

Marvellous marshals, stupendous stewards



One day, residential streets will be places where people expect to find children playing and drive accordingly. But until then, the most important job on a play street – apart from making sure the tea doesn't run out of course – is that of marshal, or steward. To keep everyone safe, road closure points must be monitored for the duration of the session.

Mandatory briefing

All stewards should be fully briefed before the session so that they are aware of the safety protocols and can give approaching drivers the correct information and advice. See the step-by-step procedure outlined on the back of this info sheet.

Friendly but firm

Residents, their visitors and delivery drivers who need to access a residence in the play zone are permitted to drive in and out of a play street in session. But they must first agree to be escorted, at walking pace. Through traffic is not permitted so have some alternative routes in mind to be able to redirect.

Two's company

Ideally you will have two stewards at each road closure point. That way if one needs to escort a car in or out of the play zone, the other can close the barriers behind them and remain there to deal with any other motorists that turn up. Plus, it is more social! A great opportunity to share a cuppa with a neighbour and catch up on local gossip, ahem, news. Mix it up and take turns with others on the street.

Share the glory

Who doesn't want to wear a hi vis vest and get to blow a whistle? Ideally, you will have a small pool of adults (and sometimes older teenagers) who are willing to take turns as stewards on your regular play street sessions. Use your first session to try and recruit more volunteers – this way if someone is away or has other commitments on a particular day, there will be enough volunteers to make sure the session can go ahead.

Opportunities for promotion

As well as dealing with drivers, stewards can also be great play street promoters! Lots of passers by are likely to be intrigued by what is going on, especially if they have not seen a play street in action before. So, it is helpful if volunteers are able to explain a bit about play streets. Consider having some London Play leaflets to hand for them to take away. Wouldn't it be great to have a whole network of play streets in your neighbourhood?

Chasing children

Although it should be made very clear in all communications that adults on the play street retain full responsibility for their children, stewards will sometimes find themselves dealing with children wandering (or more likely, chasing each other) beyond the play zone. A friendly reminder to their accompanying adults is usually all that's required.

Close encounters of the unreasonable kind

It is very rare to encounter anything more than a few grumbles from motorists on a play street. But if a driver becomes aggressive, or drives dangerously in the play zone, take a safety-first approach. Keep calm and respectful. Do not be provoked into escalating the situation. Warn adults and remove children from danger as quickly as possible. Once everyone is safe, you could take pictures of the car and licence plate, details of witnesses and then refer the matter to the police.

More information about play streets: www.londonplaystreets.org.uk

STEP BY STEP PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH MOTORISTS ON A PLAY STREET	
1	Speak to all approaching drivers to find out if they are residents, visitors or hoping to drive through the street. Do not move the barriers before confirming this.
2	If residents, visitors or delivery drivers need access to a property inside the play zone, they are permitted to enter the street. However, they must agree to be escorted by a steward and drive at walking pace. Do not move the barriers until they have agreed to this.
3	Once the driver's agreement has been obtained, the barriers can be removed to allow them to be escorted through. The barriers should be replaced behind the vehicle as it enters. Ideally a second steward will remain at the closure point in case another car arrives in the meantime.
4	The escorting steward should walk in front of the car all the way to its parking place , ensuring that children and adults are safely out of the way. Use a whistle to get their attention.
5	Through traffic is not permitted to enter a play street. If a motorist does not need to access an address on the street, they should be politely redirected. All stewards should be made aware of alternative routes for through traffic prior to the event.
6	Occasionally you may encounter a motorist who is not happy with the minor inconvenience the play street creates. We have found that the best approach is to acknowledge the inconvenience and thank them for cooperating. You can also firmly remind them that the event is approved by the council, has the support of most residents and that access to the street is only restricted for a short time. It can be helpful to have a copy of the road closure order to hand to show to anyone who is particularly challenging. But this is not normally necessary.