



How to organise playing out sessions on your street

*A version of Playing Out's manual
for residents in Wales*



Street play

Play Wales supports initiatives that reclaim the streets and neighbourhoods for children and teenagers to be able to range and play.

For most children, there has been a decrease in the use of streets and outdoor areas for play near their homes. Parents tell us that they are fearful of the combination of more vehicles on the roads and the speed of traffic which means that they stop their children playing out.

We have worked with Playing Out – a parent and resident-led movement working to promote street play – to produce materials to support parents to organise play sessions on their street.

The Playing Out model

A playing out event is a play session led by neighbours for neighbours and only publicised within the immediate streets.

A residential road is closed to traffic to ensure safety and freedom of movement for participants, with volunteer stewards at each road closure point to redirect traffic and give parents peace of mind.

Parents and carers are responsible for their own children. The emphasis is on free, unstructured play and people usually bring out their own toys such as skipping ropes, bikes and scooters. Children are simply given the space and permission to play in the street, whilst adults have the opportunity to meet and get to know their neighbours better and experience a car-free street.

www.playingout.net

Playing Out is a UK-wide parent and resident-led movement restoring children's freedom to play out in the streets and spaces where they live, for their health, happiness and sense of belonging. As well as providing advice and training for local authorities and community organisations, Playing Out supports residents to take action on their own streets and more widely.

www.playwales.org.uk

Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play, an independent charity supported by the Welsh Government to uphold children's right to play and to provide advice and guidance on play-related matters.

Playful Childhoods is a Play Wales website to help parents and community groups to give children good opportunities to play at home and out in their neighbourhoods – www.playfulchildhoods.wales

Contents

Introduction	3
Welcome	3
What is 'playing out'?	3
Why should I do it?	3
How long will it take?	3
Before you start	3
Step 1. Talk to your neighbours and set a date	4
The first meeting	4
Share the playing out idea	4
Set your dates	4
Roles and responsibilities	5
Step 2. Get permission and support	6
Applying for a road closure	6
Recruiting stewards and other volunteers	6
About being an organiser on your own street	6
Objections and concerns	7
Other support	7
A note on insurance and liability	7
Risk assessment	7
Step 3. Tell everybody and get ready	8
Publicity	8
Signs and cones	8
Get the local police on board	8
Things to have on hand on the day	8
Toys, games and equipment	9
What if it rains?	9
Documentation	9
Step 4. Play out	10
What to expect on the day	10
Briefing the stewards	10
Closing the road	10
Dealing with cars	10
Difficult drivers	11
Having a good time while managing the session	11
Clearing up and re-opening the road	11
After the event	12
You and the future of playing out	12
Playing out checklist	13
Common concerns about playing out	16
10 good reasons for street play	20
Frequently asked questions	21
Easy and effortless things	31
Template consultation letter	33

Introduction

Welcome

This is a step-by step guide to organising 'playing out' or street play sessions, based on the experience of parents and residents across the UK.

This manual, together with the '4 steps films' on the Playing Out website should cover what you need to know, but if you have any questions, please contact Playing Out or Play Wales.

There are also lots of useful resources, like template letters, which you can download from Playing Out and Play Wales' websites.

What is 'playing out'?

In June 2009, two Bristol neighbours, Alice Ferguson and Amy Rose, came up with the idea of short, resident-led road closures to allow children to play out freely on their own street and for neighbours to meet. They called the idea 'playing out' – it has also been called 'street play' or 'play streets'. The idea has spread, transforming hundreds of street communities across the UK.

The main features of the 'playing out' model are:

- Organised by residents on their own street
- Free play – not organised activities
- Temporary road closure
- Short, regular sessions
- A catalyst for change.

Why should I do it?

This is a safe, simple way to let your children and others on the street play out together on a regular basis. We know, through personal experience and academic research, that it has many benefits, including:

- Children are physically active (up to five times more than normal)
- Children make friends on the street
- Children gain skills and independence
- Neighbours meet and get to know each other
- Your street feels safer and friendlier
- You gain confidence through taking action to change things.

And, of course, it is joyful! But 'playing out' is also part of changing things in a deeper, longer-term way. Seeing the street filled with children is powerful and can really start to shift the way people think about their right to play out in streets and public space. By taking action in this way, you are part of a growing grassroots movement towards children regaining the freedom to play out every day.

How long will it take?

You will need a bit of time and energy. The whole process, from having the idea to the first session, takes two to three months. But please don't let that put you off – the work can be shared and much of that time is simply waiting for the council to give permission.

Before you start

Making your street a place for play is a radical step and it helps to have some moral support. If you know any neighbours already, it is worth talking to them before putting the idea out to the whole street.

Step 1. Talk to neighbours and set a date

The first meeting

Invite your neighbours to an informal meeting to discuss the idea. This ensures that everyone feels included from the start and can raise any questions or concerns.

Choose a place, time and date that will be convenient and comfortable for people. A local pub, café, someone's front room or even out in the street, all work well. You can adapt the meeting invitation that's available on Playing Out and Play Wales' websites and talk to people in person. Before the meeting, check the application process in your area as councils have different procedures – you can find out more from the Playing Out website or call your council directly.

The aims of this first meeting are to:

- Share the playing out idea and generate enthusiasm for it
- Discuss any questions or concerns.

And if there's enough interest:

- Choose your dates and times
- Agree who will do what.

Share the playing out idea

The main aim of this meeting is to propose and discuss the idea. You may want to show the video from Playing Out's website homepage or ask people to share their own memories of playing out to break the ice. This will no doubt generate some lively discussion about street play and related issues. Some people may have questions or concerns, which need to be heard. See Common concerns about playing out on page 17.

If there's not enough interest, it may be best to leave it for now and try again later. If you have no response at all, look at Easy and effortless things on page 31. You are not alone in wanting your children to feel a sense of freedom and independence and you can still be part of trying to change things. Some streets have found a street party or Big Lunch to be a good starting point, or you may have your own ideas.

Set your dates

If people are interested in making it happen you can set your dates. Road closure applications take around four to six weeks to process, so take this into account. Think about how often you'd like to close, how long for and how much of the road.

Don't be over ambitious. If there are concerns or objections, you might want to organise a one-off session to assess people's reaction.





You may wish to start by doing sessions after school, to boost the idea of it being a normal part of everyday life, but weekends are also fine – whatever suits you and your neighbours.

Roles and responsibilities

Share the work. Discuss the roles below and see whether they appeal to anyone. Aim to get as many people as possible to commit to helping, so you don't carry out all the work alone. Rotating and/or sharing the main organiser role is also a good idea.

Organiser(s): The main driving force and coordinator of the playing out sessions – probably you. This might sound daunting but you just need commitment and enthusiasm.

Stewards: Responsible for making the space safe – so crucial. On most streets, you need two reliable adults at each 'vehicle entry' point, so the more stewards you can recruit the better.

Helpers: Mostly needed to help with publicity and other odd-jobs such as designing flyers and sourcing and collecting signage or other resources.

Step 2. Get permission and support

Applying for a road closure

The Playing Out project began in Bristol, using the council's 'street party' procedure to have one-off sessions. Then, in response to demand from residents, the council pioneered the 'Temporary Play Street Order' (TPSO), letting residents apply for a whole year's worth of weekly or monthly sessions.

Many other councils have followed suit – see the local authority directory to find out the process in your area. If you get stuck, see the FAQs on page 22 or contact Playing Out or Play Wales for advice. Getting a local councillor on board is a good start.

As well as filling in a form, you will need to formally consult with everyone on the street. Where the council provides a template letter, we advise accompanying it with a friendly cover letter explaining why you want to hold playing out sessions and reassuring people they will still have car access to their street. Some councils may ask you to gather signatures in support of the idea, which could be an opportunity to talk to people face-to-face.

Recruiting stewards and other volunteers

Playing out sessions are only possible with volunteer support. Asking neighbours to hand out leaflets and other jobs is a good way to involve others, particularly those without young children.

You will need at least two stewards for each vehicle access point throughout the session (one to stay put and one to walk in front of cars). We have found it's best to ask people directly, rather than just sending out a general request. You might want to print out the steward sign-up sheet from Playing Out or Play Wales' websites and get people to commit in writing.

Stewards need to be reliable and confident, particularly on streets that normally have a high volume of traffic. Their position is the main place of potential danger or difficulty because it is the interface with cars.

Any stewards with very young children should ensure someone else takes responsibility for them. There is more detail about briefing the stewards in the Play out section of this manual.

About being an organiser on your own street

'I've been stressing the importance of play to neighbours and friends, as whilst the street closures are an excellent way to gain momentum and reduce anxieties, it requires the idea to be embedded in people's minds outside of the official street closure times. My boys were attracted to being outside more so when other children were also visible, so whilst we were initially alone outside playing (outside official closure times), the idea is slowly growing and more children are thankfully starting to emerge from their back gardens and away from screens and coming out to play!

Toni, Cardiff resident

It is not unusual to feel uncomfortable or have mixed feelings about your role. You are challenging the current situation. Where possible, share the responsibility and the sense of achievement that brings.

Remember that it is a community effort, so try to create opportunities for people to contribute their own ideas, skills and strengths. Most people will appreciate and support what you are trying to do.



Objections and concerns

Sadly, not everyone likes the idea of children playing in the street. In general, the best policy is to avoid confrontation and seek to hear and understand their opinions. They may have simply forgotten their own childhood, or they may have valid concerns. Look through the Possible concerns and contact Playing Out or Play Wales if you need advice or support.

Other support

Remember that the Playing Out network of active residents is available for peer-support and advice. You can contact those near you via the map on the Playing Out website, or join Playing Out's national Facebook group. Some areas even have local Playing Out groups – or you could set one up. Contact Playing Out or Play Wales to find out more about setting up a group or becoming a local 'activator', helping to spread the idea beyond your street.

A note on insurance and liability

See the Playing Out website for advice on insurance. Most streets don't buy insurance, and most councils don't insist on it. In general, the best way to prevent being held liable for anything that goes wrong is to make sure you do everything in a responsible way, prepare well and encourage everyone to be respectful about other people and property. Try to generate a sense of shared responsibility for making sure the sessions are safe.

Risk assessment

It is worth carrying out a risk assessment which involves listing any potential risks (for example cars leaving the street without warning) and deciding what you can do to reduce that risk. Once you have done this, bearing in mind there is no such thing as a 'risk-free' environment, it is a good idea to weigh up the overall risk against the potential benefits of going ahead. A template is available on Play Wales' websites, but every street is different so you still need to adapt it or develop your own.

Step 3. Tell everybody and get ready

Publicity

Designing and delivering letters, posters and flyers is perhaps the main work of organising playing out sessions. The good news is that these jobs are easily delegated. There is usually a 'design-whizz' on the street and children enjoy the job of putting leaflets through doors. We recommend keeping publicity within your own street and perhaps a few directly neighbouring streets, to avoid promoting it as a public event.

Now is the time to promote the first session with everyone you see on the street. You may be pleasantly surprised at how people light up at the mention of street play. It is a great conversation starter – people (of a certain age) enjoy sharing their memories and it reminds them what an important part of their childhood this was.

Ask people to put a poster in their window a couple of weeks beforehand to show their support for the idea. You could also send emails and text messages to neighbours leading up to the day.

You are welcome to use and adapt the templates from Playing Out and Play Wales' websites, or make your own. It is important to state clearly on all publicity that parents are responsible for their own children during the sessions and that cars can only come in and out escorted by a steward at walking speed.

Signs and cones

Check with your council about the requirements for 'Road Closed' and other signage. Some councils will provide signs, while others ask you to arrange your own. You also need to think about physically closing off the width of the road, using cones or barriers. It is important to make sure whatever you set up meets with your council's legal requirements and clearly and effectively stops cars and bikes from coming through without permission.

Things to have to hand on the day

Even though parents are responsible for their own children and it is not an 'event', it is worth having a first-aid kit to hand. Other useful things are flasks, umbrellas and chairs (for stewards). You may also want to have some Playing Out leaflets to give out to curious drivers or passers-by.

Toys, games and equipment

One aim of playing out is to enable free, child-led play, so you shouldn't need to buy or organise anything special. There is real value in free play as it encourages resourcefulness and creativity. Often people bring out chalk, long skipping ropes, paddling pools, bikes, scooters, stilts, hoops, bubbles and more.

Get the local police on board

A tiny minority of car drivers (and even some cyclists) react angrily, aggressively or dangerously to being asked to take a different route or drive at walking speed. For this reason, consider inviting your local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) or Beat Manager to your sessions.

They should see this as a good opportunity to engage with the community and it sends a message to drivers that the road closure is legitimate and enforceable. If you do have any issues with dangerous driving or other unacceptable behaviour on the day, take as many details as you can and contact 101 straight away to report it.

Unless you notice something unduly risky (for example hard cricket balls) in which case you may need to calmly intervene, you can probably relax.

What if it rains?

Many streets have pressed ahead and played out in the rain, snow and sleet. In general, this seems to add to the fun from the children's point of view, so it is really a question of whether the adults are happy to stand out in it or not! If you do decide to carry on in bad weather, just be aware of any extra hazards, like the possibility of bikes skidding. And follow up with a nice hot drink.

Documentation

Consider how and if you want to document your first session. Photos are fantastic for sharing the idea via local newsletters, noticeboards or social media. You could also film neighbours sharing memories of their own childhood. Always make sure you get consent (and parental consent for children).

Please also share any documentation or feedback with Play Wales and Playing Out if you have permission to do so – it all helps to encourage others and show the real benefits of street play.



Step 4. Play out

What to expect on the day

Finally the day has come. You may feel excited, tired, or even a little nervous. This is all normal. You will be glad when it is under way. You have done everything you can to let people know about it so you can only wait and see who comes out to play.

Briefing the stewards

Arrange to meet and brief the stewards about 15 minutes before the session starts. We take this bit seriously because stewards need to be alert to cars and clear about their role, which is to:

- Keep children within the street closure
- Politely divert 'through' traffic
- Safely escort residents in or out of the street.

Ask them to read the steward briefing, or read it aloud. You can be quite formal with this so there is no room for confusion. If there are two shifts, they will then be responsible for briefing their replacement.

Stewards wear high-visibility vests and a 'lanyard' with a whistle, steward briefing and phone numbers for the organiser and council contact. They should be safely behind the road closure point (i.e. not in the live carriageway) but in view of oncoming traffic, the closure area and other stewards.

The organiser and stewards should agree who will look out for drivers wanting to leave the street and how this will be managed. On a long stretch of road you will probably need a 'floating steward' as well as those at each end.

Closing the road

Once briefed, the stewards go to each end of the street and put the signs and cones or barriers in place as simultaneously and safely as they can. Once in place, the stewards should not leave their posts except to walk cars in and out. Make sure you have a clear signal for when the street is fully closed and safe for play, for example three blows on a whistle.

Dealing with cars

With drivers, try to be both friendly and clear. After the road is closed, if a car wants to go through, they can't, as the road is legally closed. Stewards should all know the best alternative route for directing through traffic. If, on the other hand, a resident or visitor wants car access in or out, the procedure is:

- Get clear agreement from the driver to wait and be escorted in. You can only give access if you have this agreement.
- Warn everyone in a loud and clear voice (or whistle) that a car is coming through and wait for the road to be clear of children and obstacles.
- Gain eye contact with the driver and remind them to drive behind you at walking speed.
- If or when you feel it is safe, one steward should let the car through and then replace the barrier while the other walks in front of the vehicle to a parking space. Once the engine is off, call out '*Safe to play!*' (or whistle).
- Thank the driver and return to the road closure point.

Only ever try to deal with one car at a time. The steward who remains behind at the closure point will need to hold back anybody else who wants car access.

If a driver wants to leave the street, talk to them and agree which way they will be going out. Then follow the procedure above in reverse.

Difficult drivers

This is a rare but serious area of risk, so be prepared. If a driver becomes difficult or challenges your authority, you and the stewards will need to use your judgment in the moment and trouble-shoot as best you can. Avoid arguments and confrontation and prioritise the safety of all the participants. Remember that people may have all kinds of reasons for their reaction and try to remain calm, courteous and assertive.

Reassert the legal status of the closure and that it is temporary. If a driver becomes confrontational, your co-steward should quietly alert the organiser and any nearby parents to ensure children's safety. The stewards' briefing will have the contact number for the council that you can offer if a driver wants to talk to an official. In the extreme situation that a driver behaves dangerously, dial 999 (or 101 if the immediate situation has passed).

Having a good time while managing the session

The organisers are in effect, the hosts. People are responsible for themselves and yet you are bound to feel somewhat responsible for the event overall. So you strike a balance. You have every right to let a child or parent know if you think they are acting dangerously or disruptively.

Likewise, you will want to relax and enjoy the session with your neighbours. By all means do, but keep an eye out, particularly on the stewards.

Use your judgment – it is unlikely that you will need to intervene with anything except the occasional steward no-show or at worst, a difficult driver.

Watch for elderly neighbours or people from other streets who come to have a look and enjoy the afternoon. They will be happy for you to introduce yourself and have a chat. These conversations can be the most rewarding thing about the sessions.

Clearing up and re-opening the road

About 10 minutes before re-opening the road one steward from each end walks up the road towards each other, telling everyone that the road will be reopening shortly – ask that they start clearing things away. Pick up toys, chalk and so forth as you go and encourage others to do the same.

Once everything is cleared away, the two stewards should go up and down again calling something like, *'Onto the pavements now please, we are reopening the road'*.

Use whistles to gain attention, and a clear and loud voice – but try to stay warm and friendly. This is also a time to remind parents to make sure their children understand the difference between a playing out session and normal circumstances.





You might need to be quite firm to make sure parents realise that cars may now be coming through at speed and it is their responsibility to keep their children safe. Getting their verbal agreement is useful.

Once you are sure everyone is off the road and parents have control of small children, aim to open the road closure points simultaneously to avoid any cars getting stranded in the middle. After taking away the signs the stewards can do a final 'sweep' of the road, walking down the carriageway from each end and meeting in the middle, to make absolutely sure everyone is safely off the road before traffic starts coming through. If they do this, the stewards should be aware they are walking in a 'live carriageway' and keep themselves safe.

If you find the return of the cars really hard to bear, remember that what you have done is a first step towards a longer-term change of attitude about roads and street space. And start to think about your next step.

After the event

Now is the time to sit back and enjoy your achievement. Within a few days, send a thank you message to everyone involved. If possible, include a photo or two. You might want to record some of your thoughts and feelings at this time. These may include ideas you have for future events or activities for your street or community.

Writing and images are powerful and help you to communicate your ideas to other people. Following the event, we encourage you to celebrate your achievement.

You and the future of playing out

Please contact Playing Out or Play Wales with any questions or concerns you might have or if you need practical support. Also, let us know how you get on with using the materials. We would appreciate your feedback and wish you all the best with playing out.

We would like to hear about your experience, either via email or social media. Your observations, ideas, feedback, testimonials, photos, memories of play will help us grow this movement. If you feel able, please also add yourself to Playing Out's online map so other people locally can contact you for friendly help and advice. Your tweets, blogs, emails, website and Facebook mentions, and of course, telling your neighbours about playing out will be much appreciated and go a long way towards activating street play as a normal part of daily life.

Playing out checklist

First steps (at least two months before first playing out session)

	Talk to your neighbours about the idea to see if they would be interested. If so:
	Set a date and venue for the first meeting.
	Read about street play and Playing Out. The Inspirations and Ideas page on Playing Out's website is a good starting point. Contact your local council to find out about the application process in your area. You could also find out what else is going on in your area using the map on www.playingout.net
	Let Play Wales know you are thinking of arranging playing out sessions. We'll work with Playing Out to do what we can to support you. Join Playing Out's Facebook group for more ideas and inspiration.

10-14 days before first meeting

	Adapt and print the Neighbour meeting invitation.
	Distribute invitations through letterboxes.
	Plan for the meeting using the manual.

At the first meeting

	Talk through the idea with your neighbours.
	Share memories of playing out, hopes, ideas and concerns.
	Assess interest and set a date for your first playing out session (and subsequent sessions if applying for repeat closures).
	Decide who will do what (including who will make the formal application).
	Collect contact details (use the steward sign-up if it helps, or start an email list).

During the week following the meeting

	Send an email to everyone who came to the meeting to thank them for attending, review any decisions made and roles agreed and the proposed dates for your sessions.
--	---

Six to eight weeks before your first playing out session

	Apply to your council for the road closure(s) and make sure you follow any requirements for consultation with your neighbours.
	Start to recruit stewards and volunteers.
	Respond to any objections and concerns that arise from the consultation. See Common concerns or contact Playing Out or Play Wales if you want help with this.
	Check how you will find out about approval (some councils may only let you know the week before).

Two weeks before your first session

	Distribute posters to neighbours for display in windows.
	Once you have had confirmation from your council, let everyone know it is going ahead and remind them of the dates. A confirmation flyer template is available on Playing Out and Play Wales' websites.
	Confirm stewards.

One week before your first session

	Put up council Road Closure Notices where required.
	Make arrangements for your road closure signage and any other materials you want to have on the day – high-visibility vests etc.
	Print out copies of the Steward Briefing (two for each closure point) and become familiar with it.
	Carry out a risk-benefit assessment.

On the day

	Make sure you have everything you need ready to go.
	Verbally brief the stewards and ask them to read the Steward Briefing.
	Close the road (following the procedure in the manual) and play out.
	Talk to neighbours, collect memories, take video and photos.
	Make sure everyone knows the road is going back to 'normal' and open the road safely.

In the week or so following your event

	Email Playing Out or Play Wales or visit the Playing Out Facebook page to let us know how the session went.
	Celebrate the achievement with your neighbours, children, helpers, volunteers and stewards. Consider inviting them to have a look at the Playing Out website and Facebook page or sharing their feedback with you.
	If you have a local newspaper, consider sending a photo and a short erthygl about your session. If you are happy to, offer your support and contact details to other streets wanting to encourage street play, and direct them to the Playing Out or Play Wales' websites.

Common concerns about playing out

These are some of the most common concerns and objections that have come up in relation to playing out – and our responses. Let us know if you come up against any others and we'll do what we can to help.

In general, it is good to try to listen to people's concerns and deal with them constructively wherever possible. Appealing to people's own childhood memories of playing out can be a good way in.

Why do children need to play in the street when there are parks nearby?

Parks are great for family outings and for older children who can get there independently but for younger children, it usually involves a special trip, organised and supervised by adults. Street play is very different. Firstly, it is literally on the doorstep so children can play 'semi-supervised' and can come and go independently. Secondly, children playing together on their street helps to build a sense of community and belonging, which in turn makes your street a safer and friendlier place.

Why can't children just play in their own back gardens?

In towns and cities, if you have a garden at all, the space is limited and the experience isolated. Street play is a way for children to meet other children on their street, who they may not come across normally (they may be at different schools or of different ages). It also provides more space and freedom to move. Big-rope skipping, hopscotch, roller-skating, cycling and scooting are all generally impossible to do in a tiny back garden.

Can I still have car access to my house?

Residents can still drive in and out during the session if they need to, just at walking speed to make it safe for everyone.

You may actually find it easier than normal to park on the street, since there will be no through traffic. For those not living on the street, it will usually only mean a tiny addition to journey times. Most sessions only last an hour or two and take place before rush hour and at weekends.

Will you let visitors/deliveries through?

Yes. Stewards will ensure that all drivers wanting to drive down the road are aware that through traffic is not allowed but if a delivery needs to be made or someone is visiting, the steward will escort the driver at walking pace to their destination.

I have a business on the street. What about parking for my customers?

As part of the application process, everyone within the closure area should be consulted. If you are outside the closure area talk to the organisers about your concerns, in an open neighbourly way. There is usually a way around things if you really need access to parking for your customers, although please remember there is no right to parking on a public highway, even for residents.

There is strong support for children's right to play out amongst parents and grandparents in particular, so you might even find that by being accommodating or offering support you improve your business image and get new customers.

Aren't roads just for cars?

The idea that residential streets are just 'roads' i.e. places simply to drive and park cars has crept up on us gradually and has now become accepted. Up until the 1970s, street play was common. 71 percent of adults played out in the street or neighbourhood as children, compared to only 21 percent of children today¹.



The street is our main public space in towns and cities and the place where a sense of community can be created. Playing out is partly about challenging the perception that streets are nothing but highways and demonstrating their possibilities as social spaces for everyone.

Why do you need to close the road? We just played out as kids

Times have changed. Streets are much more traffic dominated and it is no longer normal to see children out playing as it used to be. Having to organise an official road closure to use the street in this way is not a long-term solution. In some very quiet streets children can and do still play out naturally.

However, in many residential streets, cars – both parked and moving – dominate to such an extent that play becomes impossible. In this instance ‘playing out’ sessions provide a temporary solution and show what is possible. Ideally, our streets would be spaces where cars and people of all ages can coexist happily. This is the long-term goal of Playing Out.

Won't playing out bring lots of children to my street from elsewhere?

Playing out is organised by residents and only publicised through flyers and posters on their own street. It is a chance for children to play right outside their front doors and not a public ‘event’. Streets are public spaces, but it is very unlikely that you would have more than a few ‘outsiders’ dropping in, as the main attraction is being able to play outside your own home.

I'm worried that the noise made by children playing outside will disturb me

Our experience is that streets are quieter during playing out sessions than when open to traffic, to the extent you are more likely to hear birdsong! Some people would also say the sound of children playing is wonderful and something we no longer hear enough of. In towns and cities we all need to live alongside each other and tolerate a reasonable amount of noise from other people's activities. Even those who don't drive have to live with traffic noise.

Children cannot be contained within houses, cars and designated 'play areas'. The town or city is theirs too and it is their right to use public space. If there is a persistent problem with neighbours complaining about children making an unreasonable amount of noise, it may be appropriate to organise a street meeting to discuss and try to reach a solution everyone is happy with.

I'm worried about my car being damaged

If you are very nervous about damage to your car, you may wish to park it elsewhere during playing out sessions. However, we have heard of very few incidents of damage in the thousands of sessions that have taken place and would not expect the level of risk to be much greater than on a 'normal' day, with cars, lorries, cyclists and pedestrians passing through.

Parents are responsible for their children during playing out sessions but any adult who sees a child causing damage should talk to them or their parents. The organisers and stewards will do their best to ensure that children play safely and responsibly.

Who is going to pay if my property gets damaged?

In terms of damage to property (including cars), the liability situation is no different with a road closure than under normal circumstances i.e. people take responsibility for their own actions. Parents will have ultimate responsibility for their own children and residents will need to resolve any issues between each other and their insurers.

I don't like the idea of children playing unsupervised. Who will make sure they don't get up to mischief?

'Getting up to mischief' is a part of childhood we all remember, but so is being told off by adults other than our own parents! It is made very clear that parents are responsible for their own children during sessions. But, if any adult sees children playing out on the street seriously misbehaving or causing damage or injury they should take responsibility to speak to them or their parents in a reasonable way. Being kept in check by other adults in our community is an important learning experience.

Won't it encourage children to think the road is a safe place to play under normal circumstances?

We have had many conversations with parents about this and there is a strong agreement that even young children can understand the difference between a playing out session and normal circumstances. There should be a clear signal that the road is 'safe to play' and parents will ensure children understand that things are 'back to normal' once the session is over. Playing out sessions are also a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children about road safety and the danger of traffic.

I haven't got young children and this idea makes me feel excluded from my own street

We need to remember that for the vast majority of the time, children may feel excluded from this space right outside their homes. Playing out is a small way to redress the balance. Organisers should make sure that residents of all ages feel welcome to be out on the street and sessions don't just feel like family events.

Equally, no one should feel any obligation to 'join in' if they don't want to. At some sessions, older residents or those without children have helped to steward or just enjoyed sitting out, meeting neighbours and sharing memories about their own childhood play experiences.

What other benefits are there to playing out?

As well as safer streets, another key factor in enabling street play is parental permission. Parents feel anxious about allowing children to play on the street for all sorts of reasons and often feel unsure about the cultural acceptability of letting kids play out on the street. Playing out sessions are a chance for parents to get together and support each others' desire to let children play out. See 10 good reasons for street play on page 21 for more detailed information about the benefits of street play.



10 good reasons for street play

1. Children need to play. It is vital for their physical and emotional development and for their social learning. It is also a human right under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
2. Children need to experience free play, when they follow their own ideas and interests. This implies a degree of freedom and independence, which cannot be satisfied by organised or over-supervised play.
3. Children like to play near home and have traditionally done so. A 2007 poll found that 71 percent of adults played out on their street every day compared to only 21 percent of children today². The main reason cited for not playing outside was traffic.
4. Children need space to play energetically. Many homes do not have gardens and in towns and cities these tend to be small. Parks are great but many children don't have independent access to these so the street is the obvious place for everyday play.
5. Playing in the street increases community cohesion and brings neighbours of all ages together by providing a sense of common space and shared ownership. It can engender a sense of collective responsibility and thereby increase the safety of the neighbourhood.
6. Street play enables children to meet and develop friendships outside school and also increases contact between children and adults, helping to build up familiarity and trust.
7. Through dealing with situations that arise independently, children can learn valuable social skills and gain understanding about the world around them.
8. Playing in the street allows for 'semi-supervised' play. Parents can get on with housework or looking after other children in the house while allowing children to play outside. Children are far more likely to play outside every day if allowed to play outside their home, rather than relying on parents to take them somewhere.
9. The street is the 'starting point for all journeys'³ and the ability to play independently in the street is a first step towards greater independent mobility around the neighbourhood – to visit friends, go to the park or walk to school.
10. Streets constitute the vast majority of public space in towns and cities. To see them only as places to drive and park cars is to massively undervalue them. Streets can and should be places where people can sit, talk, read, play and walk – and even sing and dance if they want to! The only way this will happen is if we start to use them differently.

Frequently asked questions

Here are some frequently asked questions from people wanting to organise playing out sessions on their streets.

Background information

What are the benefits of playing out in your own street?

There are loads – see 10 good reasons for street play on page 21. These are the ‘big’ benefits, but you will find many smaller, less obvious ones by holding playing out sessions, for both children and adults on your street.

What is Playing Out?

Playing Out is a not-for-profit organisation set up by parents to activate street play across the UK. It is a small team based in Bristol and gives peer-support ‘on the ground’ to Bristol residents as well as offering practical help and support for residents across the UK. You can phone 0117 953 7167 or email hello@playingout.net.

What is Play Wales?

Play Wales is an independent charity – our area of charitable remit is Wales.

We work to raise awareness of children and teenagers’ need and right to play and to promote good practice at every level of decision making and in every place where children might play. We welcome projects and initiatives that are making streets and communities play friendlier places for children and teenagers.

We have an agreement with Playing Out to promote and support resident-led street play sessions in Wales. We have been involved in the piloting of several street play sessions.

What are ‘Play Streets’?

The term ‘Play Street’ originally referred to inner-city streets, which, from the 1930s onwards, were designated by the authorities to serve as informal playgrounds during certain hours.

London Play’s website includes a history on play streets and information about efforts to redevelop play streets in London. An updated version of the legislation used to do this is still being used by some councils to enable regular road closures for play, particularly in London.

The term ‘Play Streets’ is now also being used interchangeably with ‘playing out’ or ‘temporary play streets’ to refer to the current movement of resident-led temporary road closures for play, which contributes towards street play being a normal, everyday activity for children everywhere.

Applying for road closures

How do I ‘do’ playing out on my street?

A lot will depend on where you are in the country, as different councils have different policies around how to close your road for play.

How do I find out what my council’s policy is and who to contact?

You can start by looking at the map on Playing Out’s website or local authority directory – or contact Play Wales or Playing Out if you can’t find what you need.

What if my council does not have a policy in place?

The people behind the Playing Out model started in Bristol by organising one-off sessions using the council’s ‘street party’ application form – not actually having a street party, but using the procedure to close the road for play.

How do I go about trying to get a street play policy adopted by the council?

After the success of Playing Out’s initial one-off sessions, Bristol City Council got behind the idea and brought about a change in policy to allow streets to close regularly. The same has happened in other local authority areas across the UK. Getting political support is key, so invite local politicians along to your early sessions to see the

benefits for themselves. Finding the 'right' person in the council is key – this could be a councillor, or an officer from Highways, Community Development, Public Health or Play/Children's Services, so don't be put off by an initial negative response – try another route.

What different models are there for regular road closures for play?

In Bristol, the council has developed a policy letting residents apply for a Temporary Play Street Order (TPSO), which allows you to close your street to through-traffic up to once a week. Residents can still drive in and out at walking speed, escorted by volunteer stewards.

Other councils are now offering versions of this policy, allowing residents to decide which days and hours to apply for, whereas others offer fixed dates through the year. TPSOs usually last for a year, after which you need to re-apply.

Some other places (particularly in London) are trying to bring back more traditional permanent 'play streets' with fixed signage. In theory, this model could allow for more frequent road closures, even every day, although residents would still need to make sure this happened safely.

It doesn't matter too much which legal route the council chooses to use, as long as residents can cheaply, easily and safely open their street for play on a regular basis.

What do I need to do before applying?

The main thing you need to do before applying is to talk to your neighbours about the idea, perhaps by holding an informal meeting, and make sure you have enough support and have tried to address any concerns.

How do I apply?

In Bristol, the council needs six weeks to process applications, and most other councils have a similar timeframe. In Hackney, London there are four application deadlines each year.

The general advice is that it can take about three months to get started. Once you have decided how often you will be closing, how much of the street and got others on board, you will need to go through the formal application process.

In some local authorities in the UK, the council provides a standard 'consultation letter' for you to photocopy and put through all the doors on your street. If your council doesn't provide this, it is still a good idea to do this to make sure everyone feels consulted – a template consultation letter is included on page 33 for you to use or adapt. It is a good idea to add a friendly note to neighbours to go with the formal consultation.

Each local authority will have a slightly different process. Search Playing Out's map to find out about your local council's process and who to contact. If there is not a policy in place or the council does not have a process that would allow you to play out, contact Playing Out or Play Wales for advice.



Who needs to be consulted?

All residents and businesses within the proposed closure area should be consulted – usually with a letter through their doors – and have a chance to raise any objections or concerns. You may also want to let others know who are outside the closure area but might be affected, although you are not obliged to do this.

How do I address objections and concerns?

It is good to ensure you have invited and listened to as many opinions on the street as possible and tried to address any concerns raised in an open and neighbourly way (see Common concerns on page 17). Contact Playing Out or Play Wales if you need advice and support as it can be very unsettling dealing with strong opposition from neighbours.

Can residents who are unhappy stop the application progressing?

Councils will each have their own policies around responding to objections and it is worth finding out what this is in advance.

In several local authorities, objections received by the council will be carefully considered and responded to. The council's aim will be to attempt to resolve or address any objections so that the sessions can go ahead. A street may occasionally be refused permission if a lot of people object or if 'material' objections are unresolvable, but this is very unlikely.

Can I see a street holding a playing out session before I apply?

There are playing out sessions taking place in many different areas of the country. Please see the map on Playing Out's website or contact Play Wales if you'd like to get touch with someone local to you who would be happy to invite you along to their street and share their experience.

Can I organise a one-off session to try it out?

Yes. This is sometimes a good idea where you are unsure or where you know some residents are unsure about the idea. In some areas, you can organise a one-off session using the TPSO form or apply under the street party procedure. You can reapply for a second TPSO during the same year if you then wish to organise a regular session. If you are unsure about the best route to do this, contact the council to check the process in your area. See the map on Playing Out's website or the local authority directory for the contact information in your area.

How is it different from a street party?

The main differences are:

- Residents can still drive in and out of the street
- Road closure is 'stewarded'
- Emphasis on free, child-led play (not organised activities)
- Short period of time (one to three hours)
- Potential to become a normal, regular part of street life.

But it still has some of the benefits of a street party in terms of neighbours getting to know each other and the street feeling safer and friendlier as a result. Many streets have both regular playing out sessions and an annual street party, which feels like more of a special event for the whole street.

Practicalities

What work, time and effort is involved in organising playing out sessions?

It is about 20 hours of 'work' for the main organiser, from organising an initial meeting to putting on the first session. This might sound a lot, but it is spread over several months and can be shared between a number of people. Also, a lot of the time involves talking to your neighbours and might be enjoyable. Give yourself lots of time, pace yourself and just do as much or as little as you want to.

We have had a lot of feedback from people testifying to how worthwhile and rewarding they have felt their efforts to be. Get in touch with Playing Out or Play Wales if you have any questions or concerns, need moral support, or to talk things through.

How often and how long do you close the street?

Within the limits set by your council, each street needs to consider what would suit them best. The closure times, days and frequency will depend on the availability of residents, organisers and children and may take into account other factors, for example if there is a church or school on your road.

Some streets close for an hour or so after school on a weekday, others close at a weekend. Streets close weekly, fortnightly or monthly, depending on the policy of your council. You may want to vary what you do at different times of the year, for example closing less frequently in the winter, or at weekends over the winter and weekdays in the summer.

You will need to consider how many people are likely to be involved and able to help. You may also want to take into account other factors such as organised after-school activities (if a large proportion of children go to Scouts on a Monday, it may not be the best day to play out).

Can we still play out in winter or after dark?

Many streets play out all year around. Experiencing different weather and seasons is one of the great benefits of outdoor play. In the winter, it may also be easier and more attractive to play out on the street for a short time, rather than trek to the park.

If you are organising after-school sessions, you may want to keep them short (even 45 minutes is a worthwhile run-around) as evenings draw in and it gets cold for the adults standing around. Or, if the local application process allows for it, you

could switch to weekend sessions that are held earlier in the day through the winter.

It is good to keep it going if you can (without forcing it), to maintain the sense of it being 'normal' and regular. You could also think about making the winter sessions special in some way, to maintain enthusiasm. Some streets have had small fires in a 'fire wok' or brought out hot chocolate to share.

Can we play out in the rain?

Definitely. We have found that children generally enjoy the chance to get their wellies on and play out in the rain (and again are more likely to do this right outside their front door, rather than going to the park). As long as the stewards are happy to stand outside and you have addressed any additional risks, there is no reason to cancel. If it is very windy, this might be more of a problem – in particular you would need to make sure any signage was properly secured.

Is there an age limit?

No. Playing out sessions should be open to everyone and not prescribed. We have found that older children (twelve and above) are usually less keen to be in such an adult-supervised environment and hopefully have more freedom to wander further afield. In terms of younger children, as long as they can move, they can play. Even babies and toddlers get a lot out of it and it is a great way for children of different ages to interact. Often children from different schools get a chance to meet and play as well.

What if I live on a major road or bus route?

This might be a problem in terms of closing the road, but check with your council. Otherwise, there may well be other things you could think of doing to enable more playing out and a better sense of 'belonging' on your street. Have a look at Easy and effortless things on page 31 for inspiration. 'Pavement play' is one model some streets follow, where residents just agree a particular time to come out and semi-supervise children playing out



on the pavement. If speeding traffic is a problem, you might want to think about trying to get some traffic-calming measures put in, or have a '20s Plenty' campaign.

What signage and barriers should be used?

How do I get hold of them?

As a minimum, each road closure point needs an official 'Road Closed' sign and a physical barrier across the road. Depending on the layout, some roads will also need 'Road Ahead Closed' signs to warn drivers they can't get through and some may need extra barriers such as cones. Stewards wear high-visibility vests and have whistles to blow when a car is about to come through. Play Wales can advise on road closure kits.

What if I want to cancel a session or change the timings?

If you decide to cancel a session, perhaps due to bad weather or a lack of stewards, you can do so without informing the council. The same applies if you decide to run a shorter session than applied for.

For example, if you have been given permission to close from 3.00 to 6.00pm but you decide to play out from 4.00 to 5.30pm, that's fine as long as you are clear with residents that is what you are doing. However, if you wish to change the times or dates from sessions that your current permission does not cover, you will need to get in touch with the council and may need to re-apply.

Should I try to get local media coverage of my street's activity?

Getting your local newspaper or radio station to come along to a session can be a great way to get people thinking about the issues, spread the idea of playing out and even gain support from the council. However, we have found that there are a few things to consider first. Contact Playing Out if you want to discuss or have any questions.

How do I ensure that only people from my street come along?

Most streets are public highways and public spaces, which is one of the great things about them, so it would be wrong to try to prevent people from coming into the street from elsewhere. This is not about trying to create a 'gated community'. At the same time, you don't want to find yourself hosting a public event. As long as you keep publicity only to the street itself and don't put on any organised activities you are very unlikely to get more than a few 'extras' coming along to see what is happening.

Do we need to have any organised games or equipment?

No. Keeping it 'normal' is good and powerful, showing that children mainly need space and freedom to play on their doorstep, rather than being shown what to do. In our experience, they need very little to make the most of it and will often bring out their own toys, scooters, bikes, roller skates and hula-hoops. The street is a great 'blank canvas', encouraging children to be creative and make the space their own.

However, you may want to provide some extra things such as pavement chalk, long skipping ropes, hula-hoops and soft balls (to replace hard footballs).

How do we ensure that people without children don't feel excluded?

Make sure that any communications and publicity go to all households, not just those with children or those you think will be interested. Start the process with an open meeting for all residents and make it clear that you want this to be something for the whole street, not just young children and their parents. Retired people and students can be particularly useful as stewards and those without children might appreciate having a way in to the community which they don't have otherwise.

What do I do about side streets?

It is important to risk assess all the roads/rights of way that lead onto a street you have closed for play. All junctions need to be stewarded. Even if the side road is a *cul-de-sac* itself or a back lane leading to garages it is important to indicate to emerging drivers that the road ahead is closed, and to steward the junction.

Responsibility and liability

What are the responsibilities of the applicant?

The Temporary Play Street Order (TPSO) form or application should make it clear about the responsibilities of the applicant (the person who signs the form). Normally, these include:

- To ensure the road closure and re-opening of the road is managed safely and using the correct signage
- To ensure there is no permanent damage to the public highway
- To ensure that parents are aware they are responsible for their own children as on any other day.

As the named applicant, you do not need to be present at every session. However, you are still responsible for the points listed.

Often, the applicant takes on the role of organiser and ensures stewards are in place and signage is put out.

What do we do if children turn up unaccompanied?

The job of the organisers and stewards is to make the space relatively safe by stopping through traffic and ensuring that residents drive at walking speed, not to look after other people's children. It is worth some effort in advance to ensure that publicity states clearly that parents are responsible for their own children and that, whilst adults around will aim to keep an eye out for any issues, unaccompanied children will not be 'looked after'.

If you have any real worries about unaccompanied children, either because they seem too young or too irresponsible to be out alone, you should try to talk to their parents. If they have come from outside the street, perhaps give the child a note to take home, politely explaining that the organisers' job is only to manage traffic and that parents are still fully responsible for their own children. In a friendly way, explain that playing out is a collective community effort and invite the parents to come along to the next session and help steward and/or meet other neighbours.

Do stewards need DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service – formerly CRB) checks?

As long as you are clear that this is an informal event organised by neighbours on their own street, that parents are responsible for their own children and you are not providing organised childcare, there should be no reason to go through this formality. The sessions are simply a way for children to play in a traffic-free street. They may come into contact with neighbours of all ages and this can be a good way to learn about interacting safely and positively with adults in their community.

The role of the stewards is simply to make sure the space is safe and not to look after children.

If you are an organisation providing volunteers or playworkers then you need to follow your own safeguarding procedures.

Do we need to provide first aid?

It is always good to know if one of your neighbours is trained in first aid, or if someone has a particularly good first aid kit. But, if a child hurts themselves, it is up to the parent or carer to treat them, as they would if they were playing in a park or on a pavement.

My street is on a steep hill / off a very busy main road / around a blind corner – is it safe?

You should carry out a simple risk assessment and factor in any particular issues to do with your street. On a hill, for example, children may well take the opportunity to free-wheel on bikes or scooters in a way they wouldn't when the street is open to cars. If there is an accident, the organisers could be accused of encouraging this behaviour, so you need to think about how to minimise the risk. Clearly stating that parents are responsible for their own children will go some way towards this but you might also need to think about putting other measures in place to keep it safe, such as an agreed start and finish line chalked on the road.

If you have worries about traffic and the particular layout of your street, the council officers dealing with your road closure application should be able to help advise on correct use and placement of signage and barriers to ensure safety.

Would I (as the 'named' organiser/applicant on my street) be potentially liable for injuries or damage that happen as a result of the session taking place?

Some possibilities that worry me are:

- Injuries occurring during a session

- Damage to property (including council or highways property) during a session
- Children being hit by a car outside of session time / closure area.

There is always some risk of liability for injuries or damage to property if you organise any event, but if you carry out a risk assessment and follow the guidance in this manual you will go a long way to protect yourself against any potential claim.

Generally, you will only have any potential liability for what happens within the closure area and during the session time (or immediately before and after it). Other damage would be too remote.

Finally, remember that not every person who suffers a minor injury or damage to property will necessarily make a claim. Ensure that any injuries that do occur are promptly and supportively dealt with and keep notes of each one, just in case.

Would Public Liability insurance (either under my own name or a residents' group) protect me if someone does suffer injury or damage to property?

Most streets currently organising playing out sessions do not have insurance and the cost (between £50 and £100) can certainly be a show-stopper but it is very much a matter for each street to decide. This is the legal advice that Playing Out has received:

'If you carry out careful risk assessments and put in place suitable controls you should have nothing to worry about. However, the courts can be very sympathetic to injured people, especially children. Public Liability insurance, that will pay such claims for you, is therefore advisable.'

For guidance about insurance see Playing Out's website.



Is the named organiser liable for any negligence if not physically present?

The named organiser may be liable if the cause of any injury or damage is inherent in the way the event was planned or set up. For example, if you failed to identify a side alley as a potential vehicular access and a car entered by it, causing injury. However, there would probably be no liability if the marshal of an identified point of access absented him or herself against your instructions and the same accident occurred.

The distinction will not matter if you have appropriate Public Liability insurance, since both types of liability would be covered. But, generally it is best to be present at an event if possible, since you will have the best overview of the whole session and will be best placed to spot if someone is not following the plan. If this is not possible, it is best to appoint someone trustworthy in your place.

Who is liable if a child is injured by a car entering the road closure?

As long as you have followed the proper procedures around road closure and stewarding, almost certainly the car driver would be held liable in this instance. There was a case in Bristol in 2014 where a car driver entered the road closure at speed. Although fortunately no one was injured, the driver was convicted of dangerous driving.

If the council includes an ‘indemnity clause’ when agreeing the road closure, does that absolve them of any liability?

It is not possible for the council to exclude liability for personal injury or death caused by its own negligence. For example, if there was a broken paving slab for which the council would have been liable when the road was open, they will still be liable during the closure. However, the clause is effective to ensure they don’t acquire any liability for anything that results solely from the closure and/or the session.

What action can I take to minimise risk and liability for any accidents occurring during or following a session?

It is worth carrying out a risk assessment and involving others in this so as many people as possible are fully aware of the risks and responsibility is shared. Many councils will require this as part of the application to temporarily close the street. Use the guidance in this manual and the steward briefing and follow any instructions or guidance given by your council on closing the road safely. Finally, ensure everyone involved is aware of any risks and responsibilities, especially parents and stewards.

Other questions

I live in a *cul-de-sac* where children do play out but I'd like to make it safer without it being too formal. Any suggestions?

If children already play out naturally that is fantastic and you need to be careful not to give the message there is anything wrong with this, whilst also making it safer and encouraging more children to play out. Some *cul-de-sacs* have managed to get the council to agree to informal

'Children Playing' signage to warn car drivers to go carefully. Some do a version of 'playing out' sessions without a formal road closure, just having stewards in place to walk cars in and out safely.

Closing my street feels like a big step. Are there smaller things I can do?

There are many – have a look at the Easy and effortless things on page 31 or join the Playing Out Facebook group to see what people have done on other streets. Anything you can do to get to know your neighbours better or start being out on your street more often will help to build the conditions for street play.

Can I organise street play by my children's school?

Yes. Organising a school street play session is the same as a 'normal' play street but with a few added extras. It is important to ensure that both the school and the residents are fully consulted, and on board and that the school can stay open during the street play session. Hackney Play in London has written a guide on school street play: www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/tools-for-schools



Easy and effortless things

There's a lot you can do to make the place outside your home more playful and friendly without organising a formal road closure.

Why start small?

Small, personal thoughts and actions are often the most powerful, and they're a good place to begin if life's too busy or you don't feel like organising anything. Sitting on your front step with your children and saying hello to people who pass, chalking some pictures together on the pavement, or even just starting to think differently about your street are all simple starting points. Here are some ideas and suggestions:

Bring a chair and sit out on your doorstep

Or in your front garden or on the pavement. Why not have a cup of tea or bring a newspaper if it helps you feel more comfortable? This is your space. Observe its rhythms and inhabitants. Smile and say hello to people as they pass. Encourage light conversation if it feels okay to do so.

Notice what you like about your street

Is it busy and interesting? Do you enjoy the way the sun streams through in the late afternoon? Consider developing or encouraging what you already enjoy. If you like a neighbour's window box, you might want to let them know and get some planters or window boxes for your own house. If you enjoy the sound of children playing nearby, let them know.

Notice how people already use the street and whether children are out on their own. As you walk around your neighbourhood, start to notice, or even draw, write about or take photos of what you see and share these with others as a way to start a conversation.

Leave your front door open

If you are in the house during the day and feel secure enough to do this, the open door sends a signal to neighbours and passers-by that you are at home and that there are 'eyes on the street'. It may also encourage your neighbours to follow suit, making the street feel safer and more lived-in.

Allow your children to play out on the doorstep

Or within an agreed area of the front garden, pavement or neighbourhood. Sitting out with younger children is an opportunity to develop their road safety, 'street wisdom' and social skills. As confidence grows or if they are older, you could be inside with the front door open and check on them from time to time. Chalk and bubbles are great for keeping them closer to home – or let them bring their favourite toys out the front. Scooters, roller skates and bikes also work well on the pavement.

Have a go at using chalk

Chalk is an inexpensive and temporary way for you and your children to make your mark and invite play and interaction in a place. It washes away quickly with rain and time or if you prefer, with a little water on a brush. Keep your chalking to public pavements and street surfaces, or agree permission with owners if chalking on walls or private property.

Find excuses to chat with neighbours

Use any excuse to get to know your neighbours. Offer help with unloading cars or bringing in bins, getting in and out of tight parking spaces and so on. Borrow a cup of sugar or offload that extra cabbage or outgrown children's toy. Talk about the weather. Most people enjoy the attention if you take genuine interest. If they seem really uncomfortable, that is good to know too.

If you persistently get a negative response from neighbours despite friendly approaches or are criticised for letting your children play out on the pavement, the 10 good reasons for street play and Common concerns about playing out sections of the manual may give you some encouragement.

Remind drivers that people live on your street

Research has shown that car traffic can have a negative impact on how we feel about our streets and neighbours – see a summary in a short video on Playing Out's website. This 'invisible harm' can make us feel unsafe and retreat from the street. This retreat then increases the sense of isolation and fearfulness for many people, which in turn increases their reliance on car use. It becomes a cycle.

When you are visible to drivers, it may help them to remember to slow down because people live on your street. Speeding traffic and dangerous driving are a threat and barrier to play, so watch and share the Room 13 children's Safer Streets film to help communicate the true cost:

www.playingout.net/inspiration-ideas/exhibitions-projects/hartcliffe-safer-streets-films-event/

The activities listed above can help change things on your street. It's courageous and valuable to simply reclaim some of the space out the front of your home.



Template consultation letter

To: Resident

From: _____

Address: _____

My telephone number: _____

My email: _____

Date: _____

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Proposed Temporary Play Street Closure Order

I am writing to inform you that I am in the process of applying for a Temporary Play Street Order to close the following road(s):

This Order would be valid from _____ only and, subject to _____ Council approval, closures would only take place on the following specific dates/times:

The road will be fully closed to through traffic and points of closure will be marshalled. Residents will be allowed full access but are requested to drive at walking speed under supervision of stewards when within the closure area. It is not necessary to move parked vehicles from the street although you may wish to do so. Parents will be fully responsible for their own children and access will be maintained for emergency services at all times in all parts of the street(s).

Please direct any comments, queries or objections about this proposal to me in the first instance. If I cannot resolve your concern I will refer you to _____ at the council.

Many thanks in advance for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

References

^{1,2} Playday (2007) Playday: our streets too research.

Available at: www.playday.org.uk/resources/research/2007-research

³ Tim Gill (2007) *No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Available at: <https://rethinkingchildhood.com/no-fear>



January 2019

© Playing Out and Play Wales

All rights reserved. No part of this publication, other than the appendices may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any person without the written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-9160226-0-7

Published by Play Wales, Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FH

Play Wales is a registered charity, no. 1068926
A company limited by guarantee, no. 3507258
Registered in Wales