



Photo credit: <https://bit.ly/2so0R1F>

Theme(s): Partnership, Inclusivity, Stakeholder involvement

Type of initiative:
Public Square

Year: Ongoing

Location:
Birmingham
United Kingdom

Owner: Birmingham Wellbeing Service

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DESCRIPTION

Active streets was inspired by Playing Out in Birmingham, and took what was a small-scale closure project in Kings Heath to a city-wide initiative. Playing Out itself was created following a road accident in Birmingham that motivated citizens to take ownership of what is, rightly, their own space in a safe way. Following this, the initiative was taken up by Birmingham's Wellbeing Service, where it became Active Streets. The initiative has now blossomed into a city-wide community cohesion project that is still expanding. Active Streets provide neighbours with the tools to close their street, encourage them to come out of their homes, engage with their neighbours and take the opportunity to actively participate in a variety of street activities, and support children with playing in a safe environment right on their doorstep.

SUCSESSES

Providing the citizens of Birmingham with an opportunity to build a closer community, and eventually run their own street closures independently. Some communities, since the beginning of the project, have developed from being dependent on a lot of support from ActiveStreets, to becoming self organising. We have connected residents of a street together who would often see each other daily but share no more than a polite greeting, and even some who didn't even know that they lived on the same street together!

Delivering free activities on the doorstep of people who would not otherwise have access to these events is also a key success, as it means that more people are now being active and healthy. The enthusiasm of citizens and the ActiveStreets team members helps to grow and expand the project.

The ActiveStreets team has aspirations of successful closures on every eligible street in Birmingham. The success can also be contributed to ActiveStreets bringing events and activities to people, minimising barriers such as ability, cost and distance that may usually prevent citizens from participating. The communities are more connected, with citizens taking ownership of their roads. Reclaiming their own space has allowed them to create safer and more vibrant places for them to live.

CHALLENGES

The ability to invoke civic responsibility on the streets within the city. There is reluctance in some circumstances for people to offer their time or services to fill the necessary volunteering roles, such as leafleting and stewarding. It is challenging to deliver a successful road closure without willingness from residents to fulfil these duties. This is an ongoing challenge being tackled through strategic planning and an idea generation.

The project objective is to allow Birmingham citizens to take ownership of their road. ActiveStreets enables residents of a street to come together and consider the wider issues that their community faces. With this opportunity, residents can develop a network of community members local to them, all discussing and envisaging solutions to problems which they could realistically resolve themselves. In certain communities, this objective has been met. Although, as the project is ongoing and permanently working with new communities, each with different challenges and barriers to entry, the attainment of these objectives is a continuous process.