



# Playing Out St Albans District FAQ

adapted from [www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net)



## GENERAL FAQ

### What is a Playing Out scheme?

In our modern car-dominated world, children are unable to play safely outside their houses on the street as many of us used to. A Playing Out scheme is a resident-led regular temporary road closure that enables today's children to experience what many of us took for granted when we were young. It also benefits adult residents who meet their neighbours and form community support networks. The idea is spreading across the UK with participating streets now numbering over one thousand and dozens of councils now supporting the concept. Residents in St Albans District are now able to apply to close their road for Playing Out up to 8 times per year for up to 3 hours each time.

### How is a road closed for a Playing Out scheme?

A road can only be closed with a formal Temporary Play Street Order from St Albans District Council. Anyone wishing to propose a scheme needs to get the support of the other residents and devise a community-appropriate schedule e.g. 2 hours once a month. Once a formal Order is in place, the physical road closure takes place during the allotted times using Road Closed signs and appropriate barriers while volunteer stewards control resident cars needing to access the road.

## POSSIBLE CONCERNS

### Why can't children just play in parks or back gardens?

Playing out in the street has two main advantages. Firstly, it offers a very different type of play from supervised outings to the park or isolated playing in the back garden - children can play with a variety of other children of mixed ages from their own neighbourhood in an unstructured, child-led way: scooting, chalking or skipping. Secondly, Playing Out turns isolated families into a community. In one single street in Harpenden in 2014, children attended up to 10 different primary schools. Many families had no idea that children of similar ages lived only a few doors down. Playing Out is how children get to know each other, have the space to learn to scoot and ride their bikes and ultimately grow up to take care of the street and each other.

### I don't have children. Why should I support a Playing Out scheme in my street?

Playing Out may ostensibly be for children but in practice it brings communities together. Residents of all ages are welcome to participate, whether coming out for a cup of tea and a chat or volunteering as a steward. Stronger communities make a friendlier, safer and better place to live.

### Why do you need to close the road?

The danger from traffic is the main reason that children don't play outside nowadays. In many residential streets, cars – both parked and moving – dominate to such an extent that

play becomes impossible. A stewarded road closure provides the reassurance parents need to allow their children to play out.

**Would I have access to my house by car during a Playing Out session?**

Yes, stewards warn residents in the street and then escort cars in and out of the street at walking pace. Visitors and deliveries are also escorted. Only through traffic is prevented.

**Would I need to move my car from the street during a Playing Out sessions?**

No, that would be optional.

**Will this event bring lots of children to my street from elsewhere?**

No - each Playing Out event is organised by residents and only publicised through flyers and posters in the street. They are for the children to have a chance to play in their own neighbourhood and not designed to be 'public events'.

**Who will make sure the children don't misbehave?**

The playing out sessions are semi-supervised by residents, mostly parents who will step in if they see misbehaving. However if any adult sees children playing out on the street misbehaving or causing damage or injury they should definitely feel they can speak to them or their parents about it. Being told off by adults other than your parents is an important learning experience!

**Won't children think the road is a safe place to play under normal circumstances?**

All the experience of the street play and street party movement to date is that even young children can understand the difference between an event with a road closure and normal circumstances. These events are a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children about the danger of traffic but also to observe what streets could be like if traffic was less dominant and begin to think about ways to slow cars on their street.

**What about risk of damage, e.g to cars?**

The risk is extremely low – this has not been an issue in any of the schemes so far. Parents will do their best to ensure that children play safely and responsibly but if this is of concern to you, a good suggestion to your street's organisers is that they ensure that hard balls are not allowed. The liability situation is no different with a road closure than under normal circumstances i.e. people take responsibility for their own actions. Parents will have ultimate responsibility for their own children.

**I still have concerns. What should I do?**

If you do have any concerns about a proposal, do talk to the person or people organising it. They will be happy to have an honest, neighbourly discussion with you and try to find ways to make sure your concerns are addressed.

**Feeling inspired?**

Visit [www.sustainablestalbans.org/playingout](http://www.sustainablestalbans.org/playingout) if you are interested in setting up a Playing Out scheme in your St Albans, Harpenden or District village street. We would love to help make your street a place to play!