

Stockport School Streets/Play Streets: Scrutiny Update April 2021

1. Introduction

Further to the last Scrutiny meeting on Monday 29th March, the panel asked for an update and written response from Education and Children's services with thoughts about how Play Streets and school streets might impact on children's health and wellbeing, and road safety awareness.

In addition to these responses, we are reporting on two further areas:

- An idea for an approach towards a new mechanism to support playstreets and
- Potential funding and resources for both schemes.

2. Responses from Education and Children's Services on Playstreets and School streets

Russ Boaler: Consultant for Physical Education, Sport & Physical Activity. Public Health Strategic Lead – Physical Activity & Healthy Weight.

Russ's comments are;

- Both play streets & school streets are positive programmes which can have great benefit to not only children & young people but also to the wider family & local community
- The benefits include health, social cohesion, community engagement, reduced ASB, reduced vehicle traffic, improved air quality etc
- It is also a relatively simple concept and something that used to occur naturally in communities over previous decades (and still does in a few areas)
- The current policy is not user friendly (perhaps best exemplified by the very low number of schemes in Stockport) & the application process needs to be as simple as possible (whilst still obviously meeting minimum standards)
- Without some application support being available this could exacerbate inequalities & become a 'leafy suburb' programme. Conversations with residents in Brinnington as part of the Active Communities Local Pilot work have illustrated this when some residents have told us that they do not fully understand how to get permission or how to complete the relevant forms etc. c.f. average reading age in Brinnington & other P1 areas. This would also be true of communities where English is not the main language
- Discussions with various communities over the years has also highlighted a low awareness that Stockport even has this policy
- Strategically, this would greatly support the objectives of the Active Community Strategy & also specifically help to address the following child health challenges we face in Stockport
- Childhood obesity rates continue to increase across all age groups in Stockport

- The majority of children in Stockport do not meet the Chief Medical Officer's minimum levels of physical activity to maintain health into adulthood
- Children are more active during the school day than at other times, therefore the already low levels of activity are exacerbated outside of the school day
- Children's mental wellbeing was already a concern prior to Covid but has obviously been further impacted negatively over the past 12 months
- Play is vital for both the educational & physical development of children – this is true across all ages but especially in the early years.

Steve Nyakatawa, Interim Director of Education supports the need to have School Streets and Play Streets in Stockport. He also agreed with the statement that this review will hopefully lead to some trials being carried out in Stockport allowing active play for children coming out of the pandemic.

Steve also highlighted that we needed to consider access for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

3. Ideas to support Play Streets

As a way to improve the Play Streets offer in Stockport, the idea of having an overarching support mechanism in place for Play Streets across the borough has been reviewed.

The idea would be to have a central online hub/group/ forum that would offer council support whilst at the same time enabling the community to share ideas and support one another. This would give more ownership to the community.

Due to the potential removal of the need for mandatory liability insurance further research into the opportunities for alternative support for insurance are required. Potentially creating a central hub group gives the option of overarching group insurance to cover all applications. If this is not possible, the use of the central hub group to improve training options and minimise Council risk is still a possibility.

The central online hub/group/forum could house all documents relating to the scheme including an easy step-by-step how to guide, possible video demonstrations/ training webinars, risk assessment guidance. It would be available for all members to upload and share their own experiences and share collectively.

As well as a central hub the potential to change the way the Council facilitates the closure of streets as also been considered by officers.

Options for Play Street closures:

- -Adapt the Leeds wheelie bin stickers to a suitable Stockport option reducing the need for other cones and signs.

Photo of the Leeds wheelie bin sticker below.



- -Continue to utilise cones and road-closed signs but provide a communal storage container to organisers. For example, Leeds Council provided School Streets with an orange wheelie bin.
- Review material used for road closure signs. For example:
Corrugated plastic road closure sign



- <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/62000/dft-offers-councils-cheaper-way-of-supporting-play-streets/>

Banner



• <https://playmeetstreet.wordpress.com/>

4. Funding and Resourcing Playstreets

The idea to further support play streets has a staff resource implication for the Council that is currently unfunded.

Currently potential for play streets are asked to request funding for signs, cones and hi-vis from ward budgets. If this is to be replaced by a more user-friendly process an alternative funding source will be required.

5. Ideas for School Streets

School Streets rely on the support of involved school and the community therefore many of the other authorities have utilised one off events to trial and develop these schemes. These trials have often been related to other events such as Clean Air Day or Bike Week. Officers have discussed the potential to do a similar process in Stockport. These closures have been done under the same legislation used for Street Parties and Play Streets.

Stockport is also involved in a number of Active Neighbourhood schemes where, if the relevant school and community interest exists, there is the potential to undertake School Street trials. The potential for longer-term trials using experimental traffic regulation orders could also be considered.

In addition, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) are currently exploring options for implementing school streets across Greater Manchester and officers continue to engage with TfGM to identify potential opportunities to implement school streets within Stockport.

6. Funding and Resourcing School Streets.

There is a resource requirement to design, implement and maintain school street schemes. The Council has successfully secured funding via the Cheadle Towns Fund to implement a first school street scheme around **Cheadle Primary school**.

Officers will continue to seek funding opportunities to implement schemes, including through the developing Active Neighbourhoods programme.

The current Transport Capital Programme includes a small pot of funding for school Road Safety improvements, this has been allocated to certain schools that have been highlighted as having a specific needs. It is possible that one of these schools could possibly also become a school street if criteria fit and funding allowed as well as /instead of other more common road safety improvements for example, 20 MPH zones.

It is important to consider however that using schools as pilots is not a long term fix and in order for the schemes to be successful borough wide there needs to be a rolling programme and future funding sought and put in place.