

Free, safe, enjoyable... Calderdale's Walkabout scheme

The secrets of WHI's success have been uncovered following an evaluation of Calderdale's Walkabout scheme by students from Leeds Metropolitan University's BSc physical activity exercise and health course.

Running for three years as part of the WHI scheme, Walkabout organises group walks across Calderdale led by trained volunteer walk leaders. With WHI funding due to finish in



October 2005, Leeds Metropolitan University was asked to evaluate the project in an attempt to attract future funding. As part of the project evaluation, four

- if they felt they had benefited from walking with the scheme
- how they would like to see the project develop

dissertation students were invited to interview walkers and volunteer walk leaders to find out

The students found that the main determinants of joining Walkabout were that it is free, safe, convenient, enjoyable and provides social interaction.

Enjoyment of being outdoors was also a common determinant for people to join Walkabout.

As one student reported 'there are few physical activity interventions which involve being outdoors which are

accessible and for people of all ages and abilities.'

Below is a selection of the anonymous comments gathered by the students from walkers and walk leaders

"I wouldn't do it on my own."

"At the time I wasn't so good than when I first joined, so it's very good for people who have had operations or not been out of the house."

"I know my sister said...things were really getting her down and I said to her, just come on the Sunday walks, we all have such a laugh and you'll feel better... so it does work mentally."

"I just long for fresh air."

"Mainly to meet people, that was the main thing... since my husband died."

"Well there's no charge you see. It's not like your trendy fitness clubs that attract... office workers who are prepared to pay a yearly fee."

"As a woman you couldn't walk on your own."

"I've got high cholesterol so I'm supposed to get my heart pumping."

"Being a walk leader has meant my confidence has increased so much over the last year."



North Lincolnshire Health Walks Partnership

Ray and Derek: Life on the walks

WHI in North Lincolnshire has been running for two years and is proving very successful, attracting not just female walkers but many males too. Attendances are regularly between 25 – 40, with up to 60 attending on occasions. The walks are varied both in length and scenery, with some walks in the North Lincolnshire countryside and some in the villages and towns.

Ray and Derek explain how valuable they found walking as part of a group.

Ray: "I lost my wife two years ago and it has really helped. I've only missed a few walks since and I really love it. The walks have opened up another



Ray (left) and Derek having a rest.

world and given me another set of friends. I love the company and the walk leaders are great. Although getting to the walks can be a problem I find it good exercise and feel a lot better both mentally and physically."

Derek: "My wife and I are coming up to our 50th walk with this initiative. It has made me fitter and improved my social life. The people are nice, they all speak to you. I write a bit about the walks when I get home, what I learned and how easy or difficult parts of the walk are. I also find that if I don't make a walk people notice and mention that they missed me, that's lovely"

New walk packs launched

Fantastic new walking packs are going like hot cakes in Hull and Hambleton.

The pocket sized packs contain advice on walking and give simple routes with short local walks. They are aimed at people who walk in the WHI groups but also wish to go on more walks on their own or with friends.

In Hull, packs were produced by the Specialist Health Promotion Service, Hull & East Riding Primary Care Trusts. The packs contain five walks, each in a different location round the city. The pack launch has been supported by a poster campaign in 180 of the city's bus shelters. The posters are placed alongside bus timetables and advertise local walks, together with a phone number for people to contact for more information.

In Stokesley, Hambleton Strollers walking group has launched the first of a proposed

series of packs for the Hambleton district. Each pack contains six walk cards, a town map and a series of tips on exercise and health. They are available free from libraries, leisure, health and tourist centres.

Most of the WHIs produce walking packs. Contact the group nearest you for a pack.



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Popularity grows and grows

The Walking the Way to Health Initiative (WHI) is now in its fifth year and has never been more popular with walkers across the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Set up in 2000, WHI is led by the Countryside Agency and British Heart Foundation. It aims to get more people walking, especially those who do little exercise, by running walks lasting between 30 and 60 minutes which provide a safe and friendly opportunity for people to get exercise.

Inside this newsletter are fantastic examples of some of the projects which have helped make WHI so successful – from helping individuals and local community groups to join in organised health walks, to promoting independent walking through the 'Walking from Home' scheme and the launch of walk packs.

Julie Rhodes, WHI coordinator in Yorkshire and the Humber says: "Each year WHI seems to get bigger and bigger. Its popularity is due to the fact that walks take place in the local community, mainly on level ground and are led by trained volunteer walk leaders. In 2005 we had almost 600 trained walk leaders leading more than 5,000 walkers.

"Walks are designed to be a pleasant and enjoyable way to improve fitness and health as well as providing opportunities

for social interaction. Inside there are over 30 schemes listed covering virtually all areas of the region.

"There's more good news for walkers too in that all these schemes are set to continue once the main funding for WHI runs out during 2006. Primary Care Trusts, local councils and charities including Age Concern and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers have all agreed to support WHI in the coming years."



Walk from Home scheme transforms lives

A unique 'Walk from Home' scheme in Keighley is helping to transform the lives of older people who have lost the confidence to go outdoors, after having a fall or following a period of illness.



For Mary Moffatt, age 93, the scheme has helped her regain confidence to walk alone outdoors for the first time in a year or so.

Out of 206 WHI schemes in England, Walk from Home is the only one where volunteer walkers accompany individual older people on short walks to help them regain the confidence to go out, to increase their activity levels, reduce isolation and improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Mary was referred to Walk from Home by a physiotherapist at the local hospital where she had been attending a balance and exercise class to improve the mobility of older people who have had falls. Mary has had several falls over recent years and although her mobility did improve, once back at home she wasn't confident enough to go out anywhere on her own for fear of having another fall. For almost a year she didn't venture very far from her home except on the occasions that she could find someone to go with her.

This came as a blow to Mary as she had always been an active and independent lady. She was concerned that her fear of going out was cutting her off from people and she began to feel quite isolated and lonely.

Following referral to Walk from Home she was introduced to Margaret Croft, one of 26 Walk From Home volunteers. Mary and Margaret hit it off straight away and started taking short walks together each week. At first they walked for short distances near Mary's home, then as Mary's confidence grew they went further afield, catching the bus into town to look round the shops for instance. Both Mary and Margaret say that they have benefited from their walks. Apart from the physical benefits from getting out more often, Mary says: "I have really enjoyed Margaret's visits, as she is such good company."



Walk from Home coordinator Maureen Basierak adds: "This scheme has had some marvellous results. It is especially important when you consider that inactivity among older people is a major public health worry. Not only is it adding to the burden of cardiovascular disease but research has shown that it is also contributing to frailty and dependence in old age and an alarming increase in the number of falls and fractures."

For further information contact:
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Contact details for a group to walk with in your area

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 The Grove, Station Road, Royston,
 Barnsley, S71 4EP
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Bradford

Bradford City Health Walks
 West Bowling Health Action Project
 104 Gaythorne Road, West Bowling
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 49 East Parade
 Harrogate, HG1 5LQ
 Helen Steventon
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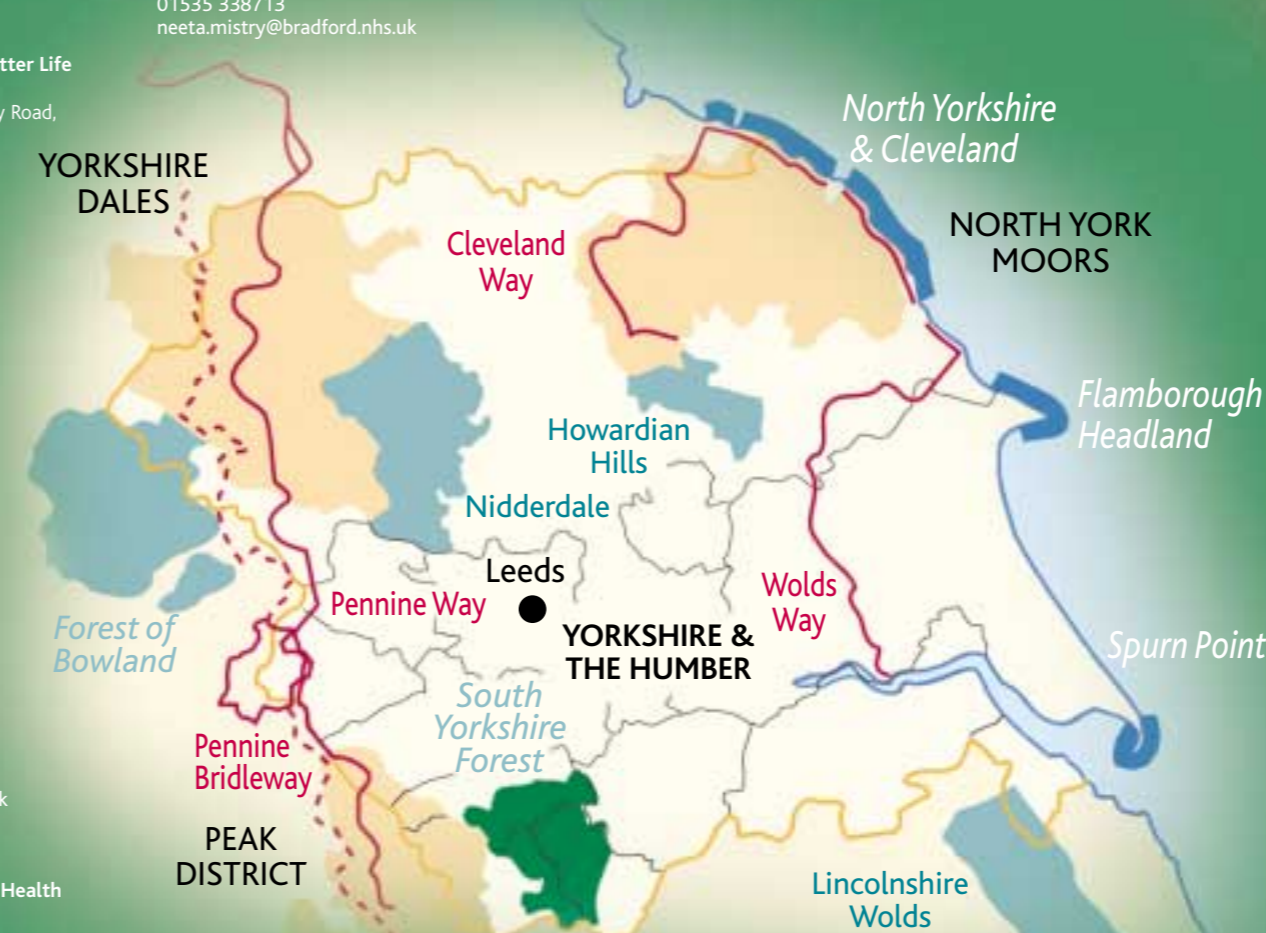
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