



# Play streets: Children's health

Play streets are regular, short, resident-led road closures, creating safe space for children to play and communities to come together on their doorstep. Here we present the evidence demonstrating their impact on children's health and wellbeing.

- For councils, a play street policy is a low cost route to long term increase in children's physical activity and mental wellbeing
- Over 1,500 street communities have 'played out' with over 90 councils actively supporting the playing out model
- Around 45,000 children and 22,500 adults have been directly involved on their street
- Residents do the bulk of the work (with support where needed) - councils just need to make it easy for them

## Children's physical and mental wellbeing: A growing crisis

Pre-pandemic, only 18% of children were getting the recommended minimum 1 hour per day of physical activity. This has now declined even further, as has children's mental wellbeing. 1 in 4 children now leave primary school clinically obese, with those from less affluent households significantly more impacted.

## Physical activity

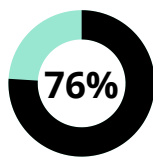
Physical activity on play streets is equivalent to 14 additional weekly PE lessons each school term  
Hackney Play Association (2015)

Children are **THREE to FIVE TIMES more active** during a play street than they would be on a 'normal' day after school.

- University of Bristol, (2017)

"We already walk or scoot to school, but since getting involved in play streets we walk/cycle/scoot **much much more!**"

- Play street organiser  
Bristol



Parents reported that post-lockdown play streets have positively impacted children's physical health

- Playing Out survey (2021)

## Physical literacy and skills

Scooting 85%

Riding a bike 80%

Skipping 66%

Roller-skating 63%

Ball games 55%

Play streets have allowed children to learn or improve skills in physical activities

- Playing Out survey (2017)

"[My] son is more keen to scoot to school, having seen other kids doing this. Also gained confidence to try bike with gears, having seen one at Playing Out. [...] we know play streets work."

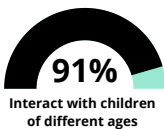
- Play street steward  
North Tyneside

Play Streets supports the development of physical literacy in children holistically, with a particular strength in developing psychological and social capabilities

- University of La Trobe (2020)

## Mental health and wellbeing

Play streets allow children to:



Interact with children of different ages

"It's great to see the kids play and have the street free of cars so we know it's a safe place for them to play. Makes them feel like it is THEIR street."

- Play street organiser  
Leeds

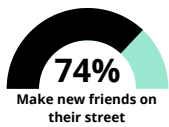
Post-lockdown play streets have positively impacted children's:



Mental wellbeing

"Play streets have improved my child's social integration, feeling part of the community and confidence with starting school."

- Play street resident  
Northumberland



Make new friends on their street

- Playing Out survey (2021)



Social confidence

- Playing Out survey (2021)

## Wider benefits of play

Within Play streets' unstructured activities there are opportunities for young children to improve their thinking processes, whether that be interpreting, reasoning or thinking strategically.

- University of La Trobe (2020)

"[Play streets] Reaffirmed the importance of outdoor play for children."

- Play street organiser  
Reading

Free play allows for:

- ✓ Resilience
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Self-esteem
- ✓ Coping with challenges

- nidirect.gov.uk

Free play is child-led and by nature involves diverse activities and ways of moving and exploring, it naturally builds children's physical literacy, skills and confidence

- Whitehead (2010)

## Find out more and get started in your area

[Play Streets Info for Councils](#)

[Get your council on board](#)

[Set up your council play street scheme](#)

[How to support residents](#)

We're here to help with any questions, just email us at: [hello@playingout.net](mailto:hello@playingout.net)

## Sources

[Playing Out Survey 2017](#)

[How play streets support the development of physical literacy in children](#)  
[University of La Trobe \(2020\)](#)

[Physical Literacy - Whitehead \(2010\)](#)

[Hackney Play Streets Evaluation Report - Hackney Play Association \(2015\)](#)

[Why temporary street closures for play make sense for public health](#)

[University of Bristol \(2017\)](#)

[nidirect.gov.uk](#)

