

18 July 2012

Item 6

Street Play

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

Cllr Rea was interviewed for BBC Breakfast about the growing trend of parents applying for temporary road closures so their children can safely play in the road.

This report provides background information on councils' role in supporting schemes such as Bristol's Playing Out sessions, where about 30 streets are temporarily closed for children to play in.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to circulate the Bristol case study to councils via the CTS ebuletin.

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Street Play

Background

1. Bringing communities together is one of councils' key roles. From closing roads for the Royal Wedding and Diamond Jubilee street parties to street play or tea parties, councils will do everything they can to support communities who want to come together. The LGA in partnership with DCLG, insurance bodies and volunteer groups, recently published a two-page starter guide for community event organisers and a short information booklet for councillors.
2. The rise of the motor car in the early twentieth century first put the issue of outside play on politicians' agenda. Successive governments became increasingly concerned about the number of children injured in road accidents and in 1938 Play Streets were passed into law. These were signed side streets which prohibited vehicles from 8am to sunset, apart from for access. By the mid-60s there were about 750 in England and Wales. However, it soon became impossible to enforce Play Streets as cars became ever more central to our society and the number on our streets boomed. The organisation London Play is calling for the return of Play Streets.

Bristol Playing Out

3. Three years ago two Bristol mums were granted a road closure from the city council so their children could play in the street for a few hours. The idea has taken off and about 30 streets take part every year, each organised by parents who live on the street. There is a dedicated Playing Out Project website and Facebook page.
4. Playing Out sessions usually take place after school from 3:30pm to 5:30pm. There are volunteer stewards at each road closure point to redirect traffic and parents and carers are responsible for their own children. Children bring their own toys and play in the middle of the road, chalk out games like hopscotch and play on scooters, bikes and skateboards. The only costs involved are photocopying flyers and possibly hiring road signs, although the Playing Out Project will lend these within Bristol.

Conclusion and next steps

5. It is relatively simple and cheap for councils to support street play in suitable places. Obviously not every road will be appropriate – it maybe on a bus route, be a key emergency service route, a busy road essential for traffic flow, have

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lots of shops on which rely on traffic for business, be home to a school or doctors' surgery – but there are many side streets which would be suitable if it is what local people wanted.

6. It is suggested that we share the Bristol Playing Out case study with councils via the CTS e-bulletin.