

Streets alive

Do you know your neighbours?
Are children in your road allowed to knock on others' doors to play? PlayStreets is a local scheme reflecting the growing popularity around London of reclaiming streets for community fun.

Our roads make up more than half of the open space in our towns but they have almost exclusively become the domain of cars, for understandable reasons. But it does not have to be that way all of the time.

PlayStreets is a resident-led scheme backed by Ealing Council which aims to draw people out from behind locked

doors and away from their TV screens, so they can share the common space in front of their homes with their neighbours.

Councillor Bassam Mahfouz, cabinet member for transport and environment, said: "The borough currently has three active PlayStreets and another three have applied as word has spread. A PlayStreet is a stewarded road closure for two or three hours each month to let you

capture some of the excitement of street parties on a regular basis, and build a sense of community. It lets neighbours have a cup of tea and a chat, and allows children to run, scooter and play safely together, and with freedom."

All of the existing PlayStreets run between 3-5pm, except in the winter when they switch to the earlier time of 1-3pm.

Councillor Mahfouz said: "The council is accepting applications to set up more PlayStreets in the spring. It can take a couple of months to organise, so it is best to start thinking about it now."

Applications for PlayStreets are free to make and there will be no fee for closing roads if a scheme is approved.

WANT TO BRING YOUR STREET ALIVE?

If you want to set up a PlayStreet in your road, there are four easy steps to follow:

- 1 Talk to your neighbours and see if enough of you are keen to organise it
- 2 Do a house-to-house survey with neighbours and get them to complete a survey. Contact the council and ask it to help you. The council can run a confidential online survey and collate the results for you. You can also collect signatures on paper. You will need to show support for the scheme comes from the majority of residents in your street
- 3 If the response is in favour of a PlayStreet, you will need to advise residents of the outcome of the survey and then the council will apply for a temporary traffic order on your behalf to enable the road closures. It takes six-eight weeks to organise, but then lasts for years
- 4 Let everyone know when your first PlayStreet will be. A 'Playing Out' kit is provided for you by the council, which contains everything you need to get started.

WHAT IS A PLAYSTREET LIKE?

Neighbours of Goldsmith Avenue in Acton worked with the council to pilot the first ever PlayStreet in the borough in September 2013. They have held sessions once a month on a Saturday ever since.

Resident Sara Nathan said she first came up with the idea after their street got together for the first time when throwing a big lunch to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee. She said:

"All of a sudden there were all these children that nobody had ever seen before. It made you realise they weren't playing together outside and we were missing the liveliness of street life that you get when children are out playing."

Another resident, Sonya Matthews, said her two children, aged five and three, really look forward to playing out. However, the events are not exclusively for the little ones in their street. "Neighbouring streets are also invited," said Sonya. "It's lovely to

be able to step outside and have a cup of tea and a biscuit with other parents and people whose kids have long since left home. One neighbour who grew up on the street and has lived there for about 30 years said the sound of the first PlayStreet took her back to her childhood in Goldsmith Avenue. It was really nice for us to know that was something we were recreating."

MORE INFO

■ Contact Renée McCaw at the council, email mccawr@ealing.gov.uk or call 020 8825 8415

■ www.dosomethinggood.org.uk or www.ealing.gov.uk/playstreets

