



GUILDFORD
BOROUGH



Case Study:

Street Play - Wodeland Avenue

“The Council is keen to actively promote and support opportunities for Street Play to start up and flourish in the borough”

Guildford Play Strategy 2016-2021



The interaction and communication between children in their playful street

Summary

Street Play is a new initiative for Guildford and is part of a national scheme endorsed by Play England. The Street Play project vision is for every child to have the freedom to regularly play actively and independently near their own front door, contributing to a healthy lifestyle.

Street Play is about bringing communities back together and sharing their street with the neighbourhood. Sessions are set up and run by the local residents. Guildford Borough Council offers advice and support on setting up these sessions.

This case study reviews the first resident led Street Play session in the borough, held in Wodeland Avenue on Sunday 22 April 2018. A section of road was closed off between Annandale Road and Wherwell Road to allow children to play freely between 3:00pm and 5:00pm. The closed road offered local children a space to play that was safe from the normal road traffic.



“The emphasis is on free, unstructured play and people usually bring their own toys. Children are simply given the chance to play in the street, whilst adults have a chance to meet and get to know their neighbours better.”

Guildford Play Strategy 2016-2021

“Having the freedom to step out of your own front door and kick a ball about – is nothing new. There are still some streets and estates where this happens and that’s great. But the reality is that most children have far less freedom to play out than their parents or grandparents had. Yet though the world may have changed for today’s children, their need for free play close to their homes remains just as strong.”

Playing Out

Planning and preparation

A local resident of Wodeland Avenue had an idea to hold a Street Play session after holding a successful street party. The resident met with a group of four neighbours to discuss the opportunity and to see if they were supportive of the idea. Once they were satisfied the street would be suitable and there was enough interest, they approached their ward councillor to enquire about the possibility.

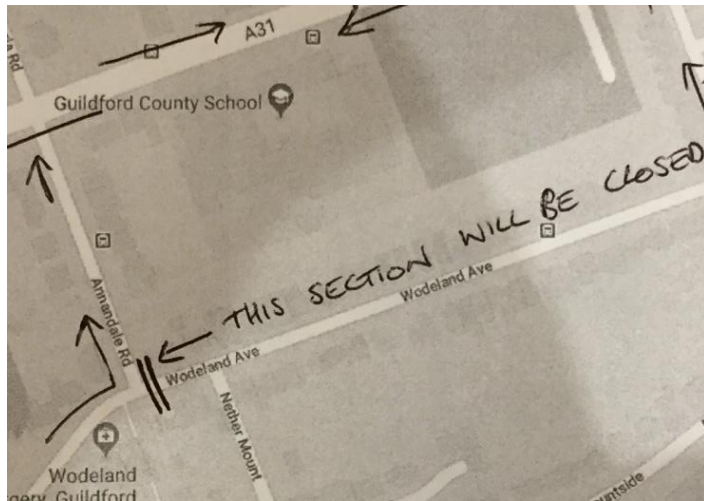
The ward councillor put the residents in touch with the Council’s Play Development team who offered advice and guidance on how to move forward and plan the event.

The residents contacted their neighbours by creating a flyer and distributing it to every house on the street. The flyer offered contact details where the residents could give their opinions on the scheme and advise if they would like to join in or to raise any concerns. The feedback received was positive, with overwhelming support for the Street Play session.

The organisers contacted the Council to apply for the road closure, they included a map detailing the section of road to be closed and the information on how the traffic would be re-directed. The Council applied for the road closure under the Town Police Act 1847, they ask for a minimum of 8 weeks before the event in order to process the application. The Council confirmed there would be no fee for the Street Play session’s road closure.

Once the closure was approved the organisers advised the local residents. A week before the session the organisers put up official street closure notices.

The organisers booked a road closure pack from the Council’s Play Development service. This included two road closure signs, traffic cones and high visibility vests. The pack is loaned free of charge.



The map of the proposed street closure and how the traffic would be redirected

“As well as increasing the level of activity in children, resident involvement and regular street closures has also led to wider benefits including improved social cohesion and community connectedness because neighbours are being given the opportunity to meet neighbours they have never really talked to”

Professor Angie Page – Professor of Physical Activity and Public Health, University of Bristol

On the day

The Street Play session was a big success with the local residents. Children and adults enjoying a fun and playful afternoon. Children’s laughter and giggles filled the road. Children met and played with their neighbours, which they said would be a rare thing for them to do. There were fifty participants, both young and old.

The children enjoyed discovering new playful opportunities that the street gave them, many of which would normally be discouraged due to the hazards of traffic. This gave parents the opportunity to talk to their children about road safety.

Cycling, scooting and other wheeled ride-ons were favoured during the Street Play session as well as group skipping games and washable playground chalk.

Marshals carefully escorted the occasional car out of the street, warning the children of the slow moving traffic.

This session provided numerous benefits to the residents including:

- an opportunity to socialise with neighbours
- children learning how to assess hazards and risk for themselves
- improved physical and mental health for the children
- presenting the residents with a sense of belonging in their community



“We’re not going to stop until we run out of chalk”
exclaimed one young person

“We would just like to congratulate you on your efforts to get the children out to play. We no longer have small children and even our grandchildren are quite grown up now so would love to hear the sound of today's children playing outside in the fresh air and often say how sad it is that it doesn't seem to happen these days. We look forward to hearing a knock at the door from someone asking if they can please have their ball back.”

Wodeland Avenue resident

“Thank you for organising this amazing opportunity for the street. One of the downsides to living here is the traffic and the fact that the children are not able to play outside as I did when I was younger. We are keen to support the scheme, have no issues with the road being closed and are happy to help with stewarding”

Wodeland Avenue resident

Challenges

Residents’ concerns

Prior to the event, a local resident was concerned that the closure at the Annandale Road junction would cause traffic build up due to cars needing to turn around. To overcome this problem, the residents moved the road closure signs back a few metres, so that Nether Mount could be accessed and used as a turning point. During the Street Play session there were no traffic problems and the road users easily turned around in Nether Mount when necessary. This is a positive example of the organisers listening to concerns and working together to resolve them.

Parked cars

Wodeland Avenue has allocated street parking on each side of the road which limits the amount of space where the children can play. The local residents, whose cars are normally parked outside their houses, moved their cars a few hours before the Street Play session began. Unfortunately, there was an event on at the local school in a neighbouring road, people attending the event saw the vacant car parking spaces as an opportunity for convenient parking. The local residents reflected that next time they would move their cars closer to start time of the Street Play.

Next steps

Wodeland Avenue has three more Street Play sessions planned in 2018 following the successes of the initial session.



Street Play

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www.guildford.gov.uk/streetplay

