

ActiveStreets

Step-by-Step Manual

Achieving a Successful Street
Closure

Introduction

This is a step-by-step guide on arranging, organising and delivering a successful *ActiveStreets* 'street closure'. It will walk you through how you and your fellow residents can take ownership of your street, road or cul-de-sac and safely turn it into a community space for activities or a social event chosen by you, for you.

What is *ActiveStreets*?

The project is about providing the support for local residents and providing them with opportunity to come together, to take the ownership of their street and use it as shared communal space. Active Streets provide neighbours with tools to close their street, encourage them to come out of their homes, engage with their neighbours and take the opportunity to actively participate in a variety of street activities and support children with playing in a safe environment on their doorstep.

During the road closure Active Streets support local communities by organising the delivery of a variety of activity session as part of the scheme. The activities can be organised by Active Streets lead officer and delivered by Active Streets team, with a wide choice of activities available to choose from for example street games, dance class or a multisport session.

Setting a Date

The whole process from having the idea to the first closure will take from **4-6 weeks**. This gives enough time to:

- Arrange and have a consultation meeting with your neighbours
- Decide upon the activities wished to be available on the day
- Pick a day and time which suits everyone
- Share out the roles and responsibilities of organisation prior to, and on, the day
- Get the closure signed off and agreed by the district engineer and Birmingham City Council Transport Department

Please keep in mind, making your street a place for a play or a social event is a big deal! While you may feel confident about leading this project and delivering it successfully on your own, it always

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helps to have some support, morally and physically. If you know any neighbours already, it is good to sound them out and see if they will support you before putting the idea out to the whole street.

The Consultation

When you've decided you would like to propose the idea of closing your road to the rest of your neighbours it's time to arrange a consultation meeting with them. This preliminary meeting should take place at an absolute minimum 3 weeks before the date of the closure, so keep this in mind when putting forward potential dates and times. The idea of this informal meeting is for residents to discuss the idea of a street closure. This not only allows people to shape the day into something everyone will enjoy, but also allows questions and concerns to be raised and addressed at the beginning of the process.

Choose a place time and date that will be convenient and accommodating for as many residents as possible. A few ideas that have been successful in the past are; local pubs, cafés, someone's front room or even out in the street itself.

How you invite people to the consultation is really up to you. It's suggested that you can either invite people by going door-to-door or by putting an invite letter or flyer through their letterbox. Going door-to-door adds a personal touch but it is hard to effectively and efficiently reach out to everyone, even on smaller roads. Putting a letter or flyer through the letterbox is less personal but is an effective way of quickly getting the message to everyone on the street. You're welcome to create your own invites or if needed the *ActiveStreets* programme has a template invite letter which can be adapted for your street. The Wellbeing Service will also print as many copies as needed to help keep the cost down to a minimum.

To request invite letters please contact one of the *ActiveStreets* team.

Email: ActiveStreets@birmingham.gov.uk

Phone or Fax: 0121 464 0206

Aims of the Consultation:

- Generate interest, enthusiasm and discussion
- Discuss and address any questions and concerns
- Explain the procedures of the day, referencing and referring to this document if necessary
- Discuss types of activities people would like to see and the expectations of the day
- Collectively choose a date for the closure
- Discuss and agree who will fill the necessary roles
- Gather contact details of people willing to help

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If you feel it necessary you can request for an *ActiveStreets* Project Officer to attend the Consultation to offer support and provide advice.

Some people may have concerns or objections to what is being proposed. To familiarise yourself with the possible concerns see [page 13](#) of this document where some are listed.

Setting the dates

If there is sufficient interest and support that's great and it's time to pick a date for the closure. Road closures can take a maximum of six weeks to process, but can usually be arranged in 3-4 weeks. Make sure you take this into account, we recommend setting a first date 1 or 2 months from the Consultation. Think about how often you would like to close, and for how long and how much of the road, test the water (especially if there are concerns/objections as there is the option to change the time and date of your sessions if needed with two weeks' notice given).

The majority of previous play orientated sessions have been delivered after school, boosting the idea of it being a normal part of everyday life, but pick a time that suits what type of event you're planning and accommodates you and your neighbours, being as inclusive as possible.

If there is not enough interest in a closure on your road it may be best to leave the idea for now and try again at a later date. If you have no response at all, or nobody comes to the meeting, have a look at the playing out website in the section on inspiration and ideas, or start building up a plan of your own. Use your passion and enthusiasm to woo your neighbours, tell them about yours ideas the next time you bump into them or see them on the street. This has proven to be a productive way to engage people in the idea outside of a formal Consultation meeting and eventually lead into a successful closure. If you believe in it don't give up!

Roles and responsibilities

If you decide you want to go ahead with a closure, introduce everyone to the following three basic roles involved and see whether they appeal to anyone. Try to get as many people as possible to commit to helping at this meeting; you'll need at an absolute minimum of three additional volunteers in order to perform the closure on the day, as four people are required to steward the road. The more people willing to help out the better and by sharing out the responsibility no one feels left out and everyone can be included in the activities and enjoy the day.

Organisers

You will need at least one person to be the main organiser and lead on making it all happen. If you are reading this you are probably that person. The organiser is the main driving force and co-ordinator of the closure, on and before the day. With help and support provided by the *ActiveStreets* team and information contained in this manual, no previous experience of leading an event is required just commitment and enthusiasm. **Some streets have successfully shared this role between two or more people which you may prefer to do.**

Stewards

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Stewards are crucial as they are responsible for making the space safe, be it for street play or what ever your closure entails. It is essential to have two reliable adults at each 'vehicle entry' point throughout the session. The more stewards you can recruit the better. There are more details about recruiting stewards in the next step.

Helpers

Helpers are mostly needed to help with publicity and other odd-jobs such as designing flyers, posting letters and sourcing/collecting signage or other 'kit'.

Consultation Checklist

- A venue for the Consultation to take place
- Set a time and date for the Consultation
- Inform all residents about the Consultation
- Bring this manual along with you
- To help keep things on track set a rough agenda with a brief introduction
- Notepad and Pen to take note of any ideas or concerns

Tell everybody and get ready

Publicity

Decide how you want to publicise and advertise the event communally at the consultation. Decide expectations of attendance, who you want to come and how will you tell them about it. The day can be aimed just at residents of the road or you could decide to invite the whole neighbourhood. How you market the event will depend on your audience, do as you see fit.

Please note it is important to state clearly on all publicity that parents are responsible for their own children during the sessions and that cars can only come in and out escorted by a steward at walking speed. You are welcome to use and adapt our templates see appendix 8, 9, 10, 11.

It may be an idea to ask people to put a poster in their window a couple of weeks before the closure to show their support for the idea. You could also send out emails and text messages to neighbours leading up to the day.

Signage

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The requirements for signage are detailed in [appendix 12](#). This will consist of official 'Road Closed' signage and detailed instruction on how they should be used and displayed, to signal to drivers that a legal road closure is in force.

Documentation and Data

For the scheme to be successful and supported it will be an expectation that people participating overall in the activities will capture some basic information so that *ActiveStreets* can demonstrate success and the benefits, to ensure continued funding. This will be a simple form which asks for address postcode, age, ethnicity and disability of participants see [appendix 4](#).

Consider how and if you want to document the event. Photos are great for use in local news letters or for posting on a neighbourhood notice board, a street/neighbourhood Facebook group or send them over to the *ActiveStreets* Facebook page. It is fantastic for showing others what is possible if you are considering other community activity or physical changes in your street. You may want to write down or video neighbours enjoying the day or sharing memories of their own childhood. If you are recording other people, always ensure that you have their clear consent (and parental consent for children).

Please share any documentation or feedback with us if you have permission to do so. It all helps to encourage others to get involved with *ActiveStreets* and helps us to show the real benefits of this kind of community activity.

Recruiting Stewards and other Volunteers

TALK ABOUT VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION/REWARDS/CARD – REWARDING VOLUNTEERS

ActiveStreets road closure events are only possible with volunteer support. Asking neighbours to do leafleting and other jobs is not only to share some of the work, but a good way to involve others. Your time and energy is really appreciated and we are certain that your efforts will have a positive impact on your street and the wider community. As you recruit other volunteers, please give them respect and appreciation, no matter how much they are able to do.

You will need two stewards for each vehicle access point in order to keep the barriers attended when a car is being escorted in or out. Ideally you will also have a 'floating steward' to be near the middle of the road and watch out for cars wanting to leave the closure area. It's best to ask people to be stewards directly, rather than just sending out a general request. You might want to print out the [steward sign-up sheet](#), see [appendix 5](#), and get people to commit by asking them to read the document and confirm in writing. Stewards need to be reliable and confident, particularly on streets that normally have a high volume of traffic. Their position is the main place of potential danger or difficulty because it is the interface with cars. Any stewards with very young children should ensure someone else takes responsibility of their children while they are stewarding. Five minutes prior to a session starting it is good practice to brief the stewards for ideas on things to include and go through, please see [appendix 6](#).

About being an organiser on your own street

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“The hardest part of organising the event was being ‘visible’ on my street and realising that not everyone agreed with what I was trying to do. In my job I’m used to dealing with difficult situations, but on my own street it felt more personal. Having said that, I felt on a real high afterwards and even people who had been uncertain beforehand came out and were supportive”

Fielding objections and concerns

Hopefully you will have support from all of your neighbours but sometimes there may be people who have objections or concerns to the idea of a street closure. If this is the case of course avoid confrontation, it is best practice to seek to hear and understand their side. It may be an issue that can be easily resolved or it is something that nobody has considered, [page 13](#) is a list of possible concerns that may help and your *ActiveStreets* playing out lead officer can help.

Getting Active!

Things to have to hand on the day

Even though the event will be taking place outside of people’s homes it is worth having a first-aid kit to hand. Other useful things are thermos, umbrellas and chairs (for stewards). We usually have [information leaflets](#) about the other offers from The Birmingham Wellbeing Service, including *ActiveStreets*, to hand out to anyone who is interested in finding out more or for drivers who are confused about why the road is closed.

ActiveStreets Activities

Part of the programme can include the delivery of a structured physical activity session that will take place each time the street is closed. The activity session will need to be agreed, promoted and planned at least four weeks prior to the date of your street closure. The activity session can consist of a wide range of activities that will need to be discussed with your *ActiveStreets* lead officer. This could be anything you want from tennis and badminton to a fitness class or a multi-activity taster session offer. It’s up to you, the activities can be arranged by and delivered by yourselves, a partner organisation of the *ActiveStreets* programme or the *ActiveStreets* lead officer will make the arrangements and organise an instructor to deliver the class. The programme of activities which we can offer will be of a very similar nature to our Active Parks Programme which you can find more information on online at www.beactivebirmingham.co.uk and select Active Parks from the main page.

Toys, Games and Equipment

In our experience so far, when left to their own devices, children find their own ways to play. The organisation of the equipment and atmosphere to stimulate play is more important than forming structured adult influenced play for children, make sure it’s safe and then leave it up to them. Chalks, long skipping ropes, swing ball, bicycles, scooters, stilts, hula hoops and bubbles always go down well with kids and speak to your *ActiveStreets* Groundwork Officer to discuss what extra toys, games and equipment we could support your day with.

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Unless you notice something unduly risky (e.g. hard cricket balls!) in which case you may need to calmly intervene, you can probably relax about this side of things.

What if it rains?

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

What to expect on the day

The day is here and you have done everything you can to let people know about the event. Now its time to see who attends and to enjoy all of your hard work.

Briefing the stewards

Arrange to meet and brief the first stewards about 15 minutes before the event begins. It's important to take this bit really seriously because stewards do need to be alert to cars and clear about their role, which is to:

- Keep children within the closure
- Divert 'through' traffic
- Safely guide drivers needing access into or out of the road.

All the stewards should be familiar with and have read the steward briefing, this is extremely important. There is no room for error or poor preparation when it comes to stewarding, the safety and with it the enjoyment of the day for all participants relies on the procedures being followed. If there are two shifts, the steward being relieved will then be responsible for briefing their replacement.

We will provide stewards with hi-visibility vests, lanyards with whistles attached and the steward briefing. The steward briefing should include the organiser's mobile number and the phone number of the contact person within the council. These are passed on to subsequent stewards. Stewards should be safely behind the road closure point (i.e. not in the live carriageway) but in view of oncoming traffic, the closure area and other stewards. The organiser and stewards should agree who will look out for drivers wanting to leave the street and how this will be managed, i.e. will the responsibility be shared between people or is someone willing to take the responsibility on their own. This is an important role to be addressed as it minimises the disruption to residents needing to leave and those engaging in activity. On a long stretch of road you will need a designated 'floating steward' as well as the stewards at each end.

Closing the road

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After briefing, the stewards should go to the closure points and put the signs into place as simultaneously as they can. Do this gradually so you are always protected by a cone or barrier. Once in place, the stewards should not leave their posts except to walk cars in and out. Make sure everyone is clear about when the street is fully closed and safe for the event to begin – you could have a signal for this (e.g. three blows on a whistle).

Dealing with cars

After the road is closed, if a car wants to go through, they can't (emergency vehicles are an exception) as the road is legally closed to through traffic. If, on the other hand, a driver lives on or is visiting the road and wants access in or out, we tell them that we can only allow them to drive in the road if they wait until we have cleared the road and then drive very slowly with one of the stewards walking in front. Try to keep all of this friendly and smile while we tell them this. If they still want to gain access under those conditions, let them through, following that procedure carefully. With adult cyclists, ask them to go through very slowly or to push through. Keep it safe and respectful.

The procedure for stewarding cars into the street is:

1. Get clear agreement from the driver to the conditions above. Be clear that you can only give access if you have this agreement.
2. Warn everyone in the road in a loud and clear voice (or whistle) that a car is coming through and give them a moment to hear and respond. Ensure the road is clear of children and obstacles.
3. Gain eye contact with the driver, ask them where they want to go and remind them to follow behind you, driving very slowly.
4. When you feel it is safe, your co-steward should move the barrier to allow the vehicle past. They then remain at the closure point while you walk ahead of the vehicle to their parking space. Once the engine is off, call out 'Safe to play' and allow everyone back into the road.
5. Thank them, be friendly and polite throughout.
6. Return to the closure point.

If you become aware of a driver wanting to leave the street:

1. Talk to them and agree which way they will be going out
2. Once you have their agreement to wait until you have cleared the road and then drive very slowly with one of the stewards walking in front:
3. Warn everyone in the road in a loud and clear voice (or whistle) that a car is coming through.
4. When you feel it is safe, make eye contact with the driver and walk in front of them towards the barrier.
5. A steward at the closure point moves the barrier to let the vehicle out and repositions it.

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6. Once the barrier has been replaced, call out 'Safe to play', or 'Safe to continue' if the event is not play orientated, and then allow everyone back into the road.

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

Difficult drivers

This is a rare but serious area of risk, so be prepared. If a driver becomes difficult or challenges your authority, you and the stewards will need to use your judgment in the moment and trouble-shoot as best you can. Avoid arguments and confrontation and prioritise the safety of all the participants. Remember that people may have all kinds of reasons for their reaction and try to remain calm, courteous and assertive. Reassert the legal status of the closure and the fact that it is temporary. If a driver becomes confrontational, your co-steward should quietly alert the organiser and any nearby parents to ensure children's safety. The stewards' briefing will have the contact number for the *ActiveStreets* lead officer that can be offered if a driver wants to talk to an official. In the extreme situation that a driver behaves dangerously, contact the police immediately.

Having a good time while managing the session

The organisers are, in effect, the hosts of the day, event or play session. People are responsible for themselves but you are somewhat responsible for the event overall. So strike a balance. You have every right to let a child, parent or participant know if you think they are acting dangerously or disruptively. Likewise, you will want to relax and enjoy it with your neighbours. By all means do and you should, but keep an eye out, particularly on the stewards. Check that they're okay and if you are able to offer support in any situation where they feel uncomfortable or cannot confidently do what is needed, whatever it may be. Use your judgment; it is unlikely that you will need to intervene with anything except the occasional steward no show or at worst, a difficult driver.

Watch for elderly neighbours, people with physical or mentally disabilities or health issues, or even people from other streets who come out to have a look and enjoy the afternoon. Introduce yourself and have a chat if it's fitting. These conversations can be the most rewarding thing about the sessions. Try to make the day as open and welcoming to everyone as possible. It's up to you and the other residents whether you want to invite people from other streets but keep in mind if you decide not to the odd few people may still turn up.

Clearing up and re-opening the road

About 10 minutes before re-opening the road one steward from each end walks up the road towards each other, telling everyone that the road will be reopening shortly ask that they start clearing things away. Pick up equipment, pack up gazebos in the road etc. and encourage others to do the same.

Once everything is cleared away, the two stewards should go up and down again calling something like, "onto the pavements now please, we are reopening the road." Use whistles to gain attention, and a clear and loud voice – but try to stay warm and friendly. This is also a time to remind parents to make sure their children understand the difference between a road closure and normal circumstances. Be assertive with parents and participants that cars may now be coming through at

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speed and it is their responsibility to keep themselves and their children safe. Getting their verbal agreement is useful to reassure yourself that you have made everyone fully aware of the now present danger in relation to cars.

As soon as you are sure everyone is off the road and parents have full control of small children, aim to open the road closure points simultaneously to avoid any cars getting stranded in the middle. After taking away the signs the stewards can then do a final 'sweep' of the road, walking down the carriageway from each end and meeting in the middle, to make absolutely sure everyone is safely off the road before fast cars start coming through. As they do this, the stewards should be aware they are walking in a 'live carriageway' and ensure they are facing and visible to any oncoming traffic.

After the event

Well done! Within the next two to three days you will need to be sending the *ActiveStreets* the data that has been collected from the day, this can be sent in electronically by fax, e-mail or by handing in the hard copies of the registration forms that have been completed.

Now is the time to celebrate all of you and your team's achievements. Make sure to thank all who were involved. If possible, take a photo or two of the day for record and note down some of your reflective thoughts and feelings at this time, gathering thoughts or feedback from other people as well if they share them with you. These may help you to grow ideas for future events or activities for your street or community. When the dust has settled, we really encourage you to take some time to celebrate your achievement in some way.

You and the future of *ActiveStreets*

We'd love to hear about how your day has been and please do stay in touch. Your observations, ideas, feedback, testimonials, photos, memories of play on the day will help us grow this movement. Your tweets, blogs, email, website or Facebook page mentions, and of course, spreading the word about the *ActiveStreets* project will be much appreciated and will go a long way towards building events such as your own into a normal part of daily life.



<https://www.facebook.com/ActiveStreets>

Your *ActiveStreets* checklist:

First steps (At least 2 months before first session)

1. Talk to your neighbours about the idea to see if they would be interested. If so:
2. Set a date and venue for the first meeting (consultation).
3. Read up on *ActiveStreets*.
4. For Inspirations and Ideas go to www.playnet.com website.
5. Contact your *ActiveStreets* team on 0121 464 0206,

10-14 days before first meeting

1. Adapt and print out the Neighbour Meeting Invitation Appendix 11
2. Distribute invitations through letterboxes
3. Plan for the meeting using the manual.

At the first meeting

1. Talk through the idea to your neighbours.
2. Share memories of playing out, hopes, ideas and concerns.
3. Assess interest and set a date for your first *ActiveStreets* session and the potential for subsequent sessions.
4. Decide who will do what
5. Collect contact details (use the steward sign-up if it helps, or start an email list).

During the week following the meeting

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

6-8 weeks before your first ActiveStreets session

1. Start to recruit stewards and volunteers
2. Respond to any objections and concerns that arise from the consultation. See [possible Common Concerns](#) listed on page 13 or contact the *ActiveStreets* Team if you want any help with this!
3. Distribute posters to neighbours for display in windows.
4. , let everyone know it is going ahead and remind them of the dates. You can use the [Confirmation flyer](#) as a template, see appendix 7
5. Confirm stewards.

1 week before your first session

1. Make arrangements for your road closure signage and any other materials you want to have on the day – hi-visibility vests, lanyards etc.
2. Print out copies of the Steward briefing (two for each closure point) and become familiar with it, see appendix 6.
3. Do a risk/benefit assessment, see appendix 2.

On the day

1. Make sure you have everything you need ready to go
2. Verbally brief the stewards and get them to read the Steward briefing
3. Close the road (following the procedure in the manual) and play out!
4. Pass around a mailing list to neighbours at the event.
5. Talk to neighbours, collect memories, take video and photos.
6. Make sure everyone knows the road is going back to 'normal' and open the road safely.

In the week or so following your event

1. Email us or go on our Facebook page to let us know how you got on!
2. Send completed data registration forms to *ActiveStreets* lead officer

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3. Celebrate the achievement with your neighbours, children, helpers, volunteers and stewards.
4. If you have a local newspaper, consider sending a photo and a short piece about your street closure activity. If you are happy to, offer your support and contact details to other streets wanting to encourage street play, and direct them to the website. www.beactivebirmingham.co.uk

Common concerns about children's play type sessions

We've put these together based on our experience so far. We are very happy to discuss issues in relation to playing out and will provide as much advice and support as we can....

I have concerns about this happening on my street. What do I do?

Firstly, read through this page – you might find your concerns are addressed here. If you are still not sure, talk to the person or people organising it. They will be happy to have an honest, neighbourly discussion with you and try to find ways to make sure your concerns are addressed. If you still want to make a formal objection to the road closure you can contact the council. You need to be clear about where the proposed closure is and why you are objecting, giving your name and address. The council will attempt to address any concerns and weigh up the pros and cons in each instance before making a decision. The council cannot respond to anonymous objections and contact details will never be passed on.

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

Parks are great for family outings and for older children who can get there independently but for younger children, it usually involves a special trip, organised and supervised by adults. This means that, unlike a generation ago, children are simply not getting enough everyday active play time.

Active Streets is very different. Firstly, it is literally on the doorstep so children can play 'semi-supervised' whilst parents get on with other things. This allows for more unstructured, child-led play. Secondly, children playing together on their street helps to build a sense of community and belonging, which in turn makes your street a safer and friendlier place.

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

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

This is a major inconvenience for me as a car driver, why should I let it happen?

It really shouldn't be a major inconvenience as residents can still drive in and out during the session if they need too, just at walking speed to make it safe for everyone. For those not living on the street, it will usually only mean a tiny addition to journey times. Most sessions only last an hour or two and take place before rush hour and at weekends. If you do have concerns, do talk to the organisers about them and hopefully you can reach a solution. You may well find it easier than normal to park on the street, since only residents will be allowed in and out during the sessions.

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Will you still let visitors/deliveries through?

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

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. If you are outside the closure area talk to the organisers about your concerns, in an open neighbourly way – there is usually a way around things if you really need access to parking for your customers, although please remember there is no right to parking on a public highway, even for residents. There is strong support for children’s right to play out amongst parents and grandparents in particular, so you might even find that by being accommodating or offering support you improve your business image and get new customers!

Aren’t roads just for cars?

The idea that residential streets are just ‘roads’ i.e. places simply to drive and park cars has crept up on us gradually and has now become an accepted fact. Up until the 1970s, street play was common. 71% of adults played out in the street or neighbourhood as children, compared to only 21% of children today (Playday poll, 2007). The street is our main public space in the city and the place where a sense of community can be created. Playing Out is partly about challenging the perception that streets are nothing but highways and demonstrating their possibilities as social spaces for everyone.

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

Times have changed. Streets are much more traffic dominated and it is no longer normal to see children out playing as it used to be. Having to organise an official road closure in order to use the street in this way is not an ideal situation and is not a long-term solution. In some very quiet streets a road closure might not be necessary in order for children to safely play in the road. However, the danger from fast-moving traffic is one of the main reasons that children don’t play outside nowadays. In many residential streets, cars both parked and moving dominate to such an extent that play becomes impossible. In this instance closing the road to through traffic and having stewards in place provides the reassurance parents need to allow their children to play out whilst parents and adults are able to meet socially promoting a sense ownership to their street, whilst still allowing residents car access. Playing out can be a first step towards changing attitudes about the place of cars in residential streets. Ideally, our streets would be spaces where cars and people of all ages can coexist happily. This is the long-term goal of Active Streets.

Won’t an Active Street session bring lots of children to my street from elsewhere?

Each session is organised by residents and only publicised through flyers and posters on their own street and sometimes, immediately neighbouring streets. The Active Street session are not just for children, they are for the benefit of everybody living in or locally the

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street of any age by giving people the chance to take part right outside their front doors and not designed to be public 'events'. However, it should be remembered that the street is a public space, so it is not possible or desirable to try to exclude people coming in from outside. It is very unlikely that you would have more than a few families joining from other streets as the main 'draw' for children and parents (as opposed to going to the park) is having direct access to your own house and toys, and getting to know your neighbours.

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

Our experience is that streets are quieter during the sessions than when open to traffic, to the extent you are more likely to hear birdsong! Some people would say the sound of children playing is a wonderful thing and something we no longer hear enough of. In 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. Often, playing out sessions 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 to discuss it and try to reach a solution everyone is happy with.

I am nervous about my car being damaged.

If you are very nervous about damage to your car, you may wish to park it elsewhere during Active Streets sessions. However, we have heard of very few incidents of damage in the hundreds of sessions that have taken place 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 playing out 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.

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

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

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

We have had many conversations with parents about this and there is a strong agreement that even young children can understand the difference between an event with a road closure and normal circumstances. Playing out sessions are a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children about road safety and the danger of traffic but also to observe what streets could be like if traffic was less dominant and begin to think about ways to slow cars on their street.

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

We need to remember that for the vast majority of the time, children may feel excluded from this space right outside their homes. Active Streets is just a very small way to redress the balance. Organisers should make sure that residents of all ages feel welcome to be out on the street and sessions don't just need to be about children or family events. As for an example you could have an early morning session that included Tai Chi as an activity. Equally, no one should feel any obligation to 'join in' if they don't want to. At some sessions, older residents or those without children have helped to steward or just enjoyed sitting out, meeting neighbours and sharing memories about their own childhood play experiences. Parents may assume that those without children won't be interested in being involved, so do make it clear to them if you want to be. Your support will certainly be welcome!

What other benefits are there to Active Streets?

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

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10 Reasons why “Active Streets” is important

1. Streets constitute the vast majority of public space in the city. To see them only as places to drive and park cars is to massively undervalue them. Streets can and should be places where people can sit, talk, read, play and walk and even sing and dance if they want to! The only way this can happen is if we start to use them differently.
2. An active neighbourhood, one which seeks to understand the issues their wider community faces, is a safer neighbourhood. A safer neighbourhood means less crime, less anti-social behaviour, more tolerance and more understanding.
3. Spending time out in your street allows you to build a cohesive community and brings people of all ages and nationalities together by providing a sense of common space and shared ownership. It can engender a sense of collective responsibility and thereby increase the safety of the neighbourhood.
4. Children like to play near home and have traditionally done so. A 2007 poll found that 71% of Adults played out on their street daily as children compared with only 21% of children today. (Play England) ActiveStreets hopes to reverse this trend.
5. The street is a blank canvas, allowing for child-led ‘free’ play, providing important benefits over structured, organised activities in designated spaces. Free play builds creativity, and gives space for children to work collaboratively, to negotiate with each other and to practice decision making skills.
6. Children need ample space to play energetically. Many homes do not have gardens and in cities these tend to be small. Many children can’t get to parks and other open spaces easily whereas the street is instantly accessible, providing the space children are missing in their own homes.
7. Bringing activities to your road enables children to meet and develop friendships outside of school and across age groups. Free-play in mixed age groups allows older children to show their physical and thinking skills to younger children who in turn learn new processes in a very natural way.
8. The activities not only benefit the children through play, it also increases contact between adults and children living on the road, helping to build up familiarity, trust and a cohesive community.
9. As adults, we don’t always have time to get to know our neighbours. The process of closing your road provides an opportunity to build a closer community, discover what you have in common, share your experiences and learn from others.
10. It doesn’t matter where you live the street is open to everyone! We can help you make the most of this communal space on your doorstep.

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Notes: