

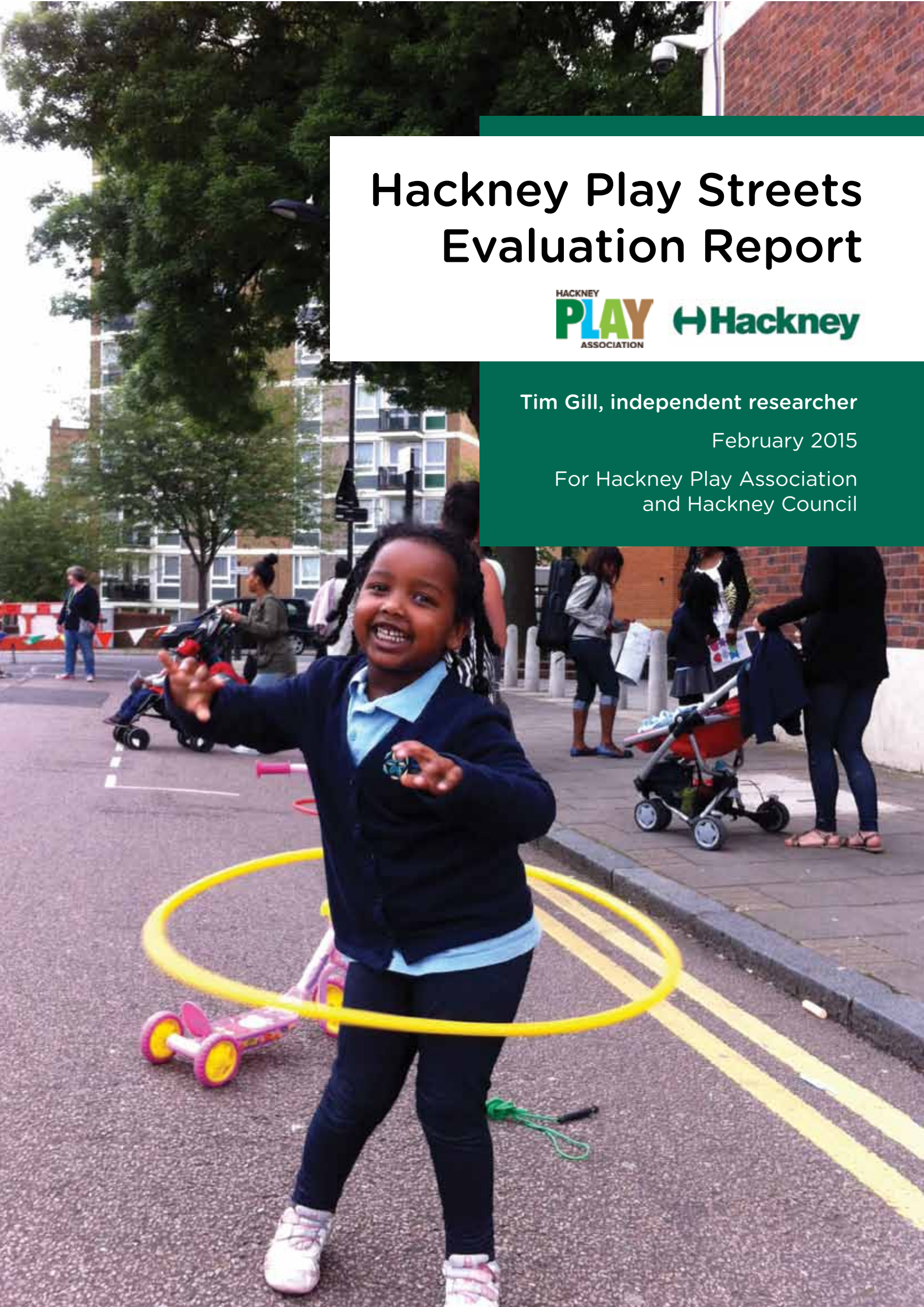
# Hackney Play Streets Evaluation Report



Tim Gill, independent researcher

February 2015

For Hackney Play Association  
and Hackney Council



# Hackney Play Streets Evaluation Report

Summary .....	3
Introduction.....	5
Evaluation focus and methodology.....	8
Evaluation results.....	10
Strengths and weaknesses of each model.....	18
Conclusions .....	19
Acknowledgements .....	20
Appendix 1: Statistics for schemes.....	21
Appendix 2: Interviewees and interview questions .....	30

## About the author

Tim Gill is an independent researcher, writer and consultant whose work focuses on children's play and free time. His book *No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society* was published in 2007. His clients include the Greater London Authority and National Trust, and he is a Built Environment Expert for Design Council CABE. Tim was director of the Children's Play Council (now Play England) from 1998 to 2004, and during this time was seconded to Whitehall to lead the first ever government review into children's play. Tim's website is [www.rethinkingchildhood.com](http://www.rethinkingchildhood.com).



## Summary

This report sets out the findings of an evaluation of a Play Streets Programme run by Hackney Play Association (HPA), on behalf of Hackney Council's Get Hackney Healthy (GHH) Board. GHH commissioned the project as part of a programme of interventions to improve children's health and wellbeing and tackle high child obesity levels, by increasing opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. The project encouraged children to play out of doors in streets and other similar spaces that are close to home. This evaluation looks at four questions: the reach of the programme, its potential impact on children, families and communities, its impact on traffic, and its sustainability and prospects for growth.

In Hackney, three different models of supporting street play have been developed. In this evaluation these are called the 'residential street model', the 'school model' and the 'estate model'. The residential street model involves residents of a street closing the road to traffic once a month for 2 or 3 hours, with signage and temporary barriers present at key points in the road, and pairs of stewards at each barrier to control traffic. This model is known as 'play streets' in Hackney. The school model is adapted for use in streets outside schools and early years settings, with the same basic format except that sessions typically take place once a term. The estate model is adapted for use in the amenity spaces of housing estates, where there is usually no through traffic and hence no need for road closures. It maintains a resident-led approach, with sessions supported by HPA staff for the first four or five sessions.

A mixed approach was taken to evaluation. Quantitative data was gathered to assess the reach of the programme and the amount of traffic disruption it gave rise to. In addition, semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with people closely involved in getting local schemes off the ground including six residents, two staff members from a school and children's centre staff, a family support worker and a playworker.

The evaluation shows that the Hackney Play Streets Programme has succeeded in establishing street play as a regular feature in the lives of a significant number of children and families in Hackney. The programme has:

- Led to 380 hours of sessions in 29 locations that have reached around 1,600 children and nearly 800 families.
- Been directly responsible for over 8,100 child-hours of physical activity – on a par with 14 additional classes of weekly term-time PE lessons. Projecting forward, this figure could rise to 13,800 child-hours in the year from October 2014.
- Spread beyond its initial pattern of the more affluent parts of Hackney to reach a broader demographic spread, including areas of disadvantage.



- Built an effective three-way partnership between Hackney Council, HPA and groups of residents to increase opportunities for street play.
- Created a highly valued source of practical support in the form of the play streets coordinator based at HPA.
- Developed a sustainable model for improving opportunities for street play, with significant potential for growth.
- Revealed a strong consensus amongst organisers about the perceived benefits of the scheme for children, families and communities – especially in terms of social interaction, but also as a way to expand children’s freedom and choice in their play.
- Harnessed support, energy, time and resources from parents, residents, schools/early years settings and local voluntary organisations.
- Uncovered significant interest from schools, early years settings and voluntary and community organisations in the idea of street play.
- Shown that residential road closures for street play have a low impact on traffic movements, and that while a range of resident concerns can arise in the development phase, it is rare for schemes to lead to ongoing conflict or opposition.
- Highlighted challenges in applying the approach in estate contexts and when attempting to move on from playworker-facilitated sessions.

The programme has the potential to build on this experience to reach many more children and families across the borough. In making decisions about the development of the programme, this evaluation points to three areas where further work may be needed. The most significant is to explore different strategies for engaging and supporting residents and estate management bodies in developing sustainable schemes on housing estates. It would also be helpful to explore ways to address problems with recruiting stewards for sessions. Finally, it would be valuable to explore the scope for carrying out more robust before-and-after evaluations on the wider impact of schemes.

# Introduction

This report sets out the findings of an evaluation of a street play programme run by Hackney Play Association (HPA) on behalf of Hackney Council's Get Hackney Healthy Board. The Hackney Play Streets Programme encourages children to play out of doors in streets and other similar spaces that are close to home. Regular street play sessions, organised by parent volunteers and/or local agencies, create the opportunity for children to play freely, and free of charge - with or without their parents.

This evaluation looks at four questions: the reach of the programme, its potential impact on children, families and communities, its impact on traffic, and its sustainability and prospects for growth. The report focuses on the 12-month period October 2013 - September 2014, and is based on fieldwork and interviews carried out between May and October 2014.

In Hackney, three different models of supporting street play have been developed. In this evaluation these are called the 'residential street model', the 'school model' and the 'estate model'. Their key features are summarised below.

## Residential street model

The residential street model is based on a model developed by Playing Out, the not-for-profit organisation working nationally to support street play ([www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net)). It involves residents of a street closing the road to traffic for usually two or three hours, with signage and temporary barriers present at key points in the road, and pairs of stewards at each barrier to control traffic. Only through traffic is diverted. Residents still have vehicle access; they are walked through by a steward once children and adults have been cleared from the street.

The closures, known commonly as play street sessions, and sometimes playing out sessions, take place on a regular basis so that children can play and others can spend time in the street without having to worry about traffic. In Hackney the most popular timing for the sessions is monthly on a Sunday afternoon. Groups of residents consult with their neighbours before taking forward a scheme, and also need to apply in advance to Hackney Council before they can hold sessions. The residential street model is also used in estates where there are suitable roads which can be shut.

## School model

The school model applies the same short, temporary road closures for use in streets outside schools and early years settings, with the same basic format except that sessions typically take place once a term, usually on a Friday afternoon. In this case, the school or setting typically takes an organising role (often through a parent body). Sessions may include some structured activities (such as a parachute game), and the school or parents association may provide food and drink.

## Estate model

The estate model is adapted for use in the amenity spaces of housing estates, where there is usually no through traffic and hence no need for road closures. There are two further differences between this model and the first two. First, sessions are held more frequently - usually weekly. Second, some professional sessional support is included from paid staff, in the form of playwork facilitation and a senior HPA staff member. The aspiration is for this playwork input to be withdrawn when local residents feel they are able to sustain sessions by themselves. This additional element was included in recognition that families in social housing contexts may find it harder to give the voluntary input that is part of the standard street play model. Weekly, rather than monthly, sessions were piloted because both the project team and volunteer organisers anticipated this would help more quickly embed the scheme, and also because there was no need to recruit stewards to manage traffic (as with the street and school models).

# The three models: key features

## Residential street model

- Formal resident-organised consultation and traffic order application process to close road
- Regular (typically monthly) two- or three-hour sessions mainly on a Sunday (two streets in Hackney run Friday afternoon sessions)
- Sessions organised and stewarded by local volunteers - usually residents who live in the street
- Little or no programming or scheduled activities
- Numbers range between 15 and 45 children



## School model

- Formal parent-teacher body or school-organised consultation, and application process to close road
- Typically one two- or three-hour session per term, usually on a Friday afternoon
- Sessions organised and stewarded by staff and parent volunteers from the school/setting
- Can involve some programming and facilities, such as food/drink or a parachute game
- Numbers range between 40 and 225 children



## Estate model

- Formal application not needed (unless road space is involved)
- Consultation is done via housing association, Tenants' and Residents' group, and/or letters to residents
- Typically weekly two-hour sessions - day of the week varies
- Sessions have paid playworker and senior HPA staff member support, for at least the first four sessions
- Numbers range between three and 15 children



## Background and context

Concern has been growing in recent years about the health and wellbeing of children in the UK, with child obesity and low levels of physical activity high on the list of public health concerns. Outdoor play is recognised as having health and wellbeing benefits, and is an emerging focus of public policy and public health activity.<sup>1</sup>

Hackney has the fourth highest levels of children who are overweight and obese in London<sup>2</sup>. While Hackney has a comparatively high proportion of public open space for a London borough, this space is concentrated in some parts of the borough at the expense of others, with some areas highly deficient.<sup>3</sup>

Hackney also has the lowest level of car ownership of any local authority in England. Moreover, car ownership has fallen by 23 per cent in a decade – the biggest fall of any English local authority.<sup>4</sup> Overall traffic levels have declined in the last decade or so (in keeping with the trend across London).<sup>5</sup>

All children and young people need time and space in order to enjoy themselves, make friends and explore the world around them. In urban areas their opportunities for play can be severely restricted.

Hackney has a vibrant, well used Play Service. The Council works in partnership with Hackney Play Association and other local providers to support a wide range of play services including adventure playgrounds and holiday play schemes, short breaks, play in parks and in schools.

Interest in street play initiatives is growing throughout the UK, in part as a result of the work of Playing Out, the not-for-profit organisation working to support street play and also since street parties became popular again for the Queen's Jubilee and London Olympics. Based in Bristol but nationwide in scope, Playing Out organised its first road closure in 2009. Playing Out promotes a resident-led model of regular road closures along the lines already described. The group states that as of October 2014, schemes are running in 34 English local authority areas.

In September 2012 Hackney became the first London borough to adopt the Playing Out approach, initially as a result of local residents taking up the idea and campaigning for Hackney Council to adopt a play streets scheme. Residents were supported from the start by HPA and Playing Out. Play streets were viewed as a way to increase outdoor play opportunities and reach more children, with the added potential of building community cohesion.

As of February 2015 the borough has 32 play streets. Hackney's combination of high levels of child obesity, low and falling car ownership, Hackney Council's strategy to make streets more liveable, and open space deficiencies provide a strong rationale for exploring street play as a public health response in the borough.



1 Chief Medical Officer (2013) *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012, Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays*

2 Public Health England, National Child Measurement Programme web pages <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>.

3 Hackney Council (2008) *Social Spaces: A Strategy for Parks in Hackney*; Hackney Council Policy Team (2013) *A Profile of Hackney, its People and Place*.

4 Hackney Council Policy Team (2013) *A Profile of Hackney, its People and Place*; RAC Foundation (2012) *Car ownership rates per local authority in England and Wales*.

5 Transport for London (2012) *Traffic Analysis Centre Traffic Note 1: Traffic levels on major roads in Greater London 1993 – 2010*.

# Evaluation focus and methodology

## Focus

As already stated, this evaluation explored four topics. The first was the programme's reach, in terms of the number of sessions run, the number of children and families that have taken part, and the demographics of the areas where schemes are running (in particular, the extent to which the initiative is reaching disadvantaged areas). The second topic was the perceived benefits of the initiative for children, parents and the wider community, based on the views of some of those most closely involved in schemes. The third was the impact of the schemes on traffic movement. The fourth and final topic was the programme's sustainability and potential for growth. This embraces the support organisers received and the challenges they feel they faced, and also the successes or otherwise in putting into practice each of the three models.

When this evaluation was originally commissioned, the aim had been to find out more about the wider impacts of the initiative. This was to have been done through a form of 'before-and-after' study: gathering quantitative data from parents at baseline (ie the beginning of the programme of sessions) and follow-up (after a number of sessions had been run). As things turned out the majority of new streets came on board towards the end of the project year - between July and October 2014. The delay was partly due to the cyclical nature of residents' interest in street play. Typically most organisers were recruited in springtime and summer.

The delay was exacerbated due to new Department for Transport guidance instructing Hackney (and other London councils) to use a specific piece of legislation to enable play streets in London - this being Section 29 of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulation Act. Using this legislation means councils have to advertise orders twice in a local newspaper - making the scheme more costly and bureaucratic to administer. This led to an administrative change by Hackney Council, introducing four fixed deadlines to process applications in January 2014; until then the Council had processed applications on a rolling basis.

These delays have meant that it has not been possible to gather follow-up data within the evaluation time frame. However, baseline data has been gathered. This leaves open the possibility that follow-up data could be gathered in 2015 when the new streets have become established.

## Methodology

A mixed approach was taken to evaluation. Counts were made of the number of children and families who had taken part in sessions and of the number of vehicles redirected or walked through during first sessions. Similar data was also gathered on a monthly basis going back to September 2013, using an online survey of established scheme organisers



Photo: by Gabrielle De Pauw



conducted in September 2014. This quantitative data shows the reach of the programme, and the amount of traffic disruption it gave rise to. Additional information about the demographics of scheme locations was provided by HPA. The main findings are summarised below, with more detailed statistics given at Appendix 1.

The other evaluation method was to carry out semi-structured telephone interviews with people closely involved in getting local schemes off the ground (referred to as organisers). Handwritten notes were made during the interviews, and these were analysed afterwards to pull out key themes. In all, ten interviews were carried out. Six were with people who were helping to organise schemes in a voluntary, unpaid capacity (typically local residents). Three were with people whose involvement in organising schemes came about as part of their job (as a head teacher, service manager and family support worker). The final interviewee was a playworker directly employed to facilitate play at sessions. Four organisers were involved in residential street schemes, four in school schemes and two in estate schemes. See Appendix 2 for more details about the interviewees, along with the questions asked.

Organisers are well placed to comment on the potential impact of schemes. They had been closely involved with schemes over an extended period, so had extensive direct experience of both the process and the results. However, it should be borne in mind that it was not possible to test the views of organisers about the programme's benefits for children, parents and the wider community against any measurable outcomes. Similarly, their views on the difference the scheme made were not able to be tested directly with the views of children, families or other residents.

# Evaluation results

## Programme reach

29 schemes were active at some point in the 12-month period October 2013 to September 2014, with five more due to start in October 2014. Of these 26 were play streets - made up of five school schemes and 21 residential street schemes. The remaining three were estate schemes. Residential street schemes typically ran monthly (often with a break over the summer) while school schemes typically ran once a term. For estate schemes the frequency of sessions varied, for reasons that are discussed below. Overall, 150 sessions were run.

In this period the programme reached an estimated 1,600 children and 780 families, and gave rise to an estimated 8,140 child-hours of outdoor play. This last statistic is set to increase in the coming year, due to new schemes coming forward in the autumn of 2014. Projecting forward based on actual activity, it is estimated that the scheme could give rise to 13,800 child-hours of outdoor play in the year from October 2014 (see Table 1 below).



The amount of physical activity undertaken by children in the year from October 2013 is roughly equivalent to 14 classes of 30 children taking part in 30 minutes of PE activity a week for a 39-week school year. This comparison assumes that children are as active when playing in the street as they are in a PE lesson – an assumption supported by research.<sup>6</sup> Other research suggests that had it not been for the programme, the children involved would have spent most of their time indoors, and hence been less physically active.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Programme reach in numbers**

	Oct 2013 - Sep 2014	Oct 2014 - Sep 2015 (projected)
Children reached	1,600	1,700
Families reached	780	830
Number of locations	29	31
Sessions run	151	230
Total hours	380	590
Total child-hours	8,140	13,800

6 Mackett R & Paskins J (2008) 'Children's Physical Activity: The Contribution of Playing and Walking.' *Children & Society*, 22(5), pp 345-357.

7 Cooper A, Page A et al (2010) 'Patterns of GPS measured time outdoors after school and objective physical activity in English children: the PEACH project.' *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 7: pp 31-39.

## Demographics

According to HPA, the streets in Hackney where the scheme was first taken up – prior to Sept 2013 – were in the more affluent parts of the borough. Get Hackney Healthy specified one of the aims of the Play Street Project was to specifically target more deprived areas.

Over the following year, the initiative has become more active in more disadvantaged areas. According to HPA four of the five school schemes (Mapledene, Randal Cremer, Shacklewell and Thomas Fairchild) are in areas of deprivation, while the fifth (Princess May) has an above average intake of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Three of the new residential street schemes (Albion Drive, Old Kingshold Estate/Templecombe Road and Arden Estate/Regan Way) have significant proportions of social housing, while three estate schemes were also active at some point in the year (Fields, Wyke and Suffolk).



## Perceived benefits of the scheme

Organisers were without exception committed and enthusiastic about the programme. There was a strong consensus about the social benefits of the initiative. Almost all interviewees pointed to increased social interaction (for children and parents) and to higher levels of neighbourliness. Over half of interviewees felt that street play allowed children to enjoy a wide range of play opportunities, in terms of the variety of activities and/or the greater freedom children could enjoy. The rest of this section looks in more detail at organisers' views on the benefits for children, families and the wider community.

### Perceived benefits for children

Organisers had clear views about the importance of giving children better opportunities for outdoor play. The most significant benefit for children was felt to be the opportunity for social interaction (mentioned by all but one interviewee). Making new friends (including friends who did not go to the same school), and playing with children of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds were all mentioned.

Half of organisers said that they valued the variety of play opportunities on offer. Organisers pointed to the chance to play with bikes and scooters, to practise ball skills, to play creatively (for instance with chinks) and to play traditional games like skipping and hopscotch.

Four of the ten organisers pointed to children's sense of achievement through their play. Several interviews specifically mentioned this in connection with cycling, where a traffic-free street close to home is likely to be an important factor.

Half of organisers pointed to the potential for children to play more freely compared to other places such as school, with sessions giving them the chance to follow their imaginations and test boundaries. At one estate-based scheme supported by a playworker, this freedom led to an imaginative play episode that spread over several sessions.

“At Fields Estate the children only have a very blank rectangle of grass to play on: large but not very inspiring. One week the children discovered that a side gate that is normally locked was unlocked. It led to another communal piece of grass with several trees and a rock garden - much more interesting than where they had been playing before. This sparked a Cinderella-type story, where the new area was the house and the space they had been playing in before was everywhere else. The next week this gate was open again. The game continued from where it left off but grew in complexity due to there being more and different children in attendance. The game spread out. The car park, the old entrance to the public toilet, the gate to the rectangle of grass all became a second house, a council office, a police station, a school and much more. A fly-tipped mattress was a perfect bedroom as the story grew and grew.”

Sarah Wilson, HPA playworker

“It’s great that children can meet other children who live in their street. They can form new friendship groups that reach across different schools and communities. Plus when children play together in their street, they can easily try out new things like cycling or scooting, and learn from having a go with each other’s toys. My daughter got a real sense of achievement when she learnt how to ride a bike in our street, and loved it when she had a go on a friend’s snakeboard.”

Melanie Read, resident organiser

“Children had the chance to play safely with other children in the community. There was more space and freedom in the street than in the Children’s Centre, and more than many families have at home. Children played in a freer and more open way, with lots of running around and socialising. The events have brought the community together, and we have had fantastic feedback from parents.”

Pamela Dushi, Manager, Mapledene Children’s Centre

“Traditional games were very popular: children loved them, and one parent asked ‘where do I buy a skipping rope?’”

Jenny Lewis, Head Teacher, Thomas Fairchild Primary School

## Perceived benefits for parents

Organisers were also asked about the benefits for parents. Almost all thought that parents appreciated the opportunities for social interaction at sessions: meeting neighbours, making new friends, consolidating friendships or simply the chance to chat. Several mentioned that sessions helped to break down barriers between different groups of parents.

Three organisers spoke of how sessions helped to tackle parental anxieties about letting their children play out of doors and to 'demystify' outdoor play. The same number pointed to how the sessions evoked positive memories of childhood play amongst adults, and encouraged adults to be more playful themselves.

**"I know virtually everyone in the road now. It doesn't feel such a scary place, and I am happier to let my children out to play or to call on their friends."**  
Vanessa Linehan, resident organiser

**"Families have connected. One week a parent came down bringing scrap they had at home- large rolls of paper. They brought face paint and another brought some watermelon to share. Three or four parents stayed out and joined in the session. By half way through the session my arms were covered in face paint and each parent present had been painted too. Children painted their own faces, each other's and us. We all shared food. One of the children knocked on their kitchen window on the ground floor and got drinks of water for all and later ice creams for the children. Parents sat together and talked throughout the session. At another session we had skipping rhymes in four different languages."** Sarah Wilson, HPA playworker

**"Seeing children being playful gave permission for adults to be playful too. Some dads said that they had not played like this since they were kids."**  
Lorna Lewis, Claudia Jones Organisation

## Perceived benefits for the wider community

Almost all interviewees thought that their scheme had improved neighbourliness and community contact in their area. Four pointed to practical community action that had taken place as a direct result of schemes being set up, while two mentioned an increase in intergenerational contact. In some cases, the impact was felt to have been dramatic, with schemes the catalyst for other street play initiatives, a street festival, new local social networking group and (in at least two cases) action to improve local public spaces.



**“The scheme has strengthened the sense of community, and has been a stepping stone for other community groups, including a park user group. It is an amazing initiative with the potential to work magic.”** Zoe Eisenstein, resident organiser

**“The scheme has had a huge impact on our road. A local Facebook page has been setup which has led to a lively network of over 80 people giving each other support and advice on things like finding roofers, giving away toys and details of local art activities. Some people without children have helped to steward, and we wanted to reach out to all ages on the road so we joined together to organise a street party.”** Vanessa Linehan, resident organiser

**“I heard one older woman say that it was lovely to hear the sound of children playing - that there was something joyful about it.”** Lorna Lewis, Claudia Jones Organisation

## Impact on traffic


The schemes have had a modest impact on traffic, according to the information provided by organisers. The largest recorded number of vehicles that had been diverted or turned away during a single session was 24. Across all sessions, an average of around nine vehicle disruptions per session was recorded (six vehicle diversions, and three 'walk-throughs', where vehicles are escorted through a session). Hackney Council has received no written complaints from motorists who were diverted as a result of sessions.

## Support received

Organisers agreed that practical support was vital, especially in the early stages of schemes. HPA's play streets coordinator was seen by almost all organisers as an invaluable source of support. Her approach was felt to be enthusiastic and supportive, but also confidence-building, with scheme organisers being encouraged to take on responsibility themselves for making schemes happen.

Organisers specifically mentioned the value of the practical support given around running sessions; guidance on the bureaucracy of consultation and applying for closures; and moral support, encouragement and advice on such issues as dealing with possible concerns. Several organisers also mentioned that the coordinator was always available.

Organisers also appreciated the support from Hackney Council. The only critical comment came from one organiser, who would have liked more clarity about the legal process.



**“Claudia was great at laying out the process and chivvyng people along. She delegated well, which should make things more sustainable.”** Lorna Lewis, Claudia Jones Organisation

**“It has not taken too much effort to get things going. It’s a good model, as long as the support is available. Claudia has been very supportive – we couldn’t have done it without her.”** Kirby Swales, resident organiser

**“Claudia has been fantastic – she’s always there to help. And it’s been great that the Council has been all for it.”** Suzanne McAuslan, PTA member, Thomas Fairchild Primary School

## Challenges faced

There were mixed views about the challenges organisers faced in taking forward schemes. All four of the interviewees who were involved in school schemes stated that there were few if any difficulties (although one mentioned having some difficulty in persuading residents to get involved). By contrast, all four of those involved in street-based schemes said they had problems recruiting enough stewards to run sessions. As stated above, the Playing Out model advises at least two stewards for each entry/exit point, meaning a minimum of four stewards is needed for a typical through-street. However, several schemes operate two stewarding shifts during a session, with each steward doing perhaps an hour or 90 minutes at a time – which obviously generates a further need for stewards.

Two organisers (one from an estate scheme and one from a residential street scheme) had some concerns about the consequences of stepping forward as promoters and/or organisers. One mentioned the sense of responsibility, while another was conscious of the potential change in relationships with neighbours. To a degree, concerns like these might be faced by anyone considering taking social action in their neighbourhood, in whatever context. However, the objections generated by street and estate play schemes can sometimes be strong, given the potential for opposition to outdoor play and hence the possibility of tension and conflict between neighbours. According to Hackney Council, for the 35 play streets processed since the play streets scheme was introduced in September 2012 (as at October 2014), 18 residents have made formal objections through the traffic order consultation process. In two of these cases petitions were drawn up. These figures suggest that a small degree of opposition to individual schemes is likely. The fact that none of the ten organisers interviewed explicitly mentioned problems with conflicts suggests that resident opposition to schemes is rarely an ongoing issue. However, HPA staff note that when occasionally an unpleasant email is received by organisers, it can feel personal.



“I do feel a bit of responsibility to do sessions every week, and suspect that it wouldn’t happen if I didn’t do it.” Abi Davies, resident organiser



## Sustainability and prospects for growth

The programme is leading to schemes that can be sustained over time. Of the 13 residential street schemes running play street sessions in October 2013, all were still active in September 2014, and at least nine had held a minimum of six sessions during the year. Similarly, four out of the five school schemes that started in the autumn of 2013 are ongoing. What is more, as already noted, residential street schemes have spread into areas of disadvantage, while a majority of the school schemes are in disadvantaged areas. While it is too early to make claims about the long-term prospects of schemes, their organisers are generally positive about continuing to hold sessions.

The picture for estate schemes is more mixed. Of the three schemes that were active at some point in the year from October 2013, two (Fields and Wyke) folded. For Fields Estate, it is difficult to make firm claims about the detailed reasons why the scheme did not continue, because it was not possible to interview resident organisers. However, HPA understands that the resident organisers who helped to set up the schemes and run the initial sessions became unwilling or unable to continue. HPA workers reported that support/attendance by other parents and one of the two initial resident organisers waned away after some weeks. This left just one resident organiser in attendance (plus HPA playworker and staff member for a few weeks). This organiser did carry on unsupported for a few further weeks, but she was not able to sustain the sessions over a longer period (although she is looking to help organise a new scheme in a nearby residential street).

With the Wyke Estate, no resident organiser was identified prior to sessions starting. The aim was to try to recruit a parent through the sessions themselves who would eventually continue to organise sessions – but this did not materialise. The scheme was organised via a partnership with the Wentworth Children’s Centre, located near to the estate, whose staff also attempted to directly engage centre users and helped with promotion. According to HPA, the Centre was keen to get involved as a way of promoting outdoor play, and also because few parents from the Wyke Estate currently use their services, though their data shows there are many families with children under five living there. Once up and running, the sessions were poorly attended. HPA thinks this was partly down to the hidden location of the play space, and partly due to adverse weather during the month the sessions started.



## Strengths and weaknesses of each model

It is clear that individual residential street schemes can be set up at low cost, and maintained - as long as there are enough volunteers to organise and steward sessions, and good support through the development process. A strong three-way partnership has been developed between Hackney Council, Hackney Play Association and groups of local residents. Hackney Council has created a robust, workable process for dealing with applications. HPA has supported emerging groups of residents to find out what is involved, build up support and (where appropriate) apply to Hackney Council. Residents have led the development process in their street/s and largely succeeded in managing the ongoing practicalities of running sessions. All three partners have also had a role in promoting schemes.

A similar three-way partnership is in place in school-based schemes - in this case between the school/setting, Hackney Council and HPA. Again, this evaluation has shown that the model is viable and sustainable, where the school/setting is able to take on the organisation and stewarding of sessions. One additional benefit of the school model is that it can help to promote street play more widely, because of the numbers of parents who take part and their wider geographical spread. In Hackney, several people who took on roles as promoters and/or organisers first found out about the scheme through attending school-based sessions.

**“The Mapledene October session enabled me to make contact with two of the parents who went on to do the estate play sessions. Also there are a further three parents who may become organisers in the long run - who live in estates - recruited via the Shacklewell and Princess May sessions.”** Claudia Draper, HPA Play Streets Coordinator

The estate model - aiming to support outdoor play in shared amenity spaces - has proved to be harder to sustain. It appears that the challenge is not generating interest from residents, but building on this interest so that schemes can get started and maintain their activity. HPA staff also picked up some reports that some Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TRA) were felt to be unsupportive, in part due to fears about potential complaints from TRA members about aspects of the children's play during sessions. HPA is currently working in partnership with Claudia Jones Organisation to develop new ways of working with parents in estates, with support from Hackney Council and Sanctuary Housing. It would be helpful to explore further the challenges faced in estate schemes.

# Conclusions

This evaluation shows that the Hackney Play Streets Programme has succeeded in establishing street play as a regular feature in the lives of a significant number of children and families in Hackney. The programme has:

- Led to 380 hours of sessions in 29 locations that have reached around 1,600 children and nearly 800 families.
- Been directly responsible for over 8,100 child-hours of increased levels of physical activity – on a par with 14 additional classes of weekly term-time PE lessons. Projecting forward, this figure could rise to 13,800 child-hours in the year from October 2014<sup>8</sup>.
- Spread beyond its initial pattern of the more affluent parts of Hackney to reach a broader demographic spread, including areas of disadvantage.
- Built an effective three-way partnership between Hackney Council, Hackney Play Association and groups of residents to increase opportunities for street play.
- Created a highly valued source of practical support in the form of the play streets coordinator based at HPA.
- Developed a sustainable model for improving opportunities for street play, with significant potential for growth.
- Revealed a strong consensus amongst organisers about the perceived benefits of the scheme for children, families and communities – especially in terms of social interaction, but also as a way to expand children’s freedom and choice in their play.
- Harnessed support, energy, time and resources from parents, residents, schools/early years settings and local voluntary organisations.
- Uncovered significant interest from schools, early years settings and voluntary and community organisations in the idea of street play.
- Shown that residential road closures for street play have a low impact on traffic movements, and that while a range of resident concerns can arise in the development phase, it is rare for schemes to lead to ongoing conflict or opposition.
- Revealed challenges in applying the approach in estate contexts and when attempting to move on from playworker-facilitated sessions.



The programme has the potential to build on this experience and reach many more children and families across the borough. In making decisions about the development of the programme, this evaluation points to three areas where further work may be needed. The most significant is to explore different strategies for engaging and supporting residents and estate management bodies in developing sustainable schemes on housing estates. It would also be helpful to explore ways to address problems with recruiting stewards for sessions. Finally, it would be valuable to explore the scope for carrying out more robust before-and-after evaluations on the wider impact of schemes, building on the baseline data already collected.

<sup>8</sup> This does not take into account any wider increase in children’s physical activity levels that may have arisen outside of the sessions, but as a direct result of them. As noted above, there is evidence from organisers that some children are playing out of doors more outside of the sessions.

# Acknowledgements

The researcher and Hackney Play Association would like to thank all the organisers who agreed to be interviewed. We are very grateful to work in partnership with Hackney Council and for its significant support and funding for the initiative across Hackney. We would also like to acknowledge Hackney Homes for the support it has given with consultation and publicity in estates; Sanctuary Housing for its financial support for the scheme at Old Kingshold Estate; and Playing Out, Play England and the Department of Health for their wider work in taking forward play streets and similar schemes.



# Appendix 1: Statistics for schemes

## Residential street schemes

Scheme	Aden Gr N16	Albion Dr E8	Chesholm Rd N16	Digby Cres N4
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	0	1	4	2
Session length	N/A	6	3	3
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	N/A	6	12	6
Average children attending	N/A	70	18	15
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	N/A	315	158	68
Child reach	N/A	70	22	18
Family reach	N/A	60	17	8
Average vehicles diverted	N/A	0	6	2
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Durlston Rd E5	Fletching Rd E5	Glenarm Rd E5	Gloucester Dr N4
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	4	10	7	0
Session length	3	2	2	N/A
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	12	20	14	N/A
Average children attending	15	20	25	N/A
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	135	300	263	N/A
Child reach	18	24	30	N/A
Family reach	8	10	12	N/A
Average vehicles diverted	5	3	N/A	N/A
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Heron Dr N4	Kynaston Rd N16	Lavers Rd N16	Leswin Rd N16
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	11	2	6	3
Session length	3	3	3	2
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	33	6	18	6
Average children attending	17	35	25	30
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	421	158	338	135
Child reach	20	42	30	36
Family reach	7	17	15	15
Average vehicles diverted	24	N/A	14	N/A
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Listria Park / Martaban Rd N16	Mayola Rd E5	Mehetabel Rd E9	Middleton Rd E8
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	7	0	1	0
Session length	3.4	N/A	3	N/A
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	24	N/A	3	N/A
Average children attending	30	N/A	20	N/A
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	532	N/A	45	N/A
Child reach	36	N/A	20	N/A
Family reach	20	N/A	10	N/A
Average vehicles diverted	23	N/A	N/A	N/A
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Approved but not yet active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.



## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Oldfield Rd/ Painsthorpe Rd N16	Poole Rd E9	Regan Way/ Arden Estate N1	Roding Rd E5
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	5	3	0	9
Session length	2.5	2	N/A	3
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	13	6	N/A	27
Average children attending	34	30	N/A	40
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	319	135	N/A	810
Child reach	42	36	N/A	48
Family reach	25	17	N/A	25
Average vehicles diverted	13	2	N/A	4
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Southborough Rd E9	Sydner Rd N16	Templecombe Rd/Old Kingshold Estate E9	Walsingham Rd E5
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	20	0	2	1
Session length	2	N/A	4.5	3
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	40	N/A	9	3
Average children attending	9	N/A	35	46
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	270	N/A	236	104
Child reach	12	N/A	48	46
Family reach	6	N/A	12	25
Average vehicles diverted	5	N/A	6	2
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Residential street schemes (continued)

Scheme	Warneford Rd E9	Winston Rd N16	Yoakley Rd N16
Type	Residential street	Residential street	Residential street
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	1	8	8
Session length	2	3	3
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	2	24	24
Average children attending	30	45	40
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	45	810	720
Child reach	30	54	48
Family reach	15	20	25
Average vehicles diverted	7	16	15
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## School schemes

Scheme	Mapledene Rd E8	Princess May School N16	Randal Cremer E2	Shacklewell School E8	Thomas Fairchild School N1
Type	School	School	School	School	School
No. of sessions Oct 13-Sep 14	3	3	1	1	2
Session length	2	2	1.5	2	1.5
Total hours Oct 13-Sep 14	6	4	1.5	2	3
Average children attending	95	125	50	150	180
Total child-hours Oct 13-Sep 14	429	375	56.3	225	405
Child reach	170	180	50	150	270
Family reach	112	75	30	75	112
Average vehicles diverted	5	N/A	10	0	N/A
Status as at Oct 14	Active	Active	Inactive	Active	Active

See the end of Appendix 1 for notes on the calculations of child reach, family reach, child-hours and vehicles diverted.

## Estate schemes

Scheme	Fields (E8)	Suffolk (E8)	Wyke (E9)
Type	Estate	Estate	Estate
No. of sessions Oct 13–Sep 14	12	10	4
Session length	2.5	2.4	1.5
Total hours Oct 13–Sep 14	30	24	6
Average children attending	9	7	3
Total child-hours Oct 13–Sep 14	201	122	12
Child reach	18	17	4
Family reach	5	5	4
Status as at Oct 14	Inactive	Active (weather dependent)	Inactive

## Notes on calculations

### Child reach

This figure is 120% of the highest attendance figure for any session. For instance, the highest figure at Mapledene Road was 142, so the reach is 120% of 142 or 170. The rationale for this formula is that it recognises that the same children do not take part in every session.

### Family reach

This figure, provided by organisers, is an estimate of the number of families who have ever taken part in a session.

### Child-hours

This figure is calculated using the formula (average no. of children attending) x (total hours) x 75%. The rationale for this formula is that it recognises that not all children attend the whole of a session, although most do stay for the majority of a session.

### Average vehicles diverted

This figure is the sum of two average figures estimated by organisers: number of vehicles turned away, and number of vehicles walked through the road.

## Appendix 2: Interviewees and interview questions

### Interviewees

Name	Scheme/s	Type of scheme	Role
Abi Davies	Suffolk Estate E8	Estate	Resident organiser
Pamela Dushi	Mapledene Rd E8	School	Manager, Mapledene & Queensbridge Children's Centre
Zoe Eisenstein	Roding Road E5	Residential Street	Resident organiser
Jenny Lewis	Thomas Fairchild Primary School N1	School	Head Teacher
Lorna Lewis	Princess May School N16	School	Family Support worker, Claudia Jones Organisation
Vanessa Linehan	Winston Road N16	Residential Street	Resident organiser
Suzanne McLausan	Thomas Fairchild Primary School N1	School	PTA member
Mel Read	Heron Drive N4	Residential Street	Resident organiser
Kirby Swales	Poole Road E9	Residential Street	Resident organiser
Sarah Wilson	Fields (E8), Suffolk (E8) and Wyke (E9) estates	Estate	HPA Playworker

### Questions asked

- What did the children gain from taking part in sessions?
- What did the families gain from taking part?
- What did you gain from taking part?
- What difference do you think the sessions have made to the street/estate?
- What support have you had from HPA/Hackney Council? What (if anything) did you find most helpful? What else might have been helpful?
- What has been the biggest challenge?



Photo: By Sean Pollock



For more information on the Hackney Play Streets programme, email:  
[nicola.butler@hackneyplay.org](mailto:nicola.butler@hackneyplay.org) or [nick.jackson@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:nick.jackson@hackney.gov.uk)

Go to: [www.hackneyplay.org/street-play](http://www.hackneyplay.org/street-play) and  
[www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets)

Hackney Play Association, Charity No. 1145960