

Our vision is for everyone to have access to a short, free and friendly walk within easy reach of where they live, to help them get active and stay active

Walking is a wonderful form of natural exercise; simple and effective. We could prevent 37,000 deaths every year, just by taking a walk. In just a short time walking can significantly improve a person's health, well-being and confidence.

Together, the Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support run Walking for Health, helping people get active and stay active. By sharing our expertise, we support around 600 local schemes across England to offer short, free and friendly walks. Our aim is to help more people – including those affected by cancer – discover the joys and health benefits of walking.

Only a third of adults in the UK are active enough, but it doesn't need to be this way. Walking for Health is England's largest network of health walk schemes, helping all kinds of people lead a more active lifestyle. We've done this for over 12 years now, improving thousands of lives.

Our walks are open to everyone and led by friendly, knowledgeable people, specifically trained for the job. Along with fellow walkers, our walk leaders provide all the advice and encouragement a new walker needs to build fitness at a pace that's right for them. In just a short time, a small amount of regular exercise can significantly improve a person's health, well-being and confidence. And from what our walkers tell us, there's plenty of laughter to be heard on our walks.

Walking for Health helps the least active move more

More than 70,000 people walk with us regularly at 3,400 weekly walks led by 10,000 volunteers. Walking is a great gateway to the world of exercise and it often inspires people to try out other health activities. It can also be a fantastic way for formerly active people 'step down' from their usual levels of exercise, as they manage their lifestyles with illness or increasing age.

Our programme helps keep people motivated and is popular with those who often aren't active enough, particularly women who are over 55. Our walkers enjoy it so much they keep coming back!

Walking is the answer to the physical inactivity epidemic

Walking is the most accessible physical activity, and already the most popular. Walking is a free, gentle, convenient, low-impact activity that requires no special training or equipment.

- Walking has a proven benefit for those at risk of, or managing, raised cholesterol, Coronary Heart Disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, colon and breast cancer, and depression (Lee et al, 2012).
- Across a town of 150,000 people, if everyone walked an extra 10 minutes a day, 31 lives would be saved with a current value of £30m per year (WHO HEAT tool assessment, 2013)
- Every £1 spent on a health walk scheme saves the local NHS £7 (Natural England, 2010)

Walking for Health is an effective intervention

Thoroughly tried and tested since its launch in 2000, and one of the simplest, longest running and most effective interventions to encourage walking, Walking for Health:

- Helps people who previously weren't doing enough exercise to stay healthy. Almost half of our current participants previously did no more than half an hour of activity on three days a week.
- Supports people to take part regularly. The average walker takes part in at least five walks in every three months.
- Helps the least active get more active. Over half of our walkers who were previously active on only 0–2 days per week increased their activity levels.
- Helps those who used to be active, but can no longer sustain their activity levels due to age, illness or injury, 'step down' without becoming inactive.
- Is particularly popular with over 55s and women — both groups with lower than average levels of physical activity, and who may otherwise be likely to do less walking due to perceived health problems.

Our schemes come in all shapes and sizes. From small schemes providing walks for those with specific conditions or in specific groups, to walks in NHS or other clinical settings, to large, public schemes where most participants are self-referred. Our walks are organised by everyone from local councils and public health offices, to volunteer groups.

Find your local scheme at walkingforhealth.org.uk