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Best Practice for Temporary Play Streets: Council play street policies

If councils wish to support residents to follow the 'playing out' model using the guidance and resources freely available on the Playing Out website, we strongly recommend the following considerations when drafting a local play street policy and procedure, based on best practice from Bristol and elsewhere. It is also well worthwhile looking at other councils' application forms and guidance so as not to entirely reinvent the wheel. There is a list on our [webpage here](#).

Read all our [extensive council guidance here](#), including Step by Step guide to setting up play streets.

1. Political and council-wide support.

- It helps enormously to gain high-level political support for play streets and children's right to play out more generally.
- Different council departments including Housing, Highways, Public Health and Communities should all understand what play streets are and the benefits for children and communities.
- The local authority should host a steering group including key council officers, resident-activators, community organisations and police, to ensure the policy and practice is working well.

2. Good policy.

- Do not charge residents for processing applications. The public health benefits for children alone far outweigh the minimal administrative costs to the council.
- Make the application form/process simple, accessible and easy for residents to use.
- One annual application form should allow for multiple play street closures.
- Don't set any limit on the number of closures per year and let residents choose the days/times that suit them (within reason).
- Don't set deadlines for applications but accept them year-round.
- Signage and barrier requirements should ensure safety without being too onerous for residents.
- The Order should be clear that all through-traffic is prohibited and vehicles may enter or leave the road *only at walking speed and under supervision, once the road is clear of children playing*.
- Keep consultation requirements reasonable. A formal letter to all households within the closure area is good practice to ensure any concerns can be addressed.
- Permission should only be refused where objections outweigh support on the street, or where there are genuine safety concerns.
- Allow residents to make more than one application during a year, so that they can trial the idea or change the day/time if it becomes unworkable.

- Ask residents to sign a reasonable indemnity clause rather than insist on public liability insurance (which could prove a major barrier for many streets).

3. Promotion to parents and residents.

- Have a dedicated, resident-facing web page for play streets, signposting clearly to www.playingout.net and other sources of support. See list of [council webpage examples here](#).
- Ensure all [promotion](#) is aimed at motivating parents to take action

4. Guidance and support for residents.

- Have a clear point of contact for residents within the council - someone who understands and supports the idea.
- Offer residents personal advice on road closure layout, correct signage etc.
- Provide residents with simple (easy to store) [signage and barriers](#) for duration of their order.
- Where possible, objections should be resolved between neighbours but the council can help mediate or offer practical solutions (e.g. having a one-off 'trial' session or moving the road closure to another part of the street).
- Residents should be required to follow standard procedure for placing signage, cones etc. in the street and to ensure two stewards are at each road closure point at all times. (Ask residents to follow the Playing Out guidelines [here](#) – see our manual and step 4 film for detail).
- It should be clear in guidance notes that *parents are responsible for their own children* at all times.
- Make it clear to residents that there is no obligation to close the road every time they have permission to do so and should only go ahead if there are sufficient stewards and it is safe to do so.
- Clearly signpost residents to www.playingout.net for information, resources and to feel part of the national movement.
- Encourage and support local peer-support groups and networks to form. Signpost to these and to any other local sources of support.
- As well as providing road closure 'kit' to all streets, the council can directly or indirectly provide hands-on support for streets or estates where needed (e.g. printing letters, attending resident meetings and first sessions). This might involve encouraging / supporting / commissioning local community organisations or third sector bodies to support residents, particularly if they are already well-known and trusted at neighbourhood level. Read more about [supporting residents here](#).

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