

WORKPLACE WALKING

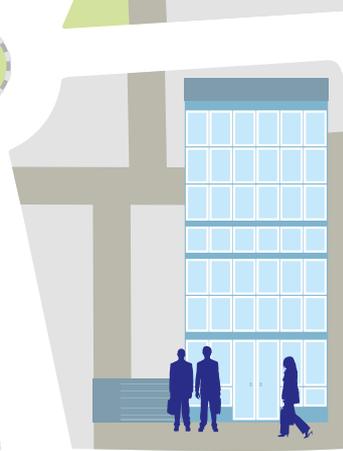
A PROJECT TOOLKIT



walk at work

www.workplacewalking.org.uk

paths
for **all**





Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Workplace walking | 2 |
| About Paths for All | 3 |
| Get your management on board | 4 |
| Recruit a team of walk leaders | 6 |
| Get your colleagues involved | 8 |
| Find and assess walking routes | 10 |
| Launch your workplace walking project | 12 |
| Monitor and evaluate your progress | 14 |
| Keep up the interest and motivation | 16 |
| Move your walkers on | 18 |
| Tell everyone about it | 19 |
| Resources | 20 |
| Example business case for management teams | 22 |

Workplace walking

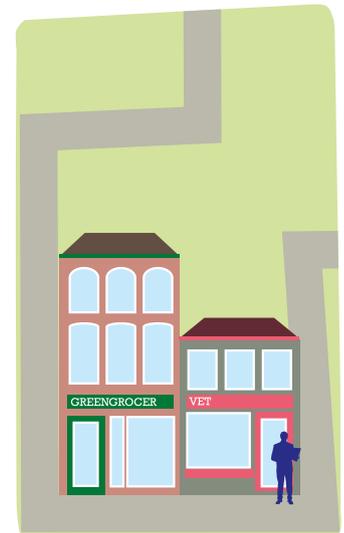
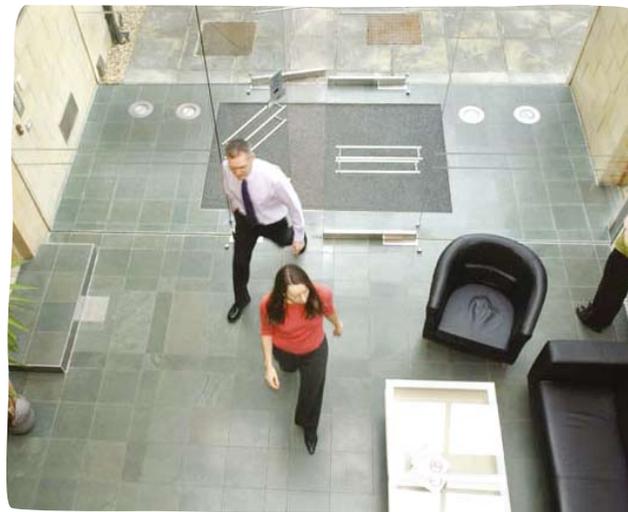
Given the amount of time we spend at work it makes sense to think about opportunities for physical activity in and around the workplace. Walking is a cheap and easy way to promote better health and wellbeing to your colleagues.

Research has shown that there are lots of benefits in having a physically active workforce including reduced sickness absence, increased productivity and greater staff retention. Walking reduces stress and has a positive impact on both mental and physical wellbeing. Workplace walking can also be a sociable activity that has the added value of providing an opportunity to network with colleagues.

This toolkit is a step by step guide to help you develop and deliver a successful workplace walking project.

You'll find practical ideas on everything from how to make the case to management, how to get your colleagues involved, how to measure the impact that your project's had and where to find information and resources to help get your project off the ground. There are also case studies from other workplace walking projects.

For more information visit our website www.workplacewalking.org.uk





About Paths for All

Paths for All is a national charity promoting walking for health and path network development in Scotland. Our Walk at Work programme has a range of resources available including grants to assist with any project costs, training courses to help staff plan and deliver workplace walks, pedometer packs and promotional resources.

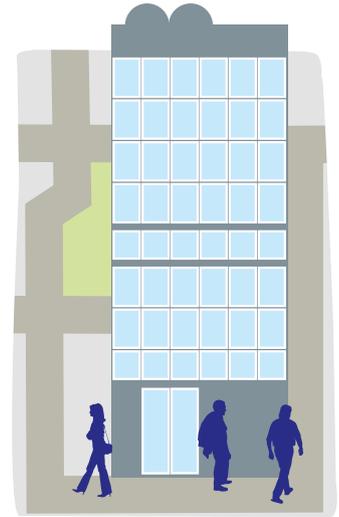
Our Walk at Work programme is funded by the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.



Get your management on board

A successful workplace walking project needs the support of management and a great way to do this is to show how a workplace walking project will be good for productivity. All employers want to see high productivity in the workforce, whether in producing goods or delivering services for customers and clients. Employers know that key to productivity is:

- a healthy and committed workforce
- being able to recruit and hold on to good staff by having a reputation as a good employer
- achieving results in a cost-effective way



Action points

- 1 Write a brief business case and submit it to your management team. Outline the economic benefits that a project can bring. A sample business case is included in this toolkit, use some or all of it to support your case but remember to make it appropriate for your workplace.
- 2 Use the National Institute of Clinical Excellence Cost Template to make a financial case for a workplace walking project. The tool allows you to calculate how much your organisation can save by starting a walking project by inputting information about employee numbers, absenteeism rates and project costs. www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH13/CostTemplate/xls/English
- 3 Ask your manager to give you time to attend a Paths for All workplace training course or consider hosting a course. Paths for All offer training throughout Scotland and grants are available to help cover the cost of training courses that can be delivered in your workplace.
- 4 Recruit some colleagues who are also interested in getting involved and who are willing to be walk leaders, organisers or walkers when your project gets started.
- 5 Check if your employer has a policy or action plan for health and wellbeing in the workplace and check if they are registered with the Healthy Working Lives Awards. Think about how workplace walking can contribute or link to this work.
- 6 Plan ahead, think of a good time to launch your walking project and give yourself enough time to set up and advertise before you start your programme of walks. January will catch those people with New Year resolutions. Spring time will be good for people who want to get fit for their summer holidays. Christmas is probably a bad time to get people's attention on a new walking project due to scheduled holidays.
- 7 Summarise the key points and be ready to make a presentation to the management team using case studies to make your point. Example case studies are included in this toolkit. Use Paths for All's information resources for up-to-date research, statistics and advice to help promote the benefits of your project.

Recruit a team of walk leaders

To deliver a successful workplace walking project you will need some help. By recruiting a team of walk leaders you can share the workload and widen participation and ownership of your project. They can also help your project become sustainable in the long term.

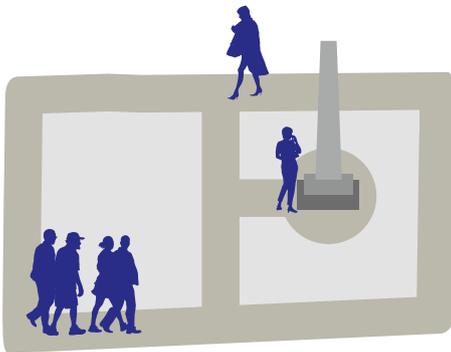
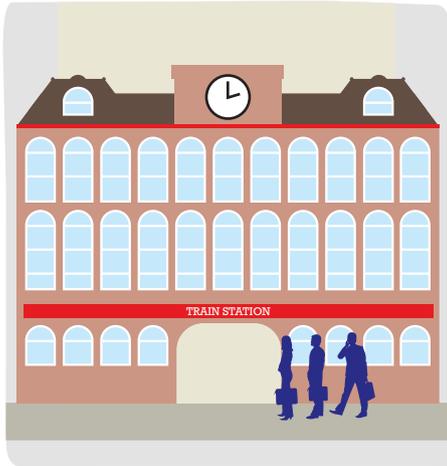
Walk leaders are key in recruiting and encouraging walkers, collecting feedback and may also have to deal with any illnesses or injuries during walks. Ideally, you will have two walk leaders in a walking group, one to lead at the front and one to be 'back marker' at the rear of the group to encourage and motivate slower walkers. It does take time to recruit, train, organise and motivate the right kind of walk leaders. However, the effort you invest will be more than outweighed by the commitment and enthusiasm your walk leaders will bring to your project.

Action points

- 1 Think about how you will recruit your walk leaders. Are there already walkers in your group ready to step up and become walk leaders? For larger workplaces think about recruiting walk leaders from different departments so your walks reflect the organisation.
- 2 What qualities are you looking for in your walk leaders? They will need to be organised and will have to motivate colleagues to participate in the walks, they will need to make sure the pace of the walk is suitable for the group and will be ambassadors for your workplace walks within the organisation.



- 3 Organise a Paths for All workplace training course for your new volunteers. The training can be delivered in your workplace specifically for your organisation and grant funding is available to support this.
- 4 Think about what you want your walk leaders to do. What will be their roles and responsibilities? Will they be recruiting walkers? Identifying and risk assessing routes? Leading walks? Share these tasks amongst your team and play to their strengths. If you have a walk leader from your marketing team, they may have great ideas about recruiting more walkers and spreading the word about your project.
- 5 What support can you offer your walk leaders?
- 6 What incentives will you use to keep your walk leaders motivated? Some workplaces allow walk leaders to deliver walks during work time.
- 7 Always ask for feedback and input from your walk leaders. Their comments and suggestions will help you to shape and develop your project. They are your link with your target audience!
- 8 Remember to thank your walk leaders and show your appreciation for their hard work and effort. Have an annual social event or a special lunch to demonstrate how much their contribution is valued by you and your organisation.



Get your colleagues involved

Do you regularly hear your colleagues complaining about their low fitness levels, their weight, lack of energy or boredom at being stuck in the office all day? Do they complain about having no time to exercise, that they can't afford gym membership or they are just not "sporty"?

If you're convinced about the benefits and pleasures of walking and would like to get your colleagues involved in a workplace walking project you're halfway there, but a bit of forward planning is also needed.

Action points

- 1 Circulate some information about:
 - Why walking is good for you – the health and wellbeing benefits
 - How it can be fun and sociable, a great way to get to know colleagues better
 - How easy it is to increase physical activity levels through regular walking e.g. walking a mile uses the same calories as running a mile. It is equivalent to swimming 15 lengths of a 25 metre pool, or playing eight minutes of squash non-stop
 - Other workplace walking projects with some case studies that reflect the type of organisation that you work for

- 2 This could be done with some posters on notice boards, staff newsletters or email bulletins, team meetings etc. Use Paths for All material to promote the enjoyable aspects of walking as well as the health benefits.
- 3 Encourage your colleagues to think about their health and wellbeing, encourage them to visit the Health at Work website for an online test to highlight areas where they could make improvements.
www.checkmylifestyle.com
- 4 Remember to advise walkers that if they have any health issues to consult a doctor before starting the walking programme or any kind of physical activity.
- 5 Find out about the level of interest in a workplace walking project. Circulate a survey on paper or by email, use question cards and suggestion boxes. You might already have done this as part of the Healthy Working Lives Awards, the results will let you know if people are keen to start walking more.
- 6 Ask about practical support in your workplace, do you have HR staff who could help you with your survey or project planning? Is there a staff social committee that might offer help in promoting the project?
- 7 Don't be put off if the number of interested people is small at the start. It is better to start with a small group of keen walkers who can lead the way than spend too much time trying to involve everyone at first.
- 8 Encourage people to volunteer to take Paths for All training to become a Workplace Walk Leader. The training can be delivered in your workplace specifically for your organisation and grant funding is available to support this.
- 9 Don't plan your launch for a time of year when your workplace is likely to be really busy. It might be hard to recruit walkers if everyone has heavy workloads and tight deadlines.
- 10 Make sure you have more than one trained walk leader if possible, you'll then have cover if one of you is ill or on holiday.

Find and assess walking routes

To get the best out of workplace walking projects, have a route or routes that can be varied to include absolute beginners as well as those starting to get more active. Safety and comfort are important; the walks should be a pleasant experience not an obstacle course! Risk assessment and route planning is covered on the Workplace Walk Organiser course and it is always a good idea to speak to the Health and Safety representative within your organisation before leading your first walk.

Action points

- 1 It may be helpful to find out if other workplaces or community projects nearby have been organising walks in the area and if they would be willing to share their experience with you. Check on the Paths for All website for more information.
www.pathsforall.org.uk
- 2 Check with the local authority's Local Access Officer, Ranger Service, Parks, Recreation, Community or Planning Departments about walking opportunities, they may have route maps that you can use.
- 3 Have a look at your workplace and its surroundings on Google Maps to search out good walking routes that you may miss on your daily commute.
- 4 Visit the following websites for routes, ideas and tools to let you measure distances walked and calories used:
www.googlemaps.com
www.walkit.com
www.mapmywalk.com

5 Take a fresh look at the streets and paths around your workplace and think about leading a walk:

- Are there any pleasant parks or open spaces nearby?
- Are the roads or paths comfortable for people walking with their office shoes on, are they relatively flat, even and in reasonable repair?
- Is there a lot of traffic and traffic crossings to negotiate? Try to find a route without too many of these.

6 Walk your routes and time how long they are likely to take for those walkers new to exercise. For complete beginners, devise walks on flat ground that are no more than 15 minutes, introduce longer walks as people's fitness levels increase.

7 Identify landmarks along the route that tell walkers how far they've walked, or use a pedometer and let them know how many steps they've taken.

8 Ask your walkers to volunteer to make walks more interesting by sharing their knowledge of the local area, history, nature or landmarks.

9 Does your workplace cover a large area? Could you mark out walking routes on site and encourage people to use pedometers as they go about their working day?

10 Look for possible hazards on your routes and incorporate these into your risk assessment. How likely is it that accidents might happen because of traffic, fallen trees, broken pavements?

11 Have a plan about how to deal with potential hazards, changing the route, advising people of action to ensure safety, your walk leaders should be alert to potential problems.

12 Conduct regular risk assessments on your routes, remember seasonal changes can mean changing levels of risk. Autumn might bring wet leaves, winter might bring icy patches on some routes.

Launching your workplace walking project

You've done your research and know that there are people in your workplace who would like to take up workplace walking, you have management support, some trained walk leaders, planned and risk-assessed routes. It is now time to launch your project.

Action tips

- 1 Pick a date for the launch and make sure your volunteer walk leaders will be available on the day. When deciding on where to hold your launch event, consider if the location is convenient for employees to get to and an appropriate size.
- 2 Check with management that the day of the launch will not clash with other workplace events. If management is involved, employees are more likely to feel they can help with the event and turn up on the day. Ask a representative of management to join the first walk.
- 3 Decide on a theme e.g. "Spring into Action" for an April date. The name and logo of your walking project should be highly visible during your launch event. The coordinator and any key people involved should be on show during the event so that employees are clear about who they can approach in the future.
- 4 Does your workplace have a marketing department? Ask for practical help and support for the launch.



5 Is there a particular interest in your workplace e.g. people wanting to lose weight, a health check programme, a smoking cessation project? If so tie the publicity into this.

6 Consider making the focus of the walks a challenge e.g. pedometer challenge between sections or teams, “Walk Around the World” as you count your steps, imagining a walk between Edinburgh and London, then Paris, then Rome and so on.

7 Promote the event through posters, email, staff newsletters and word of mouth. Use promotional material like flyers and pens to raise everyone’s awareness that the workplace walking project is about to happen. Resources are available from Paths for All.

8 Consider letting the local press and radio know, it could be great publicity for your workplace.

Monitor and evaluate your progress

Your employer might want to know how well the workplace walking project is progressing. It is a good idea to keep track of the numbers of walkers on your walks and the number of walks per week as well as collecting individual success stories and feedback. You may want to show how the workplace walking project is improving staff morale, encouraging other health and wellbeing activities, contributing to team building and reducing absence through less sickness. An online database is available from Paths for All to help you record this information. Get in touch to receive a log-in and password.

Action points

- 1 Ask people for feedback, those who walk regularly and also those who have chosen not to join the walking groups. Use what they tell you to record your successes, make changes if necessary or adopt new strategies.
- 2 Keep records of the numbers of walks per week and the number of walkers on the walks. This will let you know if interest in the walks is rising or falling and allow you to plan ahead. If you have received a grant from Paths for All this will also be useful information for your project report.
- 3 You may want to record the number of new walkers joining, this shows your promotional activities are working or your success stories are motivating others to get involved. You may need to recruit more walk leaders and organise more training as the project expands.
- 4 If people are leaving the walking group, is it because they've given up physical activity or moved on to other physical activities? Get in touch with them again, it maybe that they just need a bit more encouragement.



5 Encourage walkers to keep track of their own progress. You might be able to introduce voluntary health checks in the workplace so people can track the benefits of workplace walking on their blood pressure or heart rate.

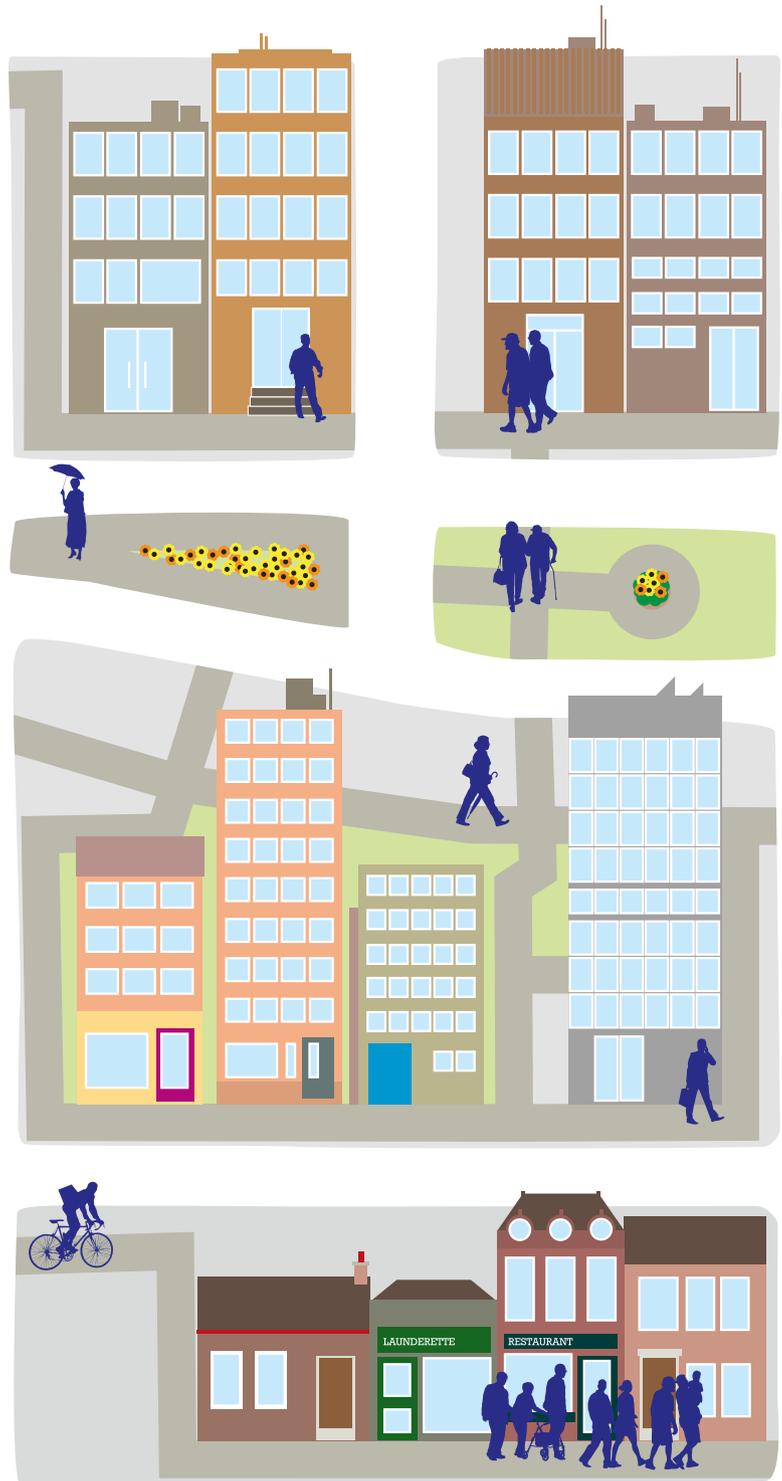
6 Suggest to the management that they may want to recommend that staff are reminded about health walks during one-to-one meetings such as appraisals or return to work interviews.

7 You may also be able to track absence management statistics over the period of the workplace walking project to highlight changes that may be a result of the project.

8 Similar statistics or data may be available to monitor staff performance, productivity, staff retention etc in relation to the workplace walking project.

Keep up the interest and motivation

Once your walking groups have been established, keeping up the interest is key to their success. There may be challenges, boredom with a particular route, poor weather, busy work schedules, other enticements at lunchtime such as shopping. The benefits of workplace walking come from regular walking, don't let your walkers get out of the habit.



Action points

- 1 Ask people for feedback. Use what they tell you to come up with new routes or interesting “themes” for walks e.g. learning about the history of an area or about the plants and trees along the route. You could introduce a quiz or competition on the walks.
- 2 Have a look at the case studies for ideas that you could adapt to your workplace.
- 3 Arrange awards to highlight walkers’ achievements. Acknowledge those who attended regularly or have encouraged others to join.
- 4 Suggest competitions between different walking groups, departments or perhaps with a nearby workplace e.g. “who can walk to Paris first?” using step counts and pedometers.
- 5 With management support, do regular promotions in the workplace. Keep the promotional material current, have regular reminders in staff newsletters and email bulletins, advertise success stories with case studies.
- 6 Consider organising or joining sponsored walks for charity.
- 7 Consider producing some information leaflets or route maps and offering pedometers to people who would benefit from walking more but can’t, or don’t want to join the regular walking groups.
- 8 Check the Paths for All website for the latest tips on keeping your workplace walks fresh and interesting.

Move your walkers on

Once your walkers have raised their levels of physical activity through regular workplace walking, many will be ready to increase their new commitment to health and wellbeing. Some will be taking their new-found enthusiasm for being more active home so their families can be involved too. Some will take up new activities, perhaps offered in the workplace.

Action points

- 1 Find out about other activities that may be offered in the workplace:
 - Is there a dance class, a golf or football team, a yoga class, a hill walking club?
 - Is there a JogScotland group in the workplace that might be interested in recruiting walkers?
 - Is there the opportunity to offer fitness classes in the workplace after working hours?
 - Could your employer arrange a special discount price for employees at a local gym, swimming pool or sports club?
 - Does your workplace promote active travel, or hold commuter cycling training courses?
- 2 Ask about practical support in your workplace, does it have a Health at Work Group that can help you develop other physical activity opportunities for your walkers?
- 3 Is there a staff social committee that might offer help to promote new activities?
- 4 Consider inviting representatives from health promotion agencies to visit the workplace and advise on other possible activities. Contact your local Healthy Working Lives Advisor based in the Health Board for details of physical activity seminars or events that are coming up.
- 5 As some walkers increase their fitness levels, consider splitting the group into 'Striders' and 'Strollers'. This way the faster walkers get the chance to stretch their legs and those new to activity don't get put off by an unsuitable pace and distance.

Tell everyone about it

Your workplace walking project is helping people get active and stay active. It is worth spreading the word. Employers may want to promote the workplace walking project as a benefit to new employees. The Workplace Walk Organisers and Walk Leaders deserve some praise for their commitment as volunteers.

Action points

- 1 Keep track of your successes, gather evidence of case studies. Get walkers' permission to write up their experiences and achievements. Take photographs of your walks, display these in your workplace and encourage new walkers to join.
- 2 Promote your successes in the workplace through newsletters, email bulletins and the intranet.
- 3 Become a case study for good practice through the agencies promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace such as Paths for All and The Centre for Healthy Working Lives.
- 4 Prepare press releases for local press and radio. You could get some good coverage for your workplace, make it a place that people want to join.
- 5 Pick a 'Walker of the Month', reward someone who has attended regularly or motivated others with a voucher or certificate. Have a prize draw every month, include everyone who has been on a walk.
- 6 Hold a volunteer award ceremony and celebration lunch for your walk leaders. Highlight the value of their time to the workplace and thank them for their enthusiasm.
- 7 Use umbrellas with the walking group logo on them or give walk leaders a branded jacket to advertise the group while you're out on your walks.

Resources

There are a number of organisations that provide information, guidance and resources to support you in setting up a workplace walking project.

Paths for All training, support, resources and funding

Pedometer pack



Paths for All has developed workplace pedometer packs which contain 10 pedometers, pedometer instructions, step count cards, coordinator guidance, leaflets and posters. There is a charge for the packs but you can apply for a grant to cover the cost if you have no funds available to implement a project.

Training

Workplace training courses are available to help you plan and manage a workplace walking project. Courses can be delivered at your workplace if you have a minimum of eight participants, or keep an eye on the website for courses advertised in your area. The course manuals are also on our website, and contain details of the course content. Contact us to discuss your training needs.

Grants

Workplaces can also access the Paths for All grant fund. Grants of up to £2,000 can be awarded for any initiative that gets inactive employees more active through walking. The grants can cover the cost of pedometers, promotional materials, incentives, a launch event, local signage and mapping, and some equipment such as walk leader jackets or umbrellas etc. The grant application form is also on the website.

Promotional resources

Paths for All can also provide a wide range of promotional materials to help you advertise the project such as posters, leaflets, mugs, pens etc.

For more information visit
www.workplacewalking.org.uk

Information about health at work activities

The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives is an organisation working to improve health and wellbeing at work through advice, support and the Healthy Working Lives Award scheme. Advisors based within local health boards are available to come to your workplace and help with any aspect of promoting health at work.

www.healthyworkinglives.com

The British Heart Foundation's Well at Work campaign is a valuable source of downloads, resources, presentations and case studies on promoting physical activity at work as well as healthy eating and mental health.

www.bhf.org.uk/healthatwork

Living Streets coordinates the Walking Works campaign that aims to get us all walking more in our daily lives. The website contains lots of promotional resources as well as activities and facts to help motivate walkers.

www.walkingworks.org.uk

Sustrans' Active Travel programme has a range of resources to help workplaces get more active through the commute to work, including leaflets, toolkits and fact sheets.

www.sustrans.org.uk

Also visit Sustrans' website

www.the-evidence.co.uk for up to date statistics and research on active travel.

Example business case for management teams

The Benefits of Workplace Walking for your business.

The cost of inactivity:

- In 2003/04 29.8 million working days were lost to ill health in the UK
- It has been estimated that absence due to sickness costs business around £12billion each year, with costs to the public sector representing around 34billion ¹

Inactive people face serious health risks such as:

- Being more at risk of coronary heart conditions than active people
- Higher blood pressure
- Higher risk of diabetes type 2
- Low bone density which can lead to osteoporosis
- Higher risk of colon cancer
- Lack of flexibility and mobility and an increased risk of injury and accidents ²

On the other hand, active people:

- Are likely to live longer
- Have less risk of developing many diseases
- Have better mental health and lower risk of suffering from depression
- Physically active employees take 27% fewer days of sick leave. This equates to over two days' improved attendance and a saving of £135 per employee ³
- Staff turnover can be reduced if the workplace promotes physical activity and studies suggest that individual performance at work improves if the employee is physically active
- Physical activity guidelines recommend that adults should build up at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week - *a lunchtime walk at work is an ideal way to achieve this*

¹ Page 4 Page 13 Health, Work and Well being- caring for our future, the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Executive, 2004 www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/health_and_wellbeing.pdf

² Lets make Scotland more Active – a strategy for Physical Activity, Scottish Government 2003 www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47032/0017726.pdf

³ British Heart Foundation website quoting the Physical Activity Task force 2003 www.bhfactive.org.uk/workplace/index.html

Become an “Employer of Choice”

Everyone wants to attract well qualified and committed people to join and stay in their workforce because they enjoy their work and the company of their colleagues.

Supporting health at work activities:

- Shows that employers care about the health and wellbeing of their workforce and are willing to take action to promote good physical and mental health
- Helps workers build good team relationships and social activities in the workplace, which in turn improves communication and interaction
- Encourages workers to contribute to the success of the workplace by volunteering to organise healthy activities
- Can contribute to personal and career development programmes in the workplace

Benefits to the “bottom line”

Workplace walking offers great benefits for a minimal or no outlay.

14 evaluation studies in 2004 concluded that health promotion measures led to between 12% and 36% reduction in sickness absence. This led to a saving of 34% in absenteeism costs, concluding that every £1.00 spent on promoting health in the workplace could lead to a saving of £2.50 for businesses⁴.

Employers can measure the impact of the workplace walking project in the workplace. Feedback from employees can show increased levels of morale, energy levels at work, individual progress with health goals. Monitoring absence levels and productivity/performance management indicators over time can show positive results arising from increased levels of physical activity.

4 Page 13 British Heart Foundation website quoting the Physical Activity Task force 2003 <http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/workplace/index.html>

How will you know if the Workplace Walking Project is working for you?

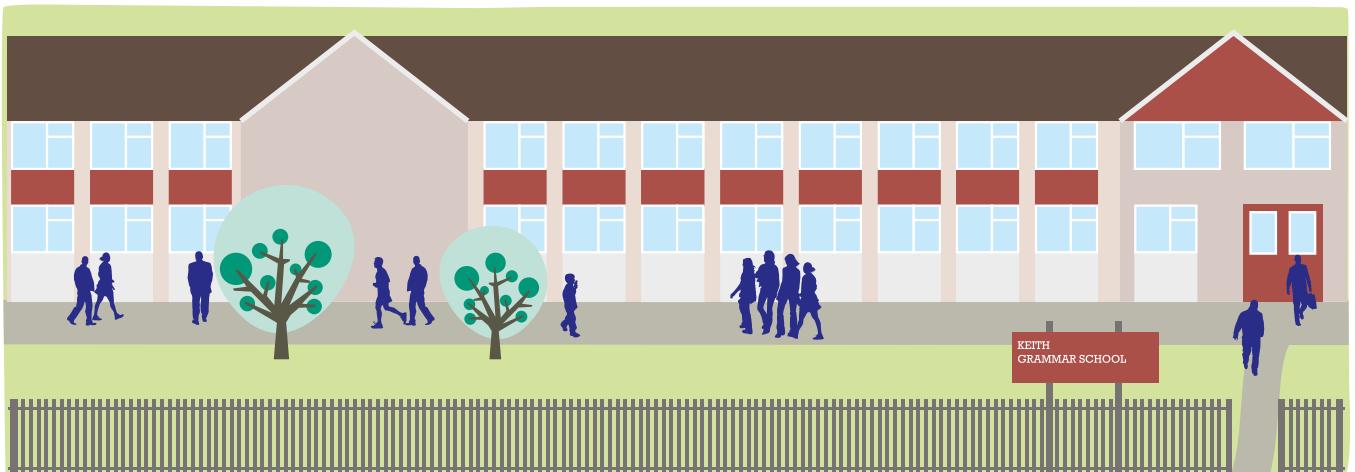
In the short term, you can take feedback from your workforce and managers about the walks. You can ask if employees feel increases in energy or alertness after walking. You might notice increased levels of physical activity elsewhere as a result of the workplace walking project e.g. walking clubs being formed for weekend walks, jogging and marathon-training, golf teams, people going to exercise classes after work etc.

In the medium term the workplace walking project can contribute to, or initiate, a wider Healthy Working Lives programme and help work towards achieving a nationally recognised Healthy Working Lives Award. Employers might consider offering employees voluntary health checks at the workplace and see the improvements reported in health and wellbeing levels as a result of people's participation in the workplace walking project. The Workplace Walking Database provides an easy way to monitor the effects of your project on employee physical activity, get in touch with Paths for All for more information.

Longer term, employers can integrate monitoring of the workplace walking project into other key performance indicators e.g. how workplace walking is contributing to improved levels of sickness absence, productivity in the workplace, improved levels of staff recruitment and retention etc.

Whichever way you look at it, walking works for your business!

Learning some lessons in the lunch hour at Keith Grammar School



Learning some lessons in the lunch hour at Keith Grammar School

Time is a precious commodity in schools, when staff aren't involved in the education of their students in the classrooms, they're busy doing other duties in the corridors or planning extra curricular activities and clubs. So there's not a lot of time to take care of their own health and wellbeing at work unless, of course, they're the PE department!

At Keith Grammar School a lot of the school's employees have to travel long distances to get to school, by car or public transport, so a walk at lunchtime is a good way to get some exercise and fresh air. Moira Bangura and her colleagues thought that a lunchtime walk would be a good option as part of the School's Healthy Working Lives programme.

There is a group of regular lunchtime walkers, but even if others have not found the time to join these dedicated walkers, they have still been inspired to take action and increase the amount of physical activity they do.

Ian, once a fit and active teacher, had allowed his exercise regime to lapse over the years, but he has been motivated by the use of a pedometer to get back on track.

He started to run regularly after increasing his step count, first by walking more and is now gearing up to compete a half marathon.

Evelyn found it difficult to fit in a lunchtime walk due to her timetable commitments but was impressed by the way that using a pedometer could keep you on your toes and let you know how active, or inactive, you could be during your working day. She and her family invested in pedometers and use them to bring a bit of fun and friendly challenge to their new family walks.

The staff members are now organising a weekly weigh-in to monitor their weight, with rewards for those who do hit their targets. Everyone is encouraged to see walking as a good way to help keep weight at a healthy level and avoid putting on the extra pounds.

So, whether school's in or school's out, the staff members at Keith Grammar School are catching the walking bug thanks to the Workplace Walking project.

Make friends on the move in South Edinburgh



Make friends on the move in South Edinburgh

When Donna O'Donnell moved to her new job in Services for Communities South Neighbourhood Office, she embarked on a novel way of getting to know her new colleagues whilst getting more active through a workplace walking project.

There are two official walks per week, but Donna and her colleagues set out for a half hour walk most lunchtimes. The office is based in a densely populated residential area but the walkers have found a little oasis of greenery that they use for different levels and lengths of walks. This lets people set targets for themselves and monitor their progress in terms of how far and how quickly they walk.

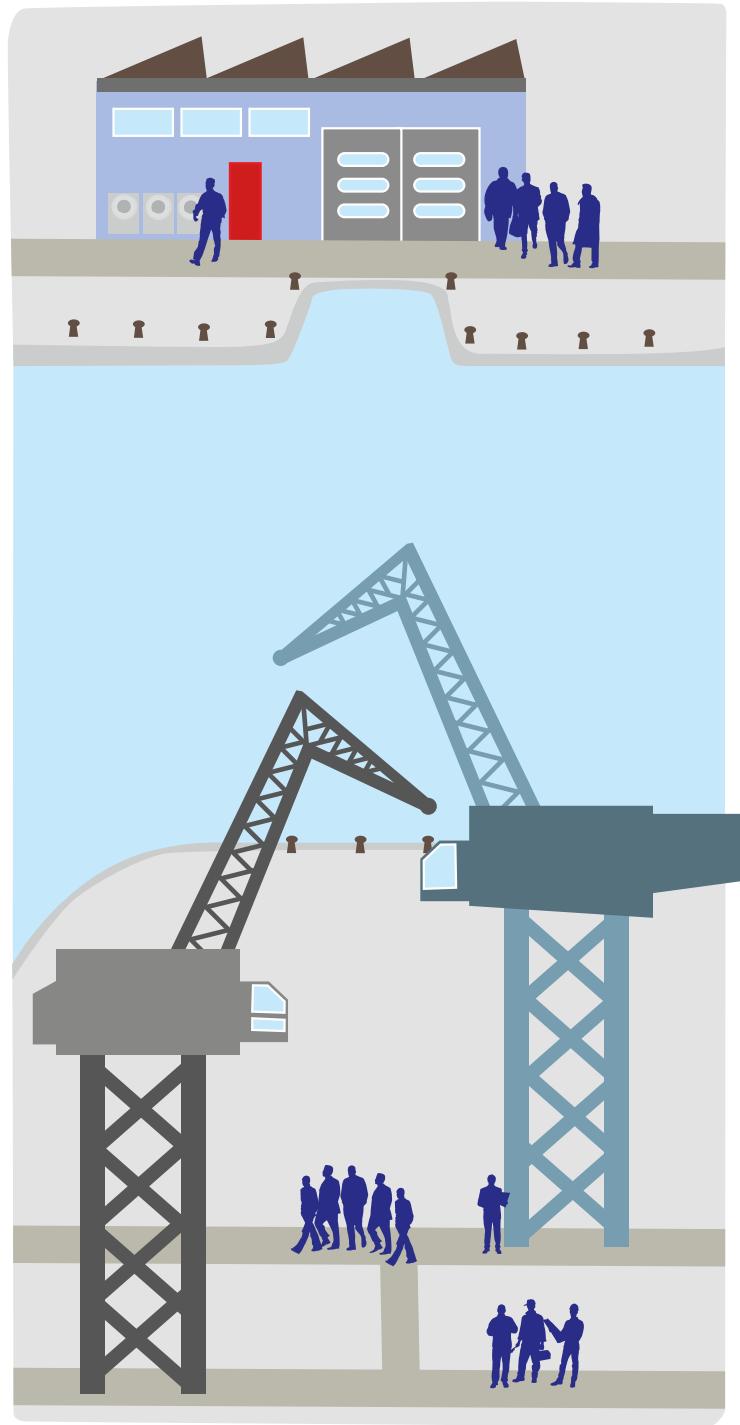
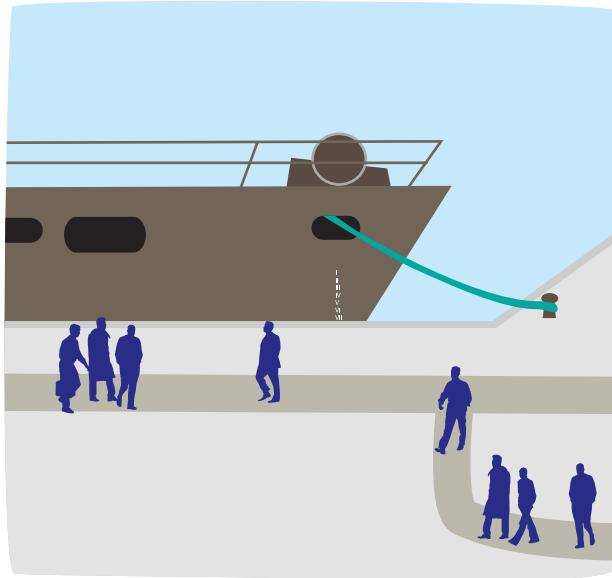
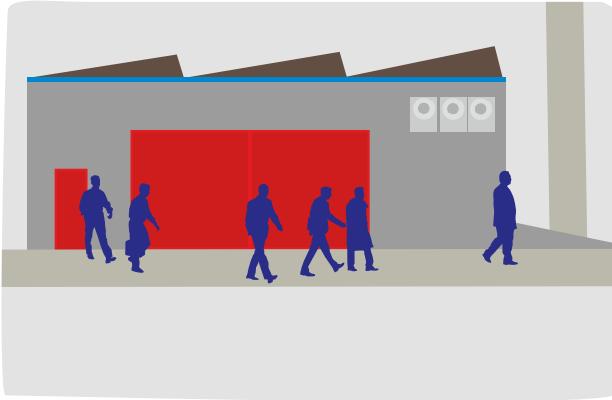
The walkers have also come up with an interesting way to keep walking an integral part of their working day. They walk around the world in their lunch hour! Using pedometers to count their steps they work their way from London to Paris and beyond. They mark their arrival at a new destination by having lunch with food from their latest destination. Managers have even been known to make a financial contribution to make the lunches a real event.

Donna won the management team over with a business plan that showed the benefits of workplace walking to the organisation. It contributes to Services for Communities' Healthy Working Lives programme and it's great for team building across grades and departments in the workplace. Volunteer Walk Leaders are also developing skills that benefit their performance at work, it's seen as a great contribution to the employee development scheme.

The South Neighbourhood Office also sees workplace walking contributing to absence management. People returning from sick leave are encouraged to join the walking group to help in improving their health and wellbeing in the long term.

Donna and her walk leaders are determined to keep their colleagues on the move in South Edinburgh and there's no chance you'll find them at their desks at lunchtime now they've learned to love walking!

No workplace
too big, no walking
group too small



No workplace too big, no walking group too small

BVT Surface Fleet in Scotstoun, Glasgow has over 2000 workers on a huge site. Carlyne McDougall and her walk organiser colleagues see the success of the workplace walking project every lunchtime, when hundreds of employees emerge from the workplace with a brisk step and the day's walking target in mind. The employees here take walking seriously as a great way to get and stay active.

There are two 'official' walks each week, and beginners are encouraged to start there before embarking on their own walking challenges in and around the workplace. Carlyne's team of walk leaders will help new workplace walkers learn how to pace themselves, how to track their improving fitness levels by using heart rate monitors and pedometers, in short how to make the most of an activity that costs nothing but gives great returns.

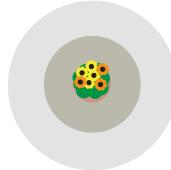
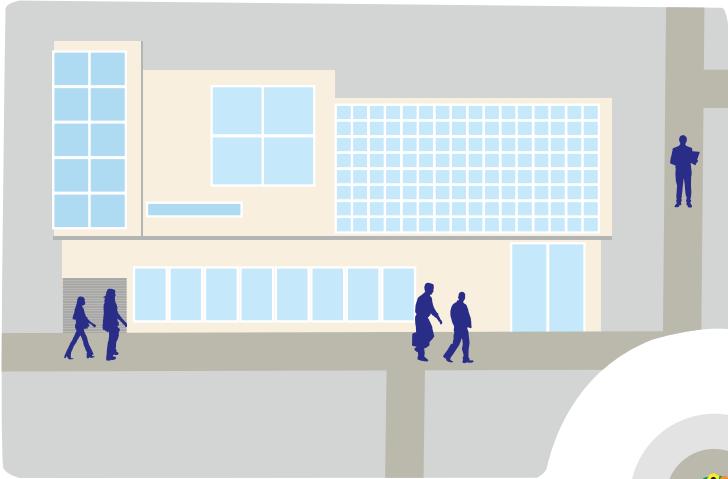
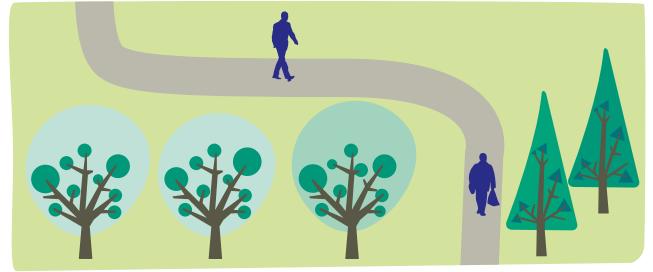
After this helpful introduction, most walkers continue walking in their own small, informal groups. They can always get tips from Carlyne about how to step up the challenge on their walks or move on to other physical activities to keep full of energy and motivated at work. Other advice and support is also available, healthy eating is promoted as a great addition to physical activity and BVT workers can learn about ways of improving their diet.

Many employees use walking as the springboard to other physical activities offered at the workplace, like running and yoga. Some walkers go onwards and literally upwards. 14 walkers recently walked the West Highland Way, challenging themselves and raising money for charity. BVT management sponsored the event and showed employees how much the company appreciated team work and charitable efforts.

BVT management offers the project support on a regular basis as it is committed to the Healthy Working Lives programme. A mile's walk has been marked out on site, so people can check how much mileage they can get out of visiting their colleagues to discuss work rather than the 'sit-at-your-desk' email or telephone call. BVT also pays for umbrellas to make sure that the weather isn't a deterrent to achieving that 30 minutes of recommended physical activity, everyday.

No workplace too big, no walking group too small, no weather too bad for workplace walking as BVT Surface Fleet demonstrates.

Business parks aren't
just for business



Business parks aren't just for business

Business parks aren't just for business, ask Sharon, Sheena and their walking friends at the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) HQ in the Gyle Business Park. Twenty two 'Walkers and Gabbers' from SPS use the paths between landscaped greenery and public artworks every Thursday lunchtime to clear their heads after a morning's work, returning to their desks rejuvenated for the afternoon.

People really enjoy getting out in the fresh air and having a chat with colleagues. As an organisation with 280 employees, discovering people who work in different offices, with different jobs and finding out what you have in common outwith work, is a great benefit. *"We did not expect the level of talking or mixing that we have had, there are no cliques on the walks and we find that the group naturally breaks down in to faster or slower walkers, however, we all start and finish together!"* says Sharon.

Some see walking as a start to a weight loss programme or a longer term plan to achieving fitness goals. Sheena made workplace walking part of her training to lose weight and complete the Edinburgh Moonwalk in 2008.

Others see the regular lunchtime walk as a convenient, no-cost way of fitting some regular physical activity into busy lives. *"For very little effort we have made a big impact"* Sharon sums it up. There isn't a downside to workplace walking, even the changing weather adds a different dimension to Thursday lunchtime walks.

The walking groups have ways of keeping the walks fresh and interesting. They vary the routes and they invite walkers to share their knowledge of art, literature and the environment as their walks take them past flower beds, streams and bronze sculptures of famous Scottish poets.

Workplace walking is a great way to contribute to achieving the Healthy Working Lives awards, as senior management has discovered. SPS management is committed to a healthy and fit workforce and offers a range of HWL activities and benefits like healthy eating promotions and smoking cessation courses. Workplace walking is a great start on the road to a more active life.

As SPS demonstrate so well, workplace walking offers employees a great opportunity to get out of the office and enjoy a walk around their local 'park'.



Walking down
the aisles to a
healthy lifestyle



Walking down the aisles to a healthy lifestyle

Pharmacist Billy Black at ASDA Linwood brought his previous experience in health promotion to the 550 workers at the huge 24-hour supermarket and applied it to helping his colleagues to lose weight, stop smoking and make regular exercise and healthy eating part of their lives. Working in partnership with the store manager, Billy and his colleagues kicked off the programme by offering health checks at work. 122 people took up the offer and the results of the health check and recommended actions were shared with their GPs.

Planning walks at the workplace posed some challenges including planning around workers' shift patterns and negotiating busy car parks. ASDA Linwood took up the offer of support and training from Paths for All to plan routes, promote walking at work and train employees as volunteer walk leaders.

The walk organisers also took advantage of their huge work site. The pedometer challenge encouraged workers to log the number of steps they took as they went about their daily work. 40 people took the pedometer challenge and were amazed to see the results and just how much walking you can fit into a working day.

Getting people started with an easy workplace walk can lead on to other types of physical activity. The recently appointed Health Champion at ASDA Linwood will be busy planning on how to keep people walking and moving on to new activities. Already the store has organised golf tournaments and a sponsored walk is being planned too.

The programme was so popular that ASDA management decided to appoint a Health Champion for their West of Scotland employees. They realised that a healthy workforce are more motivated, have better attendance, have less sickness, and are less likely to seek employment elsewhere. The project has developed from its Linwood roots to become a nationally supported ASDA workforce 'Healthy Lifestyle' initiative.

Billy has some advice to other walk organisers, *"make the challenges fun and get different departments competing against each other to record the most steps, it's amazing how competitive people get! Try and arrange prizes for different categories for that extra little bit of motivation."*



walk at work

For more information on getting your workplace walking, on training, pedometer packs or grants see your Health at Work representative or visit www.workplacewalking.org.uk

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