

Supporting street play in your area



A guide for resident activators and local groups

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Thanks and Acknowledgements

This guide was written collaboratively by members of the Playing Out team and local activators. It draws on the experience of individuals and groups and working to grow the street play movement across the UK. Particular thanks go to:

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Introduction

There is now a growing movement of parents and others across the UK who want to change things for children. We are not content with accepting a status quo where children feel increasingly excluded from public space - even their own streets – and where their freedom is very limited.

Playing Out, started by Bristol residents and now a national body for resident-led street play, is part of that movement and has a long-term vision for all children to be able to play out freely on the streets and estates where they live.

This is a practical guide on how to get street play happening in your area, either as an individual or a group, based on the experiences of people who have done it. Most local activators have started with 'playing out' sessions on their own street and then gone on to spread the idea more widely.

The 'playing out' model

If you're reading this, you may well be familiar with the 'playing out' model, or have already started organising sessions on your own street – if not, have a look at the website and introductory film at www.playingout.net to get more of an idea of what it's all about.

Are you a 'local activator'?

If you're reading this you could well be! Activators are people living in different parts of the UK, who want to play an active part in this movement by working to establish the 'playing out' idea in their area. Often, they are the pioneers, organising their own street to be the first to play out and lobbying the council to introduce a supportive policy.

Some activators have gone one step further by taken on the role of publicising the idea locally and offering practical support to other streets. Most activators have initially done this on a voluntary basis but some have gone on to secure funding to support their work to activate street play.

Using this guide

This brings together the practical experience of local groups and activators who have successfully kick-started playing out in their areas. It's a work in progress, building on learning gathered along the way (in fact we would welcome your input!). It is not meant to be definitive but to offer a useful starting point and tool kit.

There are many different ways to get things started and how you decide to do so will very much depend on your local situation, your skills and interests and, not least, how much time and energy you have. Therefore, the contents of this guide are not necessarily to be followed in order, but for you to pick and choose which bits are useful to you at any particular time. Please let us know how you get on with it, or if there is anything you think is missing.



How Playing Out can support you

Playing Out supports residents to get playing out happening around the country and especially those taking a lead in their local area. Help we can offer includes:

- Advice on supporting new streets to play out
- Email and phone advice for all residents (i.e. you can pass on any tricky queries to us!)
- Space on our website for local case studies, blogs and practical information
- Advice and troubleshooting on council policy and ‘best practice’, including directly talking to your local authority where helpful
- Help with setting up and managing a local Facebook group
- New ideas and models for enabling playing out in different settings (e.g. areas of deprivation and estates)
- Ideas and guidance on creative projects
- Links to academic research and evidence to support street play
- Help with setting up a local group and finding funding
- Help with putting together workshop plans or presentations
- A supportive network of other local activators
- Help with media and publicity around street play
- Guidance, materials, practical help and training
- An annual UK ‘Activator Day’ in Bristol for sharing ideas and inspiration

Plus, where resources allow (this may require some extra funding, e.g. from your council, to cover costs):

- Printed materials for residents (e.g. manuals, leaflets)
- Local training and workshops for residents, play professionals, council officers and others involved in supporting street play
- Attending a kick-off meeting of a local street play steering group involving council members, officers and residents – and you!
- Sending a representative to talk at local events or conferences
- Presence at media interviews and filming
- Help with designing visual materials – posters, banners, leaflets

This list is not exhaustive so if you need help with something not mentioned here then please ask and we’ll try to do it!



Getting your council on board

The main role of the local authority in the ‘playing out’ model is to provide an easy way for residents to close their street to traffic on a regular basis, but councils vary widely in their approach to street play.

Many have been extremely responsive and enthusiastic about the idea – introducing a policy quickly and sometimes providing extra funding for publicity and resident support. Some have been harder nuts to crack and residents have had to fight to get their voices heard. Don’t let that put you off! You can suggest a pilot scheme to try out the idea in one or two streets before they decide whether to allow a blanket policy. There is no rule on how long it takes to convince a council and get them to introduce a policy. It could be anywhere from 3 months to over a year.

Bearing all this in mind, here are a few tips for getting your council on board, based on our collective experience in Bristol, Hackney and other parts of the country.

Build support generally

Talk to people locally – try to get support from anyone you know and especially ‘influential people’ (community leaders, churches, nurseries, schools, play associations, GPs etc.).

Use your own street as a launch pad for the idea – call a meeting and build support for the idea there. Publicise your first session a bit more widely than you would normally and invite the media and local politicians. If your council doesn’t allow you to close the road, organise a ‘pavement play’ session as a first step.

Kathryn Kay, Adur and Worthing playing out activator, advises: *“Prove to your council that other streets are interested in playing out too. I think if it had just been me in Worthing, they wouldn’t have been so quick to act”.*

Use your existing (real and online) networks to spread the idea. This might be a good time to set up a Facebook group as a way of generating and demonstrating interest and support. Other local networks or campaign groups (e.g. Transition Towns, Living Streets, 20’s Plenty) could also be a good way to reach like-minded people.

Target and approach relevant councillors and officers

Call the officers in your Highways team responsible for street parties and road closures – ask if they are they aware of play street / temporary play street policies that other councils have in place – is there a policy in place or one under review? Can they raise it with their senior officer? Get other residents to do the same.

If the council has no policy in place, or is resistant to street play, one way to trial the idea is to apply for a street party but just hold a playing out session instead. (This is how the whole thing got started in Bristol!) Some councils still charge a fee for street party applications so let us know if you get stuck.

Find out which key councillors and council officers to target, particularly those with responsibility for Transport, Neighbourhoods, Children’s Services and Public Health. Don’t worry too much about which political party they are – we have had good support from all of them. Target councillors who have children or grandchildren.

Also get in touch with your ward councillors. Invite them and other key council members to a session or meeting on your street. You can usually visit them at local ‘surgeries’ or email them. They have a duty to respond. Encourage people in other streets to contact their ward councillors too.

Make your case

Research the priorities of your council – if they have specific targets around tackling obesity or increasing physical activity, you can use these in your lobbying and persuasion.

There is now good evidence of public health and social benefits of the model. See ‘essential evidence’ section in this guide. You can confidently tell the council that Playing Out is “an effective, low-cost, community-building, public health intervention”!

Glean positive stories and feedback from the Playing Out blog and national Facebook group to get some testimonials and quotes to share with others locally.

Remind yourself of the ‘10 good reasons’ for street play (on Playing Out website), as well as ‘Common Concerns’.

Draw on case studies and examples of successful projects around the country e.g. Bristol, Worthing, and Hackney. Tell them the government’s Chief Medical Officer recommended Playing Out in her [2012 report](#).

To show the level of interest in the idea nationally, point them to media section of the website and mention that a [BBC film](#) about Playing Out went viral in November 2017 with 8 million views in one week.

If you get the opportunity, show the short film from the [homepage](#) of the website.

Let them know that Playing Out is here to help them too! As well as lots of useful information for local authorities on our website, we are happy to talk things through with them and see what they need.



Supporting other streets to play out

Introduction

This guidance is aimed at anyone who is helping residents on other streets to organise playing out sessions, either in a paid or voluntary capacity. It sets out what you need to think about for each of the '4 steps' in the process, based on our collective experience of supporting residents on over 150 streets and estates across Bristol. It assumes first-hand experience of organising playing out sessions and should be used alongside the 4-steps films and 'Organiser's Manual' on the website.

Early conversations

When someone first contacts you wanting help to start playing out sessions, it's good to check:

- Do they understand the playing out model and how it works?
- Is their street suitable?
- Have they talked to their neighbours, do they have any key allies?
- Do they have the time and energy to be the main organiser?
- What fears or concerns they might have?
- Can they go on your mailing list? (Contact us for details on how to comply with the latest data protection rules)

Planning

Once you have a sense of where things are at in the street, it's good to talk through what the resident is thinking of doing:

- Have they considered how to consult and include all neighbours?
- Are there any problems they can foresee? Are there businesses on the street or neighbours who are likely to be concerned?
- Are there key people in the street it would be good to get on side?
- Would it be helpful for you to visit them for a chat and see the street?
- Talk about timing and how much work is involved.
- Be clear what moral and practical support you can offer.

If it seems right for them to go ahead, encourage them to watch the ['Four Steps'](#) videos on the website and, if possible, to read through the manual too. Try to encourage people not to skip ahead in their enthusiasm to play out, as we have found that the **slow process of building support amongst neighbours is at least as valuable as the end result** - and going too fast can backfire.

If you are familiar with the 'playing out' model and the Four Steps, here are some ways you can support other people through the process:

Step 1 – Talk to your neighbours and set a date.

Planning a first residents' meeting - things to check with organisers:

- Are they happy to host a meeting at their house, or would they rather hold it at a local café or other venue? Or outside on the street?
- Have they got at least one key ally to share the work (and fun) with?
- Do they need help with designing or printing invitations?
- How can they make their invitation as inclusive and clear as possible?
- Will others help deliver invitations?
- Would they like you to be at the meeting and in what capacity?
- Is there anything else you can do to help?

Before the meeting:

- Look at the street to check the layout and note any particular issues or hazards. Look at the length of the street, whether there are any obvious features such as a steep hill, blind bend, wide junction, school or business access, side streets or alleyways. Get advice from the council on the best way of closing it if needed.
- Take a manual if they haven't got one. It is useful to go through this with them, show them the common concerns, checklist and 10 good reasons for street play.
- Print out and take a council application form and any guidance available.
- Print out a map of the street to look at and discuss layout.
- Think about any other useful resources you can bring to the meeting – maybe a kit box if you have one.

At the meeting:

- If needed, introduce the 'playing out' model – explain the aims of it and describe how it works. Perhaps show the introductory film on a laptop. Invite questions.
- Gather views. Encourage people to think about their own memories of playing out. Listen to any concerns or objections and try to reassure.
- Find out what has happened already. Have they had a street party? If so, draw similarities and differences with the 'playing out' model.
- Who is at the meeting? Are they happy to help out? In what way?
- The residents need to think about which part of the street would be closed, how often and how long for. Advise them to keep it simple and manageable.
- Try to get agreement on a first date and even suggest they fill out the application form there and then (without being pushy!). Make sure there is ample time for the council to process the application.
- Remember that usually only one person can actually sign the form but letters to neighbours can come from more than one person.
- Try to get people to firmly commit to other jobs – publicity, stewarding etc.
- Make sure the street organiser has collected everyone's contact details.
- Talk through next steps. How will the meeting outcomes be communicated to neighbours? Is further consultation needed? Help sketch out a rough timetable.
- Do they need printing done or any other materials sent to them? Do they want help with door-knocking?

Step 2 – Get permission and support

This stage is mainly down to the residents to get on with but it's worth getting in touch soon after the meeting: Have they sent off the application form? Are they feeling well supported by neighbours? Be prepared to respond to any issues or objections that are raised.

If you come across any questions, objections or concerns not covered in either FAQs or 'Common Concerns' please do feed these back to Playing Out and ask for advice if needed.

Keep an eye on how the application is progressing and perhaps check in with the council after a few weeks. Once the application has been approved, get in touch with the organiser to check they know, confirm timings, make sure they are clear about stewarding procedure and have enough volunteers in place, and offer to go to the first session.

Step 3 – Tell everybody and get ready.

Again, you may not hear much until the end of this stage. Hopefully the organiser will be telling their neighbours about playing out. It's good to check they have posters and leaflets to distribute.

Try to steer organisers towards creating publicity that clearly explains what the session involves (access for drivers; parental responsibility) and also makes it clear that everyone is welcome – not only those with young children. Use the template flyer on the website as a starting point.

Organisers may need reassuring at this stage – often people worry about attendance, whether there will be enough for the kids to do, what drivers will be like, how the neighbours will react, what happens if something goes wrong. Some answers to these questions are in the manual and FAQs on the website. If you can also give them examples from your personal experience, this is more powerful. In general, based on our combined experience of hundreds of sessions, you can give reassurance that:

- Out of 1000s of sessions, there have only been a few incidents of minor damage to cars and all have been dealt with between neighbours.
- Children love the chance to play out freely on their street and do not need organised games or activities.
- Even if turnout is low, the chances are that interest and support will build.
- If there are not enough stewards, or if for any other reason it doesn't feel safe, they do not have to go ahead.
- The vast majority of drivers are understanding and considerate.
- You or another experienced playing out organiser can be there.
- They can ask their local police to come along for added support.
- People can bring out their own cups of tea!

Step 4 – Play Out!

For many people, closing their street for the first time can be nerve-wracking. Having someone experienced on hand to help and reassurance can make a huge difference. In our experience, this is the part of our support that people appreciate the most.

Before the day:

- Help residents do a simple risk assessment
- Make sure you and the organisers are clear about how the road will be closed and any signage and barriers needed, including 'road ahead closed' signs.
- Check how they are getting all the signage and other essential 'kit' they need. Do you need to bring anything on the day?
- Ensure the organiser has enough reliable stewards lined up so there are two people at each road-closure point and they themselves are free to oversee and organise.
- Arrange to meet them with the first batch of stewards 15 minutes before the session is due to start.
- Suggest they flyer parked cars the night before, using the 'polite car notice' as a template.

On the day:

Make sure there are enough stewards. If in any doubt, or you have concerns about safety for any other reason, strongly advise against going ahead and encourage pavement play or front yard activities instead.

If you and the organiser are both happy to go ahead:

- Support the organiser to brief the stewards using the ‘steward briefing’.
- Ensure stewards understand the importance of their role.
- Make sure everyone is clear about what is happening.
- Don’t feel rushed – make sure everything is set up and safe before the session starts.
- Help close the road as efficiently and safely as possible.
- Be alert for any drivers that may cause problems. Be on hand to intervene and demonstrate a ‘polite yet firm’ approach.
- Even if things seem to be really smooth and easy and you feel like a spare part, stay until the end if you can just in case of any unexpected difficulties or incidents.
- At the end of the session, make sure everyone – especially children - knows the session is over before moving the barriers.

After the first session:

- Give the organiser and stewards plenty of appreciation and encouragement that they have done something really positive for their street. And that next time it will be easier!
- Have a debrief with the organiser and stewards. Talk through any issues, concerns or ideas. Were the signs and barriers in the right place? Did the stewards do their job well? Make sure they are happy to do the next sessions themselves – if they want more support can you offer to go again?
- Make a note of any useful feedback or observations and send to Playing Out so it can be fed into the shared learning.
- Encourage everyone involved to join the street or local Playing Out Facebook group (if there is one) and post photos, quotes etc.
- Check-in with the organiser after a few weeks to make sure things are going well or if they need any further support.
- Once happily up and running, think about asking the organiser if they would be happy to be a point of contact for other interested local residents. If so, pass on their details to hello@playingout.net so we can add them to our online map.

If you have supported a street to play out successfully, you should share in a sense of pride with the residents. You have been part of seeding a longer-term change, which may have a ripple effect you can’t predict!



Spreading the word

Making sure people know about the 'playing out' idea – and getting people thinking about children's freedom to play out generally - is a crucial part of changing things. There are many imaginative ways of doing this but here are some ideas based on what we have learnt so far.

Press and 'traditional media'

Street play is a very media-friendly topic, judging by the amount of coverage it has had over the past few years (see 'Playing Out in the Media' page on our website)

If you write a press release, ensure that you or others are willing to be interviewed and be aware that the media will often want to film or take photos of a play street in action. We have produced a detailed guide on working with the media (contact us for this), and can help with photos, text and quotes.

Hyper-local newsletters/free newspapers are a really good place to put a call-out for interested streets. These are often free and the editors are usually keen for news about positive things happening in the neighbourhood.

Golden rule: make sure you mention the **Playing Out website** and give your contact details, so people can find out more and take action! You may have to be a bit insistent with journalists about this.

Social Media

Social media can be a great way to get people thinking and talking about street play. Your own existing networks are likely to be very useful to you.

Facebook has worked well for building local street play networks, as many parents already use it. Existing community/parent Facebook groups are ideal for promoting street play. See page 17 for hints and tips on using Facebook.

Twitter is particularly good for making links with other local groups and organisations, local media, politicians or people with a particular subject interest. Just beware of the trolls! Our general approach to 'trolling' (very nasty or negative comments) has been to ignore it, but you need to make your own call.

Instagram: We know this it could be useful and are on there as @playingoutcic but have not made full use of it yet. Please get in touch if this is your thing!

NB. You can of course use any social media account to communicate about street play but if you are thinking about setting up a specific local 'Playing Out' account, please refer to our guidance on materials and branding, or just run past us what you are thinking.

Word of mouth, events and creative ideas

The best way to encourage people organise street play is to talk to them about it. Having a stall or presence at community or school events can be a great way to meet and enthuse likely street organisers.

Once you have identified a good event to attend, think about:

- What is being provided, what do you need to bring (e.g. table, gazebo, projector?)
- What type of space is it (indoor/outdoor, grass/tarmac)?
- Are you prepared for questions that may arise?
- What do you want to get from the event and how best to do this?
- Who can help you?
- What materials do you need to take (chalk, manuals?)

- How will you capture people's contact details? (Contact us for guidance on the latest data protection rules)

If you don't want to just stand behind a table with leaflets (which is fine too!), think about creative ways of engaging people such as:

- Chalk Flood (providing chalk for 'free play')
- Public Skipping Service (turning a long rope)
- Mocked-up playing out sessions (using cardboard boxes etc.)
- Gathering childhood memories of play and displaying them (e.g. as bunting)

You can probably think of loads of other ideas, but look at [creative projects](#) on our website for more info on these.

Leaflets and Posters with your contact details

General leaflets about Playing Out are a good way to try and find interested people in a particular street or area. We may be able to help with design and printing of these. Posters can also work well on school, community or library noticeboards.

Here is an example of a leaflet sent out by Jo, a Bristol activator, to help find more people on a street once one or two people have expressed an interest.

Hello residents of xxxxx road. I am a local resident and activator for Playing Out. Playing out sessions are resident-led temporary road closures to let children play safely and freely in their own street, helping children be active and adults get to know each other, building a stronger community and a friendlier vibe.

I have met a growing number of people living in your patch who would like to do this, and I'm sure there are others (plus people with questions/concerns!). I am collecting contact details for anyone interested in meeting up to talk about it. Please text or email me on: xxxxxx

If you would be able to host a small gathering to discuss please let me know (I can bring baked goods). I look forward to hearing from you!
Regards, Jo Chesterman, Local Playing Out Activator
See www.playingout.net for more info.

Working in partnership

You are not alone! There are many other groups, campaigns, organisations and movements whose aims cross over with ours. Working with them can bring huge benefits.

Councils

Getting your council to put a positive street play policy in place is just the start of your relationship with them. We have found that there is great value in nurturing this partnership and ensuring that they back up their policy in practice.

In some areas, a 'street play steering group' has been set up, involving key local residents; councillors; council officers from different departments; police; local organisations and others. These groups have worked together to ensure the council policy is working smoothly; iron out any difficulties; coordinate communications; ensure the right support for streets; identify funding or research opportunities; look at how the wider policy context could support street play (e.g. introducing 20mph on residential streets). Senior council figures can also make great spokespeople for the project and for children's right to play out generally. They often don't mind a bit of positive publicity!

Police

Perhaps surprisingly, given some press stories about children being given police cautions for playing in the street, we have found the police to be very supportive and a good partner. In Bristol, we have produced briefings on Playing Out for local beat managers, setting out how the idea fits with their aims around community cohesion and safety. Please ask if you would like to use these.

Once briefed, local beat officers or PCSOs can be great allies to come along to playing out sessions and just lend an informal police presence to help back up the legitimacy and legal status of the road closure. This is particularly good for any streets that have had problems with aggressive drivers trying to challenge the stewards or ignore the road closure.

Play organisations

Local play organisations have been great champions for street play and, especially where they 'get' the grassroots nature of the Playing Out movement, can be an ideal local partner. In Hackney, local resident activator Claudia Draper ended up working directly for Hackney Play Association when they jointly got funding from the local council to support street play. HPA was able to provide not only a formal structure and resourcing but also local knowledge and expertise which has helped Claudia build relationships and initiate activity in some 'harder to reach' areas.

Other local campaigns and groups

Likely allies include: walking and cycling groups (e.g. Sustrans, Living Streets, 20's Plenty); built-environment and civic organisations (e.g. Architecture Centres); community development organisations; Neighbourhood Partnerships; social change/environmental groups (e.g. Transition Towns); children's centres or groups.

Housing Associations

We have worked with several housing associations who are keen to support their tenants to organise playing out, often as a way to build community. Ask us for more information on how we work with them. The good ones have trusted relationships with their residents and they also often have money to buy in equipment, time etc.



Playing out with schools

We have worked with several schools across Bristol over the years, as a way of promoting the idea of free play, to reach potential organisers (i.e. parents and carers!) and to give children a chance to experience playing out in the street. We have usually used a contact (parent, teacher, Sustrans Active Travel Officer) as a way in, but have also approached schools 'cold' to ask if they'd be interested in finding out more about Playing Out, particularly if in an area where the idea is yet to take off.

We usually offer:

- Leaflets to go in book bags.
- Hosting a coffee morning or workshop for parents at the school
- Coming to a PTA meeting, staff meeting or similar to do a short talk about playing out
- Help to run a Stay and Play session in the playground after school
- Help to organise a 'playing out' session outside the school

The coffee mornings have been a lovely, informal way of meeting parents. We have been on hand with information, sometimes shown the introductory film on our website and used the time to talk to parents and carers. We have also run more formal, structured workshops with the aim of giving parents the tools and information to do playing out on their own street.

Stay and Play sessions after school, where the school playground is kept open for free play, can be a good chance to talk to parents about their street whilst their children get a run-around.

Helping to organise 'playing out' sessions outside a school can be quite a lot of work and may be more complicated than on a residential street but can also work brilliantly as a way of reaching the whole community and raising awareness about the need for safer streets around schools. Hackney Play Association have produced a great guide on how to do this (see <http://www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets/school-play-streets/>) and we also have experience in Bristol, which we are happy to talk through.

A successful school play street needs co-operation and support from many people, so ensure you talk to:

- Any residents or businesses on the street
- The school: teachers, head, teaching assistants, staff
- Parents: particularly the PTA/'friends of...' groups
- The after-school club

It is essential that residents are supportive of street closure proposals as they are the most affected, even by a temporary closure. The school will need to be on board, as access to school facilities (toilets) will be needed during the time the street is closed. As with any play street, plenty of willing stewards and volunteers are important.

The deputy head of one school in Bristol said: *"I felt an immediate affinity with the aims of Playing Out. They matched so well with what we are achieving here at Luckwell – a real sense of community belonging and responsibility for our staff and pupils, which is something we see as very much an investment in all our futures. We look forward to holding more such events."*

Setting Up a Local Group

Some activators work heroically alone but forming a Playing Out group for your city, town or area can start with just two people! It is a great way to meet like-minded street play enthusiasts and can really help you to:

- Support and promote street play locally
- Build a network of active residents
- Get council support
- Get funding for materials, events and/or time
- Get local sponsorship

Existing groups how they work and what they do

There is a range of different types of 'street play' groups across the UK. The nature of our movement is that it is spreading in different ways and people are finding out which ways of collaborating work best for them.

Groups may be formal or informal and may or may not be explicitly linked with the national Playing Out movement.

If you are thinking of setting up a group, this website, made by a community organisation in Brighton, has a very good tool for working out which kind of group would suit your aims best:

<https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/starting-a-group/>

Facebook groups

As well as the main national Playing Out Facebook group, there are now over 20 local groups around the UK. These are run by residents for residents and enable people to share experiences, support each other and celebrate street play. (see next section for details on how to set up and run a Facebook group.)

Unconstituted groups

This is a group of people who have come together informally with a common interest in promoting and/or supporting street play in a city. For example, Edinburgh Playing Out have a Facebook group and a website and have successfully campaigned for Edinburgh City Council to introduce a street play pilot.

Constituted groups

These are formal groups that have a constitution (something which sets out in writing what the group is aiming to do); a Management Committee (consisting of at least a Chair and a Treasurer) and a bank account (though constituted groups can sometimes use the bank account of a bigger organisation). This sounds big, but it can start with just two people! Most local community groups that form around parks, churches and schools choose this route. In Adur and Worthing, local residents work with local council officers to support street play. They formed into a simple constituted group so they could apply for grants to fund kit and get a bank account. An example constitution is available from Playing Out.

Community Interest Companies

A community interest company is a useful model if you want to be paid for your time as well as finding funding for materials. It is similar to a limited company in how it is set up, but its aim must be for social good and any profits made must go back in to the organisation.

Playing Out is a CIC and it has worked well for us. However, there are some grant giving bodies that won't give money to CICs.

Working with community and play organisations

Forming and running a group is a job in itself and may not be where you want to put your energy. With this in mind it is possible to work with existing community groups who can support you to support others to play out. For example, in Hackney the resident activator there formed a relationship with Hackney Play

Association who were then commissioned by Hackney Council to run a street play project across the borough, employing the activator to support other streets. This has been very successful. Existing community organisations or play have all the 'infrastructure' to support voluntary or community work. It's worth researching organisations in your area and seeing if any have compatible aims with supporting street play.

Your group's relationship with Playing Out

If you'd like to set up a local group, please contact us so we can support you. If you would like your group to be named 'Playing Out in xxx' and have a formal link with us, we just ask that you sign a simple agreement setting out a few basic principles of being a Playing Out group, covering: use of PO branding and materials, the principles of the PO movement, funding and the support that we can offer you.

Other things to consider

There are lots of different issues to consider when starting a group. The Transition Network, which encourages people to take action for sustainability in their local communities, has done a lot of thinking about the social, psychological and practical aspects of forming a new group. Although they talk about 'doing transition' the principles of being a group creating change in a community are applicable to Playing Out groups too: <http://transitionnetwork.org.dedi2835.your-server.de/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>

Data Protection and other Policies.

We have the following policies that you may need as a group that we can share with you:

- Data protection and information sharing
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety

Get in Touch

We'd love to know if you are setting up a local group and will do what we can to help. Please contact us at hello@playingout.net or ring 0117 953 7167.



Growing a supportive network

Building a local network means street organisers from across your town or city can give each other support and encouragement, share problems, celebrate successes and come together to organise events or lobby for change. Providing opportunities for people to meet in real life can be really appreciated, but we have found that most interaction these days happens online and this can also be a great way to build a sense of community.

Facebook groups

Although we have considered other types of forum and Facebook certainly has its flaws, we have found it works well, as lots of people – especially parents - use it in their normal lives.

A Facebook ‘group’ (as opposed to a ‘page’) works well as a forum for discussion and can be open, closed or secret. Generally, local playing out activators have chosen to set up ‘closed’ groups - i.e. only members can see its contents, but anyone can request to join. There are now over 20 local playing out Facebook groups.

Setting up a new group is not technically very difficult. Facebook’s own ‘help’ pages give step-by-step instructions, which should help you. If you do get stuck, then do get in touch with us and we can help you through the steps.

Here are some additional tips:

- We would recommend that you set up a ‘closed’ group so members can discuss things more freely and you can ensure conversation stays supportive and on-topic.
- Make sure you set up a ‘group address’ that can be easily shared e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PlayingOut>
- Identify clearly what the group is about. A suggested description is:

"A forum for discussion, ideas, thoughts about bringing play to the streets of XXX. Please request to join this group if you are interested or involved in playing out in XXX. Go to www.playingout.net for support and resources on how to organise temporary play street sessions and join the main Playing Out Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/PlayingOut/) to be part of the national network."

- Have more than one ‘admin’ if possible, to show it’s not a one-person band!
- You may want to add a picture to the top of the page (a “group photo”) – this adds to the feel of the page, adds colour and can help explain the concept. Remember this will be visible to anyone on Facebook so only use an image of children where you have clear permission.

Managing the group

Once the group is up and running, you need to recruit some members! You can start by inviting (via email or Facebook) all the people in your area you have been in touch with about playing out.

When they ask to join the group, you will get a request notification. If they are not someone who you know/ have been in touch with, you might want to check that they are a real person (we get a surprising number of spam requests to join the national group) – usually a quick look at their profile will suffice.

If you are happy to add them, it’s nice to send a welcome message (go to the person’s Facebook profile and click on message). Unless you are friends with the person, the message will go to their “other” messages box but in our experience about two-thirds of these messages do get seen.

Here is a suggested welcome message:

Welcome to the XXX Playing Out Facebook group! It is a place for people who are interested in children's freedom to play out to share experiences, pictures, ask for advice and link up with others in the area. The aim is for the group to be a friendly place and a source of support and inspiration and we hope that you will contribute to it in that spirit. We would ask that posts are kept on topic and it is not used for advertising. Please remember pictures shared here are not for use elsewhere without the poster's specific permission.

It would be great if you could introduce yourself to the group and let us know where you are and what your interest is in joining the group – are you running playing out sessions already or thinking about starting them, or doing anything else street-play related?

Thanks, (Your Name)

If you are not sure about a request, this is our standard message asking for clarification:

Hi. Many thanks for your request to join the XXX Playing Out group. Before I sign you up, it would be good to know more about why you want to join. I'm sorry to have to ask but we are trying to stop the group becoming inundated with spammers.

Best wishes, (your name)

Each group will develop its own etiquette on off-topic postings, but here is a standard message to put as a comment or a message if someone posts something too random or unrelated.

"Hi – this is not a reprimand but a gentle reminder to all to try to keep posts and discussion related to children's freedom to play out. Thank you!"

Or, if you are unsure why someone has posted something there, you could ask for clarification about what the link is. Use your judgment about whether to leave the post visible or not (we might leave an invitation to a free community event but with blatant commercial advertising we would delete the post and usually block the poster!)

If there are issues which arise and you don't feel you have the answer to, please do refer people to the Playing Out website or main Facebook group.



Finding Funding

What would I need funding for?

You will almost certainly have started your local playing out project on a voluntary basis, probably initially inspired by wanting to get playing out happening on your own street. This is how the project started in Bristol and has been replicated by residents in Hackney, Worthing, Reading, Leeds and many other places. This personal commitment and 'resident-led' ethos - people making change happen for themselves - is a vital aspect of the Playing Out movement and why it is growing

However, in Bristol we found that after interest from other residents reaches a certain level, and particularly once the council has an advertised policy in place, the work involved can become quite regular and time-consuming. At this point, you might decide you need some resources; or you might feel inspired by what you could achieve if your project had some investment and could involve some paid time.

Even without funding for any of your time – which can be harder to raise - there are other ways in which funding can help boost playing out locally. Here is a list of suggestions but you may well think of your own:

- Local publicity materials such as leaflets and posters
- Signage or other road closure 'kit'
- Coffee mornings or other engagement or publicity events
- Workshops for residents
- Stewarding 'role-play' workshops (ask Playing Out for details!)
- Creative projects to engage people with street play

Approach

Winning funding is basically about getting people to invest in you and your work. Nearly all funders will only want to do this in proportion to your track record of success in making change happen and managing funding accountably. Think Dragon's Den! If you've not had funding before, this means the best route is to **start small**, either with funding for materials and kit or – if you are planning to include time – for small bits of freelance work to deliver a specific project or strand of work.

It also means **good planning**: being clear about what activities you want to do, why these are needed by people, how you will do them, and what will be the results before you start. If you deliver your project well, manage the funds properly, and report back to the funder – and there is a need for more of your work – you can then think of developing your plans and increasing the funding you ask for.

This is how Playing Out began in Bristol when we were mainly working with residents, and it is how many groups and organisations develop. We can provide your group with help and advice around this whole process, so do get in touch at the ideas stage. Playing Out will also support your project and including this can help to strengthen any bid you write.

Where would I get small grant funding from?

Early on, Playing Out in Bristol managed to get small and growing bits of funding from various council 'pots' aimed at health, communities, sustainable transport, play and the arts. But with years of government and local authority funding cuts, this is now much harder to find. Other funding is also increasingly competitive, with charities and services and groups of all sizes going for the same sources or 'pots'.

However, there is still funding 'out there' for small local groups/projects to make positive change happen! Here's a list of possible funding sources (we'll keep adding to this):

Local Authority:

There may still be small bits of council funding linked to communities, health or other areas. These will almost certainly be targeted at disadvantaged areas and citizens and very likely channelled into existing

community development workers. But it's good to make the link and find out, and there might also be other support available.

Local Community Foundations

These independent organisations facilitate charitable giving in a city or area by connecting those who want to give money (individuals, businesses, some Trusts and foundations) with projects that need funding. They also offer funding advice and support. It's worth getting in touch with yours if you have one. This website lists most of them in the UK: <https://www.ukcommunityfoundations.org/our-network>

National Lottery Funding

Awards for All funding can provide £300 - £10,000 for a project within one year. The form is simple and short with a 12 week turn around. The Big Lottery website also lists other funding opportunities aimed at communities: <https://biglotteryfund.org.uk> info on all funds.

People's Health Trust Funding

A private charity distributing millions of pounds around the UK raised through Health Lotteries, focussing on local projects that connect communities and give people a sense of ownership and control of their lives. £5K upwards. Playing Out has had money from here for Bristol projects: <https://www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk>

Trusts and Foundations

There are thousands of small private Trusts and Foundations across the UK set up by families or businesses wanting to give money around specific interests and charitable purposes. Application is often by letter and can sometimes be for a small donation as opposed to a grant. There are on-line tools for searching these, often available free through your local voluntary sector support organisation.

Funding for resident/community development Groups

Parallel to funding cuts, there's a big move in the UK to encourage and support resident led community development. There are public and private organisations offering small grants – upwards from a few hundred pounds - and other important support. For example, look at:

Big Local: <http://localtrust.org.uk/our-work/>

Project Dirt: <http://www.projectdirt.com>

Warburton's: <https://www.warburtons.co.uk/corporate/responsibility/community/grant>

Santander: <http://www.santanderfoundation.org.uk>

Other Sources of Funding

Other funding pots pop up around the UK, it's just finding out about them! It's best to tap into places that already gather these together. If you have a voluntary sector network organisation in your area, they will be able to help and give access to Grants Online (VOSCUR in Bristol: <https://www.voscur.org>). Otherwise there are good funding newsletters you can sign up to, such as Funding Central:

<https://www.fundingcentral.org.uk>

If you want to start looking for funding, do get in touch. We can help you with the whole process and provide lots more information and support. It's useful for us to know how Playing Out is developing around the country, and if you are thinking of setting up a formal 'Playing Out' group or project we would like to be involved.

Draft agreement between Playing Out CIC and a local Playing Out Group.

Playing Out CIC is the national organisation supporting resident-led street play and the wider movement for children’s freedom across the UK and beyond. Part of growing this movement is enabling individuals and communities to grow their own local projects, develop their own ideas and bring about change at the local level. We want to support this whilst retaining a sense of a coherent national movement with a shared vision.

This agreement aims to clarify our support for and expectations of local ‘Playing Out’ groups or affiliated local organisations.

‘Playing Out’ refers to the national organisation Playing Out CIC, based in Bristol.

‘The local group’ refers to _____ (name of local group or organisation)

I. Roles

To help support and grow local activity, Playing Out CIC will:

- Provide up to date and detailed guidance and materials for residents, organisations and councils to follow and support the ‘playing out’ model.
- Maintain and develop the Playing Out website as a source of inspiration and information.
- Provide direct email and phone support to residents or professionals where needed.
- Generate and respond to national media interest, co-ordinating local involvement where appropriate.
- Be a leading ‘voice for street play’ (in media, online, national talks and conferences).
- Provide a ‘hub’ where residents can meet and exchange ideas and learning.
- Signpost residents to local groups, networks and sources of support.
- Help local groups to find funding where needed.
- Share learning from projects aimed at ensuring the ‘playing out’ model and other ways of enabling children to play out are widely accessible.
- Be a source of inspiration through links to wider initiatives and ideas related to children’s rights and freedom.

To support the Playing Out movement, the local group will:

- Promote street play and the ‘playing out’ model locally to generate interest and action.
- Be a ‘voice for street play’ in local (or national) media and events.
- Provide ‘on the ground’ support to new streets (see Activator Guide for detail).
- Build/maintain a relationship with the local authority to ensure their ongoing support for street play.
- Liaise between residents and the council, perhaps sitting on a steering group.
- Gather and feed back (to Playing Out) issues, learning, stories or impact to help grow the Playing Out movement.

2. Communication

Playing Out CIC and the local group will aim to communicate formally at least once every six months. Each will update the other on the previous six months’ activities and plans for the forthcoming six months.

Playing Out CIC will update the local group on legislative and policy changes that could affect them locally.

The local group will update Playing Out CIC on the number and location of streets playing out at the end of every quarter.

3. Use of Branding and Materials

The local group understands and will work within Playing Out CIC's Use of Branding and Materials policy.

4. Sponsorship

Both will work within Playing Out CIC's sponsorship guidelines.

5. Financial support

Playing Out CIC will constantly be on the look out for sources of funding and other ways to support resident-led street play. We will support the local group in applying for grants and, if possible, create grants for local playing out groups to apply for. Depending on circumstances, we may request a contribution towards maintaining the central Playing Out hub to be included in any larger funding applications made by local groups.

Signed (on behalf of Playing Out CIC):

Date:

Signed (on behalf of local group):

Date:

Sponsorship Guidelines

Aim

These guidelines aim to provide clear information and advice on questions around sponsorship from commercial companies or other organisations. They are written for local activators who are doing playing out in their own area and supporting others to get started, or for street organisers co-ordinating regular playing out sessions in their own street.

Background

Playing Out began with the simple idea of closing a residential street for children to play freely safe from the dangers of traffic. And the aim was also for residents of all ages – children and adults - to have a chance to meet, get to know each other and build stronger connections. One of the aims from the beginning was to make playing out sessions easy and low or no-cost for residents to do for themselves. Playing out in the street doesn't depend on expensive, elaborate equipment or activities for children to play with. Instead they are encouraged to bring out their own toys, to use and share, make up their own games and use the space and their imagination for free play (in both senses of the word!).

Playing Out CIC takes a cautious approach to entering into links with commercial companies. When so much of childhood and public space has been commodified and commercialised it is even more urgent to protect and promote free, self-organised play and activity. This is a vital part of our ethos and we have generally turned down offers to link with companies like toy manufacturers who have approached us with partnership ideas over the last few years. We are not against all sponsorship opportunities but would like any links to be in keeping with our aims and vision.

Seeking local sponsorship

As the idea of organising playing out sessions has spread and more residents across the country have started taking action in their own neighbourhoods, they have had new ideas and experiences. One of these is around how to cover the costs which can occur in areas where playing out is not being funded by the local authority. In Bristol and Hackney, road closed signs and other kit has been funded by the council and provided by Playing Out through direct contact with residents. Elsewhere there is limited or no funding in place for this signage and equipment.

Increasingly residents are looking for ways to get their costs for kit, printing or other expenses covered through sponsorship links with local companies. So far examples have included a local estate agent paying for the printing of leaflets and posters, and a local building firm covering the costs of a vinyl 'road closed' banner sign. In each case the company's logo has appeared.

We support residents who want to use this route for funding and support but within the following framework:

Please do:

- Let us know if you are planning to begin a sponsorship partnership and share the details.
- Think carefully about the nature of the company or organisation you are working with. Is it a good fit with Playing Out and the wider aims of children belonging to their street and neighbourhood? Are there any conflicts between the company's products and services and what Playing Out seeks to achieve?
- Be clear about why the company wants to link with Playing Out. Is it to drive sales? To improve their image? Or do they just like the idea and want to help? These are all legitimate reasons but it is best to be clear and ensure that any partnership is genuinely two-way and not simply cheap advertising for the sponsor.

- Be clear about whether and how an organisation hopes to use Playing Out's name and logo.
- Make sure the sponsorship delivers as many benefits as possible beyond simply funding. For example if a local firm is providing funding or materials in return for having their logo on materials could they also promote the idea in their staff magazine/intranet/corporate literature/social media? Could you invite some staff to come along to a playing out session? Are there other forums or networks they could link you into to build support for playing out in your area?
- Ensure that our logo and visual identity is used appropriately. Please let us see a draft of any materials (posters, banners etc) that will carry the Playing Out logo alongside a company logo.
- Make sure the extent of the sponsorship is clear in any wording used and funding or other support is not 'over-claimed'. For example, wording like "**Playing Out sponsored by Moving On Estate Agents**" might give the impression that the company sponsorship is on a national scale. "**Playing Out Gillingham Road sponsored by Moving On Estate Agents**" makes the local nature of the partnership clear.

Local activator Kathryn Kay recommends meeting a potential sponsor face to face to check these things out and also says, "I drew up a simple Code of Conduct type one-pager which both I and the business signed. It asked them to agree with our group's aim and was a list of what we agreed they would do and what we would do in return".

Talk to us

These guidelines are not designed to be off-putting or over restrictive and we are open to new ways to get local support for playing out. Do get in touch and talk to us about any questions over sponsorship. Contact hello@playingout.net or ring 0117 953 7167.



Evidence briefing

Here is some useful evidence to back up your local street play campaign. There are lots more links to evidence and research on our website. We are always keen to hear about new/emerging evidence to support street play, so if you come across something do let us know.

‘The Problem’

Although it might seem like a negative place to start, often the motivation for both parents and councils to initiate local street play projects is concern about children’s lack of freedom to play out and related issues.

Children’s low physical activity and obesity

The government recommends that children and young people (5-18) should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA) for **at least 60 minutes** every day¹.

Of children aged 5-15, only 21% of boys and 16% girls meet these recommended physical activity levels. That means **around 80% of children are not getting the minimum recommended amount of physical activity to be healthy**².

Levels of child obesity in the UK³:

- more than 1 in 5 children are overweight or obese when they begin school
- almost **1 in 3 children are overweight or obese** by the time they leave primary school

The World Health Organisation published a report stressing the important **influence of childhood experience on lifelong physical activity habits**. *"Physical activity behaviours across the life-course can be heavily influenced by childhood experience. Creating safe, physical activity-friendly communities, which enable, and encourage the use of active transport (walking, cycling etc.) and participation in an active lifestyle and physical activities, will benefit all communities*⁴.

Children’s loss of independent mobility

Overall, there has been a large reduction in independent mobility for primary school children in England since 1971. A recent study shows that the proportion of children who walk to primary school dropped from 81% in 1970 to 60% in 2010. The study also found that children had less independence in other “non-school” journeys. In 1971 primary school children to at least twice as many unaccompanied weekend journeys compared with either 1990 or 2010⁵.

Negative attitudes towards children and play⁶

A survey for Playday 2013 found that more than a quarter (28%) of parents feared being judged by neighbours if they let their children play unsupervised outdoors.

- Almost a third (32%) believed allowing their children to play ball games or make noise outdoors would cause problems with other residents.
- 53% of adults said traffic was a barrier to children playing out where they lived.
- 40% of adults cited ‘stranger danger’ as a concern
- 60% of parents said they would feel confident letting their children play in the street if others were playing out too.

Loss of community⁷

A survey carried out for Playday 2010 found that 79% of adults believe community spirit has weakened since they were a child.

- Nearly half of men (44%) and 28% of women would be wary to help a child in need of assistance in their neighbourhood.
- 47% of adults thought it is unsafe for children to play out without supervision.
- One in three (37%) parents were concerned they would be judged by their neighbours if they let their children play out unsupervised.
- 71% of children worry about being followed or taken by strangers.
- Nearly three quarters of children (73%) say they would like to play out more.
- 81% of adults believed children playing outside helps to improve community spirit.
- 70% said they thought playing out makes an area more desirable to live in.

Traffic impact on children's lives

During 2013, of all children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents, 69% were on foot. 16% of adults killed or seriously injured were pedestrians.

Compared to the population as a whole, children involved in road traffic accidents are far more likely to be pedestrians (69% of children involved in road traffic accidents are pedestrians compared to 23% of the population as a whole)⁸.

In the last 40 years road traffic has more than doubled⁹ (total miles driven increased 109% between 1973 and 2013)

In the last 40 years the number of cars has increased by 136%¹⁰ (in 2013 there were a total of 36 million vehicles in the UK). 75% of households now have access to a car or van compared to 52% in 1971.

'A solution' (the playing out model!)

Since the first playing out session in 2009, the idea has spread around the UK and there are now (Jan 2018) over 600 streets that have held regular (on average monthly) sessions. We estimate that around 18,000 children and 9,000 adults have been directly involved. 50 councils are now actively supporting the model and many have specific street play policies in place.

There is also anecdotal evidence that more informal playing out is happening in streets and spaces across the UK because people are starting to think differently.

We know that the model is having a positive impact in several ways. In particular:

1. Improving children's health and wellbeing
2. Improving community cohesion
3. Increasing 'active citizenship'
4. Bringing about longer-term culture change

1. Improving children's health and wellbeing

Researchers from Bristol University have published a study¹¹, "Why temporary street closures for play make sense for public health." If you have time, it's worth reading the whole paper because it makes a thorough and well-argued case for the model, but the powerful headline finding is that playing out could make a **"meaningful contribution"** to children's physical activity levels.

Children's activity levels and location were measured during playing out sessions using accelerometers and GPS. The data showed that:

- Children were outside approximately 70% of the time during the session. This compares to less than 20% usually spent outdoors during this time period.
- Children spent 30% of their time outside during Playing Out sessions in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and another 15% in light activity. This compares to an average 5% of time spent in MVPA during this time of day.

Previous research shows that time spent outdoors equates to more physical activity for children¹².

An evaluation of play streets in Hackney¹³ found that children's physical activity at sessions was on par with 14 additional PE lessons each school term.

Our own 2017 survey of 'playing out' streets¹⁴ also found that many children have learned or improved physical and social skills, including riding a bike (80%) and interacting with other children (88%).

The University of Bristol report also found that, in contrast to many public health interventions, 'playing out' was an idea that was scalable, applicable across a broad range of socio-economic situations and – as it is resident-led and low cost - potentially more sustainable than most 'top down' interventions.

2. Improving community cohesion

There is a growing body of evidence showing that interventions that improve social cohesion have long-term health benefits. For example, a recent Scientific American article talks about how combatting loneliness promotes social health¹⁵

The University of Bristol research found that playing out sessions increased community cohesion through strengthening connections and building new connections between neighbours¹².

The majority of respondents to our 2017 survey¹⁴ said that as a result of playing out they know more people on their street (91%) and feel they belong more in their neighbourhood (84%).

3. Increasing 'active citizenship'

Over a third of survey respondents said playing out has led to them being involved in other community groups and activities.

4. Longer term culture change

This area is more difficult to evaluate but there is growing anecdotal evidence that 'playing out' is changing street communities in a deeper way and starting to 'normalise' street play. Quotes from our survey include:

"we just play out as and when, without formally closing the street."

"Over time has led to more of a "calling for you" culture as more kids know each other. Older children sometimes play football in the street now in the evenings."

"More willingness and comfort with 'hanging out' with each other and chatting on the street - but not actual PLAY because there is no room to run etc when all the cars are parked on the street."

"More readily play on the pavements and interact with neighbours on the street."

"If it hadn't been for Playing Out, we would not have realised that we can use the outdoor space on our doorstep as it is so ingrained that the roads are just for cars."

Other quotes on the changes and benefits of playing out

“I look at my kids and their friends running, skipping and playing and I know it’s doing them so much good – not just the exercise but the fun and the chance to feel part of where they are growing up.” Hazel, street organiser, Bristol

“Usually my wife and I see nothing but people parking their cars and disappearing into their houses. Now on playing out days it feels like a different street with people chatting and being friendly.” Steve, Bristol

“I’ve lived in my street for 37 years and playing out days provide an oasis in this busy electronically driven world. It’s so valuable to see neighbours mixing and chatting together, children running about outside and playing simple games with very little equipment or expense.” Vivien, Leeds

“Mummy isn’t asking me what I’m doing. She’s talking to people instead.” Six-year-old girl reflecting on what is good about playing out.

“It’s such a beautiful amount of space.” Three-year-old girl when she went to her first playing out session

“I thought is she going to think the road is a play area now? But it hasn’t happened at all. If anything, it’s kind of heightened her awareness of road safety.” Parent

“There was a guy who came out at one point who didn’t know what was happening and didn’t quite understand. But he immediately got nostalgic about how he had lived there all his life and it had been exactly like this when he was a kid. And he happened to bump into someone he hadn’t seen for 20 years who only lived around the corner.” Street organiser

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