

# Risk Benefit Analysis of the Playing Out Model

## 1. Policy Framework

“Risk benefit assessment is an approach that satisfies the legal requirement for a ‘suitable and sufficient’ risk assessment, but carried out in a descriptive way, rather than by using a scoring process”<sup>1</sup>

Play England recommends that all risk management in play provision should start with a clear play policy. At the moment there is no overarching clear play policy for the UK as a whole, although Play England published the Charter for Children’s Play in 2009.<sup>2</sup> Globally, the UN Convention on the rights of the child, article 31 says, “Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.”<sup>3</sup>

The Welsh government has a comprehensive policy, “It is the very freedom and child centeredness of play that makes it such an effective and comprehensive learning process.”<sup>4</sup> and the Scottish Government says that, “All children should have the opportunity to play every day.”<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Model Description

Residents legally close their street to traffic for a short time, creating a **safe, accessible space** for children to play out. Neighbours ‘steward’ each end of the street and allow residents car access. Parents are responsible for their own children. Play is generally **free, undirected and child-led**.

## 3. Risk Benefit Assessment of the Playing Out Model on One (generic) Street

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
Benefits	<p>Increase in children’s physical activity</p> <p>Opportunity for children to learn new skills eg rollerskating, cycling</p> <p>Opportunity for children to learn to interact with other children</p> <p>Opportunity for children to learn to interact</p>	<p>University of Bristol Study<sup>6</sup></p> <p>Playing Out Survey 2016<sup>7</sup></p>

	<p>with adults</p> <p>Children making new friends</p> <p>People get to know their neighbours better, increasing their sense of belonging and wellbeing.</p> <p>Leads to neighbours doing other social activities together.</p> <p>Organisers gain confidence and experience of active citizenship</p>	
<b>Risks</b>	<p>Risk of minor injuries (e.g. from falling on tarmac)</p> <p>Risk of damage to cars and property complaints from some residents (residents are often worried about unsupervised children and damage to cars).</p> <p>Risk of cars ignoring stewards and causing collisions</p> <p>Risk of road closure and stewarding not being carried out safely</p> <p>Lessons learnt from collision:</p> <p>PO guidance changed to ensure that there is a 'buffer' time from calling the end of the closure to actually opening it for cars, to enable children to realise that the closure has ended.</p>	<p>Evidence from people carrying out Playing Out.</p> <p>Playing Out keeps an issues log of all serious incidents in sessions.</p> <p>1 child reported to have collided with a car (at the end of a session) out of over 600 streets in six years).</p> <p>5 examples of dangerous driving reported to PO over 6 years</p>
<b>Expert Views</b>	Positive views from public health	PO Blog

	<p>professionals.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Positive views from community development professionals.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>Positive comments from the Chief Medical Officer.<sup>6</sup></p> <p>Positive views from the Police</p>	<p>(Clare Lowman)</p> <p>PO Blog (Judith Langdon)</p> <p>CMO report 2012</p> <p>Chief Inspector Blog</p>
<p><b>Options and their costs, pros and cons</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continued implementation of the PO model.</li> <li>2. Not implementing the model.</li> <li>3. Implementation of an amended version of the model.</li> </ol> <p>(1)Continued implementation of the PO model.</p> <p>The temporary play street or ‘playing out’ model has been tried and tested over six years and on at least 508 streets across the UK. It is economically efficient and sustainable, because people voluntarily close their own streets creating new places for children to play. If it is not implemented children may not receive all the benefits, both physical and social listed above.</p> <p>Residents are still able to drive in and out of the street and so retain the benefit of car travel.</p> <p>Control measures: Provision of detailed guidance materials (online, printed and video) by Playing Out; Provision of advice on RC by local authorities; Briefing of Stewards; Policies on unsupervised children; discussions with neighbours about cars; Children are supervised and the responsibility of their parents at all times.</p> <p>(2) Not implementing the model:</p>	

	<p>People would lose the opportunity to create safe play spaces outside their houses, their children the opportunity to make friends and the neighbourhood the opportunity to change the motoring and social culture of a small section of a community, with a ‘ripple effect’ to the wider community.</p> <p>Experience has shown that in some areas, after implementing the model for a year or two the culture changes sufficiently so that formal road closures are no longer felt necessary as a safety measure, and children play out spontaneously.</p> <p>We accept the status quo, where children’s freedom to play out, with all the benefits this brings, is very limited and becoming ever more so. Child obesity and other related problems continue to rise. Communities become more fractured and atomised, leading to further societal breakdown.</p> <p>(3) Implementation of an amended version of the model.</p> <p>The model has been tried, tested and refined over the years. The framework for neighbour consultation, working within a legal street closure but retaining safe access for vehicles, and creating a safe space to play balances the needs of the children with the needs of the residents.</p> <p>There was a model in London where streets were legally designated as ‘Play Streets’ but with no supervised barriers in place, parents were not confident to let their children play in the street, and as the volume of traffic has increased over the past 20 years this is not felt to be safe, until a change in motoring culture is achieved.</p>	
<b>Precedents/ Comparisons</b>	There are street closure initiatives in the US and Canada and Belgium. In the Netherlands	Seattle <sup>7</sup>

	<p>they have Woonerfs, or streets that are genuinely shared spaces where cars always proceed with caution, expecting children to be out and about. (A woonerf is a <a href="#">living street</a>, as originally implemented in the Netherlands and in Flanders. Techniques include <a href="#">shared space</a>, <a href="#">traffic calming</a>, and low <a href="#">speed limits</a>. Under Article 44 of the Dutch traffic code, motorised traffic in a woonerf or "recreation area" is restricted to walking pace)</p>	<p>Earth Day Canada</p> <p>Woonerf or 'Living Street in the Netherland'</p>
<p><b>Risk-based judgement</b></p>	<p>It is clear that the benefits outweigh the risks. Although the risk of car-child collision is potentially catastrophic the control measures put in place to train stewards and to control traffic in quiet residential streets has meant that in 508 of street closures (of which many will have closed up to 12 times per year) there has been one collision so far, which happened at a low speed and did not result in serious injury. The HSE guidance on Children's play and leisure expressly says <i>'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'</i>. and furthermore "should focus on controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user."</p> <p>It is important that in implementing the Playing Out model that each local street is assessed for its suitability for hosting a session. Model risk assessments are provided by Playing Out and include issues such as side streets, visibility, communication with playing</p>	

	<p>children, emergency procedures, and training and awareness of stewards.</p> <p>Local authorities that issue TPSOs also assess the street for suitability for closure, including factors such as bus routes and weight of traffic.</p>	
<b>Implementing judgement</b>	<p>In the past children played out unattended often all day.</p> <p>The main difference over recent years is the growth in road traffic that has led to both a culture of keeping children indoors to protect them and the genuine fear by parents that cars do not take account of children playing when they are driving down residential streets. The Playing Out model is a halfway house between the situation as it used to be, and creates a protected space where children can reclaim the streets outside their houses as a place to play, socialise, and exercise.</p>	

### References:

1. Ball, D. Gill T and Spiegel B. **Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide.** *Play England 2008*
2. Play England: Charter for Children's Play  
<http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/71062/charter-for-childrens-play.pdf>
3. UNICEF: Fact Sheet, A summary of the rights under the convention on the rights of the child.  
[https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

4. Welsh Government Play Policy.  
<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/3291781/?lang=en>
5. Scottish Government Play statement.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/parenting-early-learning/play>
6. Bristol University Study reference here.
7. Playing Out: Survey Autumn 2016
8. <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2015/12/08/loneliness-and-isolation-social-relationships-are-key-to-good-health/>
9. Playing Out Issues log
10. Playing Out Blog: Playing Out a Public Health Perspective: Clare Lowman <http://playingout.net/playing-public-health-perspective/>
11. Playing Out Blog: Local Authority Newsletter: Judith Langdon
12. Playing Out Blog: Policing the streets and Playing Out by Chief Inspector Kevin Rowlands <http://playingout.net/policing-streets-playing/>
13. Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012: Our Children deserve better, prevention  
[pays.https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/255237/2901304\\_CMO\\_complete\\_low\\_res\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255237/2901304_CMO_complete_low_res_accessible.pdf)
14. Department of Health: Guidance from the Chief Medical Office (CMO) on how much physical activity people should be doing, along with supporting documents. **Fact Sheet 3: Children and Young People (5-18 years)** 11th July 2011  
([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/213739/dh\\_128144.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/213739/dh_128144.pdf))
15. Play Streets in Seattle  
<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/playstreets.htm>
16. Play Streets in Canada  
<https://earthday.ca/play/#street>
17. The Dutch Woonerf concept  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woonerf>

18. Health and Safety Executive: **Children's Play and Leisure, promoting a balanced approach.** *September 2012*  
(<http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>)
  
19. Dangerous driving incidents recorded by PO:
  - Tring x 2
  - Stonebridge Park (court case and successful prosecution for dangerous driving)
  - Pendennis Park
  - Radnor Road
  - Glenarm
  - Burgley
  - Winston