



Play Streets timeline

1860

Taverner Miller, MP for Colchester, tells the House of Common's the plight of 12- year-old George Dunn who was sent to prison for five days under the Police Act for playing *rounders* in the street. Miller explains that George was singled out from the other children as the others, 'were old enough and their legs were long enough to run away; but the little one, with the shortest legs, was captured.'

1909

The New York Times runs the headline 'Plan [for] Safe Streets for Children's Play' in response to city officials addressing children's use of the streets for play.

1912

Lord Lamington tells the House of Lords, '[Children] have not many recreation grounds in London and it is only natural that they should play in the streets'.

1914

The New York Times tells its readers, 'Children must play, and children, if they live in the cities, must play in the streets.'

New York City's Police Commissioner closes 29 city blocks to serve as playgrounds every day during summer except Sunday, prohibiting traffic in the afternoons (the Police Athletic League charity takes over the running of the Play Streets summer programme in 1936).



1916

An NYC police officer, in defence of Play Streets, tells *The New York Times*: 'It is only natural that children should want to play and if the city refuses to provide playgrounds for them, they are going to play in the streets.'

1922 - 1933

In England and Wales over 12,000 children aged under fifteen years are killed by motor vehicles

1926

Nancy Astor tells the House of Commons: 'There is no more pitiable sight in life than a child which has been arrested for playing in the street. Of all the pitiable sights that I have seen that is the most pitiable. Though these children may be fined, we stand convicted.'

1934

Leslie Hore-Belisha becomes the UK's Minister of Transport. Observing a lack of inner-city playgrounds combined with rising numbers of child traffic-related fatalities, he looks to the USA for inspiration and imports the Play Street model.

1935

According to criminal statistics at the time, over 2,000 young people under the age of seventeen are prosecuted for playing in the streets.

1935

A limited Play Street experiment in the Metropolitan boroughs of Southwark and Paddington is deemed successful by Hore-Belisha.

1936

Ahead of UK-wide legislation, a private bill enables the creation 200 Play Streets in Manchester and Salford.

1938

The Street Playgrounds Bill receives Royal Assent in July. It allows local authorities to designate roads as Play Streets. Powers include the ability to restrict traffic between certain hours or prohibit it completely. The bill also makes allowances for 'reasonable access to premises situated on or adjacent to the road.'

1950s

The average residential street in London now has five parked cars on it.



1950

A total of 17 local authorities create Play Streets under the 1938 Act, with eight more under consideration by the Minister for Transport (including Bethnal Green and Holborn Metropolitan Borough). In London Play Streets are up and running in:

- Chelsea Metropolitan Borough (amalgamated in 1965 with Kensington Royal Borough);
- Hampstead Metropolitan Borough (amalgamated in 1965 with Holborn and St Pancras boroughs to form the London borough of Camden);
- Shoreditch Metropolitan Borough (amalgamated in 1965 with Hackney and Stoke Newington boroughs to form the London borough of Hackney); and
- Metropolitan Borough of Westminster (amalgamated in 1965 with the Metropolitan Borough of Paddington and the Metropolitan Borough of St Marylebone to form the City of London).

1963

Play Streets in England and Wales total 750. As car ownership booms, Minister for Transport Ernest Marples comments that he is receiving a growing number of complaints about the number of cars parked on Play Streets.

1970

The average residential street in London has 20 cars parked on it.

1976

The Bishop of Stepney Trevor Huddleston tells *The Times* that Britain prefers motor cars to children and shows it 'by cluttering up Play Streets with parked cars.'



1977

In New York Play Streets continue to thrive. Streets around the prestigious Rockefeller Centre are transformed into a Play Street for the city's children.

1980s

In the UK, Play Streets are all but forgotten. A number of streets retain the signage and accompanying traffic restrictions but residents' parked cars leave no space for play. In contrast, the number of New York Play Streets closed to traffic each summer increases during this decade.

1999

By the end of the century there are 21 million cars in the UK compared to 8,000 at its outset. The Department for Transport forecasts that car ownership will increase by 46% between 1996 and 2031.

2002

Farley Bank, a cul-de-sac in Hastings, is designated as a Play Street – giving children traffic-free space for play between 8am and sunset.



2005

The *Manchester Evening News* reports that a new housing development is to incorporate 'family orientated Play Streets'.

2007

Play Streets feature in a new housing development in Redditch in the Midlands.

2008

London Play's three-year Lottery-funded Street Play project begins. More than 100 street party events are held across the capital over the following three years. A forum is established to look at road safety issues arising and looks at re-establishing Play Streets in the capital.

Meanwhile in New York, Play Streets continue to be an important part of city life.

2012

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee sees 2,000 streets across London closed for celebrations. London Play, in partnership with *Play England*, *The University of Bristol* and *Playing Out*, embarks on a three year, Department of Health funded project to develop play streets across England. Hackney becomes the first borough in London to officially reintroduce play streets with the launch of a year-long trial.

2014

To meet the rising demand from residents keen to start Play Streets, London Play applies, successfully for Big Lottery funding for a three year London Play Streets project. London Play is also commissioned by Hounslow Council to develop play street events in deprived parts of the borough. This project delivers transformative results through intensive, bespoke community work. The number of London councils supporting Play Streets grows from five to 22.

2015

All Labour Party candidates for the 2016 mayoral election back Play Streets. Prospective mayors from all parties were encouraged to support play streets in the book *Changing London: A Rough Guide for the next Mayor of London*, which included the proposal of establishing 10,000 play streets.

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