



Consulting on and applying for a Play Street in Hackney

What are play streets?

Residents apply to Hackney Council to close off their streets to through traffic for a few hours weekly, monthly, or a few times a year, so that children can play out more safely and neighbours come together. Play streets are also known as 'playing out' sessions after the national organisation Playing Out, which first introduced the idea and supports residents across the UK to activate street play. In addition, schools, children's centres and other community organisations can run play streets.

Residents volunteer to steward the road closures. People living in the street can still drive in and out at 5mph, guided by the stewards. Through traffic is redirected. Parents are responsible for their children during play streets, as on any other day.

How to get started – in a nutshell

First consult with neighbours in your street about the idea. Once you've built up support, you can apply formally to the council using the play streets application form and petition. Hackney Play Streets, a project by Hackney Play Association and funded by Hackney Council, provides free hands-on support and advice to help get you up and running. More information on how we can help is provided overleaf.

Consultation

As a minimum, Hackney Council requires you send page five of their play streets application form to all residents on the street. This is quite a basic letter template that you fill in explaining that you are applying for a play street giving dates, timing and location.

Petition: In addition you must provide evidence that you have 'strong support' for the application among residents, using a support petition.

Download the application form and petition: www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets

We advise a more in-depth consultation

Experience from working with many other streets has shown that taking time to build support among a wider group of residents *before* you apply is a more effective approach. Residents who have been through the process have found that although it takes time and effort, consulting with neighbours engages more people with the idea, builds enthusiasm and encourages more people to get actively involved. It also makes it less likely that people will object to the idea.

Ideas on how to consult

Here are a couple of suggestions on ways many street organisers in Hackney and beyond have gone about consulting:

1. **Start by sounding people out and building support informally** among neighbours you already know and try to get people who are enthusiastic to help you. It will be much more fun as a team effort, and more sustainable in the long run. If you're feeling bold - start simply chatting to people you see in the street about the idea.

2. Send a letter to neighbours inviting them to a meeting to discuss the idea (e.g. at your house, or you could have a pavement play session, or a meeting in a community hall, or pub – though do remember a pub meeting is not inclusive of all cultures). If possible hand deliver the invitation letter so you can introduce yourselves and the idea personally and gather signatures in support as you go.

At the residents' meeting introduce and explain the idea, and discuss questions around frequency, timing, location etc, and address any concerns people might have. It's a good idea to gather contact details from people coming along as you might want to think about setting up a Facebook group or Google group for the street for easy communication. Sign up supporters on the council petition at the meeting and ask for volunteers to help with tasks such as stewarding, delivering flyers, more door knocking - if needed.

3. Hand deliver a letter to your neighbours and door knock as you go with the aim of talking to as many neighbours as possible. Again, this is much easier if there are a few of you helping. Many residents use this approach effectively and have enjoyed getting to meet more people in their street through doing it.

Handy downloadable tools:

Letter templates for holding a meeting or a door knock consultation are available here: www.hackneyplay.org/play-streets/handy-tools

When to apply

When you have consulted and you feel like you have enough support, complete the council application form and submit with petition of names/addresses to the council. You also need to copy page five of the application form (the official notice of the application) to the street or part of the street you want to close. Some streets print this double sided with a more friendly/personal cover letter on the front.

Questions about consulting

How many signatures are needed on the petition?

The council does not require any percentage of households you need to sign up, but a typical application will have 20-30 signatures and longer roads might have more.

Am I likely to get objections? Will it stop my play street?

Some applications generate one or two objections. More often than not residents who don't like the idea, write to the council rather than responding to organisers but sometimes they will get in touch with the organiser direct. So far no play streets in Hackney have been turned down on the basis of objections received. If complaints are received, the council looks at the grounds for complaints, and also weighs up levels of objection against the number of names on the support petition.

If any of your neighbours do raise objections, treat these with respect and try to understand where they are coming from and be open to discussion and suggestions. E.g. in some streets neighbours have agreed a 'soft ball only' rule in response to concerns about potential damage to property.

When dealing with objections, see the excellent section *Fielding Common Concerns* towards the end of the 'Playing Out manual' at <http://www.playingout/useful-stuff>

Is my street eligible?

The Play Streets scheme is open to people living and community organisations based in any residential street in Hackney, so long as it is not on a major route or bus route, and would not cause significant disruption to the road network. If you are unsure if your road qualifies, contact

Charlotte Connell at Hackney Council Streetscene department, who processes play street applications: charlotte.connell@hackney.gov.uk

Making an application and Council processing time

In the past the council had four deadlines per year for processing new applications. However the good news is - currently they are able to accept and process them on a rolling basis. You can download the form here: www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets

This is not a guarantee, but applications usually take around 8-10 weeks to process. Once the order has been granted, it runs on indefinitely. The council may ask organisers to provide evidence of support for the continuation of the play street – e.g. in the form of a new list of supporters – every few years.

The Council asks that applicants keep future changes to a minimum. Any changes in timing and frequency have to be re-advertised incurring costs to the council. Note you may also need to show evidence of support if you are upping the frequency.

How the Hackney Play Streets team can support you:

We can help in the following ways: attend residents meetings or have initial start up discussions; photocopying; advise on size and section of street you might want to close; help with the application form or with door knocking (where required); help with dealing with objections; provide safety equipment for stewards and attend your first session; provide downloadable tools like flyers, posters and notices for parked cars. We also offer ongoing email and phone support once you're up and running.

Contact us: Email: playstreets@hackneyplay.org

For more information, free downloadable resources and to see a short film go to:

www.hackneyplay.org/play-streets

You can also join the Facebook group 'Hackney Playing Out' – just send a request to join.

Hackney Council contacts: Download the play streets application pack at www.hackney.gov.uk/play-streets and to contact the Council about your application email: charlotte.connell@hackney.gov.uk

Further support: Go to www.playingout.net - Playing Out is a community interest company giving practical advice and support to anybody wanting to enable children to play out safely on their streets.

A project by:



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