

University of Bristol is working with **Playing Out to
evaluate the *Playing Out* project**

Dr Angie Page and Professor Ashley Cooper from the University of Bristol have been using combined GPS Global Positioning System (GPS) and activity monitoring for the past 5 years in Bristol to investigate the contribution of time spent outdoors to health outcomes including physical activity, obesity and well being. They are now extending their use of this technology from observational research (www.bris.ac.uk/enhs/peach) to evaluate environmental interventions such as the 'Playing Out' project.

Unique Bristol based pilot study evaluating Playing Out

66 children aged 2 to 13yrs wore GPS and accelerometers during playing out events on 2 residential streets after school between 4 and 5pm. Parent/carer consent was obtained before children wore the equipment and ethical approval was provided by University of Bristol Ethics Committee. One-to-one 45minute interviews were carried out by a researcher with 11 parents living on the 2 streets.

Preliminary results of the combined accelerometry/GPS data show that:

- Children were outside approximately 70% of the time during the street closure monitoring period
 - This compares to less than 20% usually spent outdoors during this time period on an average school day by Bristol children of a similar age.
- Children spent 30% of their time outside during Playing Out sessions in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and another 15% in light activity.
 - This compares to on average 5% of time indoors spent in MVPA during this time of day for children of a similar age.

Preliminary findings from interviews suggest that for those parents interviewed:

- Traffic is the biggest barrier to street play and the Playing Out closures are seen as a way to overcome this to some extent
- Playing Out helps parents resist the pressure to resort to TV viewing after school
- Parents link opportunities for street play with wider initiatives such as 20mph and see these as complementary
- Playing Out has meant greater interaction with other neighbours including those without children
- Parents actively engage with children to make clear that playing in the road is only 'safe' on Playing Out days
- Playing out offers opportunity for children to develop confidence and try out' independence away from direct control of parents and helps parents have the confidence to let them.
- Parents really value the opportunity to give their children the 'freedom of the street' – something they themselves had and feel their own children are denied.

Contacts for further information:

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