



Making an impact

Glasgow Health Walks Social Return on Investment Analysis

Summary Report
July 2013



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Health Walks, £8 of benefits
were generated for society*

Introduction

Paths for All commissioned this study to analyse the impact of the Glasgow Health Walk programme between April 2011 and March 2012.

Walk Glasgow is a partnership project between Paths for All, Glasgow Life and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The aims of the project are to develop and promote walking opportunities across Glasgow, targeting groups least likely to take regular exercise, in order to increase physical activity levels and improve the health and wellbeing of city residents.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, was carried out by greenspace scotland and shows that Glasgow Health Walks have been highly effective in creating social value. SROI is an accepted method of calculating the social, environmental and economic impact of a programme. The resulting findings include a cost to benefit ratio, as well as a rich story of case studies and statistics describing the changes that occurred.

The key findings are presented here, and the full report is online at www.pathsforall.org.uk/SROI



About Glasgow Health Walks

Glasgow has one of the highest instances of health inequalities in Europe and the lowest life expectancy in the UK. It has been identified that walking programmes can do much to improve physical activity levels and improve quality of life and life expectancy, particularly in areas in which high levels of health inequalities exist.

The SROI study focused on impacts from Glasgow's Health Walk programme. These are short, safe, local, free walks led by Walk Leaders who have completed Paths for All Walk Leader Training and are often volunteers recruited from within the walking groups.

Walk Glasgow employ a co-ordinator who enables the development of Health Walks by using a networked approach; developing connections with organisations who work directly with communities likely to experience health inequalities. Walk Glasgow then provide training and support to these organisations to allow them to deliver new opportunities for people to join Health Walks and build community capacity.

Walk Glasgow has a multi-agency steering group. Paths for All are members of this and provide advice, funding and support to develop Health Walk programmes across Scotland.

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 Walk Glasgow supported:

- 33 'open' walk projects, defined as free walks, open for all to attend
- 26 'closed' walk projects, those restricted to clients from certain groups, such as hospital in-patients, or people with learning disabilities

Findings

The headline cost to benefit ratio is striking. For every £1 invested in Health Walks, £8 of benefits were generated for society.

During the year April 2011 to March 2012, £48,705.15 was invested in Glasgow Health Walks by stakeholders, this included staff, volunteers, time, expenses and training. The outputs recorded relate to 21 Health Walk projects with each delivering an average of 35 walks during the year. The value of the associated outcomes was £384,630.27.

The findings are clear, Health Walks deliver social benefits including making people fitter, healthier and improving their mental health. This in turn makes cost savings to the NHS and Glasgow City Council, such as reduced spend on care and prescriptions due to clients being more fit, healthy and able.

The Health Walk programme delivered many positive outcomes for:

Walkers and Walk Leaders

- Are fitter and have improved physical health
- Over 90% are more confident
- Have more social contacts
- Experience less isolation
- Take part in new experiences

"I'm really glad I found an activity that I can manage and it's free."

"Walking is the only kind of exercise I can do and it helps me keep a reasonable level of fitness and I believe it will benefit my health generally."



Walkers with diagnosed physical medical conditions

- Experienced either demonstrable improvement in their disease or a slow down of deterioration
- Feel fitter and become healthier
- Those with mental health problems felt happier and positive
- Felt able to take part in safe led walks, where help was at hand if needed

"The walks make me get up and get myself moving I like walking and it helps my blood pressure. I feel better and more confident."

"I have other clubs I attend but I enjoy the walking group the most."

Walkers

- Feel safe and comfortable to walk in their local green space by being part of a group
- Benefit from a supported programme that encourages them to progress and to achieve a greater sense of personal satisfaction
- Are able to interact with others from different cultural and social backgrounds gaining a better understanding of ethnicity and disability
- Experience greater connection with their community
- Meet others of similar age and stage of life, which leads to other group activities being organised – resulting in further increased confidence, reduced isolation, and improved sense of wellbeing
- Learn about the local environment and gain pleasure from seeing flora and fauna
- Those experiencing acute loneliness or seclusion valued close relationships with friends made on Health Walks

“The walking group brought me out of my shell. I learnt to do other things like mixing with the other women in the groups. It’s got me out of the house more so I am not so fed up, bored and up tight. I am enjoying life more.”

Walk Leader Volunteers

- Improved self-esteem and a sense of worth as they feel valued by the community
- Experience pride and sense of achievement in creating safe, welcoming walks & positive experiences
- Achievement of Paths for All Walk Leader and First Aid training increases knowledge and practical skills – enhancing employability and opening volunteering prospects

“Coming to the walking groups has done so much for me I wanted to give something back”

“I am a recovering alcoholic and being able to achieve something has changed my life. Since becoming a leader I am happier and I haven’t had a hospital related admission for over 3 years.”



Vulnerable individuals who take part in 'closed' walks

- Walkers who are extremely socially isolated are able to meet new people and make new friends
- Have the opportunity take part in community activities and form independent relationships, an opportunity which is practically non-existent for them
- Physical activity made walkers more relaxed and calm
- Have improved relationships with care and support staff

"Service users aren't really into exercise but they enjoy walking and it builds up their confidence. Exercise is seen as challenging but walking encourages physical activity and extends people's horizons - one member now goes to Zumba. It provides a link to the community."

Paths for All

- Can recruit, train and retain volunteer Walk Leaders who provide essential services

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Glasgow City Council

- Make cost savings as a result of individuals reducing their blood pressure and reducing their requirement for prescribed drugs
- Reduced spend as a result of participants with clinically diagnosed mental health conditions requiring less drug therapies

"Walking has the biggest reach and fewest barriers. It helps tackle health inequalities as 70% of walkers taking part in the programme come from those areas of multiple deprivation"

NHS Health Promotion Advisor

Other Findings

A significant unexpected outcome was that Health Walks promote cultural awareness as they bring people together who may not otherwise interact. This has multiple benefits, not directly related to, but supportive of health and well-being.

"I understand more about people from other cultures."

"You get to talk to all different types of people from different backgrounds"

The research also indicated that the networked approach operated by Walk Glasgow is a very efficient and effective way of bringing organisations together to support and manage Health Walk programmes.

It was also recognised that Walk Glasgow plays a crucial part in providing support to individual walks and offering opportunities for training and networking events.

Supporting Research

Paths for All have commissioned two additional SROI studies to further analyse the impact of Health Walk programmes. Studies have been carried out in Stirling and the Scottish Borders, showing social return on investment ratios of £1:£9 and £1:£8 respectively.

With the all three independent SROI studies obtaining a similar cost/benefit ratio, and corroborating the nature of the outcomes, we are confident that the social return gained from investment in Health Walk programmes is valid for different types of project across rural and urban settings.

Conclusions

There is ample justification for supporting led Health Walks for the improvements they make to health and wellbeing alone. However, when other benefits they deliver are included such as improvements in cultural awareness and inclusion, the case becomes truly compelling. Health Walks are a uniquely placed, cost effective, engaging and inclusive way of delivering multiple benefits to groups and individuals who would not otherwise be able to access them.

Health Walk programmes are a cost effective way of improving health and deliver outcomes across a range of Government and local authority agendas:

- Increasing levels of physical activity
- Building community capacity
- Reducing health inequalities
- Mental Health Strategy
- Promoting diversity and equality
- Preventative approaches
- Outcomes for older people
- Forthcoming National Walking Strategy
- Integration of health and social care
- Social inclusion and community participation
- Commonwealth Games Legacy
- Single Outcome Agreements



To download the full research report please visit:

www.pathsforall.org.uk/SROI

If you're in Glasgow and are interested in offering Health Walks in your community, please contact:

Heather MacLeod, Walk Glasgow Co-ordinator on 0141 287 0963,

email: heather.macleod@glasgowlife.org.uk

www.glasgowlife.org.uk/healthwalks

If you are interested in setting up a similar Health Walk programme in another area of Scotland, please contact Paths for All on info@pathsforall.org.uk or 01259 218 888

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