

PLAYING OUT—UNDER 5'S

Rob Wheway was particularly concerned that the Department of Health's document *'Birth to Five : 2007 Edition'* did not give any guidance on young children playing out in their neighbourhood. This fact sheet forms the basis of his response for Fair Play for Children.

For generations it has been usual for parents to have the front door open and let their young children play out in the front garden or on the front step. Where traffic is very slow it is still safe and still does happen. It is disappointing in what is otherwise a helpful document they have ducked the issue of children playing out.

Parents still let their children play out where the roads are safe. Much recent publicity has blamed parents for being risk averse and restricting their children.

Blaming the parents for keeping their children indoors will do nothing to improve children's lives and is likely to lead to solutions which restrict children's freedom to play even more.

Research by Rob Wheway has shown that:

- Parents keep their children indoors where traffic speeds are fast (20 mph is too fast);
- Parents let their children play out from 3 years old upwards (as they have done for generations) where traffic speeds are very slow;
- Where children do play out, parents speak of the area being more neighbourly and friendly and people keeping an eye out for each others children;
- Parents and children want more exciting and challenging equipment in their local playgrounds, ie they want more, not less, risk.

If all drivers living in residential roads were prepared to drive that last 50 metres at very slow speeds, we could dramatically improve the play opportunities of our children, ensure that they have plenty of exercise therefore reducing obesity, increase neighbourliness in communities and cut down pollution.

If we do this the under 5's will be able to play out just in front of their own house as they have done for countless generations.

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This fact sheet is based on observational and consultation research carried out at over 60 different residential areas and housing estates.