



Case Study: Playing Out in Adur and Worthing

Introduction

This case study describes the implementation of a playing out policy in the Adur and Worthing Councils area. We also describe how playing out is administered in a two-tier authority. Since the adoption of the policy in Adur and Worthing, two other district councils within West Sussex have adopted a street play policy, Chichester and Mid Sussex.

A street play policy would not have been implemented in Adur and Worthing if it had not been for the efforts of the resident activator, supported by Playing Out. She brought other residents together to campaign for a street play policy. She also worked closely with the local community officers throughout this process and together they developed broad support among both residents and politicians.

The residents formed a voluntary group: Adur and Worthing Playing Out, initially to campaign for, and then to support street play in their area.

Implementation

The local resident activator ran a one-off playing out session using a street party application (£100 fee waived because of Jubilee) and invited local councillors and officers.

In September 2012, a second session was held to which the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing was invited. He was impressed with what he saw.

A play street pilot was introduced in 2013 in which residents could apply for up to six street closures of three hours, once a month, on fixed dates from April to October. Fifteen streets were involved.

Following the trial, an evaluation was made of how it worked for residents, the benefits to children, and how it fitted in with the ambitions of the council. The local officers worked with both the West Sussex Highways team and the local police and they are both still part of the statutory consultation process for temporary road closures.

Adur and Worthing Officers reported to the Joint Strategic Committee on the 7th November 2013: (<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media,118705,en.pdf>).

They included a report written by the residents who had campaigned for the pilot.

Two key points are quoted here:

Culture change:

“Play Streets contributes to a number of the Councils’ priorities and fits with Members desire to see the Councils undertake a more enabling role for local communities, which includes a balancing act of reducing the barriers and red tape and facilitating and providing light touch support.”

Risk:

“The Councils’ approach to risk is fundamental to this whole scheme. Play Streets is a resident-led activity, which always carries some element of risk. There have been very few problems with the pilot overall. However there is always the risk that something could go wrong. Residents are provided with clear guidance and encouraged to work together, consult their neighbours, they are guided to risk assess their own sessions and put control measures into place and most importantly - they take responsibility for their own sessions and children. All of this minimises any risks and maximises the aforementioned benefits of the scheme. However, no risk will ever be eliminated and problems could occur. If the scheme is to continue to work it is essential that it does so with minimum red tape and maximum “common sense”. For some departments and authorities this requires a culture change from being risk averse to enabling communities to take charge and take responsibility.”

Legislation used

Town and Police Clauses Act 1847, Section 21.

Rules/conditions for road closures

Adur & Worthing Councils do not charge for the road closure or require residents to take out third party insurance for the purposes of street play but strongly advise that residents carry out a risk assessment.

Residents are responsible for signage but there are road closure kits, which are available via A&W Playing Out and the Council’s Parking Services contractor. These were made possible by local donations, the councils and from a community grant.

Application procedure for residents

Residents apply for a Temporary Play Street Order using the single page form on the A&W website and consult affected residents using a template. Any questions or objections are dealt with by the resident in the first instance and passed on to the council only if they can’t be resolved informally. Up to 12 dates can be applied for in a year - any combination of days and times.

Applications should be made eight weeks before the first session. The formal notices are published on the council website and sent to the resident 2 weeks before the first closure.

The Council play streets webpage is here: <https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/get-up-and-active/activities-and-events/playing-out/>.

Relationship between Borough and County Council

Within the Borough Council the play street application process is managed by the legal department. Once an application has been received the borough council carries out an internal consultation with the County Highways team and the fire and police services. This takes a couple of weeks.

Support given by LA

Adur and Worthing Councils' Communities Team can help residents organise their first session. This officer support for the resident-led initiative is an example of very good practice by the L.A. There has been tremendous political support from both councillors and officers. During the 2013 pilot the active communities officers delivered the signage to streets and supported them setting up.

In 2014/15 West Sussex Community Initiative Funding gave a small grant to A&W Playing Out to enable them to provide signs and street play kits for residents, run a workshop and purchase materials to attend other events.

The parking services contractor NSL also supports residents by photocopying (so any street organiser doesn't have to pay for the photocopying to leaflet houses), looking after the road closed signage and providing vital equipment for the street kit boxes and printing promotional leaflets for us. The partnership between NSL, the Councils and us as a community organisation was shortlisted in the section of Parking in the Community for the 2015 British Parking Awards.

Communication with residents

Residents in Adur and Worthing have formed a community organisation (Adur and Worthing Playing Out (<https://www.facebook.com/adurworthingplayingout/>) to support people interested in street play. There is also a Facebook group, and it is promoted through local Facebook parenting groups.

Levels of Activity

Adur and Worthing had 34 streets playing out by autumn 2017.

Views of Residents

“It's made me view the council in a much more positive light” - resident

“I had no idea this many children lived on our street. It was wonderful to see the children out playing and enjoying themselves so much.” Resident Shoreham

“My disabled neighbour who rarely leaves the house got involved chatted to neighbours and enjoyed watching the children playing” (street organiser)

Views of Politicians

Tom Wye, Worthing Cabinet Member for Health and Well-Being, said: “This years' trial has been a complete success and I expect the play street scheme to go from strength to strength. I urge roads/communities who have not yet given it a go to

try one. Their children will be thanking them for the rest of the year as will other less visible members of their community. This is a win, win scheme, give it a try.”

David Simmons, Adur Cabinet Member for Health and Well-Being, adds: "This gives us a golden opportunity to bring our community together, and encourage safer play areas for our children. The benefits of a more joined up and supportive community cannot be overstated, and I look forward to visiting future play street initiatives in the Adur area."

Useful Links

A& W Council web page <http://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/get-up-and-active/activities-and-events/playing-out/>

Adur and Worthing Playing Out (resident-led group offering peer-support)
www.adurworthingplayingout.org.uk

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

Adur page on Playing Out website: <http://playingout.net/near-you/?localauthority=Adur+District+Council#mapSearch>

Adur and Worthing Officers report for the Joint strategic committee on the 7th November 2013.

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media,118705,en.pdf>

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media,119000,en.pdf>