

# SCHOOL PLAY STREETS

## – A STEP BY STEP MANUAL



Playing Out is a not-for-profit national organisation supporting a growing parent-led movement to reclaim children's freedom to play out and use the streets and spaces where they live, for their health, happiness and sense of belonging in their communities.

[www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net)

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey.

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

## Acknowledgements

### Thanks to Hackney Play Association

Much of this document has been adapted from the excellent *Guidance on running a school play street* written by Hackney Play Association, and supported by Hackney Council.

Hackney pioneered school play streets from 2013-2016.

In 2019, Sustrans and Playing Out joined forces to raise the profile of school play streets nationwide. Together, we have helped over 50 schools across the UK close their road to traffic and make space for children to play.

The additional information in this guide is based on our collective experience and lessons we have learned along the way.



[www.hackneyplay.org](http://www.hackneyplay.org)

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# BACKGROUND

## Do you remember playing out as a child?

Most adults can recall the joy of playing outdoors, unsupervised, often in the street outside their front door. Many of us walked unaccompanied to primary school or to our school bus.

All children need time and space to play. It is widely recognised that regular opportunities to be outside are vital for children's physical health and emotional wellbeing. Through play children learn to make friends, to interact with the world around them, to make mistakes and to learn from them. Outdoor play supports children's health and development in ways that other activities like structured sport or indoor play do not.<sup>1</sup>

Yet over the last few decades, the area in which children are free to play and roam has shrunk dramatically, by almost 90%.

Experts agree that greater traffic volumes and car-dominated streets, rather than the lure of screens or indoor technology, are at the heart of the problem.

A 2007 poll found that 71% of adults played out on their street every day compared to only 21% of children today.<sup>2</sup>

A 2013 poll of 3000 children, parents and adults showed that danger from traffic is perceived as the main barrier to outside play.<sup>3</sup>

A 2013 study found that only 25% of primary school children in England were allowed to travel home from school alone compared with 86% in 1971<sup>4</sup>

The impact on children has been devastating. Childhood obesity, children's mental health, breathing problems and decreasing levels of physical activity are high on the public health agenda.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, Playing Out co-founder Alice and her neighbour Amy applied to Bristol council to close their street to traffic for 3 hours after school so that their children could play freely outside their front door.

Since then, interest in play streets has been growing throughout the UK and abroad.

The 'playing out' model of regular street closures, stewarded by volunteers, has now been adopted by over 1000 streets.

Sustrans has been working to address the negative impact of motor traffic, and create spaces to walk, cycle and play for over 30 years.

Since 2004, Sustrans has been working with schools to make it easier for children to travel actively.

In response to growing concerns from teachers and parents about road safety and air pollution outside the school gates, Sustrans has been supporting schools to run play streets – and trial 'School Streets' – since 2015.

## A few definitions

A **School Street** is a road outside a school with a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic, on weekdays during school term time. These are council-led, usually piloted for 12-18 months, and enforced by cameras, the Police or retractable bollards.

**School Play Streets** are short, temporary road closures outside a school, which enable children to play in the street more safely and make space for adults to socialise. These are community-led, last no more than 3 hours but can take place regularly throughout the year.

## How play streets work

Parents usually take the lead organising them, supported by school staff and local residents.

Sessions typically last 1-2 hours, usually after school. They can be a one-off event or regular occurrence – especially during spring and summer terms.

Councils process the road closure application and usually provide the traffic signs and cones<sup>6</sup>.



## Join the movement of parents and residents organising play streets

Want to connect with other like-minded parents and residents and swap notes on how to organise play streets or school play streets? Join our lively national Facebook group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PlayingOut/>

Need help lobbying your council for a supportive play street policy?

First, see section below 'What is my council's approach to this?'  
If you're still stuck, contact Lucy at [lucy@playingout.net](mailto:lucy@playingout.net)

1. <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/outdoor-play>

2. <http://playday.gn.apc.org/resources/research/2007-research/>

3. <http://www.playday.org.uk/2013-opinion-poll/>

4. [http://www.psi.org.uk/images/uploads/CIM\\_Final\\_report\\_v9\\_3\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.psi.org.uk/images/uploads/CIM_Final_report_v9_3_FINAL.PDF)

5. Time to Solve Childhood Obesity: An Independent Report by the Chief Medical Officer (2019)

6. What is my council's approach to this?" on page 8





## GREAT REASONS FOR SCHOOLS TO RUN PLAY STREETS

1. Highlights the benefits of reducing traffic at the school gates
2. Increases children's physical activity
3. Brings the whole community together – and helps school staff build stronger links with parents and children
4. Children need to play for their health, wellbeing and happiness
5. Builds support for permanent School Streets

Seeing the streets filled with children is a powerful thing and can really start to shift the way people think about how we use our streets and public spaces.

"The community really came together for our event and it was great to see people from the wider community participating too. It was great to see so much support from the parents and to hear so much lovely feedback too."

**Claire Lippiett, Ty'n-Y-Wern primary school, Caerphilly**

"It was lovely, kids were out mixing together and adults out in the street chatting, just like the old days, pre cars!"

**Rebecca Traill  
Central primary school,  
Inverness**

"Go for it. Really brings all the community together. Easily one of the most enjoyable days of the school year!"

**Jonathan Cooper  
St Luke's primary, Brighton**

"We wanted to highlight the importance of safety around the school. The school is situated in a very short cul-de-sac, just off a main road. There is very little room to manoeuvre as residents' cars are also parked by the side of the road. Residents often complain about cars parked outside their gates. We also have a few children with asthma, which we know is triggered by air pollution. The more we can reduce traffic, the cleaner the air. In an ideal world our school street would be permanently pedestrianised or traffic regularly prevented at school drop off or pick up times."

We do a lot to encourage children to travel actively to school. We've worked with Sustrans for a number of years. We've held training sessions on scooter skills and bikeability. We introduced a five minute walking zone around school, and a Walking Wednesday – when children have the chance to win a Sustrans teddy. Our Sustrans schools officer has also done guided bike rides around local cycle routes. Being out in the fresh air helps children feel energised and they have contact with nature, which is beneficial for their mental health.

A school play street is a community event which brings people together and it's unusual: I don't imagine many of our children have played in the street. The neighbouring church opened a cafe after school as well so it was great to bring the whole community together."

**Karen Boardman, St Barnabas CE primary, York**

"I had no idea if we would create a good atmosphere on the day, but it just seemed to work out really well despite the rain. For me the main aim was to occupy all the street space with happy people, playing and chatting – it turned out that people do this quite naturally!"

We chatted to all the residents in advance, and people were so positive – one woman made everyone tea and offered face-painting. We wanted to strike a balance between hosting a happy afternoon and yet being assertive about reclaiming the road space. Don't be put off by the prospect of inconveniencing drivers.

In the end, it was really simple, once we had the council permit and the residents were on side. The only fancy stuff was hanging lots of bunting.

"There was a massive difference! The atmosphere felt very calm and peaceful around school – parents spoke with each other, pupils were able to play in the road and had a wonderful time – it was fantastic!"

**Debbie Dudt  
Cofton primary, Birmingham**

We really wanted to draw the head teacher's attention to the road safety problems, and this school play street was a good first step."

**Jo Phillips, parent at Brookburn primary School, Manchester**



# HOW TO START A SCHOOL PLAY STREET

## What is my council's approach to this?

Before you start, check whether your council allows residents to run school play streets. Over 70 councils across the UK now have a play street policy and the vast majority won't charge you for a temporary road closure. Check the local authority directory on Playing Out's website to see if yours is one of them: <https://playingout.net/near-you/localauthoritydirectory/>

If your council does support street play, have a read of their policy and procedure, then skip down to 'Step 1: Consultation' below!

If your council does not yet have a play street policy, don't panic! There are two main approaches you can take:

### *Run a one-off play street using existing council policies*

Try googling the name of your council with words like "road closures for special events" or "street parties". This will generally link to information about how to apply for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, which is what you'll need for your play street. Many councils will say that they charge for this. But in reality, once they find out why you're doing it, they will waive the fee. Make sure you invite key councillors to your event so they see the benefits!

### *Lobby your council to develop a supportive policy*

There are over 80 UK councils who have shown interest in play streets, but haven't developed a policy yet. If your council doesn't appear to support street play or you're coming up against barriers, contact your local councillor and tell them about the idea. They can help you find the right people to speak to in the council if there is not an obvious play street application process where you live. The Department for Transport

issued guidance to all UK councils in 2019, encouraging them to support play streets and advising them about which legislation to use.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/revised-road-closure-guidance-to-boost-childrens-outdoor-play>

For more tips on how to lobby your council to support street play, see the Playing Out website here: <https://playingout.net/how/faqs/getting-council-board/>

## 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 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, parent 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. If there are enthusiastic staff members, try to enlist their help with publicity and stewarding.
- **Involve the children** to see what they think. There are short fun videos you could show in assembly e.g. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2019/uk-wide/sustrans-school-streets/>, at [www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets](http://www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets) and [www.playingout.net](http://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. If your council has a play streets web page, look at this to see what is required. In some London boroughs, 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 Appendices 1 and 2 for example letters to parents and residents.

- **Consult your local councillor.** Local councillors can be a source of great support and strong advocates for play streets – especially once they have experienced one for themselves, so do invite them along. It's a good idea to involve them early on, as they may have concerns about how the event will impact residents in their ward. You can reassure them by letting them know how local residents and businesses have responded to your door knock and/or letter drop.

### *Is face-to-face consultation best?*

We find that if you present the idea personally, most residents react positively or neutrally to the idea. Remember that many are inconvenienced by school traffic on a daily basis and would love to see their street become a cleaner, calmer, friendlier place. A door knock is also a great way of helping a school connect with its neighbours. Some schools have involved a small group of year 6 pupils, or the student council, in door knocking. Of course not everyone feels comfortable doing this.

A typical street receives one or two objections and people may have reservations and questions. Be prepared to listen to concerns and answer queries.

See Appendix 3 for a helpful Q&A addressing common concerns.

Your council may provide a template consultation letter for you to photocopy. If so, we recommend adding a friendlier covering note on school letterhead – as per Appendix 2. 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 School Play Streets – e.g. is this a one-off event or do you hope to run it maybe once a term? If your council has a play street policy, they should allow you



to provide a list of dates for the whole year on one application. Bear in mind that often you can put in more dates than you're 100% committed to, and just choose not to run the play street on some of them. If the closure isn't enacted on that date (i.e. you don't put the road signs out etc.) the road will remain as normal. It is usually more difficult to add dates to an application once you've made it. If your council does not have a play street policy, it is likely they will ask you to fill in a separate application every time you want to hold a school play street. This might be fine for you if you're not running them very often.

Lots of schools opt for Fridays directly after pick up time e.g. 3.30-5.30pm, but you could do it on other days.

### Top Tip

**It is best to apply for the closure to start 30 minutes before the school day ends (or before parents start arriving to pick up at the end of the school day) to give stewards time to set up the roads signs and be in position well in advance of the children coming out. NB. Most councils will limit play street sessions to a maximum of three hours.**

**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 road; shorter sections of about 30-40 metres work well. Think about the most logical place to close the street, minimising junctions within the closure. Councils will not usually consider play street applications for 'A' roads or bus routes. You can often ask the council for advice on location of the proposed closure.

**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, chatting to parents in the playground informally and generally spreading the word, organising publicity and handing out 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. Ask a supportive member of school staff or other parents to help you with this process – don't feel you have to complete all the paperwork alone.

### Traffic management

Ask your council what their requirements are for traffic management on the day.

Some councils may insist you hire a traffic management company. The advantage of this is that they will provide and deliver the road signs, and will be in charge of diverting traffic. But this comes at a cost of approx £500-600, which the council may expect you to pay.

In the 'Playing Out' model, parent, teacher and local resident volunteers are in charge of safely managing the road closure points. See below section on Stewards in Step 3, plus the stewarding guide in Appendix 8.

You will need to recruit volunteers to help with stewarding. There has to be two people at each end of the street **at all times** to divert through traffic and escort residents' vehicles through at 5mph. It's a good idea to have an extra floating steward.

### Diversion plans

If your council asks for this, check exactly what they require.

Most school play streets will not require a diversion to be set up. They will not be on a busy through road, and the 'diversion' will be obvious. It is enough for stewards on the road closure point to have a simple annotated map and to explain to drivers verbally how to get around the closed road. E.g. "Turn left, and left again."

You may be asked to provide a 'traffic management plan' as part of your application – don't be put off by this! In our experience, it is



### Top Tip

**Any publicity materials (e.g. on posters, flyers, letters or emails) should make clear that parents/carers remain responsible for their children during the play session as on any other day.**

sufficient to take a screenshot of the relevant section of Google maps, and use differently coloured lines to designate the section of road that will be closed as well as the alternative routes that cars will be required to take.

See Appendix 4 for an example.

### Confirmation of your application

You will usually be asked to confirm that you have consulted the community that will be affected by the road closure, and sometimes to provide proof.

Keep a copy of the application pack and you can expect to hear back from the council **2 weeks before your event**. You will receive a copy of the temporary traffic regulation order (TTRO). This is the official notification that the road will be legally closed.

### Top Tip

**Councils will need anything from 4-12 weeks to process the application, so contact them as soon as possible.**

## Step 3: Preparing to run your play street

### Key Tasks

See Appendix 5 for a checklist of the key things to do in the run up to your play street.

Ask for help wherever you can – it's much more fun that way!

### Publicising

*Tell 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 6 – example parents' letter.

Talk about the play street in assembly, and encourage the children to scoot or cycle to school that day. It's also a great idea to put a memo in the school staff meeting and invite them to get involved if they wish to. At many schools, teachers, teaching assistants and caretakers 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 will have already consulted them, so you can now use a simple flyer through letterboxes as well as posters in windows or on lampposts.

Put reminders on parked cars a day or two before the play street session

There are flyers and posters you can download freely at [www.playingout.net/useful-stuff](http://www.playingout.net/useful-stuff) or you may wish to create your own.

**Ask the council** for your official Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) notification. You will need to display this on the street **2 weeks before** your event (laminated and zip-tied to lamp posts is OK).

**Managing Safety**

As a school play street organiser, you are responsible for making the street safe for children to play. Parents/ carers remain responsible for their own children on the day – it is not free babysitting! Just like in a playground, accidents can happen (trips etc.) and parents need to be on hand to deal with those if they arise.

*Road Signs*

In order to close your street safely and legally, check with your local council what they require you to use in the way of formal signage, cones or other barriers. Unless your road is a cul-de-sac, you will need a minimum of two ‘Road Closed’ signs (one at each end) and a couple of ‘Road Ahead Closed’ signs to warn motorists as they approach. Some councils supply these for free, which is great. Others will ask you to arrange your own. It’s important to make sure that whatever you set up complies with legal requirements. If you’re stuck with this, contact Playing Out for help.

*Risk assessment*

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 7.

Many experts on childhood now recognise that risk taking in play is beneficial for children.<sup>7</sup> 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 are well-briefed and confident with 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.

**Top Tip**

**As part of your risk assessment, ask somebody to walk along the street with you. A second pair of eyes is handy for spotting hazards you might have overlooked. Check for any small turnings or carparks for flats where cars might try to exit – these will also need stewarding.**

*Public liability insurance*

All schools have public liability insurance which will usually cover a school play street. Check this with your head teacher/chair of governors. Most councils will strongly recommend that you have it, but in reality many play streets happen across the country without

it. Careful preparation, risk assessment and steward briefings will go a long way to reduce risk. You can read more about liability in the FAQs on the Playing Out website: <https://playingout.net/how/faqs/>

*Stewards*

1. Read ‘Guidance on Stewarding a Play Street’ – see Appendix 8.

As the organiser you need to know this protocol and be confident briefing others on what to do.

2. 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 walking pace (by walking in front of the car) - 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 and arrange to meet them at least 30 minutes before the road closure starts to check they are clear on their role.

3. Order in hi-vis vests and whistles (check with school if they can lend you some). Store these with laminated copies of the stewarding guidance, ready to hand out on the day.

*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

*Safeguarding*

Discuss with your school what their safeguarding procedure is and what you will do if a child gets separated from their parent/carer.

7. <http://rethinkingchildhood.com>





### Planning your activities

Involve school staff, other parent volunteers and pupil committee (school council or eco group) in deciding how you will use the road space on the day.

1. Keep it simple!
2. Don't underestimate the joy that a big box of chalk can bring - even to middle school pupils. Though keep an eye out for what pupils are drawing, and be ready to scuff out any obscene pictures!
3. The school will usually have some play equipment – simple things that are used at playtimes such as bean bags, skipping ropes, hula hoops, soft footballs and maybe even balance bikes. Beyond this there's no need to organise games or anything special to entertain the children. They will do the rest for themselves.
4. Refreshments: your school or the parent association might want to offer these but it is not essential. Some parents have organised cake sales to raise funds for the PTFA (and fund balance bikes or toys for future play streets) – this can help add to the community feel.

### Other things to consider

#### Photography

If you want good photos, you could find a volunteer to do this. Ask around at school – a member of staff or parent may be able to help out.

Ahead of the session, they will need to talk to the school about their photography permissions policy and how the photos will be used. Generally schools send out a note to parents informing them photos will be taken, asking them to tell 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.

### Step 4: On the day!

#### Hold a stewards briefing

Arrange to meet and brief your stewards at least 30 minutes before your event starts. Hand out hi-vis and whistles, a laminated copy of stewarding guidance, official legal order (TTRO) for the road closure, and a simple diversion map (if necessary). Talk through how the stewarding should be done and answer any questions.

#### Display signage

Prepare the 'Road Closed' and 'Road Ahead Closed' signs, as well as the traffic cones, at least 15 mins before the street closure is due to begin. Give yourself plenty of time to do this – they can be heavy and awkward to carry! Stack



them neatly on the pavement at the relevant points, being careful not to obstruct access. This means you are not rushing and everything is in place ready for your stewards to close the road.

#### Enjoy the moment!

It is hard to stand back when you are running an event. Try to recruit enough volunteers so that you are able to be 'off duty' for at least some of the time, and able to chat to parents, school staff and local residents.

#### Finishing up

Give parents and children lots of staged warnings (blowing whistles and shouting out) before stewards reopen the street so everyone 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. For more detail, see the stewarding guide in Appendix 8.

### Top Tip

**Hand out bin bags in the last five minutes or so of the session and encourage everyone to help clear any rubbish and tidy away toys.**

#### Post event publicity

Write up a short article or ask pupils to do so for the school newsletter and website. Make sure to include any good photos (with permissions). Local media may be interested – particularly if school play streets are a first in your area.

See an example press release in Appendix 9.





# FAQS

## FOR PLAY STREET ORGANISERS

### How long will the consultation and application phase take?

It really depends, but generally schools start planning and consulting a couple of months before they submit their application. Councils can take anything from 4-12 weeks to process the application.

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

Around 74 councils around the UK have play street policies, and 80 more are interested in developing one. There are various options for you if your council doesn't yet have a play streets policy – see 'What is my council's approach to this?' on page 8 for more detail.

### What if my council charges to close the road?

Some councils will say on their website that there is a charge for closing the road – in reality once you explain that it is a community event they will often waive the fee. However, it can be useful to involve your councillor in this discussion - if they are supportive they will help you make that case. See 'What is my council's approach to this?' on page 8 for more detail, and feel free to contact Playing Out or Sustrans if you need further advice.

### What if residents or local businesses object?

It isn't unusual to have one or two objections as people can be fearful of change. A minority of people – even those who have benefitted from playing out as children – do find the idea of periodically restricting traffic difficult. Don't be put off by this. Often if you are willing to have an open conversation and listen to people's concerns, you will be able to reassure them. See 'Common Concerns' in Appendix 3 for help with answering objections. The council should also support you with this, so ask them who the best point of contact is. Councils with a supportive play street policy – like Bristol or Hackney – have taken the decision that only 'material' objections (i.e. if the street was unsuitable or unsafe) would be used as a reason for a temporary play street not to go ahead.

### What if my school is on a busy through road?

It can be difficult to organise a school play street on a busy through road, but you should discuss this with your council early on. It might be possible to close the road at a different school entrance on a quieter road. Or if the council has a strategic priority to alleviate traffic on that busy road they might be willing to help you organise the traffic diversions required. If speeding traffic is a problem, you might want to think about trying to lobby for traffic-calming measures or run a 20s Plenty campaign. Get in touch with Sustrans for further advice.

### Are DBS checks needed for stewards?

Enhanced DBS checks (disclosure and barring checks) should not be required 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. If you have any concerns about safeguarding there will be a safeguarding lead at the school you can talk to.

### 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 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.

### What if drivers get angry?

Occasionally stewards will deal with a driver who is unhappy about not being able to get through. A good steward briefing beforehand will help them to feel prepared and confident. Usually it is enough to explain firmly but politely that it is a legal road



closure, that it is only temporary, and explain the diversion route. If a driver becomes confrontational, your co-steward should alert the organiser and any nearby parents to ensure children's safety. It can be useful to have the contact details of someone at the council in case the driver wants to talk to an official. In the extreme situation that a driver refuses to cooperate and behaves dangerously, dial 999 (or 101 if the immediate situation has passed). Some schools have invited their local PCSOs to attend play streets, which has worked really well.

### What if the council says we need to use a traffic management contractor?

We have come across councils that have stipulated that a traffic management contractor must be used for play streets – generally at a cost of £500-600! Clearly this is not a cost that can or should be covered by a school or parent group. It may be that your council has no previous experience of community street closures and is following the guidelines that are used for other temporary traffic regulation orders i.e. roadworks. In our experience, for the types of street you are closing for play, the road closure can be managed safely by well-briefed volunteer stewards. This 'playing out' model has been adopted by over 1000 streets so far. In 2019, we helped over 50 schools run a play street using volunteer stewards to manage the road closures. Sometimes it is enough to share examples of what has been done elsewhere. You can direct your council contact to our webpages, or send them a video (see useful links at the end of this guide). See 'What is my council's approach to this?' on page 8 for more detail and contact us for further advice.

### 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 in Hackney, 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.

### We want to implement a School Street at our school (permanent timed closures at school drop-off and pick-up times – see 'A few definitions' on page 5) What is the best approach to take?

School play streets are fantastic on their own, but can also act as a mini-trial of a School Street. School play streets demonstrate what happens when we take traffic away from the school gate: 90% of parents and residents that we have spoken to find that it works better for everyone. Try inviting your local councillors, but also the cabinet member for Highways, Environment or Public Health and Wellbeing along to one of your play street sessions. If you can show your council that there is local support both from the school and wider community for permanent traffic restriction at drop-off and pick-up times, it will reassure them that a School Street is not going to create political backlash. We have seen school play streets lead to permanent School Streets in London, Birmingham and Southampton. So if you are interested in implementing a School Street at your school, a School Play Street is a great place to start.

Taking part in national competitions such as Sustrans' Big Pedal is also a great way to demonstrate the demand for active travel at your school.

**You will also need to speak to your local authority to get their support. If there is a Sustrans officer working in your local authority area they may be able to help you.**



# FURTHER INFO AND SUPPORT

## Contact

Playing Out  
hello@playingout.net/ 0117 953 7167

Sustrans  
education@sustrans.org.uk

## Links:

[www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net) – lots of other free tools and resources

[www.sustrans.org.uk/sustransschoolstreets](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sustransschoolstreets) – info about how temporary school play streets can lead to permanent School Streets.

[www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets](http://www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets) – more info and free downloads.

[www.streetparty.org.uk](http://www.streetparty.org.uk) – useful links and resources on road closures, particularly relating to costs, signs and guidance to councils.

**My Journey Hampshire YouTube** and **Sustrans YouTube** – couple of videos from school play streets in Southampton.

## Thank you

Thank you to Hackney Play Association and Hackney Council for trailblazing school play streets and generously sharing your excellent resources.

Thank you to the schools that have run play streets so far, for sharing your experiences and for your contributions to this document.

In 2019, the following local authorities have worked with us to fund and support temporary street closures outside schools:

Birmingham City Council, Brent Council, Bright & Hove City Council, Bristol City Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Coventry City Council, Derby City Council, Dorset Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, East Sussex County Council, The City of Edinburgh Council, The Highland Council, Leicester City Council, Luton Borough Council, Manchester City Council, North Tyneside Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Southampton City Council, Southwark Council, Tower Hamlets Council, Westminster City Council, City of York Council

Finally, a big thank you to all the parents and residents who have given their time freely to organise play streets and school play streets around the country.

Thank you for providing children with opportunities to play outside, and to walk, cycle or scoot to school more safely, for their health, happiness and wellbeing.

*Print on school headed paper*

Dear Parents/Carers,

## CLOSING [NAME OF ROAD] FOR PLAY!

### Planning & Awareness Meeting for Parents/Carers and Children

[Date, Time, Location]

We are planning an exciting event on [DATE]. Our school will be holding its first ever school play street in [ROAD NAME] from [START TIME to END TIME]. The aim of closing [ROAD NAME] that day is to:

- Raise awareness for pupils, teachers and parents of the health implications for young people caused by high levels of air pollution and traffic outside our school.
- Involve pupils, teachers and parents in a fun, symbolic day of action with an opportunity for children to play together in a traffic-free space, and for adults to be able to chat together too.
- Encourage everyone to think about how they travel to school. We hope that closing the road to through traffic will make it easier to walk, cycle or scoot the school run, or use our park and stride scheme to create a healthier, safer and cleaner environment around the school and local community.

### Can you help?

We'll be sending out more information closer to the date. But please come and share your ideas and offers of support at our Planning Meeting on [DATE]. Or contact [INSERT NAME and CONTACT DETAILS]

Best wishes

[HEADTEACHER NAME]

Headteacher



Print on school headed paper

Dear Neighbour,

Parents and staff at [NAME OF SCHOOL] are considering holding a 'play street' in [INSERT NAME OF ROAD].

[ROAD NAME] would be temporarily closed to motor vehicles from [START TIME – END TIME], giving children the chance to play together freely and enjoy the safer, traffic-free space as well as giving parents and residents a chance to meet and chat.

We want to make it easier for both children and parents to walk, cycle or scoot to school and we've been working hard to reduce the number of cars at drop-off and pick-up times. We hope that car-free play streets will help us create a healthier, more liveable environment around the school and local community.

During the play street, residents who need car access will still be able to come in and out of the street, driving slowly and escorted by a steward. Through traffic will be diverted. The road closure points will be stewarded by school staff or parent 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 any questions you may have. You can find out more about how play streets work in a short 3-minute film at [www.hackneyplay.org/play-streets](http://www.hackneyplay.org/play-streets) and also find out about the national Playing Out movement at [www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net).

Yours sincerely

[NAME OF HEADTEACHER]

Headteacher

[NAME OF PARENTS REP]

PTFA chair/member

[CONTACT DETAILS – EMAIL/PHONE]

### Why do the children need to play in the street when there is a school playground and parks nearby?

Parks are great for family outings and for older children who can get there independently but for younger children, it usually involves a special trip, organised and supervised by adults, and they need play opportunities closer to home. This means that, unlike a generation ago, children are simply not getting enough everyday active play time. Street play is very different. Firstly, it is easily integrated into the daily routine, so children can play 'semi-supervised' whilst parents catch up and enjoy themselves too. This allows for more unstructured, child-led play. Secondly, in the case of school play streets in particular it helps make the school pick up and drop off more relaxed for everyone, with less air pollution, less traffic danger and more fun! Children playing together on their street helps to build a sense of community and belonging, which in turn makes the street a safer and friendlier place.

### What about the teachers that still drive to school?

School staff often do not live within the catchment area of their school. Like all of us, they are dependent on the local transport links to their place of work. Many staff opt to car share, cycle or catch public transport and walk on the day of the school play street to show their support. If they need to drive, they may choose to arrive or leave outside of the play street timings. But if a staff member really needs to drive in or out during the play street, they will be guided by stewards, as per the protocol for residents living in the street.

### I need to get in and out by car for my work – this will inconvenience me

School play streets generally take place after school for about an hour from 3.30-4.30ish, sometimes once or twice a term, sometimes as infrequently as once a year. If you are a local resident and this is the time that you need to drive in or out of your street, you will be able to do so, guided by the stewards. Please notify them, and they will clear the street of children first, then lead you in or out by walking in front of your car so that they can check the road is completely clear as you drive.

### Will you still let visitors/deliveries through?

Where possible we would ask that visitors or deliveries park outside of the closure area and walk to the relevant house, but if it is essential that they drive to the door (e.g. there is a disabled or elderly person in the car) they will be guided by stewards. Once the stewards are aware that somebody needs to drive through, they will clear the street of children first, then lead them in or out by walking in front of the car so that they can check the road is completely clear as they drive. Where possible, please notify any visitors in advance of the play street.

### Why is the council not doing anything to address the traffic around the school at drop-off and pick-up times, but they'll close the road for children to play?

The majority of parents and pupils walk, cycle or scoot to school. Of those that drive, many park a few streets away and walk the last bit. It is a minority of parents that persist in parking inconsiderately and dangerously. School staff, other parents and the council are very concerned about road safety issues outside the gates. Resources for enforcement of double yellow lines and zig zags are limited. Play streets allow people to directly experience what a calm, child-friendly, traffic-







free road feels like. This can have more of an impact than other traditional methods of trying to change people's behaviour and it forces people to travel in a different way to/from school. In the long term, play streets can lead to a reduction in traffic around the school, as people begin to see the space outside the school gates differently – it becomes a place for people, rather than cars.

#### **This is going to have a negative impact on my business – why should I let it happen?**

As part of the application process, everyone within the closure area should be consulted. The school play street will only take place for 1-2 hours after school and it is hoped that this won't adversely affect any businesses. If your business is located outside of the road closure, there will always be alternative routes that drivers can take and the stewards will be briefed to direct them. If your business is within the road closure and there are concerns about this, it's important to have a chat with the play street organiser to try and minimise disruption. A few, essential vehicle trips may be accommodated by the stewards – they will guide drivers through at walking pace. Depending on the business, it could be beneficial to have lots of people standing around on the street! Amongst

parents and grandparents, in particular, there is strong support for children's right to play out. So you might even find that by being accommodating or offering support you gain new customers!

#### **What about my child who is disabled and needs to be picked up from school by taxi?**

We really hope that your child will be able to take part in the school play street in whatever way works for them, and in that case the taxi could be arranged to arrive after the school play street is finished. Alternatively, your child could be escorted to where the road closure starts, a short distance from the school gate, and the taxi could pick them up there. If the taxi needs to drive through the school play street, it will be guided by the stewards who will make the street safe first. Please ensure that the play street organiser is aware of this, so they can brief the stewards to expect the taxi on the day.

#### **I have to pick up two children from different schools and I work full-time, so need to drive. How am I going to pick up my child if the road is closed?**

We completely understand that many parents are in this situation and don't intend to cause you difficulties. Depending on the school there should be an alternative place to park just a short walk away – often called a 'park and stride'. However, we do hope if possible that you and your children can take part in the school play street.

#### **Won't this bring a load of children from other schools to the street causing trouble?**

Each school play street session is organised by parents and the school, and only publicised through flyers and posters on that street and, sometimes, immediately neighbouring streets. They are for the children to have a chance to play outside their school and not designed to be public 'events'. However, the street is a public space, so it is not possible or even desirable to try to exclude people coming in from outside. It is very unlikely that you would have more than a few siblings joining in from other schools, or children from neighbouring streets.

#### **The noise will disturb me**

Often the street is quieter during a play street, due to less traffic. Some people would say the sound of children laughing and playing is a wonderful thing and something we no longer hear enough of. In towns and cities we all need to live alongside each other and tolerate a reasonable amount of noise from other people's activities. Even those who don't drive have to live with traffic noise. Children cannot be contained within houses, cars and designated 'play areas'. The city is theirs too and it is their right to use the space in the way they need to. School play streets are only an hour or two long and take place once a week at most. If there is a persistent problem with neighbours complaining about children making an unreasonable amount of noise, it may be appropriate to organise a street meeting between residents and the school to discuss it and try to reach a solution everyone is happy with.

#### **I am nervous about damage to my car**

If you are very nervous about damage to your car, you may wish to park it elsewhere during the school play street. However, we have heard of very few incidents of damage in the hundreds of playing out sessions that have taken place across the UK and would not expect the level of risk to be much greater than if children were scooting, skating or cycling on the pavement past parked cars. Parents are responsible for their children during the school play street but any adult who sees a child causing damage should talk to them or their parents about it. The organisers and stewards will do their best to ensure that children play safely and responsibly.

#### **Who is going to pay if my property gets damaged?**

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

#### **Who is going to supervise the children if the teachers have finished work for the day?**

Parents are fully responsible for their children during the play street, and all publicity will make this very clear.

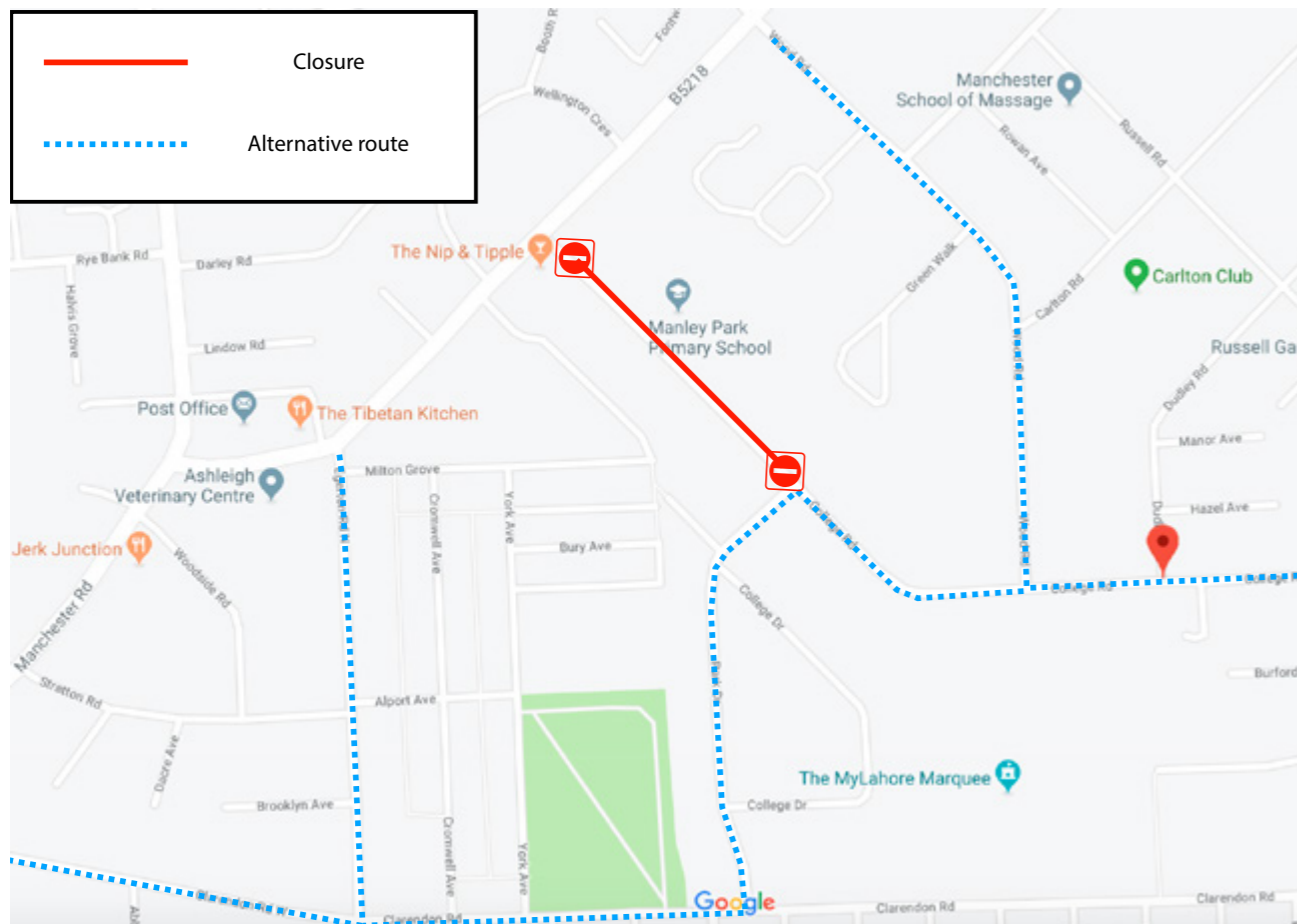
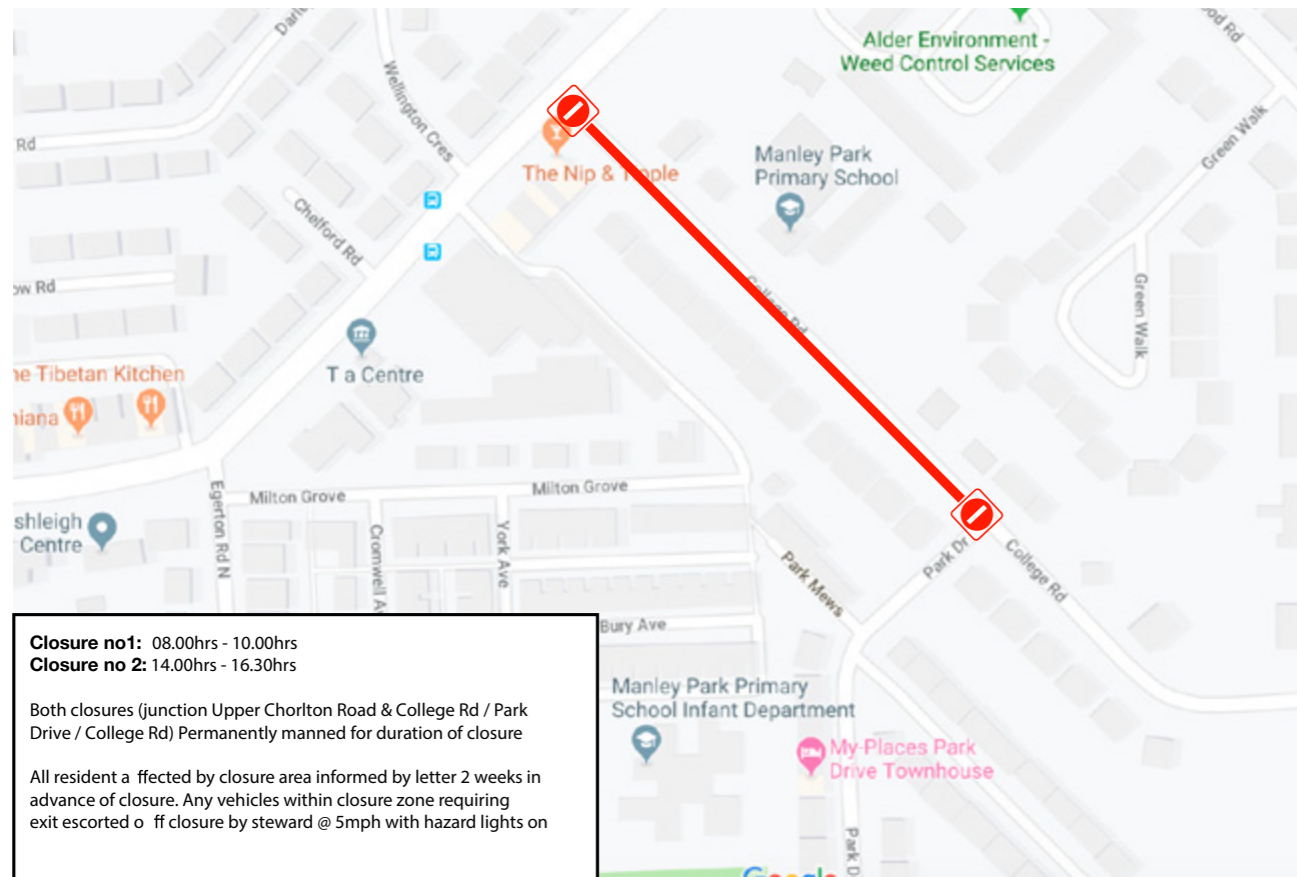
#### **Won't this encourage children to think the road is a safe place to play under normal circumstances?**

We've had many conversations with parents and teachers about this. Everyone strongly agrees that even young children can understand the difference between a play street, and normal circumstances. The University of Bristol carried out some detailed research into temporary road closures and found that children were able to clearly identify what made a play street different: "the bins come out... the high-vis jackets...the car noise stops..." Similarly, parents said they were still responsible for teaching their children the 'rules of the road.'

#### **The school has caused enough problems over the years, and now this. They don't respond when we complain about... (parent parking, anti-social behaviour by pupils, kids doing wheelies etc.)**

We hear you, it can be frustrating living near a school. Regular school play streets may well help to reduce inconsiderate parent parking – during the play street, non-residents won't be allowed to park within the area and will have to think about alternative options. Hopefully the process of organising the street closure can be an opportunity to open up lines of communication between residents and the school – you may find that school staff are equally as frustrated by the same issues and welcome your input! The school play street should be an opportunity for the whole community to come together. As a resident on the street you are encouraged to join in and benefit from it too. Do discuss your concerns with the organiser and if you're willing to compromise and show some support, hopefully that will be returned by them hearing your frustrations too.





**Applying to close the road**

- Informally consult school staff, parents, residents and local councillors
- Check whether your council has a play street policy
- Download application form for temporary road closure (TTRO) from council website
- Check bus routes/bin day
- Get name and contact number of council officer dealing with application
- Do a resident letter drop/door knock
- Annotate map with street closure location and alternative routes
- Ask school to confirm public liability insurance valid

**Lead up to your school play street session**

- Join the Playing Out national Facebook group for peer support
- Recruit helpers for stewarding (and other jobs such as flyering)
- Invite PCSOs and local councillors/cabinet members
- Agree park and stride location
- Order traffic signs and cones – hopefully from council
- Read 'Stewarding Guidance'
- Do a risk benefit assessment and street walkabout
- Get hi-vis vests, whistles together, and print/laminate copies of stewarding guidance
- Publicise on the street – TTRO notification on lamp post 2 weeks before, reminder flyer or letter to residents at least 5 days before
- Publicise to children, parents and staff – in the week leading up
- Put notices on parked cars – a day or two beforehand

**On the day**

- Send a reminder text to parents in the morning
- Bring box of stewarding equipment (hi-vis, whistles, lanyards, walkie talkies)
- Do stewards briefing 30 mins before start (exchange mobile numbers)
- Do street walkabout to check for and remove any hazards
- Set up 'Road Closed' signage and traffic cones – close road at least 15 mins before children come out
- Set out any play equipment
- Have first aid kit handy
- Make sure somebody takes photos for school publicity
- Re-open road as per stewarding guidance

**Afterwards**

- Thank and debrief volunteer helpers and school staff
- Write up for school newsletter or website with photos
- Make a note of any learning points for next time, adapting risk/benefit assessment as appropriate



School and street name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of play street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Named Organiser(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of risk assessment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Print on school headed paper

Dear Parent/Guardian,

[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.

[ROAD NAME] will be closed to through traffic from [START TIME – END TIME] and we encourage families, local residents and staff to come and join in the fun.

**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.
- Please support us by travelling actively to and from school – walk, cycle, scoot or travel by public transport. If you do need to use a car for the school run, we ask you to park [INSERT PARK AND STRIDE LOCATION], just a short walk away.

If you have any concerns or queries about the event then please do get in touch. We look forward to seeing you on [DATE]

Best wishes

[HEADTEACHER NAME]

Headteacher

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 and any actions you can take to reduce the risk.

Benefits (To help balance the risk vs benefit, list below what you hope to be the benefits to organising your play street session)		
1.		
2.		
3.		
Hazard	Risk/s	Actions to reduce risk
Moving vehicles and cyclists	<p>Injury to volunteers when setting up/ taking down the road closure, or to children when playing</p> <p>After the barriers are removed, children don't realise the play street has finished and run out into the re-opened street</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents to be clearly informed they are still responsible for children's safety and behaviour</li> <li>2. All volunteer stewards to wear high visibility jackets</li> <li>3. Volunteers to check the road is clear before installing the road closure</li> <li>4. Road closure points to be clearly marked with traffic cones and appropriate signage</li> <li>5. Consider installing the road closure point away from turning points where drivers may not be able to see it</li> <li>6. Road closure notices and door to door leafleting prior to event to warn neighbours in advance of the road closure</li> <li>7. Children and adults to be asked to stay out of the road until ALL road closure points in place</li> <li>8. Stewards given briefing material in advance, briefed verbally before the start by event organisers and will follow Stewarding Guidance as provided by Playing Out and Sustrans</li> <li>9. Stewards to use whistles or an agreed signal (loud shout) to gain attention of children/adults</li> <li>10. Floating steward on duty to look out for cars trying to leave</li> <li>11. Volunteers to alert each other and ensure there are no children in the road if a vehicle needs to pass through the road closure, before removing the barrier</li> <li>12. Cars passing through the barrier to access their property to be slowly led to a parking spot by a steward – walking in front of car</li> <li>13. Plan how to ensure children know that the session has ended and the street is 'live' to cars again</li> </ol>



Hazard	Risk/s	Actions to reduce risk
Children going beyond the barriers	Injury or loss of child	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure parents know that they are responsible for their children during the event</li> <li>2. Volunteers/ stewards with mobile phones to stay at the barriers throughout the event</li> <li>3. Have back-up stewards who can provide respite (for toilet breaks etc.)</li> <li>4. Avoid situation where volunteer is left alone with child – number of school safeguarding lead made available to stewards</li> </ol>
Parked cars	<p>Child may collide with car (e.g on scooter) causing injury to themselves and/ or damage to the car</p> <p>Child may step out unseen as vehicles moving through</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents given prior warning of the event so they can move their cars if they want to</li> <li>2. Parents and carers reminded that they are responsible for their children during the event</li> <li>3. Stewards to be vigilant as they walk any vehicles through</li> </ol>
Passing members of the public	<p>Injury from collision with children playing or activities</p> <p>Inappropriate behaviour</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Volunteers to wear hi-vis and alert people there is an event going on</li> <li>2. Monitor types of activity to ensure possibility of bumps kept to a minimum</li> <li>3. Parents and carers informed they are responsible for their children during the event</li> <li>4. Stewards made aware of safeguarding lead (usually senior member of school staff)</li> <li>5. Alert parents to move children away if necessary</li> <li>6. Call assistance from police if necessary – 999 or 101</li> </ol>
Angry motorists	Volunteers and residents subjected to abuse or injury from drivers trying to enter/exit the street	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prior notice of the event is given to residents (including opportunity for any objections to be discussed amongst neighbours and/ or considered by the council)</li> <li>2. Calm, well briefed volunteers who can lead cars in and out at walking pace</li> <li>3. Children and adults briefed to say thank you, smile and wave at drivers as they pass</li> <li>4. Call assistance from police if necessary – 999 or 101</li> </ol>
Road surface or obstacles in road	<p>Children or adults trip or cut themselves</p> <p>Rubbish left in road – unsightly and gives negative impression of play street</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Volunteers to check road and clear any obstacles/ sweep away broken glass before play street starts</li> <li>2. Bin bags provided and everyone asked to clear away rubbish 10 minutes before the session ends.</li> </ol>
Extreme weather	Sun burn, heat stroke, dehydration, slips on ice, being struck by blown objects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents will be reminded they are responsible for their children and to dress appropriately</li> <li>2. In extreme weather, event will be shortened or cancelled</li> </ol>

### School Play Streets Steward Briefing

Thank you for volunteering to be a steward and provide children with a wonderful opportunity to play out! The role of the steward is crucial to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all involved in playing out sessions. Please read these instructions thoroughly. This 6 minute video clip on the Playing Out website is also really useful to get an idea of what to expect:

<https://playingout.net/how/playing-four-simple-steps/step-four-make-the-street-safe-and-play-out/>

#### Notes for street organisers and stewards

- There must be two stewards wearing hi-viz and carrying a whistle at each closure point. One floating steward is in the middle, in case any parked cars want to leave from the middle of the closure.
- The closure points at each end of the road should be set up and removed simultaneously. Follow your council's guidance on how to set up the signs.
- '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 street until it is closed and stewards are in position.
- Remind parents that they are responsible for their children – use on street flyers and tell people.
- Ordinarily only residents who live within the closure are allowed access to the street during a play street in their cars, from within or outside the closure. See below for how to guide them in and out.
- It can be helpful to invite the local PCSO (Police Community Safety Officer) to your first play street, to provide legitimacy and support. They may be too busy to attend, but it's useful for them to be aware of it taking place.

The steward's role is to:

#### 1. Close the road safely

Help to position signs and cones according to official council guidelines and not exposing yourself to danger from oncoming traffic.

#### 2. 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.

#### 3. Stay visible, alert and safe.

Wear a hi-vis jacket. Position yourself for maximum visibility to oncoming traffic and awareness of the activities inside and outside of the closure area. Within reason, avoid any distracting conversation or activity. If you need to go to the toilet, find a suitable replacement and don't leave your co-steward on their own.

#### 4. Divert through traffic

Stay calm and friendly yet assertive. Explain briefly what is happening and how long it lasts. Suggest an alternative route. If needed, be clear that this is a legal road closure and residents have been fully consulted. It may be useful to have some of your leaflets to hand out, or to point to the street closure order on a nearby lamppost.

#### 5. Guide drivers needing access (residents/ special circumstances only)

Ensure you have agreement from the driver and the road is clear of children before moving the barriers. Two stewards are needed to let residents drive in and out; one to communicate with the driver and walk in front of the car while it passes through the street, the other to clear children from the road and then remain at the road closure point. Only deal with one driver at a time – if in the rare case you have to deal with more than one at the same time, ask them to wait.



Here 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.
- The other steward clears the road of all those playing out, with the help of the floating steward, by blowing the whistles and shouting “Car coming, move onto the pavements.”
- When the road is fully clear, the steward who is with the car walks the car in or out – walking in front of the vehicle at 5mph or slower.
- This steward keeps looking out for children and shouting “Car coming, stay on the pavement!”
- Only move the barrier when the car is just about to pass through it, and replace it immediately to prevent other cars following behind.
- Once the car has parked or left the road, shout out “Safe to play again!”

6. *If you need to swap out, ensure the steward taking over from you has read these instructions and hand over your hi-vis and whistle.*

#### 7. Floating steward

The floating steward’s key role is keeping an eye and ear out for engines starting up within 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.

#### 8. Dealing with difficult drivers

Occasionally drivers may become angry or difficult. Keep calm but assertive. If someone is a bit disgruntled it is usually enough to explain firmly but politely that it is a legal road closure, and that it is only temporary, and explain the diversion route. If a driver becomes confrontational, your co-steward should quietly alert the organiser and any nearby parents to ensure children’s safety. It can be useful to have a contact detail of someone at the council in case the driver wants to talk to an official. In the extreme situation that a driver behaves dangerously, dial 999 (or 101 if the immediate situation has passed).

#### 9. Re-open the road safely with a buffer zone

There is a small but serious risk of children seeking to return to play in the street shortly after a play street has ceased. Ultimately it is the parent’s responsibility to ensure their safety, but it does help to have a buffer zone or staged approach to reopening the road. This means that you end the play street 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 could also gently encourage parents to start taking their children home 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 session e.g. “5 minutes left of the play street!”
- 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 pavements is aware that cars are about to return. Be firm and friendly! Remind parents to ensure their children understand the difference between playing out and normal circumstances.
- Co-ordinate re-opening the road at both ends, so the barriers are removed simultaneously.
- Whilst the barriers are being removed, the floating steward can walk up and down the pavement shouting “Cars coming through now” to make a final check.

*Adapt and include your own quotes (from head teacher and local council) and photos*

#### **[NAME OF SCHOOL] first in region to shut street to cars**

Play stopped traffic outside [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 in [NAME OF ROAD].

Head teacher [INSERT NAME] said, “We were really excited to host our first play street. Many of our children have never ‘played out’ before so it was good to see them having the freedom to explore and play freely together, contributing to the healthy and happy lifestyle we aspire to for all our children. By closing the road to cars during pick-up time, we also saw a reduction in congestion and pollution around the school gates, as well as children, parents and residents coming together to enjoy the benefits of a safer, cleaner street environment. There was a real sense of community spirit. A big ‘thank you’ to everyone 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 joined in the fun.

[INSERT NAME], whose children attend the school, said: “It was nice to be able to help out and chat to other families. My children were very excited when they came out and saw they could play in the street – something that they never usually get the chance to do as there is so much traffic where we live. 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?’”

CLr [INSERT NAME], executive member for the environment at [INSERT COUNCIL] said: “Reducing the amount of traffic in and around our schools will not only help improve air quality, but children’s health too. Research shows that walking, cycling or scooting to school can help children’s concentration levels, as well as contributing to their overall health and wellbeing. I’m delighted that schools across our city are showing their support for play streets.”

#### **More information:**

For further details contact [INSERT NAME OF PERSON AND CONTACT DETAILS]



# About us

Sustrans and Playing Out issued this joint guidance, aimed at schools and parents across the UK wanting to run play streets.

Together we provide practical support to local communities and offer expert advice to local authorities.

We work in partnership to make streets safer places for children to travel and play.

We believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast.

## Get in touch

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Sustrans is a registered charity in the UK No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)

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