



Hackney Play Streets Progress Report 2017



► Introduction

Hackney Council's Get Hackney Healthy Board (GHH) has been funding Hackney Play Association to support play streets since September 2013, as part of a programme of interventions to improve children's health and wellbeing and tackle high child obesity levels. The project encourages children to play out of doors in streets and amenity spaces close to home.

This progress report summarises the results of the initiative. It complements and updates a longer evaluation carried out in 2014.

www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets



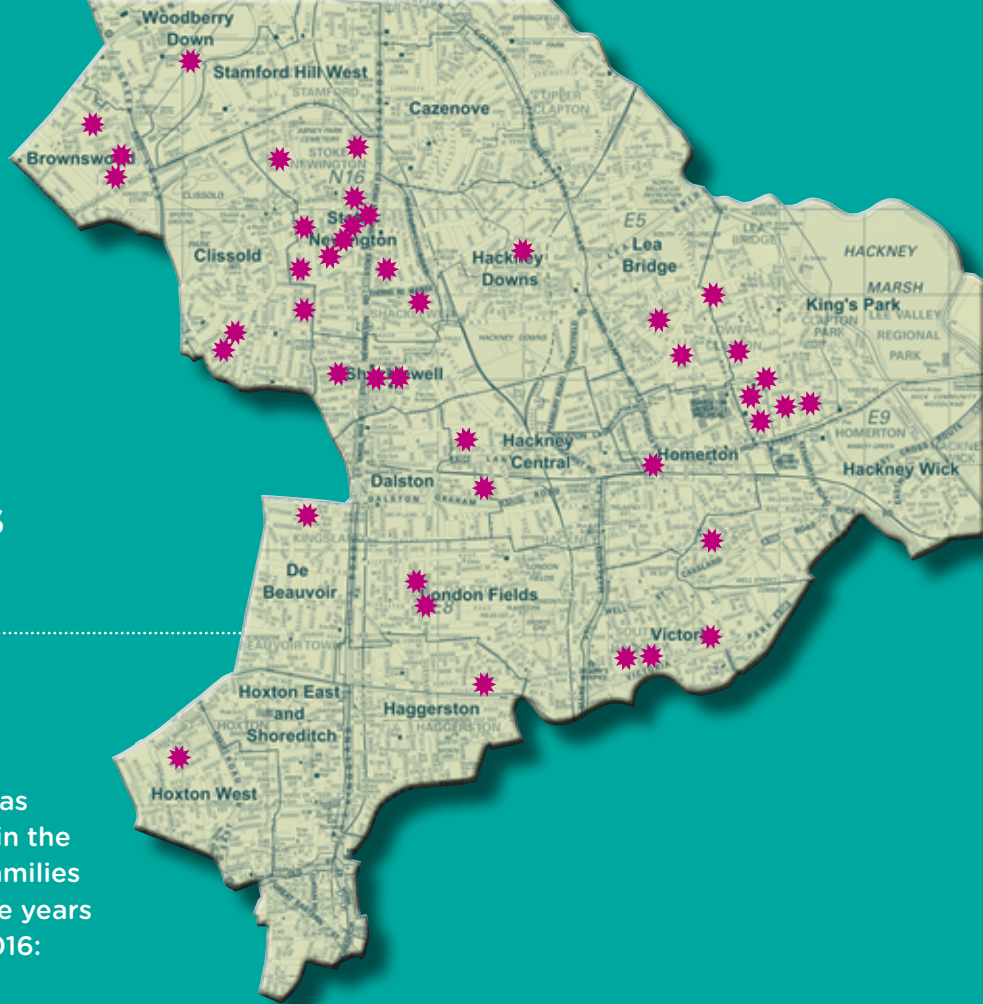
► Background and context

Concern has been growing in recent years about the health and wellbeing of children in the UK, with growing public health concerns about child obesity and physical activity levels. Outdoor play is recognised as having health and well being benefits, and is an emerging focus of public policy and public health activity.

Hackney has high levels of children overweight and childhood obesity. Moreover, parks and green spaces are concentrated in some parts of the borough at the expense of others. Hackney also has low levels of car ownership and traffic. This context provides a strong public health rationale for promoting street play in the borough.

Interest in street play initiatives is growing throughout the UK, in part as a result of the work of Playing Out, which promotes a resident-led model of regular road closures, known as 'playing out' sessions or play streets. In 2012 Hackney Council became the first London council to adopt a play streets initiative. As of March 2017 there are over 50 local authority areas across the UK actively supporting street play in some way.





42 Active streets as of 1 February 2017

► Results

The Hackney Play Streets project has made street play a regular feature in the lives of hundreds of children and families in Hackney. Key results for the three years from October 2013 – September 2016:

- 1,420 hours of sessions in 50 locations
- More than 1,400 children taking part annually for the last two years
- Over 28,400 child-hours of physical activity. This is on a par with 16 additional classes of weekly term-time PE lessons running for the 3-year period
- Total annual activity levels grew after the first year, and have been sustained over the last 2 years
2013/4: 8,140 child-hours
2014/5: 10,260 child-hours
2015/6: 10,010 child-hours
- Very little impact on traffic; an average of nine vehicles were diverted or 'walked through' during a typical 2½ hour session
- Play street uptake has spread beyond the initial pattern of the more affluent parts of Hackney to reach a broader demographic spread, including areas of disadvantage
- Residents in three estates have been supported to adopt a different model, coming together with their children to play out regularly in amenity spaces
- Play street closures have not been contentious among residents
- Mix of types of schemes
75% in residential streets
21% outside schools
4% in estates
- Mix of ages of children taking part
37% under 5
53% primary school age
10% secondary school age

Sources: annual surveys of organisers; estimates and information from project staff

Recognition

British Heart Foundation selects Hackney Play Streets as a case study for promoting physical activity by stealth, at 2014 annual conference

Faculty of Public Health featured the project at its 2015 annual conference

Project 'highly commended' at the Children & Young People Now Awards, 2015

Also showcased at international 'Child in the City' conference, Ghent, 2016

► What participants say

"Neighbours have commented that they feel that **people in the street know each other better**, we know each others' first names etc!" Play street organiser

"Twenty plus children of all ages came out to bike, scoot, chalk, hop and share toy garages **it was a bit of a shame to re-open the road.**" Play street organiser

"Children love going into each others houses (outside playing out times!). **It's given the kids a real sense of belonging and community.**" Play street organiser

"As far as an activity for a school to put on, it is very **low maintenance and easy, yet the rewards are immense.**" School play street organiser

"... Because **we know how hard is to find a safe space for children to play**, when homeless families are often housed in small cramped temporary accommodation - we went out on the street to play." Playgroup manager, homeless families project



Acknowledgements

Hackney Play Association would like to thank all the organisers who volunteer to run play streets and who provided information and quotes. We are very grateful to work in partnership with Hackney Council and for its significant support and funding for the initiative.

Full report: A more detailed 2014 report, *Hackney Street Play: Evaluation Report*, was written for Hackney Play Association and Hackney Council by independent researcher Tim Gill. It is available at www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/why

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