

NO to Pay-to-Play in Croydon

Fiona Sutherland



London Play

We work to ensure that all London's 1.8m children can exercise their right to play outside, daily, near to where they live.

We do this mostly by supporting organisations or groups to provide play opportunities in their localities.



Campaigns



LONDON **PLAY**
Swap your car...
...for a spacehopper
on World Car Free Day Sunday 22 September 2019

See what happens on your street when the traffic stops for just a few hours. Run a Play Street Taster session on Car Free Day and get free stuff to transform your street into a temporary play zone.
Contact info@londonplay.org.uk

Time to quit
THE two-a-day habit?



Play streets

Residents on a street agree together to close their road to through traffic, temporarily – but regularly – so that children can play out while adults get to know each other better.





About play streets

- By 2020 play streets offered in more than 20 London boroughs
- Benefits include more active, healthy children and adults; improved community cohesion; reduced isolation; better mental health
- They are run by residents and although there is an admin burden for councils they are free to apply for. Until....
- **...June 2021!** Just as the capital emerges from lockdown, Croydon slaps residents with a £234 application fee.



Planning a campaign

1. What are you asking for?
2. Which body has the power to make the change you seek?
3. What influences their decision-making?
4. How can the campaign team influence those influences?
5. Think about sequencing/timeline

1. The 'ask'

We want Croydon Council to remove the application fee for residents who are volunteering their time to run play streets.



Petition against charges for playi



Siobhain O Hanlon started this petition to [Sadiq Khan](#) Mayor of London)



I and many others have ran a play street for a number of years in the borough of Croydon. Play Street is an event where the street is closed to enable children to play safely in THEIR OWN STREETS without the fear of traffic.

To date, this was free. However, Croydon Council have now introduced a £195 charge.

Please sign this petition to demonstrate your opposition to the recent charges that Croydon Council are imposing against children playing in the street safely.

2. Which body has the power?

X National government

Responsible for legislation (Road Traffic Regulation Act) and issues guidance on play streets but not local policy

X Regional government (Mayor of London)

Responsible for some roads (used for TfL network) and supportive of play streets – but does not set local policy

V Local authority (Croydon Council)

Croydon Council is responsible for setting play street policies and procedures in the borough



2a. Who makes the decisions?

- Decisions are made by elected members (councillors) – not officers!
- Cabinet is the main structure for agreeing decisions – identify the relevant portfolio holder
- Ward councillors may also be able to support



3. Influences on council decision-making (internal)

- Delivering in line with manifesto commitments and strategic plans
- Democratic accountability (residents, council tax payers)
- Value for money/smart budgeting
- Research and data
- Reputation management
- More...



3a. Influences on council decision-making (external)

- Local people and council tax payers
- Press (local and national)
- Campaign organisations (eg London Play)
- Political peers
- Research institutions
- More...

4. Where can we exert influence?

	External influence(r)s				
	Residents	Press	Campaigning organisations	Political peers	Research orgs
Internal influences					
Strategic vision/manifesto commitments	X		X	X	
Democratic accountability	X	X			
Demonstrate value for money/smart budgeting	X		X		X
Research/data			X		X
Reputation	X	X	X	X	



What did we do?

Residents:

- Mobilised using Croydon Play Streets Facebook group (100+ members)
- Petition – wrongly targeted (but did attract press attention)
- Reached out for support to
 - Local MP
 - Ward councillor
 - London Play

5 reasons why

streets are the perfect pandemic-proof opportunity this summer

LONDON PLAY

1 Messy community spirit built during lockdown

Neighbours have self-organised to support one another through the pandemic, with a proliferation of WhatsApp-based groups emerging on WhatsApp, Facebook and other virtual platforms. As restrictions lift, there is a huge appetite to make these connections more tangible. Play streets offer a simple way to do this.



2 Play streets are the antidote to months of lockdown

Opportunities for social interaction and physical activity boost mental and physical health for adults and children. Those who still feel vulnerable can chat from the safety of their doorstep or front garden.

3 Play streets are minimal risk for covid transmission

Transmission of covid in outdoor settings is known to be minimal and play streets are a low-risk opportunity for children to play outside and be active. There is no need to travel to take part, no high-fixed play equipment and everyone has their own bathroom (& kitchen, for the all important cuppa).



4 One summer is a long time in the life of a child

Childhood summers are few and precious; and children have sacrificed a lot for a disease which affects them very little. Play streets are a simple way to help children have a summer to remember.

5 Play streets are a way to feel part of something bigger

Encouraging or participating in play streets, councils and residents will be part of two major summer campaigns - Let's Do London (the mayor's reopening campaign) and Summer of Play, a nationwide drive to help children back part of what they have lost during the pandemic.



6 Help is at hand

London Play has led the play street revival over the past decade and is here to help councils and residents make play on the street happen. Check out our new website for resources including covid-safe guidance.

www.londonplaystreets.org.uk

What did we do?

London Play:

- Amplified residents' message via social media channels
- Open letter to Cabinet member hitting all levers incl:
 - Clarifying legal obligations of the council
 - Outlining how play streets contribute to their vision
 - Highlighting practices of other councils
 - Financial and social arguments
- Picked up by media, generating press coverage and coordinated media requests

Making the case

Strategic case: letters, created flyers and canvassed their neighbours. In applying, they are also committing to volunteering regularly in the future to enable these events to happen. That a council with a five-year strategic plan envisaging Croydon as a place with “a vibrant and connected community and voluntary sector”, would intentionally create barriers for residents who are willingly volunteering their time and energy to contribute to this vision is baffling.

Budget case: adults. Play streets are a cheap and easy resident-led initiative which mitigate exactly these negative impacts. Now more than ever, they should be encouraged. We understand that the justification for the charge is to cover the cost of advertising the temporary road closures in the local press. This is not necessary, for several reasons:


Reputation: London Play has worked in Croydon for many years supporting the council and residents to promote, start and sustain play streets. With our help, Croydon was in fact one of the first boroughs in London to lead the capital’s play street revival. It would be a huge shame now if it stood out for being the only London council to charge residents for this. We would be very happy to work with you again to ensure your play street policies reflect best practice and are fit for purpose in the post-pandemic landscape.

Media coverage

THE CHRONICLE

COUNCIL TO CHARGE CHILDREN TO PLAY

Jun 24, 2021 | 0 | *****




A charity has accused Croydon Council of being short sighted and regressive after it revealed plans to charge children to play in the streets outside their homes.

Croydon has become the only London borough to impose a tax on local residents who run the award winning Play Streets scheme, which involves closing the road for three hours every second Sunday of the month to give children the opportunity to play for free in a safe space.

Children's charity London Play got involved in the row after angry Croydon parents set up a petition opposing the council's decision to ask for £234 per street to run the scheme.

The council says it is for the cost of advertising the road closures but London Play say there is no legal obligation for the council to advertise these closures.



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Croydon In Crisis: Now council wants to charge kids to play

Posted on [June 24, 2021](#) by [insidecroydon](#)

CROYDON COMMENTARY: Our cash-strapped council is so hard-up, they want to charge kids hundreds of pounds for the simple pleasure of playing in the street outside their homes. EMMA HOPE-FITCH explains



Play Streets can be a load of fun... until the council starts demanding money

Back in 2015, I had the pleasure of organising one of Croydon's first Play Streets, at Love Lane in South Norwood.

It was a fairly simple process. I organised a consultation with the residents that would most be affected by a potential road closure.

This involved the cost of my time (volunteered), leafleting (funded by me) and fielding questions that arose from the consultation (more

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Welcome to Croydon! And a town centre designed by Minecraft



Croydon High 'shocked' at death of former head at Epsom



Council response

- Cabinet member responded to London Play letter promising to look into it.
- Time passed! Until ITV London News made plans to interview resident for evening television news.
- Swift public statement saying no charges applied.
- Denial and 'gaslighting'!

Result!

London Play @londonplay · Jun 29, 2021

Great news. All local authorities say they are striving for healthier, more cohesive, stronger communities; and #playstreets tick all those boxes and more. It should be a no brainer for councils to support them – especially as we emerge from months of separation and isolation.

Muhammad Ali @ali_CR0YDON · Jun 29, 2021

In response to various queries about play streets, I would like to clarify that @yourcroydon has always supported play street events & will continue to support anyone who wants to organise a play street without any charges. #playstreets
croydon.gov.uk/children-young...

1 2 9

LDN News South London News Croydon

Croydon Council backtracks on plan to charge parents £234 so children can play in street

The council u-turned on its original plan under public pressure

NEWS By **Tara O'Connor** Local Democracy Reporter
17:43, 28 JUN 2021 | UPDATED 17:48, 28 JUN 2021

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Kids play in Livingstone Road as it closed for traffic for a 'play street' (Image: Sue Ahmad)

Croydon Council has scrapped plans to charge locals more than £200 for children to play safely in the street.

Play Streets were first trialled in Croydon in 2015 and sees roads closed off for a few hours to allow children to play without traffic.

Sue Ahmad was "shocked and angered" when she was told that there would be a charge of £234 to get a new licence for a play street that has been running in Thornton Heath since 2018.

Between March and October, Livingstone Road is closed to through traffic for three hours on every second Sunday of the month.

Ahmad first contacted the council by email in March and a month later was told there could be a charge due to the financial crisis at the council.

This was confirmed to her in writing on June 4. The email stated that the £234 charge was to

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Success factors

Combination of luck and design:

- Right message to the right people
- 'Embarrassment' factor – public shame
- Highly motivated residents with existing channels for collaboration
- Post-Covid – high public awareness of value of play
- 'Pincer move' – enabled through strong working relationship between London Play and residents



Communities United for Play

- Trust for London project to work alongside local play campaigners to challenge threats to play provision
- Co-design practical resources for campaigning for play – content driven by needs of participating groups
- Facilitated workshops, bespoke support
- Online Toolbox, modules potentially on decision making in local government, working with the media, case studies etc



Thank you

www.londonplay.org.uk