



Wiltshire Council

Housing Services

The Client

Housing Services, Wiltshire Council
Featuring Aileen Fenlon
Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Officer.

The Product

Two x Trojan
Noise Nuisance Recorders

“The Trojan is very user friendly and we have never had an issue with tenants not being able to understand how to operate the remote for activating the recordings.”

Wiltshire Council Fact File

- Noise nuisance cases reported in 2016 in Council properties: **132**
- Number of installations of Trojan: **24**
- Trojan installation was for a minimum of 4 days and a maximum of 21.
- Housing stock comprises **5,265** rental properties and **400** leasehold properties.
- Main noise issues: barking dogs, loud music, shouting and stamping in flats.
- The Trojan has been used in flats, bungalows, houses, maisonettes and sheltered accommodation.

The Solution

When people read about Local Authorities dealing with noise nuisance complaints it is often the worst cases that come to light with threatened court proceedings and evictions.

What seems to be lost in the heated headlines is that council officers at the heart of the disputes are actually in the business of providing homes for some of the more vulnerable in society and not heartlessly trying to take them away.

In the constant battle of noise nuisance the Council has to walk a tenant tightrope so someone's right to live as they wish - quietly or not - does not impact unfairly on their neighbours.

Aileen Fenlon is an Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Officer for Wiltshire Council and is on the front line when it comes to dealing with noise complaints.



“The Trojan is extremely sensitive and having the 30-second record delay means we often capture elements that the tenant has forgotten about.”

She has been in her role for over eight years and has relied on the Cirrus Research Trojan Noise Nuisance recorder since 2013 to record and provide crucial evidence in disputes. The team use two Trojans, nicknamed Tom & Jerry.

“I install the majority of the Trojans in the homes,” she said. “I have the knack of looking pretty anonymous, which is a bonus when you want to be discreet!”

“The Trojan is very user friendly and we have never had an issue with tenants not being able to understand how to operate the remote for activating the recordings. It is ideal for giving us a fuller picture of what is going on in the home because sometimes it is picking up more than just the noise issues...”

“There is a lot of confusion over what people think is their rights when it comes to noise nuisance and having to live with what they think is an unacceptable level of noise. We have to balance that against other people’s right to live in their homes as they wish, and that may include playing music longer and louder than others would enjoy.”

Aileen and her team will only consider court action and the possible threat of eviction in the most extreme cases and she rightly points out they are in the business of housing people not making them homeless. Nevertheless, the Trojan has, at times, been used to persuade the complainant rather than the “perpetrator” that perhaps they would be better suited moving elsewhere, or by simply putting the noise into perspective.

“We had one lady who had the Trojan installed for her persistent noise complaints,” explained Aileen. “You could actually hear on the recordings her stress and anxiety levels rising when the noise levels weren’t really increasing. It gave us a fuller picture and helped to persuade the tenant perhaps she would be better living elsewhere in a quieter area. She agreed, a new tenant moved in and we haven’t had any noise complaints since. That was a win/win for us.”

She added: *“People often forget we are dealing with some of the most vulnerable members of society with complex needs and it would be a tragedy if we had to evict them due to noise complaints when they are dealing with many other issues at the same time.”*

Managing and helping all their tenants when it comes to anti-social behaviour is a full-time job and the team always try to go down the mediation route. “You often find that neighbours haven’t even spoken to each other about the problem and have just come straight to us,” said Aileen. *“We always encourage people to engage with each other.”*

“If and when we have installed a Trojan to gather evidence it is extremely useful to be able to play that back to help persuade people to come up with solutions. The Trojan is extremely sensitive and having the 30-second record delay means we often capture elements that the tenant has forgotten about, for example, a banging door their side setting the dog off barking next door. In some cases we have made DVDs for tenants to listen to of their recordings to reinforce the message.”

“As I mentioned before, people often forget it is recording them too, so we can hear if they are becoming more agitated, using strong language etc. We can get an idea if they are hyper-sensitive to start with. In some cases, the noise levels are almost incidental to the bigger anxiety issues they are dealing with.”

Aileen’s job does sound like part enforcer/part social worker in many ways and The Trojan is essential to her day to day work that is, literally, keeping the peace.