

## Play streets: some common concerns

At London Play, we think that play streets are great! We also know that people who are not familiar with play streets can be worried about how they work and how they might be affected. Which is fair enough, if you haven't seen one in action. So here we have collected a few common questions and some responses to them.



### **What if I don't have any children? Will I feel excluded?**

Everyone is welcome on a play street. Tea drinking, biscuit eating and chatting tend to be the dominant activities among the adults on the street but it is 'play' that gives everyone the excuse to come out and do that in a wonderfully informal way. Older residents, those who live alone, house sharers, couples and of course families can all benefit from better relationships with neighbours.

### **What if I need to use my car?**

There are very valid reasons why some people might want to use their car during a play street session. For example, residents with impaired mobility, or heavy shopping. Or perhaps they are expecting a delivery, or visitors. The good news for them is that it is only through traffic which is banned. Residents or visitors can drive in or out of the street during the sessions – provided they agree to drive at walking pace, escorted by a steward.

Residents can leave their cars parked outside their properties during the sessions, if they choose.

### **What if my car gets damaged?**

This is a big concern for some people and of course if it happened, it would be very annoying – and likely expensive too. However, we have rarely heard of this being a problem. We encourage the use of soft (inflatable) balls and other play equipment for this reason. In the unlikely event that damage does occur, responsibility lies with the person who caused it (or their parent if it is a child). And there are so many eyes on a play street that any incident will be seen. If you are really worried, move your car around the corner. After all it is only a few hours and the rest of the time, it is children who have to worry about being damaged by cars. See our info sheet 'Play streets and parked cars' for more detail.

### **We've got a park down the road, why can't children play there?**

If you are lucky enough to have a park down the road, that's fantastic. We agree that children should play at the park as much as possible! But it is not either-or. Visiting the park often requires an adult chaperone, and the children playing there usually live across a wider area. Playing on the street where they live builds relationships between children and adult neighbours which are continued outside of play street sessions. And that benefits everyone who lives on the street, whether they take part or not.

### **Won't a play street be a magnet for 'weirdos'?**

If anything, play streets make it more difficult for outsiders to slip by unnoticed. Some adults are always on the street during the sessions and during the course of regular sessions, begin to get to know each other and who lives behind which door! So, most people find it actually becomes easier to spot strangers and monitor their behaviour. Any 'weirdo' is going to feel very obvious, very quickly. So they will probably make like a tree – and leave.

### **Children will think it's safe to play on the road at other times**

Give children - and their parents - a bit of credit here. It is very clear when play street sessions are in progress – parents will tell their children, and the street will transform with other children, marshals and barriers. Play streets also provide an excellent opportunity to talk to kids about road safety and practice cycling proficiency.

### **Will it be noisy?**

Play streets are not the same as a street party and do not normally entail amplified music. The sounds of cars will be replaced by the sounds of laughter and chattering. Most people will find this a pleasant change. But if they don't, it is only for a few hours!