

Football and ball games complaints

Every summer, and particularly during the school holidays, we see a rise in complaints about children/young people playing ball games in public places.

Normally, football and other ball games are not classed as anti-social behaviour. However, we do recognise that although they are fun for the people playing them, they can be a disturbance for others.

Green spaces may seem ideal for ball games, but in some residential areas they are often only a small distance away from residents' gardens, walls and garages. This is why complaints can arise.

It is also important to remember that quiet residential roads are used by cars and if a moving car has to swerve to avoid a ball or a child, the results can be serious and even fatal.

But everyone has a right to be treated respectfully and to enjoy their home and know their property is safe.

Most of the complaints we receive are not about the playing of ball games but the way in which they are played. The key to tacking this conflict is to reach a compromise that satisfies everyone. Here are some tips:

For those of you who enjoy ball games (and parents) please remember:

- Respect other residents' right to a peaceful and safe environment.
- Use a soft ball if you are playing in the street around houses and cars.
- Don't deliberately kick a ball against someone's wall, fence or garage.
- Where possible play outside your house not someone else's.
- Small grassed areas may only be suitable for young children – in which case older children should go to a park.
- Always ask permission before entering people's gardens to collect balls and play equipment.
- Don't play near parked cars and be aware of your own safety and the safety of other road users.
- Don't use foul or abusive language.
- Parents - check where your children are playing and make sure others are not being disturbed.

For residents, please remember:

- 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/youths playing after school, at weekends and in the evening, especially in residential areas.
- It is not illegal to play football on a grassed verge or open space.
- 'No ball games' signs are a request not a bylaw.
- There may be only one grassed area for children to play safely in their own neighbourhood.
- Sometimes it is better for young people to divert their energies into playing sport rather than doing other things.
- Compromise, create a dialogue, and speak to your neighbours to find an agreeable time and location to play.
- Open spaces are for the use of everyone, including children and young people

Action the council can take

The council will always take a neutral and balanced view on the issue of ball games and expect residents to take responsibility within their own neighbourhood and work together to reach a compromise. However, in extreme cases of deliberate nuisance we may use our powers to intervene. We hope that a renewed level of respect prevents further action being taken.

If you do need to report serious persistent nuisance caused by ball games, please contact us:

Email: housing@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Tel.: (01229) 876578