

# Walking in the Workplace



The workplace is a fantastic setting in which to provide opportunities for physical activity. Over a third of our waking hours are spent at work so it makes sense to use some of that time to fit physical activity into our lifestyle. Studies have also shown that if staff regularly walk at lunchtimes it can increase their productivity in the afternoon.

Walking for Life! has been successful in setting up a sustainable lunchtime walk at Shirehall, Shropshire Council Offices.

Members of staff who have regularly attended the walks have provided the following comments:

“I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the walks. It’s easy to go for a walk but one never does, so the walking group has encouraged me to go outside before home time! The benefits have been - meeting new people, seeing parts of Shrewsbury I’ve never seen before and feeling refreshed on my return. Thank you”

“It’s lovely to get out in the fresh air and do a bit of exercise, it’s really revitalising.”

“Therapeutic to get away from the office, meet and chat to other people, discover places I’ve never been to before and good exercise and fresh air.”

“Thank you for getting the walks started - they give a real break away from the desk and the phone and leave you feeling refreshed for the afternoon. It’s also such a good opportunity to meet new people and find out what they do. Can we do them more than once a week?”

## Step by step guide to setting up a lunchtime walk

### STEP 1: Identify routes

Identify and carry out risk assessments on at least 4 x 30 minute routes, taking into account these key considerations:

Distance: walks must not take longer than 30 minutes

Terrain: most staff will walk in their everyday shoes, it is important to avoid anywhere that could get muddy (or have alternatives for wet days!)

Try to get away from noise and traffic as much as possible; the idea is to reduce stress!

### STEP 2: Two week poster campaign

Promotional posters can be obtained from the WHI website [www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk) and from the British Heart Foundation website. These posters can be distributed around the workplace (with permission) on:

- lifts
- stairs
- toilets
- staff notice boards
- canteen
- reception

The idea is to make people start to think about how much physical activity they do.

### STEP 3: Promote idea of a lunchtime walking group

Promote the idea of a lunchtime walking group through:

- posters
- promotional stands in the reception area
- links with Occupational Health department
- global emails
- advert on staff intranet
- emails or letters to heads of departments
- staff newsletters

Provide staff with a contact name/number/email through which to 'register their interest' so that you can compile an email list.





#### STEP 4: Consult with staff who have 'registered their interest'

Using the email list consult with members of staff on preferred day and time for a 30 minute lunchtime walk.

Decide on the day, time and date of first walk based on the majority and promote via the previous methods.

#### STEP 5: Lead weekly lunchtime walks for a pilot period

Lead lunchtime walks for a pilot period of 4 weeks to identify whether there is enough interest from members of staff for the group to become sustainable in the long term.

Prior to each walk:

- Ensure all new walkers have completed a health screening form and signed to say they will walk at their own risk
- Take a register



#### STEP 6: Make the group sustainable

If after the initial 4 weeks there has been a positive interest in the walks, take a move to making the walks sustainable by approaching those members of staff that have attended regularly and ask permission to put them on a rota.

Over time recruit members of staff to take responsibility for the rota themselves.

Continue to promote the walks via the intranet/ staff newsletters/ posters.



#### Other ideas to promote walking and physical activity in the workplace:

Produce independent walking materials i.e. downloadable leaflets on the staff intranet that show short circular walks

Link with Transport Planning to encourage active travel to/from and during work e.g. making use of pool bikes

Hold physical activity workplace challenges such as 'Shape up for Summer' (guidance available on CD)

Create after work 'Speed Walking' as a progression from lunch time walks (these have proved very successful)

*For supporting documents please refer to 'Walking for Life! Toolkit' CD.*



**Sustrans** is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Every day we are working on practical, innovative ways of dealing with the transport challenges that affect us all.

Sustrans provides creative, innovative and practical solutions to the transport challenges affecting us all. By working with communities, local authorities and many other organisations, we create change by putting people at the heart of activities, enabling many more people to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

Visit their website for information on active travel  
**[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)**



**Walking Works** aims to encourage more people to walk to and from work, and to walk more during their working day. We do this by running national events such as Walk to Work day, Walk Champion schemes and by giving online support to people who pledge to walk more. As part of the campaign, we work directly with business to help them promote walking and encourage their employees to use walking as a way to travel actively.

The Walking Works campaign is one in a series of Living Streets campaigns that aim to get us all walking more in our daily lives.

Visit their website for lots of useful information about reasons for walking and walking at work.

Also log onto **[www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)** and follow the links section to find lots of useful relevant websites.