



How can housing providers support children to play out?

Playing Out, September 2023

Intro

Playing out - just having the freedom to get outside the front door and play with friends near home - is important for children in so many ways. It is how they get everyday exercise to stay fit and healthy, it's how they let off steam and stay mentally healthy, it's how they make friends and develop social skills. It's how they feel a sense of place and belonging in their communities.

Children playing out in an estate or community - when properly supported and made safe - can also be a positive for everyone, bringing parents and neighbours of all ages and backgrounds together and helping to create a stronger sense of community.

Sadly, this everyday freedom and cost-free access to health and wellbeing for children has been hugely diminished over the past few decades due to increased traffic, shifting attitudes and increased parental fear. But the good news is that children still want to play outside together. They consistently ask for this in consultations and interventions like play streets show that where the opportunity is provided, children follow their natural instinct to get outside, move around and play with other children.

Two of the key factors in enabling children to play out where they live and restoring this freedom are:

1. Safe, accessible space
2. Permission and support

Housing providers are in a unique position to provide both of these conditions and to be part of a positive culture-change for children. There is huge potential. But we have seen that a greater understanding is needed about the vital importance of doorstep play for children and there are some major issues and barriers to be resolved.

We have also seen and been involved with some very good work by housing providers - see positive case studies below. This report identifies some of the issues, highlights good practice and suggests a way forward.

Playing Out's aim is to identify and support good practice, demonstrate positive impact for children and communities and disseminate this to all housing providers so it becomes standard practice.

Current issues

Over the past ten years, we have regularly been contacted by parents living in social or managed housing who have come up against barriers to children being able to play out freely near home. At the most extreme end, they have even been threatened with eviction if they continue to allow children to play out in the shared spaces on their estate.

Through these contacts and other case studies, we have identified a number of **distinct issues and barriers to children playing out within housing**. These are *additional to* (and exacerbated by) all the



known barriers to children playing out more generally such as traffic danger, lack of safe/accessible space, parental fear and a general culture-shift away from playing out being normal and acceptable.

- HA/landlord response to complaints about children playing out, usually from a minority of neighbours or a single household (based around noise, perceived 'nuisance' or 'ASB', safety concerns or negative perceptions of children playing unsupervised) aimed at stopping children playing rather than resolving the issue. Usually in form of letter to all tenants (or just to families) saying children must not play out, sometimes threatening eviction.
- Ambiguity in tenancy agreements around rights to use of shared spaces or use of space for play explicitly banned within tenancies.
- 'No Ball Games' or 'No Playing' signs discouraging children from using outdoor space and allowing other residents to complain about them doing so.
- HAs considering a designated play space (playground or park) within walking distance to be sufficient play provision, precluding the need for children to play in the street or very near home.
- 'Segregated play' - play provision for private tenants/owners separate from social tenants. Clash of priority/needs between private/social tenants/owners and q over whether some HAs are being even-handed in way the treat these two sectors.
- Lack of distinction between play and ASB. Ambiguity in legal definition of ASB.
- Housing officers not equipped to defend children's right/need to play out.
- Tenants not fully equipped to defend their own rights (even where they have the will) and unclear about the action and steps they could take.
- Building on space that is currently/historically used informally or explicitly for play
- Developers not fulfilling "promise" to provide play space/child friendly development (using images/idea of family/child friendly to sell development but not following through)
- Management/rules deterring children using potential play space (e.g. rules banning noise, school-hours only, no unaccompanied children). Hostile environment.

Underlying problems

- Lack of clarity around legality/rights - do HAs have right to prevent people using / being in highway outside homes (if not public)? How restrictive can tenancy agreements can be about use of space?
- Lack of understanding/awareness of benefits/importance of street play (for children and communities) both within organisations and across society. Children playing as sign of a good/safe community.



- Although age is a 'protected characteristic' under the [Equality Act 2010](#), this only applies to children (under-18s) in the context of employment. So children as a group are not otherwise protected from discrimination on the basis of their age.
- Lack of existing guidance/support materials for either residents or HAs
- Lack of clear/explicit support for children's play from council, police, local MPs etc.
- Lack of power of social tenants. Who gets to set the rules?
- Lack of visibility of children in public space - vicious circle, intolerance of children's noise/presence

Evidence summary

- Media reports of housing associations, local authorities or the police imposing play bans or threats of fines or eviction as a result of children playing in the spaces outside their homes.
- Enquiries direct to PO from parents asking for support and advice about 'play bans', letters etc.
- Enquiries direct to PO from HAs asking for support and advice about dealing with complaints around playing out
- "More Ball Games" project. Informal research with housing contacts, conducted by Ellen Weaver on behalf of Playing Out, summer 2021.

(See Appendix for case studies and examples)

Research project: "More Ball Games?"

This was a small research project conducted by Playing Out in 2021

Aim

To better understand the barriers and drivers to housing providers supporting children's opportunities for play in open spaces around managed and social housing, particularly where a housing association, local authority or private management company has ownership of the outdoor space.

Objectives / key questions

- a) Identify *why* housing providers implement policies and practice which restrict or discourage children's play on their doorstep
- b) Identify the barriers to having more play-friendly policies on housing estates (e.g. taking down 'no ball games' signs, changing approach to complaints)
- c) Identify strategies that could overcome these barriers and allow orgs to implement more play-friendly policies, leading to more play.

Lead researcher: Ellen Weaver



Methodology and limitations

Ellen conducted in-depth semi-structured phone or Zoom interviews with eleven housing contacts from seven organisations. These contacts were mostly “warm” to Playing Out or had been passed on via other contacts. Their roles included Arts and Events Officer, Strategic Lead for Place and Community Connector, so were a diverse range.

The findings from the research are limited due to: the limited time/capacity of the researcher, doing this on a voluntary basis; the relatively small number of interviewees; the range of roles and level of knowledge of interviewees (making it difficult to find any consistency or patterns in responses). Despite these limitations, some useful insight was gained which will help inform Playing Out’s approach towards encouraging housing providers to implement child/play-friendly policies.

The possibility of following this with a wider survey was considered but not felt valuable at this time.

Organisations involved in research

Hyde Housing, Sanctuary Housing, Live West, One Manchester, Frome Town Council, Tameside Council, L&Q Housing

Findings/ conclusions/ striking points

Overall impression:

- Views and experiences varied widely even within one organisation: No consistency. No co-ordinated HA policy/ view/ approach to play.
- Many interviewees were unclear who has responsibility for children’s play opportunities within their organisation.
- Within councils, a lack of cabinet member, department or staff expressly responsible for play means responsibility falls to random individuals, with no policy, budget, targets or accountability, so often little initiative.
- Lack of policy/strategy reflects a wider lack of awareness of importance of play (for children and community) and inadequacy of budgets
- Of 11 interviewees, about 4 were passionately pro-play
- Few interviewees were aware of benefit of doorstep play in own street/estate rather than going to a park.
- A few were aware of child friendly urban design (e.g. connectivity to greenspaces) as key to play & child health.
- Planning deficiencies identified as problem: ratio of residents to play space needs drastic improvement and failure to consult residents of all ages, youth workers, community workers

Findings in relation to key questions:

Why do housing providers implement policies and practice which restrict or discourage children’s play on their doorstep?

- *Children (and their needs and rights) not considered*



- *Concern about liability and cost (damage to property)*
- *Insurance requirement*
- *No Ball Games Signs: some just left over / historical and could be removed, some HAs still putting them up in response to complaints/fears about damage or disturbance from children playing. Some view as essential close to homes & garages; others not in favour and want to remove.*

What are the *barriers* to implementing more play-friendly policies on housing estates (e.g. taking down 'no ball games' signs, changing approach to complaints)?

- *Nobody has asked/suggested changing things*
- *Lack of awareness amongst staff about NBG signs/letters going out*
- *Some interviewees not sure why NBG signs haven't or can't be removed*
- *(In one case only) Concern about liability / meeting insurance requirements*

What strategies could overcome these barriers and allow orgs to implement more play-friendly policies, leading to more play? Possible next steps:

1. Build and share strong case for positive impact of doorstep play for children and communities
2. Commission risk/benefit (and/or legal) analysis of NBG signs/policies
3. More training for those working in housing to raise awareness of significance of doorstep play (linking with health, environment, transport, safety and community).
4. Run campaign requesting organisations to remove NBGs signs
5. Run campaign for sound of play to be respected as part of healthy community life. Children playing as indicator species for a healthy neighbourhood.
6. Write/ publicise argument that distinguishing between play and ASB is not actually a problem: play which is below extreme volume, which causes no damage, at reasonable times of day cannot be ASB.
7. Possible test legal case where children being actively prevented from playing out
8. Continue to campaign for far stronger planning requirements for doorstep play
9. Encourage, support and publicise good practice in child-friendly housing management

Examples of Good Practice

1. Affinity Sutton/Clarion Play Position

In 2015, Affinity Sutton housing (responsible for 57,000 homes in neighbourhoods across England) adopted a corporate 'play position' on the basis that:

- Large numbers of children and families lived in their properties
- A recognition that "children and young people have a right to play and that it is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development"
- Not all adult responses to children playing out were positive/supportive
- Normal play was sometimes confused with anti-social behaviour
- Dealing with conflict and complaints around children playing out was a drain on officer time
- A blanket response/approach to these complaints and issues was not appropriate or effective
- Children need safe, accessible spaces and places in order to play out

The proposed approach, set out in more detail in the Play Position, was based on two principles:

- "Local, sensitive decision-making" and



- “Providing appropriate and accessible places for play”

In 2016, Affinity Sutton merged with another organisation and became Clarion Housing Group, the largest housing association in the United Kingdom with 125,000 properties across more than 170 local authorities. Clarion is now developing a play strategy based on the Affinity Sutton one, that would support children’s right to play out across the organisation, remove ‘No Ball Games’ signs and ensure new developments are child-friendly.

2. Haringey Council and Homes for Haringey

In 2016, the London borough committed to removing No Ball Games signs as part of a drive to increase physical activity and reduce child obesity.

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/news/no-ball-games-signs-given-boot-haringey>

Cllr Peter Morton, Haringey Council’s Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing said, “Removing ‘No Ball Games’ signs demonstrates our commitment to making Haringey a healthier place, where people feel encouraged to go outdoors and get active in a safe environment. For too long children have been banned from playing in public spaces and in an era when we know inactivity is contributing to major health problems, this has to change. That’s why we’re giving ‘No Ball Game’ signs the boot today and leading the fight back against obesity in Haringey.”

Astrid Kjellberg-Obst, Executive Director of Operations for Home for Haringey said, “Over the past two years we have encouraged children to play outdoors through estates activities and the improvements of play areas on estates. We want to help people live happy and fulfilling lives and we are really pleased to be able to do our bit to support young people getting more active as a partner in the Haringey Obesity Alliance.”

3. Hyde Housing ‘Please Play Here’ project

In 2015, Hyde Housing (50,000 homes across the Southeast) launched a project called ‘Please Play Here’, with the joint aims of:

- Reducing the amount of staff time spent on responding to complaints about children playing
- Supporting children’s right to play, as “children should have the ability to socialise and play safely where they live”

The project plan stated that “Historical attempts for managing these tensions, such as installing ‘No Ball Games’ signs, or providing ongoing diversionary activities away from the neighbourhood, are difficult to enforce and sustain over time... ‘Please Play Here’ is an approach to facilitate resolution of these complaints, and to promote safe and acceptable play in our neighbourhoods”

The internally funded project recruited a project worker (with youthwork experience) to facilitate the project over 2 years. A key aim was to work with communities to identify at least one suitable safe space for play within each neighbourhood and to identify these with ‘Please Play Here’ signage (also removing No Ball Games signs).

Playing Out was commissioned as a partner on the project to provide consultancy, training for staff and support with ‘playing out’/play street sessions as a way of starting conversations within communities.



Whilst some headway was made (e.g. the organisation adopted an online tool for residents to differentiate play and ASB, using a checklist), sadly the project folded after a year due to huge internal restructuring and cuts to project and youth funding.

The project manager reflected that challenges included:

- An entrenched culture of ‘no ball games’ across the organisation and communities
- Some communities need deep/long-term work
- Staff handling complaints need increased confidence to defend play

4. Knightstone Housing supporting play streets in Bristol

From 2015-16 Playing Out worked with Knightstone housing to support resident-led play streets in Hartcliffe - a large residential estate in South Bristol. A full report of this project, including learning, positive outcomes and challenges, is available here: <https://playingout.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Estates-Project-2015-16-Final-report-1-1.pdf>

5. **Wrexham Council** is looking into supporting play streets and removing ‘no ball games’ signs as part of an overall approach to supporting children to play out.
6. Major housebuilder **Redrow** has launched a “please play here” campaign, commissioning play expert Tim Gill and academic Helen Dodd to advise.
7. **Barnet Homes** have launched a policy to remove ‘no ball games’ and other signage that deters children from using open space for play.
8. **Peabody Housing** have made a clear statement that “children playing” is not considered anti-social behaviour.
9. **Aberdeen Council** agreed a policy to remove No Ball Games signs from their properties: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/News/Press-Archive/Article?title=No%20Ball%20Games%20signs%20to%20be%20removed>



What would an ideal pro-play housing policy look like?

Based on the good practice examples above and our wider learning about the issues above as a basis, we would propose including the following:

- Adopt a corporate position clearly and publicly stating support for children's right to play out in the streets and spaces near home, for their health, wellbeing and sense of community.
- Ensure staff throughout the organization are aware of this position, the reasons behind it and what it means in practice.
- Ensure tenants are aware of this position and the reasons behind it.
- Clearly distinguish between play and ASB and communicate this to residents and staff.
- Respond to complaints about play in a way that seeks to resolve tensions and build consensus but protects children's right to play.
- Clearly state children's right to play and use shared space in any advertising and tenancy agreements, to ensure there is no ambiguity. Selling it to everyone on basis that child-friendly means better/safer for everyone, including those without children.
- Remove 'no ball games' and other signage or rules that deter children from using space for play where it is safe and reasonable to do so.
- Look beyond playgrounds to define a wider 'playable realm' on estates. Give children access to as much safe outdoor space as possible. Research shows that children like to play out as close to home as possible - literally on their doorstep.
- Make existing spaces - streets, greenspace, other - as safe and child-friendly as possible. Prioritise children over cars.
- Design and build new developments with child-friendly principles following best practice, ensuring children can freely and safely play out together semi-supervised.
- Support temporary play streets or other interventions where needed to kick-start a culture of play.
- Lobby councils to put supportive play street policies (and wider pro-play policies) in place.
- Share best practice and positive outcomes, encouraging other housing providers to adopt similar policies.

How can Playing Out help?

Some of the things we have done or are planning to do to support playing out within housing:

Done:

- Provide simple guidance for residents on actions they could take - to include writing to their councillors and MP, writing to their housing association.
- Provide template letters for residents to use and for authorities to respond to complaints
- Support play streets (and variations) in housing estates, including where there are tensions
- Collate good practice from housing associations that have done positive things - e.g. Affinity Sutton/Clarion, Hyde and Knightstone (in this report)
- Gather quotes and experiences from tenants in areas where they have experienced 'bans' and other sanctions (in this report)
- Work with housing associations to develop and implement 'pro-play' policies



- Provide template 'pro-play' policy for housing associations (in this report)
- Provide training for housing officers on supporting play streets (and playing out more widely)
- Conduct research to understand the barriers for housing providers to changing practices and removing 'no ball games' signs

In progress:

- Clarify legalities around control and use of space (including privately owned streets) in managed housing estates
- 'FAQs' about play within housing estates (countering arguments made by housing associations and other bodies against children playing in their spaces)

To do:

- Gather quotes and experiences from tenants in areas where there is good practice and children play out freely
- Make the "case for street play" including quotes and rationale for supporting it from those housing associations doing positive work in this area, as well as the police and other bodies.
- Share Play England and other useful reports, Managing Risk in Play Provision, A World without Play and Play for a Change.
- Organise meeting for forward-thinking HA people to put heads together about whole issue.
- Draft guide for HAs on best practice (in collaboration with partner HAs) and disseminate via national HA networks/conferences
- Try to resolve the key question of how authorities (LAs or RSLs) can take a balanced, proportionate approach to what is a common if not inevitable conflict in places where children are playing out in neighbourhoods.

Other info/links:

<https://playingout.net/play-streets/info-for-councils/housing-and-playing-out/>

<https://www.zcdarchitects.co.uk/housing-design-for-community-life>

Play Wales hosted *Child-friendly planning and design: beyond TAN 16* seminar: <https://dcfw.org/beyond-parks-and-playgrounds/>



The problem: case studies and examples

The intention of this section is not to 'name and shame' – in fact, it is likely that nearly all housing providers, however well intentioned, have got it wrong at times. This is just a small selection of the stories we have come across over the past 10 years, intended to illustrate both the specific issues that arise and how widespread these issues are, even within organisations that are doing other good work around children, young people and communities.

1. Dagenham

Location: Simmons Road. Cul-de-sac
Date and coverage: 28/8/2013 Barking & Dagenham Post

http://www.barkinganddagenhampost.co.uk/news/lilly_3_banned_from_learning_to_ride_bike_in_dagenham_street_1_2356587

Housing association involved: London & Quadrant

Details:

Housing association launched a 'no balls or bikes' policy after complaints from some residents about potential damage to cars or property. Grandmother told verbally by a housing officer that she was not permitted to teach her granddaughter to learn to ride her bike. Other residents apparently received letters about other things they are not permitted to do.

Housing association spokesman quoted in Barking & Dagenham Post as: *"L&Q strives to create places where people want to live but unfortunately due to the concern of the local residents we had to enforce a 'no bikes no ball games' policy around the area. We do appreciate this being a difficult issue especially throughout the holidays and the nice weather."*

2. Worcester

Location: Wensleydale Drive. Cul-de-sac
Date and coverage: 26/8/2014 - Mail Online

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2734572/Children-ordered-stay-inside-fear-legal-action-play-outside-homes-housing-chiefs-say-s-dangerous.html>

Housing association involved: Nexus Housing Association

Details:

Letters to residents after complaints of anti-social behaviour

Housing Officer quoted in Mail Online excerpt of letter received by residents:



"... I feel it important to note that (the children) do not appear to have any desire to be directly anti-social, as they have predominantly been attempting to play with friends, but due to the inappropriate nature of the location this appears to have fuelled complaints, due in part to their proximity to people's homes and vehicles.

'It is therefore private property and not a suitable location for the children to play.

'To avoid further complaints of this nature I would appreciate your time in reiterating this message to your children, advising them not to enter the area.'

3. Reading

Location: Alan Place, Bath Road, Cal cot

Date and coverage: 8/9/2014 - Get Reading

<http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/no-place-play-communal-gardens-7733892>

Housing Association involved: Sanctuary

Details:

Letter sent from Sanctuary Housing to one mother in a flat telling her she and her children are not allowed to use the communal gardens as a play area as they are for gardening only.

Sanctuary Housing quoted in the media coverage: *"In October 2011 this plot was redesigned and raised beds were installed so that residents could use the area as an allotment. Responsibility was handed over to the Alan Place Residents Association for use as a designated gardening area.*

"The space is also quite small and overlooked by a number of flats and as such it would not be an appropriate play area.

"Alan Place does have a number of other outdoor green spaces which are open to all residents, with a number of nearby children's play areas within just a few minutes' walk, there are much more suitable areas for [this mother] and her children to utilise".

4. Derby

Location: Hallam Fields, Bargate near Belper. Cul-de-sac

Date and coverage: 7/5/2015 - Derby Telegraph

<http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/Huge-support-Derbyshire-mum-police-called-noisy/story-26452988-detail/story.html>

Organisation involved: Derbyshire Police

Details:



Police were called to the cul-de-sac after they received reports of children playing noisily. They asked the children to move down the street. Huge protests from Derby Telegraph readers online, the majority of whom supported the children's right to play out and criticised the police for heavy-handedness.

5. Nottingham

Location: Ena Ave, Sneinton, Nottingham. Terraced street

Date and coverage: 12/5/2015 - Mail Online

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3078556/Parents-told-face-100-fine-children-caught-playing-football-street.html>

Organisation involved: Nottinghamshire Police

Details:

Parents received a joint letter from Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council saying it was not permitted for children to play football on the street threatening £100 fines (under Highways Act 1980) or an injunction (under Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) if they continue.

6. Glastonbury

Location: Cottle Close, Chilkwell Street consists of 15 housing association tenants and six part-owned homes, arranged as two rows of houses with a small block of flats in the middle. Cul-de-sac

Date and coverage: 9/9/2015 - Central Somerset Gazette

<http://www.centrialsomersetgazette.co.uk/Glastonbury-parents-face- eviction-children-play/story-27766273-detail/story.html>

Housing association involved: Stonewater

NB Playing Out had existing links with Stonewater and had delivered training to Stonewater staff and residents and was due to deliver more. Following this story PO sought dialogue with Stonewater about their position on play and offered to mediate/facilitate situation with Glastonbury residents but no meeting date offered so all further work was put on hold.

Details:

Residents received letters informing them they are in breach of their tenancy agreements and threatening them with eviction if they continue to allow their children to play out in the cul-de-sac. The only acceptable place for children to play is a small area right in front of the flats. No cycling, scooting or skateboarding is allowed.

Stonewater regional director for the south quoted in Central Somerset Gazette:



“Under the planning consent for the scheme there is a legally binding clause that states that the parking and access space must be kept clear of obstruction.

“This legal direction, along with the additional concerns of safety, has led us to make this decision...”

“As a responsible landlord, our tenancy agreement has clear rules on antisocial behaviour for the benefit of residents and the wider community.

“Eviction is always a last resort, but where tenancy agreements are breached we have to explain that this is a potential repercussion”.

7. East Grinstead

Location: Evelyn Clark Square, Forest Row, East Grinstead. Cul-de-sac. 'Eco-development' of 28 homes.

Date and coverage: 20/4/2016 - Metro (and Mirror online 24/4/2016)

<http://metro.co.uk/2016/04/20/killjoy-council-tells-parents-they-could-be-evicted-if-their-children-are-seen-playing-outside-5829620/>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/families-threatened-eviction-council-children-7826801>

Organisation involved: Wealden District Council

Details:

Residents received letters from the council threatening them with eviction if they continued to allow their children to play outside in the cul-de-sac. They were told their back gardens were the only suitable spaces for play in the development.

Council spokesperson quoted in media coverage (Mirror):

“We must point out that the cul-de-sac is not a safe place to play, with owners’ and visitors’ cars coming in directly from the main road.

“Most of the homes have their own rear gardens, providing a space for children to play, and there is a park nearby.”

8. Stockport 2013

“Informal Ball Game Nuisance Management policy”
positive comments/support from footballer.

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/council-bans-ball-games-in-street-940300>

9. Stockport 2018

Letter from council banning football in street – shared on Twitter – huge outcry (see thread)

<https://twitter.com/arghkid/status/1006593201682239489>



David Scott
@arghkid

...

My friend's daughter (Under 10) has just got this Anti-Social Behaviour letter for playing football outside HER house by @GMPStockport - no damage done and the neighbour who complained said "Girls shouldn't play football". So much wrong with this.

We are now helping the resident to respond and set up play street. Also working with Stockport Council (public order) to develop better process.

10. Bristol 2018

Finzal's Reach – Private housing company banned playing out and retracted/apologised following campaign by residents and local media coverage. Issues with inequality between private and social tenants.

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/full-housing-companys-letter-threatening-1633556>

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/social-housing-boss-says-sorry-1649455>

11. Hull 2023

<https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/hull-parents-receive-letter-police-8662887>

Direct contact from residents asking for advice from Playing Out

1. Phone enquiry, 2nd March 2016: Parent from Coventry, Warwickshire.

Neighbours complaining about children playing out (9-13 year olds). Parents said it's absolutely normal play, not ASB. 7pm 'curfew' imposed by housing association (Friendship Housing).

2. Email enquiry, 6th May 2016: Parent from Essex

Lives in a mixed housing estate in Essex with lots of children aged 4-14 who play in the street together and "it's a really lovely thing." She has just received "the annual letter" from her Housing Assoc (Chelmer Housing Partnership) reminding tenants that their tenancy agreement prohibits children from playing in the street and that it is dangerous. We talked it through and I asked her what would be helpful in terms of support/resource. She said she would really appreciate a 'formal' letter or petition that she could get neighbours to sign in protest. She was going to meet with her MP and said she would let us know how it went.

3. Email, 10 May 2016: Parent from Glamorgan, Wales

Parent received letter from the estate management using a restrictive covenant to attempt to restrict children playing in the street after a minority of residents (2 out of a 90 property estate) complained.

Playground was built as part of a planning condition of the estate but children over the age of 8 are not allowed in the area.



Media coverage - <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/llantwit-fardre-boy-banned-playing-2028054>

4. Email, 25 March 2019: Parents from Lilian Baylis estate, London

Parents sought engagement and support from the management company (Warwick Estates) and Developers (Henley Homes) after “a campaign of anti-social and intimidating behaviour against parents and children within the development” from two adult residents. Warwick Homes had responded to the complaints (about noise of children playing) by writing to all residents formally telling them not to allow children to play out. In an email to the management company, one parent wrote that, “*This development should be the poster child for urban living, with the 3 designated play areas (and I include the communal courtyard as one of the three). But it will not work if children and parents continue to be intimidated and bullied*”. The management company failed to respond or resolve the issue.

Other complex issues arose around the use of play spaces within the development, leading eventually to an article in The Guardian exposing the issue of ‘segregated play’ - social housing tenants having less access to play spaces than private owners within the same estate (contrary to planning).

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/mar/25/too-poor-to-play-children-in-social-housing-blocked-from-communal-playground>

The article received huge attention, including from senior politicians, and the housing authority eventually agreed to open up the play spaces to all residents. However, the issue of ongoing complaints about children playing have to date not been resolved.

5. Email from Parent in Surrey, 2/10/18

“I was wondering if you could help me. I am a mum of two small children & I live on private estate. Basically there are lots of children in the estate (26 or so under 7s out of 46 houses). The kids love playing out together and what usually happens is they play out for no more than one hour a day usually after school fully supervised by their parents. There is traffic in the road but it is all mostly internal and slow (there is a 10 mph speed limit) and if a car is coming the supervising adults ensure the kids get out of the way.

Some of the older generation in the estate (not all) are very opposed to the children playing out and have complained about noise levels (even though it is just for an hour and the supervising parents do ask them to keep it down). Plus there are no more than 6-8 kids out at once.

We have now received an email basically asking us to keep the kids out of the road (there is just one main road through the estate really). This is really frustrating, and depressing, because these are just little children outside having fun fully supervised (ie. we watch them carefully with the traffic).

I just wondered if they have any legal right to order us to do this, especially given this is a private estate?” I've had a look through the rentcharge deed (which governs the estate and all the home owners sign). It does prohibit ball games but I can't see anything else”.

6. Email from parent in Bradford

“For years we have been battling against the older neighbours who live in the apartment block on our street regarding the children playing out. They took to shouting and swearing at the children and to taking photos



for 'evidence' of them playing out. We called the police for advice and to put an end to it as we believed our well behaved 4-10 year old children on our street had a right to play out as they do no harm but instead having a fantastic upbringing playing out with their friends. The police agreed and warned the people in the apartments that their behaviour was not on and that they needed to destroy all the photos they had.

Today when we returned home there was a huge no ball games private property sign outside the apartments. To start with a lot of the children live in the apartments and secondly it's a public road and has been put up by management not the council. We removed it as we felt they had no right to put up a sign like that. Can you tell us what our children's rights are (we're under Bradford council) as we would like to draw a line under this and for our children to play out and continue to have the care free, healthy life they have lived for the 10 years we have lived here,

Direct Contact from Housing Associations asking for advice

Cottsway housing association, West Oxfordshire (and several similar enquiries over the years)

Housing officer got in touch to say "We are getting a lot of complaints about kids playing in the street on one of our streets. We don't want to take a draconian "No ball games" approach but also can't not address the issues. What we had in mind was some sort of handout along the lines of being considerate to neighbours at the same time as giving the parents and kids something positive and helping them get some playing out days started".

For more information or to discuss anything in this report, please contact alice@playingout.net