

Health Walk Leaders Update

August 2025



It is lovely to volunteer on a Wednesday evening in Weston to experience being a leader and seeing lots of happy walkers enjoying the sunset. We are planning to find out if all of you are also having a positive experience being a walk leader through an online questionnaire that will be distributed in the autumn.

We have quite a few new leaders joining our scheme (detailed below) which certainly takes off any pressures some leaders maybe feeling especially as other leaders take holidays.

Thank you for all the time you give on a regular basis, keep up the great work.

Health Walk Leader Training

Our next training is on **Monday 15 September 2025** at the Town Hall from 10am-1pm.

GetActive@n-somerset.gov.uk'. At the bottom, there is a 'Better Health NS' logo with a Facebook icon, and two website links: 'https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/get-active/walking/' and 'https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/walk-leader-training/'. At the very bottom are logos for 'Health Walks', 'Better Health North Somerset', and 'North Somerset Council'."/>

Please do encourage anyone who is currently walking with you who might be interested AND who would make an ideal walk leader!

An overview of the training:

- Outline the aim of the Health Walks Scheme in North Somerset.
- Highlight the positive impact exercise can have on health in the widest sense.
- Support those who most need to become active to attend walks on a regular basis.
- Understand the role of a walk leader from completing the paperwork required to making sure safety and enjoyment is a priority on all walks.
- Be clear about the practicalities of running a safe and enjoyable health walk.

North Somerset Walk Fest

National Walking Month took place for the 5th year running with its aim to celebrate all things walking, highlight walking opportunities locally and nudge people to walk more.

We worked with Bristol Walk Fest to align branding and with funding from Bristol Airport Diamond Fund (thanks to Catherine) .

What was on offer:

Online booklet – all things walking (groups, walking sports, wellbeing walks, walk and talk, footpath group, health walks, etc). 24 providers, 171 walks/activities, 79 unique walks

Promotion of Walk every day in May, walking routes, walking groups

Workplace Walking challenge - 20 teams take part from 11 workplaces, with 125 people.

Facebook – 45.5k reach throughout May, most popular post reached 19.6K reach

Website visits: 9,566 page views throughout promotional visits, 38% of overall website visits. Most popular page visited - overall NS Walk fest info page – above website landing page.



Evaluating the Health Walks Scheme

Once again thank you for all the support that you gave between January and April this year to encourage as many walkers as possible to complete the evaluation. A full report is being written as I write this newsletter and we will be sharing it with you in the autumn. To give you a taste of some feedback here are a few paragraphs that gives some insight into what we found:

- Average weekly attendance across all groups: 238. 170 survey responses, majority 65+ and female.
- Length of time respondents have been coming to the walks: 17% walkers Ten years+, 21% walkers between 5-10 years, 29% walkers between 2-5 years, 14% walkers between 1-2 years (20% did no answer).
- Attendance: 72% go every week, 21% go every other week, 3% once a month, 4% did not answer.
- Are you more active since joining the health walks: 44% do more, 55% do the same, 6% do less
- If health walks were not available, 51% said it's unlikely they would join another group
- 184 individuals have at least one long term health condition (this means some individuals have ticked more than 1 LTHC), including 34% with high blood pressure, 22% with high cholesterol, 12% with cancer, 12% prediabetes
- A list of benefits was available for individuals to tick up to 5 which were most important to them: 94% meet others/make friends; 74% for physical health; 71% to keep mobile, 40% to lift mood, 27% to feel less lonely, 23% mental health, 15% maintain independence.



As mentioned above we will be asking all volunteers to complete an online questionnaire regarding why they volunteer in October.

Refresher session for walk leaders – 15 July

For those who didn't get to the above last August we repeated the session last month with a new cohort of leaders! As expected, it was totally different and we had some valuable feedback when focusing on 'Going Back to Basics whilst leading a health walk'.



Conversation covered:

- Editing of the risk assessment to accommodate some additional information.
- Making it clearer when sending emails, they have either gone to all leaders or only main leaders.
- Ways of getting more walk leaders.
- Availability of walking routes from other groups.
- Make key contact information available for each walk in case others want to attend walks or cover leaders*.
- Access to the latest paperwork. All paperwork is now on the website so all groups can have access to the most up to date information:

<https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/hw-paperwork/>

This includes:

- Walker Registration Form
- Health Walker Survey
- Accident & Incident Form
- Walker First time briefing for Leaders and for Walkers
- Key leader contact numbers

(*These numbers are already on publicity material but if you do not wish to share your number, PLEASE let us know).



Health Walks North Somerset - New Walker Briefing

Welcome to North Somerset Health Walks, we hope you will find walking with the group enjoyable.

All paperwork can be requested to be photocopied. I wanted to highlight the New Walker Briefing document that enables every new walker to fully understand how the health walks are managed.

Text messaging from The Cedars surgery

Emily Moore a GP based at The Cedars Surgery in Worle has a focus on preventative Medicine and has been working closely with us to gain an understanding of the physical activity work we do.

Through texting a selection of patients about health walks and the opportunity to become a walk leader we have had over 25 patients calling us to enquire about the health walks programme in Weston-super-Mare.

We are hoping this can be done across surgeries in North Somerset to encourage those who need it most to become active through attending a health walk. (This will of course be carried out with consideration of the capacity of each walking group).

Update on Health Walk Groups/Leaders

- The monthly walk in Congresbury has been continuing from the youth centre in the village since the café closed. It will however stop after September if walker numbers remain low.
- New leaders from our training in July have joined Weston (Jan and Pete), Clevedon (Helen) and Nailsea (Julia).



Volunteer Training Day - 8 July

- A new walking group has been set up in Banwell (in the photo above). Amy who works for Banwell Parish Council has managed to find five volunteers in the village to support her in leading monthly walks. The next one is on Monday 1 September at midday from Banwell Youth Club.
- A few of our groups struggle with leaders when leaders are on holiday so if you wanted to be put on a standby list to help, please let me know.
- Eileen from Congresbury will be a walk leader on the Yatton walk as and when required.

National News:

Every Move Matters: what moves you?

The NHS South West are urging people living in North Somerset to celebrate how they move as part of the Southwest Every Move Matters campaign. Moving just a little each day can build a stronger, healthier future.

Starting with simple movements could be the first step towards reaching the recommended physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes a week (just 20 minutes a day) for adults, as set out by the Chief Medical Officer.

Movement looks different for everyone, from walking the dog to dancing in the kitchen. #EveryMoveMatters – there is no wrong way to move, only your way. Everyone is encouraged to find their own way to move more and to recognise the strength they are building along the way.



- Every Move Matters – any movement is better than none, even short bouts of activity add up and contribute to overall health.
- Move More, Sit Less – break up long periods of sitting with light activity to reduce the risk of health issues like heart disease.
- Start Small, Build Up – begin with what you can manage and gradually increase over time.

Walk Leader Feedback

As we are about to put together an online questionnaire for all of you to hopefully complete, I thought I would share a few paragraphs of some feedback I received from a long-standing volunteer (ten years+).

Why do I volunteer as a Health Walk Leader?

It's a good question and you probably go into it thinking you can make the world a slightly better place by doing so. The reality is probably not too far from the truth. It can be frustrating that you don't really get as many of those who should get out and walk but for those who do go, I like to think that we do make a difference.

The feedback we receive is that for around an hour a week we take people out of their normal life and let them experience something different. Be it just some new places they have never been before, facts they never knew before, or simply the pleasure of speaking with different people.

Leader from Worle group

If you have any contributions for the next update in Nov/Dec please get in touch as well as any ideas of how we can celebrate **20 YEARS** of Health Walks next year!

Thank you once again for making Health Walks in North Somerset such a success.

Kira, Catherine and Lucy

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