

DIY STREETS Pocket Guide



A pocket guide to
redesigning your street


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Introduction

This short guide has been written for people who would like to do something to improve the safety, condition and general feel of their street. It gives some suggestions of methods you might like to use, ways in which residents and other users of the street can work together and who you will need to involve.

The best streets...

... are part of a community's social space, an attractive place where everyone can enjoy their journey, neighbours can meet and socialise and children can play.

The trouble with streets...

... is that they often do not feel safe and cannot be used as comfortable social spaces.

Some of the common problems are:

- Speeding traffic
- "Rat-running" (where vehicles use your street as a short-cut)
- Lack of safe crossing points and dropped kerbs
- Pavement and nuisance parking
- Access difficulties for emergency and delivery vehicles
- Ageing, cracking, unattractive tarmac or other paving
- Lack of landscaping
- Associated social issues of crime, litter, lack of social cohesion.

How can residential streets be improved?

Even though a large amount of traffic often passes through a street it is possible to redesign it so that it is no longer just a glorified car park or through route.

Your Council's Highways department will need to agree to, and implement any permanent changes, but you as residents can encourage them to become involved by creating a strong determined group and producing some great new street designs.

There is a range of options that you might like to consider when thinking of ideas for changes:

1. "Mental speed bumps" or psychological traffic-calming

This is a method of traffic calming in which residents of a street use the space differently and so encourage different behaviour. Any physical changes are often temporary. You might want to organise a street closure every few months and hold a street party, or put a Christmas tree in the street and have mince pies together.

For more information see:
www.mentalspeedbumps.com



2. Traditional traffic-calming and traffic management measures

We are all familiar with bollards, speed humps or tables, chicanes, 20 mph signs, marked parking bays, one-way streets etc. that are put in place to calm traffic.

These measures can be effective at dealing with specific problems but may detract from, rather than add to the attractiveness of your street. In addition, speed humps/cushions etc. can be unpopular due to noise, vibration and discomfort to drivers.

You may find that your Council is responsive to your request for these items because they are relatively easy to implement and inexpensive.



Safety is one of the main concerns with busy streets.



3. DIY Streets approach

This is an approach in which you devise more creative designs than standard traffic calming measures. Although you may want to use some elements of the first two options, the aim is usually to make your street more attractive as well as safer. The actual physical changes may, however, still be fairly minor.

You could use attractive planters rather than pavement build outs to create a chicane, or introduce art works and coloured paint on walls.

Your Highways officers may be unfamiliar with this type of creative street design so you will probably need to work closely with them.

For more examples of DIY Streets see: www.sustrans.org.uk/diystreets

4. Home zones and shared surface



This is a much more extensive approach to re-designing your street. It usually involves the removal of the distinction between pavements and carriageway altogether to create a single "shared



surface" for people and cars. Because there is in-built uncertainty, drivers will tend to travel at walking pace. Your council will need to take the lead because of the complexity and high cost of a home zone.

For more information see: www.homezones.org.uk
www.homezones.org

5. Street closure

You may want to consider campaigning for your street to be closed at one end to create a cul-de-sac. This would radically alter how your street feels and functions so it is essential that most residents agree to this option.

You will need to work closely with your Highways department because they will have a broader view of the ways in which the closure of your street will affect traffic flows in the surrounding area.

First steps to a new street design

Before you start to work on redesigning your street it is worth answering some questions.

- Why do we want to make changes to our street (what particular problems are we trying to solve)?
- Are there one or two people who will get things going and initially take responsibility?
- Where are the boundaries of the area which we would like to redesign?
- Does anyone else apart from residents have premises in the street e.g. retail businesses, offices?



- You will also need to hold some **semi-formal meetings** so you can gather and discuss ideas and take decisions.
- **Newsletters and fliers** are a very useful way of keeping everyone involved and informed. They are also a reminder of the next event or meeting.
- As well as redesigning your street to reduce traffic start to think about **other issues** that need to be dealt with to improve your street. They may include litter, untidy bins, graffiti and so on.

Involving as many residents as possible

You will need to involve as many neighbours as possible. The larger the group, the more influence you will have with your local Council. The group will probably form gradually so do not be impatient. To encourage involvement:

- Carry out **door to door surveys** which will give you a chance to meet your neighbours and encourage them to become involved. You can use them to find out certain facts and to keep people informed. For more details see below under “Gathering Information”.
- Arrange **social events** such as street parties, barbeques or trips to other similar schemes in your area so that people can meet informally and talk together.



Even though you may know each other well it can be different when you start to work together.



Don't forget to involve children and ask them to help.



Forming a constituted group

You may want to set up as a “constituted” group, which is a very simple process.

Two of the most important reasons for becoming a constituted group are:

- it will give you more influence when dealing with official bodies because they see that you have a serious purpose.
- you can apply for small scale funding which is not possible to do otherwise – see below under “funding” for more details.

For more information contact your local community voluntary service (CVS) or equivalent organisation.

Working together

Even though you may know each other well it can be different when you start to work together to achieve an aim. You will have to take decisions as a group and there is the potential for disagreement. It’s useful to think in advance of ways of dealing with these issues.

- Decide together how you will make decisions e.g. by consensus or by majority vote.
- It is also helpful to think about how you would resolve any disagreements – one of the best ways is to ask an impartial person to mediate or to facilitate at a meeting.

See www.communityplanning.net for lots of ideas about ways of getting everyone in your street involved.



Involve as many people in as many different ways as possible.



Gathering information

Gathering information about your street and the people who live in it is important for helping to identify possible solutions.

Door to door surveys are also good opportunities to get to know your neighbours and to encourage them to get involved. You may want to find out:

- Who lives in your street
- What vehicles they own
- How they travel to school, shops, work, days out
- What they feel about the street at the moment (safety, traffic, attractiveness)
- How much they feel they can contribute to redesigning your street
- What skills they have that might be useful
- Any other issues that are of particular relevance to your street/area

Traffic survey – Record how much traffic uses your street and where people park in it. You should aim to do this before and after you make changes to your street so you can see the effects. Your Council may be able to help with traffic surveys.

Informal surveys can be useful ways of finding out views about an activity (e.g. what others thought of the street party, any ideas for new activities). You can also ask people's views about a certain decision – which is also a way of including people who cannot come to events or meetings because of personal circumstances.

Additional information may also be useful, for instance:

- is your street in a conservation area? If so it may mean that there are restrictions on the things that you can do.
- any there any current planning applications in your area? If so you may be able to negotiate money for local street improvements.

Recording information

You need to keep a record of ideas and decisions;

- Minutes/notes of meetings – write them up as soon as possible after a meeting and keep them together.
- Survey results – you can keep the actual survey sheet and/or put the information together in a table or database.
- Photos – take photos of events, meetings etc.
- Plans – keep together any useful drawings or plans that people contribute.
- Draw a map – see below.



Informal surveys can be useful to find out views about an activity.

Drawing a map

It is useful (and fun) to use a large map of your street to record certain aspects of the information you are going to collect. People can mark their own houses or the route they take when walking to school, as well as getting creative and drawing suggested alternative street layouts.

Involving councillors and council officers

Your local councillors and council officers are key people that you need to involve as soon as possible. Invite them to occasional meetings, send them relevant information and build up a relationship with them. The better they know you the more likely they are to commit their resources to making changes to your street. They will also be able to give you advice and support.

You can find out about your local councillors from your Council web site.

The officers that you need to involve include:

- **Highways officers** – In some areas, there will be two tiers of council – in this case it's usually the County Council that will be responsible for highways.

- **Regeneration officers** – if your street is in a Regeneration Area the officers will be able to give you an idea of the overall plan for the area and how your street fits in. It is also possible that there may be some funding available.
- **Other officers** – from streetcare, streetscene, landscape/ parks, community development, play and youth services departments may also be helpful – ask your councillor for advice.

Involving other key people:

You will need to ensure that other key people are happy with your designs especially if they need emergency access to the street:

- **Police** especially the local beat officer
- **Emergency services** (fire and ambulance)
- **Utility companies** e.g. Gas and water providers.

The following may or may not also be relevant to your street:

- **Housing association or management company**
- **School governors/ head teacher**
- **Local business owners**
- **Other community groups**
- **Bus operator**



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Funding

The level of funding needed to change your street will depend on the approach you want to take.

- If you need **substantial amounts of funding** you should first approach your council officers and local councillors will be able to advise you on any available funding. This may include environmental improvement grants and Neighbourhood Renewal funding.
- If you feel that relatively **small amounts of funding** (up to about £10,000) are sufficient you may be able to obtain them yourselves if you are a constituted group - see above under "Forming a Constituted group".

Many Councils offer various grants for community groups and they are simple to apply for. Charitable trusts may also be able to provide some funding. Try:

- **Access Funds**
www.access-funds.co.uk
Tel: 020 78715237
- **Grants Online** www.grantsonline.org.uk
Tel: 01202 813452
- **The Charities Information Bureau - Fit4Funding** www.fit4funding.org.uk

- **Trust funding** Accessed free of charge at some major libraries
www.trustfunding.org.uk
- **The Scarman Trust** is a national charity that helps people improve their communities.
www.thescarmantrust.org
Tel: 0207 6896366
Email: info@thescarmantrust.org
- **CSV Action Earth** provides grants of £50 to assist community groups in carrying out small-scale environmental projects www.actionearth.org.uk
Tel: 0121 3237455
- **Community Foundations** charities located across the UK dedicated to strengthening local communities, creating opportunities and tackling issues of disadvantaged and exclusion www.communityfoundations.org.uk
Tel: 020 7713 9326
- **Local Transport Plans**
- **Section 106** money from local development



You may even want to apply for funding for some fun things like street art.

Additional pages showing more design ideas are also available. You can obtain them from our web site www.sustrans.org.uk/diystreets or by contacting Sustrans Liveable Neighbourhoods team by phone on 0117 915 0244 or by email at liveableneighbourhoods@sustrans.org.uk

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As the UK's leading sustainable transport charity Sustrans vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

We are the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

To find out more visit: www.sustrans.org.uk

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