

Stockport Council Play Street Guide.

Introduction

This is a step-by-step guide to organising a one-off or regular Play Street session on your street. This is where neighbours formally close their road to through traffic for a couple of hours to enable children to play¹. Residents and visitors will continue to have car access.

It should be noted that some areas may be less suitable to be Play Streets than others, due to the nature of the road. Also if there are other road closures in the area then it may not be possible to close your road at the same time due to the need to provide traffic with alternative routes. If you have any doubts about the potential for your road to be a Play Street contact the Council for advice.

There are four main steps:

1. Raising awareness and agreeing times and dates

Start-Up Meeting.

Before you arrange your first Play Street, you will need to invite your neighbours to a meeting. It is important to make sure that all of your neighbours, on the streets to be affected, are informed and have a chance to be involved/ raise concerns

The aims of this meeting are to:

1. Share the idea.
2. Discuss any questions or concerns.
3. See if there is enough interest to go ahead.
4. Choose a date for your first session.
5. Discuss and agree roles and gather contact details.
6. Decide who will fill out the application for the Play Street closure

Set a Date

Because a road closure application normally takes 6 weeks to process, and the proposal for such a closure must be agreed at your Area Committee, we recommend setting a date at least 2 months from this first meeting. Note that Play Street related road closures can be for no more than 3 hours.

Roles and Responsibilities

If you decide to go ahead, you will need volunteers for the following duties:

1. **Organiser:** For each participating street, you will need someone to be the main organiser. The Organiser is the main coordinator of the event.
2. **Assistant:** This is someone who can support the Organiser during the planning stage and on the day itself, as well as helping with jobs such as leaflet/letter distribution.

¹ Play streets are not age limited and the closed space can be used by all ages providing it is not in conflict with the risk assessment which has been undertaken.

3. **Other Volunteers:** Volunteers could help to put up posters, and put leaflets through letterboxes etc.
4. **Marshals:** Marshals are responsible for redirecting traffic and allowing access for residents / visitors. They can also warn people on the street if the closure is ignored by drivers. Ideally you should plan to have two people to marshal at each street closure point for the duration of the event.

None of the volunteers are responsible for the children at play they remain the responsibility of their parents and this is to be made clear in all literature and meetings.

2. Permission and Agreement

Applying for Permission

Apply for a Play Street closure using the appropriate form from the Council website <http://www.stockport.gov.uk/highwayandstreetlightmaintenance/>. As part of this you will need proof that you have consulted with local residents, addressed their concerns and filled in a risk assessment. Sixty percent of the local residents must agree to the scheme and you cannot prove that they have agreed then the scheme will not be able to go ahead.

Objections and Concerns

All residents affected by the road closure must be contacted by the organiser in writing. An example letter is attached to the application form from the Council. People may have objections or concerns at this point especially if they did not attend the start-up meeting. Try to think through the potential issues before you begin to try and get support to enable you to address people's concerns. There are some websites listed at the end of this document that could help you with this. If the concerns are insurmountable then the closure will not be able to go ahead.

Permission, once given **by the council** will be kept under review and if objections **resulting from the closure** do become an issue then the permission to close the road may be rescinded.

Insurance and liability

The organising of an event on the public highway may expose the organisers to claims for injury, loss or damage. In extreme cases where permanent disability is caused from an accident the claim may run into millions of pounds to pay for lifelong care. Much more likely could be damage to a vehicle by play equipment. Even quite minor damage to modern cars (for example to repair a damaged door mirror) could cost hundreds of pounds. Such claims are becoming increasingly common and, even if the claim is baseless, significant legal fees could be incurred in resisting it. This will not be covered by normal house insurance. The Council therefore **requires** that the organisers are covered by Public Liability Insurance of a minimum of £5m and under no circumstances will the Council be held liable for any injury, loss or damage arising from the organisation of an event.

Requests can be made to your Area Committee to assist with the funding of such insurance. This assistance is not guaranteed and consideration should be given to what you will do if such help is not forthcoming.

Claims made against the Council with regard to damage or injuries caused by play street events will be passed to the relevant organiser(s) by our claims handlers. The main organiser should be aware that there may be circumstances in which you would be held liable for any accidents. The regular nature of the closure makes the chance that this will be the case more likely than for people holding a one-off event.

Everyone should be encouraged to be sensible and respectful about other people and their property. Organisers are advised to remind parents (in publicity literature and on the day itself) that they are ultimately responsible for their own children and should be ready to intervene if they see anything that looks dangerous. Please also remind parents to explain to their children that the road is not safe to play in under normal circumstances, but only when the signs and marshals are in place and parents have said it's safe to do so.

Noise Nuisance

Consideration should be given to those living or working nearby and excessive noise should be minimised. For further information please telephone 0161 474 4284

Fire Safety

Free safety advice may be obtained from the fire service.

3. Publicity and Organisation

Publicity

This could include distributing notices, posters, leaflets and flyers. The Council recommend keeping publicity within your own street and perhaps a few directly neighbouring streets. You will want to avoid it being seen as an event for the wider public, which may have implications for liability and road closure procedures. Regular promotion will help keep people aware of the closure and the need to plan to avoid it.

Signage

You will need to use official highways 'Road Closed' signs to signal to drivers that a legal road closure is in force. This will need to be supported by the use of traffic cones.

Signage will be supplied by the Council to organisers. The area committee responsible for your play street area may cover the cost of these signs. However, this is not guaranteed and groups should consider how they will pay for the signs if the area committee cannot fund their schemes signs.

At the time of publication the costs were estimated to be £82 per closure point. Updated costs will be available from the Council's Network Management Team.

Organisers will be responsible for storing signage and cones between events.

Risk Assessment

The aim of a risk assessment is to ensure that your event goes according to plan without any incidents. You can never guarantee that an incident will not happen but careful planning can reduce the likelihood of it happening and help you deal with it if it does occur. Identify all the hazards that may be part of your event and decide how much risk they are individually or in combination.

You must then either remove the hazard completely or if this is not possible, reduce the risk of this hazard to an acceptable level; 'Hazards' are things with the potential to cause harm and 'Risk' is how likely it is for something to happen because a hazard is present. There is no set way of writing a risk assessment, all situations are different. However it is good practice to clearly document what the hazards and risks are, how serious they may be and what you intend to do about reducing or eliminating them. You must do all this in writing and keep a copy safe just in case something does go wrong.

Please remember:

1. It is your responsibility to do the risk assessment. It is your event and you should be more familiar with it than anyone else;
2. On the day of the event, check the whole venue to make sure that all the risks are controlled properly as you said in your risk assessment. If you find any more, put them right before the event starts and make a note of what you have done;
3. Your risk assessment should be dated and signed by the person who has done it;
4. Before your event is approved, the Council may want to come and visit the venue with you to discuss practical issues and possibly comment on your risk assessment. The Council will not do the risk assessment for you, but we may spot something that is wrong or missing. This does not mean the Council accepts responsibility for your risk assessment.
5. More information about risk assessments can be obtained from the Health & Safety Executive.

4. The Day

Briefing the marshals

Arrange to meet and brief the marshals before the event begins. The marshals have an important job and should be clear on what they are doing and it should be clear to others what purpose they are fulfilling. Hi-visibility clothing should be worn by those acting as marshals.

Occasionally, drivers may be unhappy, or even aggressive, so it is important the marshals are capable of dealing with this and that they know how to get help if needed.

Closing the Road

When closing the road, put the signs into place as simultaneously as you can. Place the signs with the writing clearly visible to the approaching drivers. Wider streets may need cones (be sure you can move these swiftly if an emergency vehicle needs access.) Once in place, the marshals should not leave their posts except to let vehicles of residents and visitors in and out.

After the road is closed vehicles (except emergency vehicles) are breaking the law if they go through. Take the license number of anyone who disregards the signs and report it to the police.

If, on the other hand, a driver lives on the road or is visiting a person living on the road and wants access in or out, you must have organised a way to warn the children and then ask the driver to drive slowly.

If a driver becomes aggressive, you and the marshals will need to use your judgment in the moment. Avoid arguments and confrontation and prioritise the safety of all the participants. You can carry the phone number of the person in the council whose name is on the road closure notice if somebody wants to lodge a complaint.

Clearing Up and Reopening the Road

Before re-opening the road, you will need to tell everyone that the road will be re-opening and start clearing any things away. Aim to clear everything you can and to pick up all rubbish before re-opening the road. Try to re-open the road closure points simultaneously to avoid traffic problems.

Links to Resources

Advice on the process of setting up a play street closure can be found on <http://playingout.net/> The "Playing Out Step By Step Guide" may be particularly useful.

Streets Alive www.streetparty.org.uk

Central Government Street Party Application
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/streetpartyguide>.