, through planning and licensing controls, via Licensing Act 2003. There are also other potential tools, which are used to resolve or prevent noise complaints such as The Noise and Statutory Nuisance Act 1993, Noise Act 1996, Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

## Supporter of the survey: Noise Abatement Society (NAS)

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This year, the CIEH Noise survey was supported by NAS. NAS is a dynamic UK charity whose aim is to share a better understanding of what sound is, how it affects us and how we can solve noise problems in a pragmatic and sustainable way. Its internationally respected work helps to relieve the physical and mental distress caused by excessive noise which profoundly affects health and wellbeing, learning, productivity and social cohesion.

## Health effects of noise

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According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), environmental noise comes second in burden of disease to air pollution and is arguably responsible for more disturbance to quality of life.

Sufficient undisturbed sleep is necessary for daytime alertness and performance, quality of life, and health. Sleep disturbance is one of the most harmful effects of environmental noise exposure. The short term effects of noise-induced sleep disturbance include impaired mood, increased daytime sleepiness and impaired cognitive performance.

Aircraft noise is linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, including stroke and diabetes mellitus, and to an increased risk of hospital admission and mortality. There is also evidence that road traffic noise is linked to an increased risk of hypertension and a small but consistent risk of coronary heart disease. However, it should be noted that EHPs do not have powers to deal with complaints about aircraft or road traffic noise and would refer these complaints to the appropriate authorities.

While over 80% of people in the UK report being exposed to noise in their homes, some groups are more sensitive and vulnerable to noise, including chronically ill and elderly people, children and nightshift workers. Low income households are also more vulnerable as inadequate housing conditions are associated with increased risk factors for noise.

Health issues associated with noise not only affect individuals' quality of life, but also generate significant social costs. The Department for Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) estimates that the annual social cost of urban road noise in England is £7 to 10 billion, placing it at a similar magnitude to road accidents (£9 billion).

\* We did not collect data for the years 2016/17 and 2017/18 as we worked to improve the method of data collection

## About the survey

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The CIEH Noise survey provides the only source of data on the vital contribution made by EHPs working to resolve noise complaints in England and Wales. CIEH has been running its noise survey since 2000.\* Data collected from local authorities includes:

- The total number of noise complaints received
- The total number of notices served
- Staffing levels for noise related work
- The total number of prosecutions
- Other formal actions taken after complaints
- Breakdowns of noise complaints by sector

The 2019/20 CIEH Noise Survey collected data from local authorities in England and Wales. Northern Ireland and Scotland have separate arrangements in place to quantify the demand for local authority noise services.

This year's survey also looked into the other formal actions taken by local authorities, including:

- Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning
- Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice
- Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise
- Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms
- Section 3 or 3A Warning Notice under the Noise Act 1996
- Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003
- Notices under The Fireworks Regulations 2004

## Key findings

These figures represent data from 117 local authorities (36% of all local authorities in England) for the year 2019/20.

- In total, 131,645 noise complaints were recorded by these local authorities, 67 complaints for every 10,000 people
- 1,633 Environmental Protection Act 1990 notices were served by local authorities, on average 14 per authority
- There were 96 noise-related prosecutions
- Twice as many formal actions were taken using legislation other than the Environmental Protection Act 1990 – 3,544 formal actions, on average 30 per authority
- The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 was the second most commonly used legislation to take formal action on noise with 1,636 actions, including 1,297 warnings and 339 notices served
- Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice (construction noise) was the third most common type of formal action with 993 notices served
- Some noise-related legislation was not being used at all, such as Fireworks Regulations 2004 and Noise Act 1996
- Overall, there are approximately 440 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) professionals with noise complaints
- Overall, local authorities allocated 0.2 FTEs to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- There are 3.8 FTEs average employed by a local authority to deal with noise issues
- Each 1 FTE officer at an authority had to deal with an average of 299 complaints per year

**Compared with the last time CIEH collected data in 2018/19, the 2019/20 data shows a decrease of 11.7% in the number of noise complaints in the 83 local authorities which participated in the survey in both years. Between 2015/16 and 2019/20, there was an estimated drop of 13% in the number of noise complaints recorded, according to data from 51 local authorities which participated in both surveys.**



## Summary of formal enforcement actions in England

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	1,633
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	1,297
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	339
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	993
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	752
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	77
Section 3 or 3A Warning Notice under the Noise Act 1996	0
Notices under The Fireworks Regulations 2004	0

# Regional results

## Key findings

- Greater London had the highest number of noise complaints, 189 for every 10,000 people, more than double the national average
- South West England had the lowest number of noise complaints, 27 for every 10,000 people, less than half of the national average
- Yorkshire served the highest number of notices per local authority
- Yorkshire had the highest number of Community Protection Warnings under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Greater London had the highest average of complaints per FTE
- The West Midlands had the lowest average of complaints per FTE

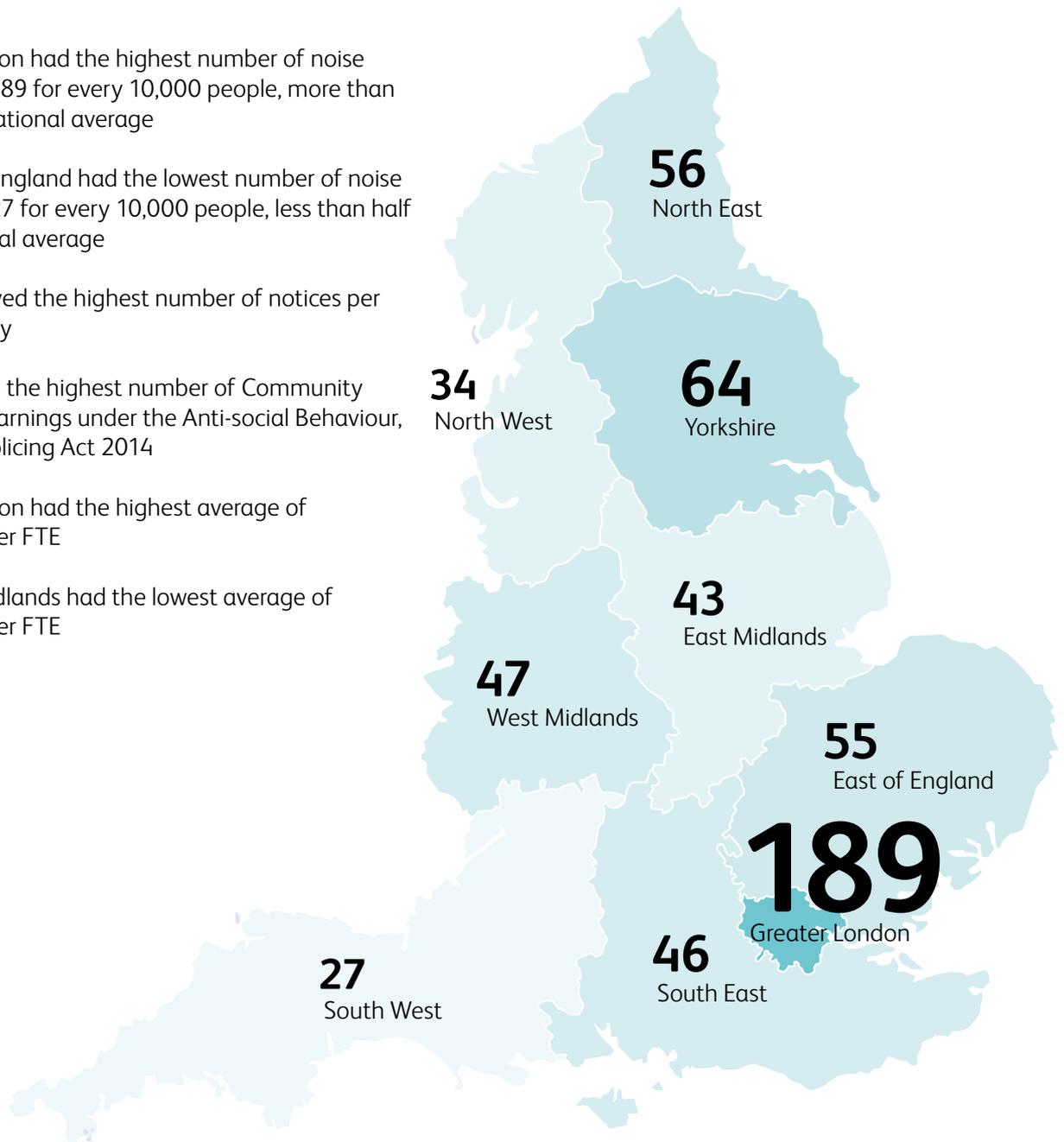


Fig. 1: **Average number of noise complaints per 10,000 people by region.** Headline noise stats for England. (Regions in darker colours represent more noise complaints, lighter colours represent fewer noise complaints.)

## South East

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The data represents 28 local authorities in the South East of England (41.7% of local authorities in the region).

- 18,653 noise complaints were recorded, 46 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 111 notices were served by local authorities, 4 notices for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- There were 3 noise-related prosecutions
- 69 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.2 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 233

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	111
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	69
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	84
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	30
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	7
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	2

## South West

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The data represents 11 local authorities in the South West of England (29.7% of local authorities in the region).

- 6039 noise complaints were recorded, 27 for every 10,000 people below the national average
- 115 notices were served by local authorities, 10 notices for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- There were 3 noise-related prosecutions
- 49 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.1 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 194

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	115
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	49
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	26
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	1

## Greater London

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The data represents 12 local authorities in Greater London (36.3% of local authorities in the region)

- 54,819 noise complaints were recorded, 189 for every 10,000 people more than double the national average
- 466 notices were served by local authorities, 39 notices for every 10,000 people, more than double the national average
- There were 9 noise-related prosecutions
- 3 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.3 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 671

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	446
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	3
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	952
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	731
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	54

## East of England

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The data represents 10 local authorities in East of England (21.2% of local authorities in the region)

- 7110 noise complaints were recorded, 55 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 105 notices were served by local authorities, 11 notices for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- There were 5 noise-related prosecutions
- 9 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.2 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 220

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	105
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	9
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	1
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	4

## East Midlands

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The data represents 21 local authorities in the East Midlands (52.5% of local authorities in the region)

- 10,505 noise complaints were recorded, 43 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 124 notices were served by local authorities, 6 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- There were 7 noise-related prosecutions
- 96 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.2 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 197

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	124
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	96
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	38
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	3
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	8

## West Midlands

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The data represents 13 local authorities in the West Midlands (43.3% of local authorities in the region)

- 9,171 noise complaints were recorded, 47 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 277 notices were served by local authorities, 21 for every 10,000, above the national average
- There were 34 noise-related prosecutions
- 4 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.3 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 186

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	277
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	4
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	1
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	4
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	5
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	3

## Yorkshire

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The data represents 8 local authorities in Yorkshire (38% Of local authorities in the region)

- 15,200 noise complaints were recorded, 64 for every 10,000 people, just below the national average
- 386 notices were served by local authorities, 48 notices for every 10,000, more than double the national average
- There were 29 noise-related prosecutions
- 1,044 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.3 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 209

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	386
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	1044
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	181
Section 60 Control of Pollution Act Notice - Construction Noise	3
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	4
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	9

## North East

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The data represents 4 local authorities in the North East (33.3% Of local authorities in the region)

- 5,519 noise complaints were recorded, 56 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 21 notices were served by local authorities, 5 notices for every 10,000, below the national average
- There were 2 noise-related prosecutions
- 14 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.2 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 307

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	21
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	14
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	4
Section 77 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 - silencing of Intruder Alarms	1

## North West

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The data represents 10 local authorities in the North West (25.6% Of local authorities in the region)

- 4,529 noise complaints were recorded, 34 for every 10,000 people, below the national average
- 50 notices were served by local authorities, 5 notices for every 10,000, below the national average
- There was 1 noise-related prosecution
- 9 Community Protection Warnings were given under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Local authorities allocated 0.1 FTE professionals to deal with noise complaints per 10,000 population
- The average number of complaints per 1 FTE were 233

Type of formal action	Number of formal actions in 2019/2020
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Notices Served	50
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Warning	9
Part 1, Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Community Protection Notice	4
Review of Licence Condition under Licensing Act 2003	1

# Workloads across England

## Key findings

There is a wide variation between the number of complaints dealt with by practitioners working across different regions.

- The West Midlands had the lowest average of noise complaints per FTE
- Greater London had the highest average of noise complaints dealt with by one FTE practitioner, which is more than three times higher than in the West Midlands
- The average number of noise complaints per FTE in England was 299, this was higher than nearly all regions due to the number in Greater London

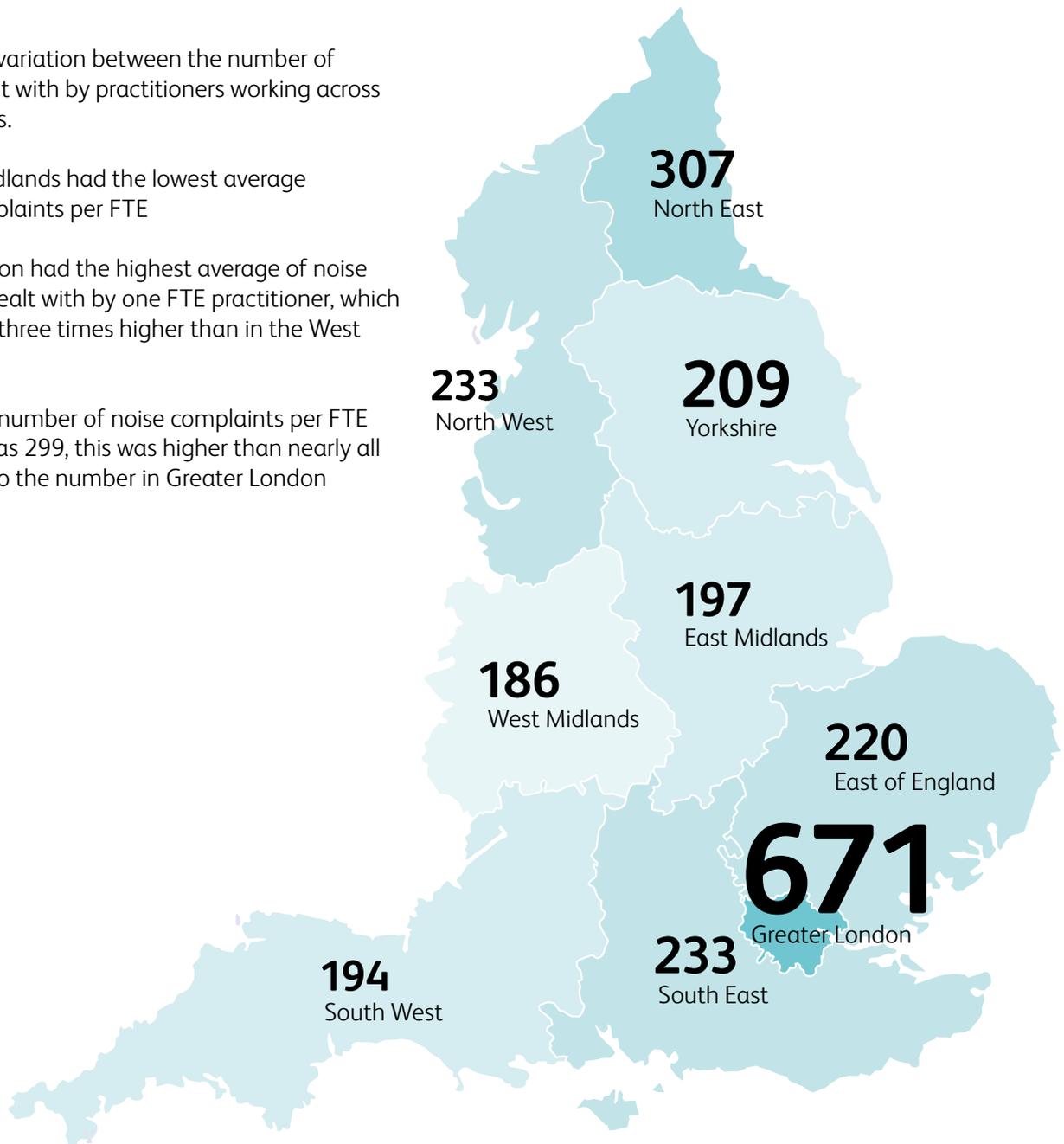


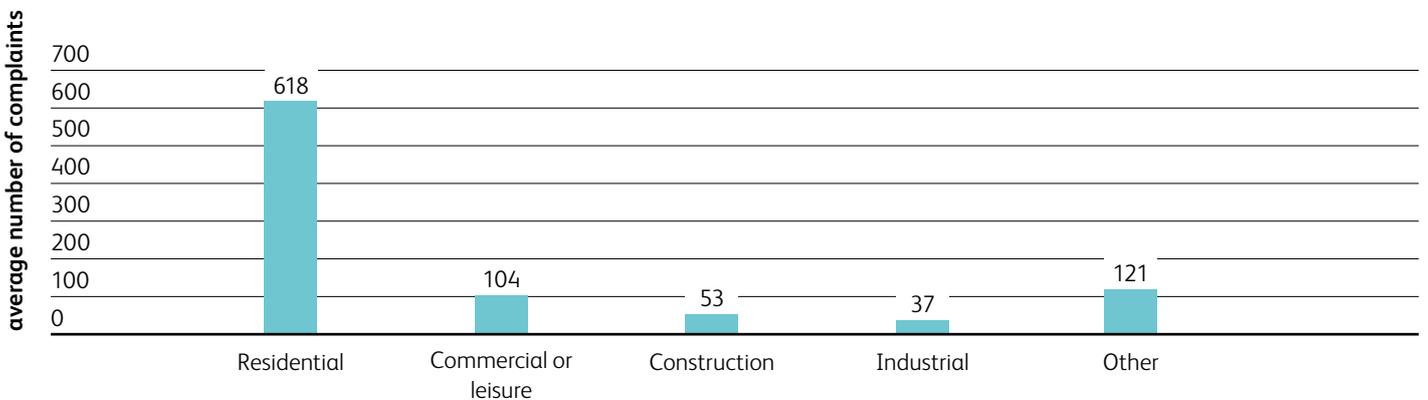
Fig. 2: **Average number of noise complaints per officer by region.** Headline noise stats for England.  
(Regions in darker colours represent more noise complaints, lighter colours represent fewer noise complaints.)

## Sector breakdown

We asked local authorities to provide a breakdown of noise complaints received by sector. The number of the local authorities represented in each figure is included in the table below as not all local authorities record or use the same sector categories.

- Residential noise accounts for the largest proportion of noise complaints. This is the case across all regions in England.
- Industrial noise accounted for a lowest proportion of noise complaints in over half of the regions, with Construction noise accounting for the lowest in the South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire, and the North East.
- Other sources of noise complaints recorded by local authorities include noise in the street, vehicles, machinery and equipment, dogs, agriculture, alarms, military, traffic and railways.

Fig.3: Average number of noise complaints by sector by local authority



Sector	Total Noise complaints	Average number of complaints by local authority	Number of local authorities
Residential	51,922	618	84 LAs
Commercial or leisure	8,486	104	81 LAs
Construction	3,898	53	73 LAs
Industrial	2,966	37	79 LAs
Other	7,913	121	65 LAs

- 1 Health Impacts of All Pollution – what do we know?, Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, 2017.
- 2 Guidance. Noise nuisances: how councils deal with complaints, DEFRA, 2017.
- 3 Burden of disease from environmental noise. Quantification of healthy life years lost in Europe, World Health Organisation, 2011.
- 4 Auditory and non-auditory effects of noise on health, Basner, Mathias et al., The Lancet, Volume 383, Issue 9925, 1325 – 1332, 2014.
- 5 Health Impacts of All Pollution – What do we know?, Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, 2017.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Environment and health risks: a review of the influence and effects of social inequalities, WHO/Europe, 2010.
- 8 Guidance, Noise pollution: economic analysis, DEFRA, 2014.

## Appendix

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List of participating authorities:

Adur and Worthing Borough Council	Eastleigh Borough Council
Allerdale Borough Council	Eden District Council
Amber Valley Borough Council	Elmbridge Borough Council
Ashford Borough Council	Epping Forest District Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council	Exeter City Council
Bath and North East Somerset Council	Hambleton District Council
Blaby District Council	Harborough District Council
Boston Borough Council	Harrogate Borough Council
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	Hart District Council
Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Hastings Borough Council
Broadland District Council	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Broxbourne Borough Council	Ipswich Borough Council
Broxtowe Borough Council	Kirklees Council
Cambridge City Council	Lancaster City Council
Cannock Chase District Council	Leicester City Council
Canterbury City Council	London Borough of Barnet
Carlisle City Council	London Borough of Camden
Castle Point Borough Council	London Borough of Enfield
Charnwood Borough Council	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Cheltenham Borough Council	London Borough of Harrow
Cherwell District Council	London Borough of Southwark
Chesterfield Borough Council	London Borough of Sutton
Chichester District Council	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
City of Lincoln Council	London Borough of Waltham Forest
City of London Corporation	Mansfield District Council
City of York Council	Medway Council
Colchester Borough Council	Mid Sussex District Council
Corby Borough Council	Milton Keynes
Coventry City Council	New Forest District Council
Crawley Borough Council	Newcastle Under-Lyme District Council
Dacorum Borough Council	North Devon District Council
Darlington Borough Council	North East Lincolnshire Council
Dartford Borough Council	North Kesteven District Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	Oxford City Council
Dover District Council	Peterborough City Council
Durham County Council	Reading Borough Council
East Lindsey District Council	Maldon District Council
East Northamptonshire Council	Ribble Valley Borough Council
	Rossendale Borough Council
	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead  
Runnymede Borough Council  
Rushcliffe Borough Council  
Rushmoor Borough Council  
Rutland County Council  
Salford City Council  
Sedgemoor District Council  
Sevenoaks District Council  
Shropshire Council  
South Derbyshire District Council  
South Gloucestershire Council  
South Lakeland District Council  
South Norfolk District Council  
South Northamptonshire Council  
South Somerset District Council  
Stafford Borough Council  
Stockton Borough Council  
Tandridge District Council  
Tewkesbury Borough Council  
Thanet District Council  
Torbay Council  
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council  
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
Warrington Borough Council  
Warwick District Council  
West Suffolk Council  
Wiltshire Council  
Worcestershire Regulatory Services