

Information for Hackney residents Consulting on and applying for a Play Street

Consultation

The minimum level of consultation required by Hackney council is send page 5 of application form to the street – this is quite a basic letter template that you fill in detailing that you are applying for a Play Street giving dates/timing /location.

Petition: In addition you must provide evidence that you have 'strong support' for the application among residents, using support petition - download form and petition at www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets

How many signatures?

The Council does not stipulate any set percentage of households you need to sign up, but generally a typical application will have 20-30 signatures and longer roads more.

We advise a more in-depth consultation

Experience from working with many other streets has shown that taking time to build support among a wider group of residents *before* you apply is a more effective approach. Residents who have been through the process have found that although it takes time and effort, consulting with neighbours engages more people with the idea, galvanises enthusiasm and encourages greater numbers of people to get actively involved. It also minimises the risk of objections – which can cause delays in processing applications.

Objections

Some applications generate one or two objections. More often than not residents who are not in favour write to the council rather than responding to organisers direct.

Residents need to feel they have a genuine say in the process - that it's not something that has already been decided and is being imposed on them. So if neighbours do raise objections, treat these with respect and try to understand where they are coming from and be open to discussion and suggestions. E.g. in some streets neighbours have agreed a 'soft ball only' rule in response to concerns about potential damage to property.

When dealing with objections, see the excellent section *Fielding Common Concerns* towards the end of Playing Out manual. Hackney Play Association can also advise on how to respond to objections. You can download the manual at <http://www.playingout/useful-stuff>

Ideas on how to consult

There is a lot more information in the Playing Out manual about the process of consultation, applying for and running sessions. It takes about 20 minutes to read through. Here are some suggestions on ways many street organisers in Hackney and beyond have gone about consulting:

1. **Start by sounding people out/building support informally** among neighbours you already know and try to get people to help with organization/consultation – more fun doing as a team. If you're feeling bold - start simply chatting to people you see in the street about the idea
2. **Invite neighbours to a meeting** to discuss the idea (e.g. your house, pavement play session, community hall, pub – though pub not inclusive of all cultures). If possible hand deliver the invitation letter so you can introduce yourselves and the idea personally and gather signatures in support as you go. *Letter template on Playing Out website for this purpose* www.playingout/useful-stuff
3. **Have residents meeting**/discuss idea/ questions/frequency/timing etc/address concerns if expressed. Gather contact details; possibly set up a FB group or Google group for the street for ease of communication. Sign up supporters on Council petition at the meeting and get volunteers

to help with tasks particularly stewarding, help with dropping flyers etc

4. Complete form and submit with petition: When you have developed sufficient support complete the council application form and submit with petition of names/addresses to the Council. You also need to copy page 5 of the application form (the official notice of the application) to the street or part of the street you want to close. Some streets print this double sided with a more friendly/personal cover letter.

Is my street eligible?

The Play Streets scheme is open to people living and organisations in any residential street in Hackney, so long as it is not on a major route or bus route, and would not cause significant disruption to the road network. If you are unsure if your road qualifies, contact Hackney Council Streetscene department who process applications: charlotte.connell@hackney.gov.uk

As yet no applications in Hackney have been turned down on the basis of objections received by residents. If complaints are received, the council looks at the grounds for complaints, and weighs up levels of objection against no. of names in support petition received.

Council deadlines for new applications and processing time

Applications for new play streets have to be advertised in local press. The Council aims to process four scheduled adverts per year. The deadlines for the submission of new applications in 2015 are: 31 January; 30 April; 30 June and 31 October.

This is not a guarantee, but applications usually take around 8-10 weeks to process. Once the order has been granted, it runs on indefinitely. The council plans to ask organisers to provide evidence of support for the continuation of the play street – in the form of a new list of supporters – every two years.

The Council asks that applicants keep future changes to a minimum. Any changes in timing and frequency have to be re-advertised incurring cost to the council, and you will need to show evidence of support if you are upping the frequency.

How Hackney Play Association (HPA) can support you

Hackney Play Association is a local charity. Our work supporting street play is funded by Hackney Council. We can support you in the following ways:

- Attend residents meetings or initial start-up discussions
- Advise on getting started and as you go along by phone/email
- Photocopy letters/flyers - if you can't use one at work!
- Help with dealing with objections (should you get any)
- Advise on size and section of street you might want to close (some streets alternate which end) and issues to think about re. scheduling/ frequency
- Assist with questions over filling out application form
- Assist with door-knocking (where required)
- Provide safety equipment for stewards i.e. high vis, whistles/lanyards
- Signpost you to resources
- Attend your first session and helping with steward briefing
- Offer ongoing email/phone support once you get going and a follow up visit

Further information

www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets

www.hackneyplay.org/street-play

www.playingout.net - for useful resources and tools like letter templates, flyers etc