



Guidance on running a school play street

Easy print version

About us

Hackney Play Association is an east London charity that aims to improve children and young people’s health, wellbeing and quality of life, through play. We coordinate the Hackney Play Streets project, promoting the idea across the borough and offering free support to anyone who wants to get involved. As well as our work on play streets, we offer inclusive play services including Homerton Grove adventure playground, Clapton Park play & youth project, and playworker training.

Hackney Council works in partnership with voluntary sector organisations to support a wide range of local play services including adventure playgrounds and holiday play schemes, short breaks, play in parks and in schools. The Council’s ‘Get Hackney Healthy’ Board commissioned Hackney Play Association to deliver an ongoing Play Streets project as part of a programme of interventions to improve children’s health and wellbeing, and to combat childhood obesity. Play Streets are a way of reaching even more children and providing them with more outdoor play opportunities.

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Background

All children need time and space to play in order to enjoy themselves, make friends and explore the world around them. It is widely recognised that regular opportunities to play outside are important for children's health and wellbeing, learning and creativity. Child obesity and decreasing levels of physical activity are high on the public health agenda¹ and experts recognize that regular opportunities to play outside are fundamental to long term health outcomes. Nowadays, children's opportunities for play can be severely restricted and most children do not get to play out near their home.

- A 2007 poll found that 71% of adults played out on their street every day when they were youngsters, compared to only 21% of children.²
- A 2013 poll of 3,000 children, parents and adults showed that danger from traffic is perceived as the main barrier to outside play - children (35%) and adults (53%).³

Interest in street play initiatives has been growing throughout the UK in the last five years, in part as a result of the work of Playing Out⁴ based in Bristol, which promotes a resident-led model of regular road closures stewarded by volunteers, called 'playing out sessions' or 'play streets'.

How play streets work

- Play streets are short road closures, which enable children to play in their street more safely and bring adults together too.
- Volunteers organise them - usually residents living in the street.
- With school play streets, parents or school staff organise the sessions.
- Session typically last between one and three hours. They can take place weekly, monthly, or once a quarter on a weekday or at weekends.
- Councils usually provide the 'Road Closed' signage.

School play streets

Hackney schools were the first in the UK to run school hosted play streets. Thomas Fairchild School in Hoxton trailblazed the idea back in 2013. Since then several more Hackney primary schools have taken part, and the idea has spread to neighbouring boroughs with a few schools in Islington and Camden involved too.

Acknowledgment

The Hackney Play Streets 'Guidance on running a school play street' tailors the 'playing out' model of road closures for play to meet the particular requirements of schools. It is based on Hackney Play Association's work supporting 10 schools and children's centres/nurseries to run play streets from 2013-16. Hackney Council has funded the work.

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

² Playday 2007 poll

³ Playday 2013 poll

⁴ Playing Out is a community interest company supporting anyone who wants children to play out www.playingout.net

Great reasons for schools to run play streets

1. Children need to play for their health, wellbeing and happiness. A child's right to play is enshrined by the UN Convention⁵ on the Rights of the Child.
2. Play streets are low cost and relatively easy to run with instant paybacks.
3. Play streets increase the sense of community say participants - and help school staff build stronger links with parents and children.
4. Playing in the street makes children happy in the here and now and enables them to let off steam. This is of particular importance in an era of increasing concern about children's mental health in the UK.⁶
5. Street play increases the activity level of children⁷ - important when the dangers of sedentary lifestyles and rising childhood obesity dominate the public health agenda.
6. Shutting the street prevents parents driving and parking outside the school on that day and this ties in well with schools wishing to encourage active transport - that is more children walking or cycling to school.
7. School play street sessions model the benefits of outdoor play to families and demonstrate how a few simple toys (e.g. chalk and a skipping rope) can facilitate play.
8. Streets are the hub of communities and constitute vital public space in cities:
"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," Playing Out⁸

⁵ Unicef: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

⁶ 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 - 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder - or around three children in every class. Source: Young Minds

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/policy/mental_health_statistics

⁷ Bristol University Outdoors and Active Evidence Briefing, (March 2015)

<http://playingout.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Bristol-University-Outdoors-And-Active-Evidence-Briefing.pdf>

⁸ Playing Out, 10 Good Reasons <http://playingout.net/why/10-good-reasons/>

First hand experiences

Head teacher Jenny Lewis, formerly head teacher at Thomas Fairchild School in Hackney and now at Thornhill Primary School in Islington says:

“Our parents group ran a play street at my previous school in Hackney and we’ve now started doing it here at Thornhill. The really special thing is the way it brings out the playful side in everyone – children and adults alike. We often see parents showing off their skipping or football skills and passing them onto their children. We also find it brings together parents from different social and ethnic backgrounds enabling them to mix in a way they might not normally do. It’s been a really positive thing to do and I’d really encourage other schools to get involved.”

Head teacher Karen Law, from William Patten School in Hackney says:

“The children are always hugely excited when we announce that a play street is happening! They can play freely and safely in areas that are not typically available to them and they can meet and play with other children who might not come to our school. They have also enjoyed playing traditional activities, such as French skipping and Tug o’ war. It is also an opportunity for parents to take time out and get to know each other. Sometimes pick up at 3.30pm can be a very busy part of the day and parents don’t get the time to talk to each other. Parents can also talk to staff in an informal setting, thereby strengthening and building relationships.”

Parent Anthea Anka, member of Thornhill School PTFA says:

“It enables the children to have the freedom to feel as if they can break the rules a bit and abandon the usual routine. There is a definite liberation in being able to play in the street and this is something that children ordinarily do not have. It is also a great opportunity for everyone to catch up, socialise and engage with their children in a fun and relaxed setting... There are so many positives and so much fun to be had, and as far as an activity for a school to put on, it is very low maintenance and easy, yet the rewards are immense.”

Pamela Dushi, Manager of the Mapledene & Queensbridge Children’s Centre says:

“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 socializing. The events have brought the community together and we have had fantastic feedback from parents.”

Mariana Toulechkova, Playgroup Manager at the Finsbury Park Homeless Families project, says:

“Children and families are a central part in our work assisting families in crisis – and because we know how hard it is to find a safe space for children to play, in London when homeless families are often housed in small cramped temporary accommodation – we went out on the street to play.”

Talk to a head teacher who’s done it!

Head teacher Karen Law of William Patten School is happy to be contacted by other schools. Email: klaw@williampatten.hackney.sch.uk

How to start a school play street

Step 1: Consultation

Get the head teacher's backing. The first and very important first step is to talk to the head teacher about the idea. It's really crucial that the head teacher is engaged and supportive as this sets the tone for the rest of the school.

Consult with parents to explain the idea, answer questions, and galvanize support – ideally both face to face and in writing. This could be done via informal coffee mornings, parents committee meetings and a letter or email to parents.

Consult with staff to get their views and hopefully build enthusiasm – e.g. via a staff meeting. The play street may impact staff personally (e.g. if they drive) and they may have questions. Involve the children to see what they think. There are short fun videos you could show in assembly e.g. at www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets and www.playingout.net - and introduce the idea in the school newsletter or at school council.

Consult with residents. Councils normally stipulate that before applying formally you must consult with neighbouring residents/businesses in the street you wish to shut. Look at your council's play streets web page to see what is required. In some areas (e.g. Hackney and Islington) organisers must provide a petition of names in support.

Schools usually consult by means of a letter drop and a door knock of residents and businesses in the street. Ideally, you would get a few parents to help do this. See Appendix 1 for an example letter or download: www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/tools-for-schools

Why face-to-face consultation is best

We find that if you present the idea personally, most residents usually react positively or neutrally to the idea. A door knock is also a great way of helping a school connect with its neighbours.

Of course not everyone will like the idea. A typical street receives one or two objections and people may have reservations and questions. Be prepared to listen to concerns and answer queries. There is a really helpful Q&A addressing common concerns in the Playing Out manual, available at www.playingout.net/useful-stuff Your council may provide a template consultation letter in the application pack. If so, we recommend adding a friendlier covering letter to this which is on school letterhead – as per Appendix 1: Example consultation letter.

Some schools hold a meeting for residents and parents to discuss the idea and this is another valuable way to give people a chance to ask questions and get involved.

Things to consider as you consult

Frequency and timing: How often do you want to run play streets – e.g. monthly, bi-monthly or maybe once a term. We advise applying for a regular recurring date, such as 1st Friday of the month in January, March, May, July, September, October, December. Think about the dates really carefully as it can be very expensive for councils to make changes, and some will not allow date changes once the play street order has been approved. Islington Council, for example, provides permanent on-street signage listing the recurring dates - so changes are not permissible.

With timing, most schools opt for Fridays directly after pick up time e.g. 3.30-5.30pm, but you could do it on other days. We advise applying for the closure to start 15-30 minutes before the school day ends, to give stewards time to set up the closures and be in position well in advance of the children coming out. Note most local authorities limit play street sessions to a maximum of three hours per session.

Location of closure: If your school is accessible via several streets, choose the street with the least traffic movement. Also, it may not be necessary to shut the entire street road; shorter sections of about 30-40 metres work well. Councils will not usually consider play street applications for 'A' roads or bus routes. Ask the council for advice on location of the proposed closure.

Collect signatures on petition: If your council requests signatures in support of your application, collect these as you consult. Usually it's only residents who live in the street whose signatures will count. Where a petition is required, it's worth putting in a bit of time to get as many signatures as you can. It puts you in face-to-face contact with residents and helps to build goodwill. In addition, if the council receives any objections, a strong petition demonstrates that overall there is good support.

Sign up volunteers: The more help you get the better, and the more fun it'll be! The key jobs are: doing the door knock/collecting residents' signatures, chatting to parents in the playground informally and generally spreading the word, organising publicity and putting up flyers in the run-up to the play street, as well as stewarding on the day.

Step 2: Applying to the council

Once you've consulted and built up strong support then you are ready to apply to your council by completing the application form, usually available on the council website, and providing any additional required documents. Keep a copy of the application pack. Councils will have different ways of processing the applications. Some allow a few weeks to see if any objections come in, before advertising the order twice in local press. A few councils take extra steps - for example doing their own online or paper consultation.

Step 3: Preparing to run your play street

Once you receive approval for your play street – it's time to start planning your first session. We offer a special schools pack of downloadable resources to help your play streets run as smoothly as possible – go to www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/tools-for-schools. Examples are included in the Appendix. You will also find materials, advice and further resources at: www.playingout.net

Here are the key things to do in the run up to the play street (two to four weeks) and of course on the big day itself. Enlist help with tasks wherever you can – it's much more fun that way. Please also see a checklist of key jobs in Appendix 2.

Tell us

If you're in Hackney, we'll try to make it along to support you. We will also provide you with a start-up pack including stewarding equipment (high-viz and whistles). Email: playstreets@hackneyplay.org. If you are not in Hackney we'd still be happy to hear from you and may be able to offer tips or help with particular queries.

Publicise to parents, children and staff

Put up posters around the school, and publicise in all the usual ways – e.g. in the school newsletter, via email and texts to parents, school website, parents meetings etc. See Appendix 3 – example parents letter. If you're in Hackney you can use our templates for posters and flyers. Playing Out offers flyers and posters you can download freely at: www.playingout.net - or you may wish to create your own. Some schools run a competition for pupils to design posters. We'd love to see them if you do!

It's a good idea to laminate and make them not date specific – e.g. say 'This Friday' - so you can reuse them each time. Find example posters here: www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/handy-tools and www.playingout.net/useful-stuff

Any publicity materials should make clear that parents/carers remain responsible for their children during the play session, e.g. 'During the play street, parents/carers remain responsible for their children as on any other day. You must stay to supervise your child.'

Talk to the children in assembly about how the closure will work and explain they can bring in scooters or bikes if they wish. Flag up the key safety information and explain the process for walking cars in/out. Tell children to listen out for instructions from stewards. It's also a great idea to remind staff at your staff meeting and invite them to get involved if they wish to. At many schools, teachers and teaching assistants have volunteered to help and have really enjoyed the experience.

Tell residents

You must let all residents in the street know that the play street is happening ideally a week or two beforehand. You can use flyers or letters through letterboxes as well as posters in windows or on lampposts. If you do post a reminder, you could list all the year's play streets dates. See example letter in Appendix 4.

Managing safety

As the organiser of a play street, you are responsible for running the play street sessions. We recommend taking the following steps:

Order signs from your council

Contact your council to arrange delivery of your 'Road Closed' signs and traffic cones (if provided). Most streets need two 'Road Closed' signs and for many roads it's good to have 'Road Ahead Closed' signs too. These should be placed ahead of the closure point to warn drivers ahead of the actual closure. In Hackney, the Council's Streetscene team will sort these out for you and advise: Email: streetworks@hackney.gov.uk

Usually councils also send out public order notices ahead of the session, which should be affixed to lampposts at the closure points. Some local authorities have different arrangements - so contact your council to find out local arrangements.

Do a risk/benefit assessment and street walkabout

Whilst it is impossible to eliminate all risk, it is important to consider all potential hazards and how you will manage them. You can use our risk/benefit template to help – see Appendix 6. Many experts on childhood now recognise that risk taking in play is beneficial for children. Accidents happen in play streets as they do in parks, playgrounds and streets on any normal day. The most serious risk to manage is that presented by cars entering at speed. Having stewards who follow the procedures around stewarding minimises this risk – see information on stewarding below. Each time you do a play street you should review your risk/benefit assessment to reflect on any new risks and any lessons learned.

As part of the risk/benefit assessment, do a street walkabout to assess the geography (e.g. are there any small turnings or carparks for flats from where cars might try to exit that will need stewarding). Also on the day itself do another street walkabout and ask your stewards to help check for any dangerous objects or hazards in the street. If you wish to read up further about the risk/benefit assessment see Tim Gill's website: <http://rethinkingchildhood.com>.

Read our 'Guidance on stewarding a play street'

Download the stewarding guidance here: www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/tools-for-schools and find it in Appendix 7. As organiser, you need to know this protocol and be confident in briefing others on what to do.

Recruit stewards

You need to recruit parents and/or staff to help with stewarding on the day. There has to be two people at each end of the street to divert through traffic and escort residents' vehicles through at 5mph - once children have been cleared from the road. We recommend having one extra floating steward. Stewards should be responsible adults and able to give the role their full attention. We advise that stewards are not looking after young children (e.g. those under 6) at the same time as stewarding. Circulate the stewarding guidance to all stewards ahead of the day.

Order in high-viz tops and whistles for stewards

Order in high-viz tops and whistles for stewards (unless provided by the council or a supporting organisation). Store it all in a plastic box along with copies of the stewarding guidance, to give out on the day.

Put reminders/ flyers on parked cars

Put reminders on parked cars (example in Appendix 5) a day or two before the session.

Hold a stewards briefing

Each time you run a play street, arrange to meet and brief your stewards 30 minutes before it starts. At the briefing you will give out high-viz and whistles, plus the stewarding guidance note, talk through how the stewarding should be done and answer any questions from your stewards.

Display signage

You must display the 'Road Closed' signs provided by your council. We also recommend requesting 'Road Ahead Closed' signs to give further notice for drivers. Some councils provide extra safety equipment – e.g. road cones. Set up the road closure points at least 15 minutes before school ends, so you are not rushing and so that everything is in place before the children come out. Doing it early will also help prevent too many parents parking in the area and needing to be stewarded out during the play street.

Reminders to parents

Any publicity (e.g. on street posters, emails to parents, articles) should make clear that parents remain responsible for their children as on any other day. We suggest you use this wording or something similar on all communications about the event.

First Aid

Have a First Aid box/point available in case of minor accidents and ensure stewards know where to direct children and parents as part of your stewards briefing.

Other things to consider

Play equipment and refreshments

Schools usually provide some play equipment - simple things that are used at playtimes – such as chalk, hula-hoops, bat and balls, soft footballs and skipping ropes. Beyond this, there's no need to organise games or anything special to entertain the children. They will do the rest for themselves and will enjoy coming up with their own fun.

If you do have volunteers who want to organise extra add-on activities then that's brilliant too, so long as children can choose whether to join in and adults are supporting, rather than leading the activity. Examples have included parachute games, setting up table tennis tables and giant board games in the street. One Islington school teamed up with their local play association who supported some fantastic 'loose parts' play.

You might choose to offer some light refreshments but again this is not essential. We do recommend having some jugs of water and plastic cups, especially in hot weather. Sometimes parents sell cakes, fruit or lollies to raise funds for the PTFA and these are sure to go down a treat and add to the community feel!

Photography

Find a volunteer to take photos. Ahead of the session, they will need to talk to the school about their photography permissions policy and how the photos will be used. Some of the schools we've worked with sent a note to parents informing them photos will be taken, asking them to inform the school office if they don't wish their children to be photographed.

Toilets

Have a plan for toilet access - if this is via school then you may need to have a member of staff available to let children in.

Finishing up

Give parents and children lots of staged warnings (blowing whistles and shouting out) before stewards reopen the street so as to ensure that anyone left on the pavements is aware that cars will be coming through.

We recommend having a buffer zone period of around 10 to 15 minutes between ending the session/clearing people from the street and the time when stewards physically reopen the street to traffic. See our stewarding guidance in Appendix 7 for full information on the reopening process. Another useful cue is to hand out dustbin bags in the last five minutes or so of the session and encourage everyone to help clear rubbish and collect up toys.

Debrief and learning for next time

Doing a debrief with your stewards on the day might be tricky – understandably they may just want to get home to feed the kids! So the day after the session you can email all your stewards thanking them for their help, sharing any photos and asking for any feedback and learning points.

Post event publicity

Write up a short article or ask students to do so for the newsletter and website and use photos too. Local media may be interested – particularly if school play streets are a first in your area. See an example press release in Appendix 8.

Get tips from others and share yours ideas too!

If in Hackney, please join the Hackney Playing Out Facebook group and there is also the national Playing Out group - a great source of peer support.

Frequently asked questions

1. How long will the consultation and application phase take?

Most schools take around a month to consult. Once you've submitted your application, it varies how long councils take to process things, but it is usually between 6-8 weeks.

2. What if my council doesn't have a play streets policy?

Where there isn't a policy, in the short term you could try applying to run one-off play street under the street party process. If you wish to campaign for a policy - then contact Playing Out www.playingout.net who offer a really comprehensive 'local activators guide'. If in London, you could also contact London Play, www.londonplay.org.

We at Hackney Play Association would also be happy to offer some tips based on our experiences. In addition, the charity Play England www.playengland.org offers briefings on the benefits of street play, which are useful for influencing policy-makers.

3. Are DBS checks needed for stewards?

To our knowledge enhanced DBS checks (disclosure and barring checks) are not needed for people stewarding play streets. This is because the stewards' role is about managing traffic. They are there to make sure the space is as safe as possible; they are not responsible for children and are not providing childcare. Furthermore, the stewarding role is occasional and does not involve unsupervised access to children. You must make clear on all publicity that parents are responsible for their own children.

4. Should the school take out public liability insurance for the play street?

We are not lawyers or insurance experts, so we recommend you take advice on this area. To our knowledge many councils recommend - but do not insist - that play street organisers take out public liability insurance. This is the case in Hackney and Bristol, for example.

It is our understanding that as the organiser you take on liability for the safe running of the play street session. This means you are responsible for assessing risks ahead and on the day itself, and you take steps to manage these; that stewards are briefed and safety equipment (e.g. road signs) and procedures are in place. An example of a risk/benefit assessment for a play street is included in Appendix 5 of this guidance.

Schools or PTFAs will usually have Public Liability insurance and you may wish to consider adding play streets to this insurance policy.

On this subject, the national organisation Playing Out advises:

"We are not lawyers but we have sought advice from lawyers and it seems that the liability situation is slightly uncertain. It is best to get advice on this from your council and also look at the FAQs on our website for more explanation. 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. Our main advice is that you take good care, prepare well and encourage everyone to be sensible and

respectful about other people and their property. In all publicity and on the day, please remind parents that playing out sessions are not 'risk-free' and that they are still ultimately responsible for their own children's safety, both during and after the sessions." Playing Out manual – Feb 2015.

5. What if the weather is bad?

With our climate, this could well happen! Children generally don't mind a bit of rain or colder weather; if they are dressed appropriately it can be great fun. If there are extremes of weather; e.g. really hot or freezing/ snowy conditions – then you should reflect this in your risk/benefit assessment. One option if the weather isn't great could be to simply shorten the session. In the case of really bad weather, plan for who will make the final call and when, and how you'll advise parents if it's cancelled.

6. What if anyone makes trouble?

This is really rare but it's good to have a plan for this and also have someone who can assist. Having a senior school staff member prepared to help with such situations is really helpful. We know of one instance where a parent organiser had to deal with a very drunk individual who was causing problems in the street just as the children were coming out to play.

In such a scenario, it would be a matter of considering your own safety and that of those around you, getting back-up from another adult and asking the person politely but firmly to move on or stop the troublesome behaviour. You would tell parents to take charge of their children and to move away if necessary. If the person remained uncooperative and causing safety issues, then call the police – 999 if an emergency or 101 if not an emergency. Some schools have invited community safety officers from the local police to attend play streets, which has worked really well.

7. What if children/parents from other schools join in?

The play street takes place in a public space with children and adults passing through and sometimes joining in - but in our experience this does not cause any problems; it can in fact be a really nice way for children from different schools to mix. So long as you limit the publicity it's unlikely you will get lots of extra people turning up.

8. My school has an after-school play centre/childcare? What happens here?

Talk to the after-school staff as part of the consultation so they can form a plan around it. The ideal scenario is enabling all children to join in if they want to. Of course this will involve the club staff getting up-front permission from parents and working out the supervision ratios – but it's all doable so long as it's planned for.

With one school, for example, all the after-school children took part and wore their club T-shirts to make them more easily identifiable. The after-school staff said it was one of the best ever sessions.

Thank you

Thank you to the schools and children's centres that have run play streets so far, for sharing your experiences and for your contributions to this document. In Hackney the following have taken part: De Beauvoir School, Finsbury Park Homeless Families Project, Lauriston School, Mapledene and Queensbridge Children's Centre, Princess May School, Randal Cremer School, Shacklewell School, Thomas Fairchild School and William Patten School. Also in Islington, thanks to Thornhill School.

Thank you to Hackney Council for funding the Hackney Play Streets project - and supporting children's opportunities to play outside regularly, for their health, happiness and wellbeing.

Further information and support

Hackney Play Streets Email: Playstreets@hackneyplay.org, Tel. 020 8525 7932

Hackney Council Email: streetworks@hackney.gov.uk

School contact: Head teacher Karen Law of William Patten Primary School

Email klaw@williampatten.hackney.sch.uk

Links:

www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets - more info and free downloads

www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets - with a map of all Hackney's play streets

www.playingout.net - FAQs highly recommended and lots of other useful free tools

www.londonplay.org - support and guidance on play streets

Appendix 1: Example residents consultation letter

Adapt for consultation with residents/businesses in street. You can also adapt to use with parents. Print on school headed paper

Dear Neighbour,

Parents and staff at [NAME OF SCHOOL] are considering running ‘play streets’ in [INSERT NAME OF ROAD]. This would give our pupils and local children the chance to play together freely and have fun in the street for around [INSERT NO. OF HOURS/MINUTES] after the school day ends, as well as giving parents and residents a chance to meet and chat too.

We wish to apply to run up to [INSERT PROPOSED NUMBER} of these sessions per year. The proposed dates are on the attached notice.

During play streets – also known as playing out sessions - residents who need access can still come in and out in their cars, driving at 5mph and escorted by a steward. Through traffic is diverted. The road closure points would be stewarded by parent or school staff volunteers, and parents will remain responsible for their children at all times during the session.

We are trying to talk to as many people in the street as possible about the idea. If we’ve missed you today and you are interested in finding out more, or have any concerns, or wish to express your support, please contact us.

[USE DELETE AS APPROPRIATE] We are also holding a meeting in the school on [INSERT TIME/DATE] when you can come along and find out more and ask questions.

Find out more about how play streets work in a short 3-minute film at www.hackneyplay.org/play-streets and also find out about the national Playing Out movement at www.playingout.net

Yours sincerely

[INSERT NAME OF HEAD TEACHER] [INSERT NAME OF PARENTS REP]
Headteacher PTFA Chair/member

[INSERT CONTACT DETAILS – EMAIL/PHONE]

Appendix 2: Quick checklist on running a school play street

This checklist applies once you have received formal approval from your council to run play street session

Lead up to your session:

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- Join the national Playing Out Facebook group, or the Hackney Playing Out one (if in Hackney) – sources of peer support
- Recruit helpers for lead-up jobs and stewards for the day
- Order signs (and cones where provided) from the council
- Read ‘Guidance on stewarding a play street’ – Appendix 6
- Do a risk benefit assessment and street walkabout
- Get high-viz bibs and whistles together and copies of ‘Guidance on stewarding a play street’ and keep all in one big plastic box
- Publicise on the street with flyers and send a reminder letter to residents (at least five days before)
- Publicise to parents, children and staff – in the week leading up
- Put notices on parked cars (a day or two before the session)

On the day:

-
- Send a reminder text to parents in the morning
- Bring out your box of stewarding gear plus ‘Road Closed’ signs (and cones if using)
- Do a stewards briefing 30 minutes before you start and hand out ‘Guidance on stewarding a play street’
- Give stewards high-viz and whistles to wear
- Do a street walkabout to check for and remove hazards
- Get stewards to set up ‘Road Closed’ signage and any additional equipment provided by council (e.g. cones) at least 15 minutes before children come out
- Have a First Aid kit handy for minor scrapes
- Provide basic play equipment e.g. chalk, balls, skipping ropes
Consider having a table with refreshments e.g. water and fruit
- Have someone take photos for use in school publicity
- Follow the reopening procedure as per Stewarding guidance

Afterwards:

-
- Thank and debrief stewards
- Write something or ask children to write up for the school newsletter and/or website with photos
- Make note of any learning points for next time – and adapt your risk/benefit assessment as appropriate
- Let us know how it went!

Appendix 3: Publicising - example parents letter

Print on school headed paper

Dear Parents,

[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL] play street: [INSERT DATE]

We have an exciting event happening here on [INSERT DATE]. Our school is holding its first ever play street in [INSERT ROAD NAME] when we will be reclaiming the street for play and fun!

The idea is to create a traffic-free space for children to play together, and for the adults to be able to chat together too. The road will be closed to through-traffic. It takes place at [INSERT TIMING AND DATE].

The school will provide some play equipment like chalk, hoops and balls – and your children are welcome to bring their own bikes and toys too. Please also provide snacks and water for your children.

Important safety information

- During the play street, parents/carers remain responsible for their children as on any other day. You must stay to supervise your child.
- If you intend to drive to school on [INSERT DAY] afternoon, you will not be able to park in [INSERT ROAD NAME].
- The road closure will be stewarded by parent and staff volunteers who will be wearing high-viz tops.
- Residents are still allowed vehicle access during play streets. If a resident wishes to drive in, stewards will blow whistles to alert children to get out of the road. Once the road is cleared, a steward will walk the car through at 5mph. Please assist the stewards if this happens by helping to get your child out of the road.

Can you help with stewarding?

Please let us know if you can assist with the stewarding. Contact [INSERT NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS].

Look forward to seeing you on [INSERT DAY]. It will be a lovely opportunity for the children to play and let off steam and for us all to come together.

Best wishes

[INSERT NAME]

Head teacher/ or PTFA member as appropriate

Appendix 4: Publicising – example of reminder to residents

Print on school headed paper

Dear Neighbours,

[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL] play street: [INSERT DATE]

We have an exciting event happening here on [INSERT DATE]. Following council approval, our school is holding its first ever play street in [INSERT ROAD NAME] when we will be reclaiming the street for play and fun!

The idea is to create a traffic-free space for children to play together, and for the adults to be able to chat together too. The road will be closed to through-traffic. It takes place at [INSERT TIMING AND DATE]. We really hope you will be able to join us.

Here is some more information about how the play street will run:

- Children get to play in the street – for example riding scooters and bikes, skipping and chalking, and playing ball games.
- Parents are responsible for their children, as on any other day.
- Residents do not have to move their car – but if you don't mind doing so then please go ahead as it will create more room for play.
- Residents have stewarded vehicle access. Please tell a steward (they will be at the barriers in high-viz) if you wish to drive in or out so they can clear children off the road first and escort you safely at walking pace/5mph. Deliveries and visitors to your house also have stewarded access.

More play street dates

We are also running sessions on the following dates/times during this academic year: [INSERT DATES AND TIMES OF OTHER SESSIONS]

If you'd like any more information, please contact [INSERT NAME & CONTACT DETAILS OF ORGANISER].

Look forward to seeing you on [INSERT DAY]. We think it will be a lovely opportunity for the children to play and let off steam and for us all to come together.

Best wishes

[INSERT NAME]

Head teacher/ or PTFA member as appropriate

Appendix 5: Risk/Benefit assessment example

[INSERT SCHOOL & STREET NAME] Date: [DATE OF PLAY STREET] Completed by: [INSERT YOUR NAME]

Please review and adapt to your own requirements. Consider any other risks that may be particular to your street – e.g. is there a bend in the road, steep hill, or small turning from flats where cars could exit from. Also think about extremes of weather and how this might affect things. Identify what the risk is, as well as any benefits associated with this, and any actions you can take to reduce the risk.

Hazard	Risk(s)	Benefits	Actions to reduce risk
<i>Moving vehicles</i>	Injury to volunteers when setting up road closure, or to children when playing.	Residents able to access their cars and to come in and out of the street if necessary, minimising disruption to residents. Children learn about road safety and to be cautious when moving vehicles are nearby.	All volunteer stewards to wear high visibility jackets. Road closure points to be clearly marked with appropriate signage on wheelie bins and traffic cones. Road closure notices and door-to-door leafleting prior to event to warn neighbours in advance of the road closure. Children and adults told to stay out of the road until ALL road closure points in place. Stewards given briefing material in advance, briefed verbally and will follow Stewarding a play street guidance, as provided by Hackney Play Assoc. Stewards to use whistles to gain attention of children/adults. Floating steward on duty to look out for cars trying to leave.
<i>Playing beyond the barriers</i>	Injury to children by vehicles passing beyond the road closure barriers		Stewards posted at the barriers. They are briefed to watch for children playing on the road beyond the barriers and will instruct them to move on the pavements if they see this happening.
<i>Collisions with parked cars</i>	Child may collide with parked car (e.g. on scooter) causing damage to themselves and/or car	Children enjoy being able to ride in the street more freely and develop skills Children can develop spatial awareness by having to negotiate obstacles. Children develop resilience and confidence through minor scrapes and knocks.	Organiser will monitor activity and talk to child(ren) if it becomes necessary, about the need to be aware and allow space around parked cars. Notice put on car before reminding drivers about event and suggesting they could move their cars (but not compulsory).
<i>Children arguing/getting upset/physical violence between children</i>	Bringing groups of children together in unstructured way may lead to confrontations, upsets, and possibly physical violence between them.	Opportunity for children to learn coping skills and ways to deal with confrontation without parental/adult input.	Organiser and steward will keep overview and will intervene if they judge it is necessary to do so. Stewards and organiser instructed to intervene if see any children acting violently or inappropriately - and parent informed.

Hazard	Risk(s)	Benefits	Actions to reduce risk
<i>Personal injury to those people (children and adults) attending including accidents whilst playing</i>	Collisions between scooters/bikes/skateboards; collisions between children running around. Slips, trips, falls, broken limbs, collisions involving adults or children in the course of play.	Fun, freedom and enjoyment of playing. Children develop social, physical, intellectual and creative skills. Riding scooters, bikes and skateboards makes children happy, active and boosts their confidence and independent mobility skills. Children develop resilience and confidence through experiences of minor scrapes and knocks – they also learn to assess and modify their risk-taking. Adults and children get to know their neighbours, increasing neighbourliness and community cohesion.	Parents and carers attending to be informed via flyers and word of mouth that children with them are their responsibility at all times. Monitor numbers of children and types of activity to ensure that possibility of bumps is kept to a minimum. Advertising limited so that only children from school and immediately neighbouring streets likely to be come. Stewarding arrangements in place as described. Hackney Council has approved the road as being suitable for temporary street play closures.
<i>Damage to houses</i>	House windows damaged by balls or other thrown objects (e.g. frisbees)	Ball and other throwing/kicking games develops children's hand to eye coordination. Ball games great for engaging dads in play with their children	Parents and carers attending to be informed via flyers and word of mouth that children arriving with them are their responsibility. Organiser/stewards to monitor activity and talk to children/parents where necessary – e.g. if kicking balls too hard.
<i>Disturbance from non residents</i>	People come to the street and create problems – e.g. noise, inappropriate behaviour		Organiser to monitor numbers and activity, talk to people/children about what's happening and that it's a low-key community event. Politely ask anyone causing problems to stop or move on (with back up). Call for assistance from local police officer if became necessary – 999 in emergency or 101 if not an emergency. Alert parents to move children away/clear street if necessary.
<i>Disturbance to night shift residents or those working from home</i>	Noise disturbance	Children being loud and exuberant, sometimes is a normal part of playing freely. Many adults enjoy the sound of children playing.	Reminder posted in street in week running up to event to make neighbours aware. Invitations controlled so that only children from street and immediately neighbouring streets invited. Monitor noise levels and where appropriate intervene.
<i>Strong sun</i>	Sun burn, heat stroke	Being outdoors regularly is good for health and wellbeing. A moderate amount of sun exposure is beneficial.	Stewards briefed to look out for children getting too hot or showing signs of sunburn. Provide jugs of water and cups if possible. Suggest sensible sun protection/hats in communications with parents and children.

Appendix 6: Guidance on stewarding a play street

Setting up the closures

- There must be two stewards wearing high-viz and carrying a whistle at each closure point. One floating steward is in the middle.
- The closure points at each end of the road should be set up simultaneously. Follow your council's guidance on how to set up the signs. In Hackney organisers should string a 'Road Closed' sign on a wheelie bin – positioned in the middle of the road, or between two wheelie bins.
- 'Road Ahead Closed' signs, if provided, should be used before each closure point to give drivers extra warning – positioned to the side of the road. Use traffic cones (if provided) across the road at closure points.
- Children should not play in the road until the street is closed and stewards are in position.
- Remind parents that they are responsible for their children - use on-street flyers and tell people.
- Stewards should stay inside the barrier for their safety and so drivers can see the signage. Keep children inside the closure
- Look out for children trying to go beyond the barrier and remind them to stay on pavements beyond the barrier.
- If you have concerns, try to locate the child's parents and get assistance from other parents.

Diverting through traffic

- Be friendly when diverting people. Smile and point to the diversion route.
- If asked, explain briefly: "The road is shut for a few hours so children can play out."
- It helps to have Hackney Play Streets flyers (if in Hackney) or Playing Out flyers you can hand out.

Residents' access

Residents who live in the street still have vehicle access (in and out of the street). If a resident wants to enter or leave the road in their vehicle, this is the recommended procedure:

- One steward explains to the driver they can have stewarded access once the street is clear.
- Get their agreement and stay with the driver. Do not open the barrier yet.
- Clear the road of all those playing out. This should be done by one steward from each end and the floating steward walking up and down, blowing whistles and shouting: "Car coming, move onto the pavements."
- When the road is fully clear, one steward from the relevant end walks the car in or out – walking in front of the vehicle at 5mph or slower.
- Keep blowing the whistle in short bursts and shout out "Car coming, stay on pavements".
- Only remove the barrier when the car is just about to pass through and replace it immediately to prevent other cars following behind.
- Once the car has parked or left the road, shout out "Safe to play".

Cyclists

Explain to cyclists what is happening and that young children are playing in the street. Tell them they can enter but must go very slowly/cautiously (5 mph) or walk their bike through.

Emergency services access: Quickly clear children off the road and tell parents to supervise them. Warn the driver to be cautious, but do not insist on walking them in, or ask questions. We advise either suspending the play street until the emergency vehicle has left, or shortening the closure area so it can exit unimpeded.

Floating steward

The floating steward's key role is keeping an eye and ear out for engines starting up within, or near the closure – and to stop any vehicle from attempting to suddenly leave. Floating stewards also assist the other stewards by helping to alert and clear everyone when cars are about to be walked through. They also help with reopening the road – see below.

Dealing with difficult drivers

Sometimes drivers may become angry or difficult. Keep calm but assertive. Explain the closure is legal and temporary – show them the legal notice, which should be up on lampposts near closure points. If this isn't working, call for back up from the organiser or other stewards. If you feel threatened dial 999 and alert parents to ensure children's safety.

Reopening the road and the buffer zone

There have been cases where children have sought to return to play in the road after a play street has ceased. In one case, a child was knocked down by a car and injured, thankfully not seriously.

For this reason, we recommend a buffer zone or staged approach to reopening the road. In essence, this means that you end the play street session 10-15 minutes before you intend to physically reopen the road. Give everyone lots of notice that the street is to be reopened to cars. You should also gently encourage parents to take their children indoors before the street reopens.

- One steward from each end and the floating steward should walk up and down the street and give a series of warnings in the lead up to the formal end of the session.
- The other two stewards stay at the closure points at all times.
- To mark the end of the play session, all stewards should blow their whistles repeatedly, shout out: "Play street finished now".
- After the session has ended, take at least 10 minutes to ensure that everyone is out of the road, and that anyone left on the pavements is aware that cars are about to return. Tell parents it is recommended they take children inside before the road reopens.
- Co-ordinate reopening the road at both ends, so the barriers are removed simultaneously.
- One steward from each end should remove all bins, barriers and road signs.
- At the same time the other stewards shout out: "Cars coming through now," blow whistles, and do a final sweep walking down the pavements to ensure everyone is aware.

Appendix 7: Example reminder note for cars

Print on school headed paper

Reminder: Play street in [INSERT ROAD NAME] – [INSERT DATE & TIMING]

Just a reminder that our play street takes place here on [INSERT DATE AND TIMING] in [INSERT ROAD NAME] will be shut to through traffic, but open for play and neighbourly chat – we hope you might be able to join us!

You do not have to move your car – but if you don't mind doing so then please go ahead as it will create more room for play. Residents who need to come in or out in their cars are still able to access the street; we will clear the children and you will be escorted by a volunteer steward and must drive at walking pace/5mph. Deliveries and visitors can also come in. Alternatively – and if you are happy to do so – you can park just outside the closure area until the play street ends.

Important: Please tell a steward (wearing high-viz) if you wish to drive out so they can clear children off the road first and escort you out. Please also note that parents/carers are responsible for their children, as on any other day.

For more information, contact [INSERT NAME & CONTACT DETAILS OF ORGANISER].

Appendix 8: Example news release

Adapt and include own quotes, print on school headed paper

Play stops traffic outside school

Play stopped traffic outside [INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL] last Friday – as pupils reclaimed the street for hula hooping, skipping and games!

Around [INSERT APPROX NUMBER] children and their parents took part in the Play Street Session. The school based in [INSERT STREET/AREA], is hosting four of the sessions per year.

Headteacher [INSERT NAME], said:

“Street play provides the opportunity to all children to have the freedom to explore their area, enjoy and participate in space for free play, independently in front of or near their own front door and school, contributing to a healthy and happy lifestyle. It was good to see children, parents and residents playing outside, which helps families get to know each other and creates a greater sense of community spirit. A big ‘thank you’ message to all residents and parents that came out to show their support!”

Parents volunteered to ‘steward’ the road closure – standing at the barriers and redirecting through-traffic. People living on the street also helped with stewarding and joined in the fun.

[INSERT NAME], whose children attend the school, said:

“It was fun doing the stewarding and nice to be able to help out. My children were very excited when they came out and saw they could play in the street then and there with their friends. They loved riding up and down on their bikes and doing the chalk drawing. Afterwards all they kept saying was: ‘When can we do it again?’”

More information:

For further details contact

[INSERT NAME OF PERSON AND CONTACT DETAILS]



The Hackney Play Streets Project – part of Hackney Play Association and funded by Hackney Council – issued this guidance.

<http://www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets>

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets>

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