

Walk Aberdeen



active 
lifestyles



A simple guide to setting up a social walking group



Step-by step guide to setting up a social walk.

What you need to know...

A social walk is a short (up to an hour), low level, risk assessed walk led by a trained Walk Leader. Walks are free to attend and generally open to all, although there are some 'closed' walks which may have been set up to meet the needs of a specific group. More information about walks can be found on the Paths for All website.

Walk Aberdeen, Sport Aberdeen's walking project, can provide training, guidance, support and paperwork to any group planning a walk. Groups will be expected to have suitable Walk Leaders available and to promote their walk.

This guide is designed to provide an overview of how to plan a group. If your walk will need to be adapted to suit the abilities of your group, then you will already have some experience of their needs. Walk Aberdeen can provide guidance and discuss adaptations that you may wish to consider to make your walk more inclusive and this is also covered on the Paths for All Walk Leader training course.

Walk Leaders

Walk Leaders can be volunteers or members of staff. The Paths for All Walk Leader training course is delivered locally (or online) at various times throughout the year, depending on demand, and covers everything you need to get started including route planning, appropriate walk pacing and risk assessments. This training is available free of charge to anyone who is looking to support an existing walking project or set up a new one.

Volunteer Walk Leaders can have access to free public liability and professional indemnity insurance through the Scottish Health Walk Network. This would need to be requested on the online application to join the network. Walks can also be delivered as a 'Sport Aberdeen' walk. This would need to be discussed with Brian Harrison, Sport Aberdeen Walk Coordinator prior to walks being planned.

The above insurance does not cover paid staff, they should be covered by their organisations employer's liability insurance. Paths for All Walk Leader training is usually recognised for insurance purposes - organisations should check with their own insurance provider.

First Aid

Walking is a safe activity but Walk Leaders should understand their responsibilities if a walker has an accident or takes ill on a walk (a briefing sheet is available). Online first aid training is available free of charge for anyone who wishes to expand their knowledge. Walk Aberdeen can deliver training if a suitable number of students show interest.

Initial steps involved in setting up a Health Walk:

Discuss whether your group/ community will support a social walk. We know it is a good idea and an ideal activity to promote community connectedness, however, it is important to check with your community that they would like to participate, before you put lots of time into training, planning and preparing a social walk.

Setting up a social walk - preparation

- Volunteers or staff should attend Paths for All Walk Leader training and a 'practice' walk if required by your organisation
- Walk Leaders then identify a suitable route for the participants you are planning on attracting. (Consider age, ability, distance, terrain, buggies etc)
- A simple risk assessment must be completed for suitable walk routes (generic RA available)

Delivering a social walk - pre-walk

Coordinators / Walk Leaders should:

- Ensure you have all the paperwork required
- Ensure the Health Walk Agreement card has been read by all walkers prior to the start of the walk
- Keep a register of names for each walk (for six months)
- Report any incidents to the Walk Coordinator using the appropriate form
- Ask all new walkers to complete a new walker form. Walkers can also register online direct with Paths for All
- Walk Leaders may decide to walk the route on the day of the walk to check risk assessments are still valid

During the walk, the Walk Leader should

- Introduce yourself and tell walkers where we are going
- Check the spread of your group, don't let people drop off the back or walk away at the front
- If possible (depending on Walk Leader availability) plan a route with a shorter loop available for less able walkers
- Try to move through the group to chat to different people (ensure they are coping with pace/ distance/ slope)
- Take charge at crossings, hold people up until the group is all together and cross as one block

Post-Walk

- Ensure all walkers have returned safely with the group (head-count)
- Try to chat to as many participants as possible to ascertain their health state (harder/ easier walk next week)
- Inform walkers of other 'gatherings' or activity opportunities
- Ask if everyone is planning on coming next week

Leading Health Walks is a simple and rewarding activity. Guidance is given in the Paths for All Walk Leader training course and the training manual given to all course delegates. This covers the main tasks involved in leading a group Health Walk. We recommend walking with a Health Walk group prior to attending the training.



Walk Aberdeen would like to thank Claire Turnbull, Aberdeenshire Health Walks Coordinator, for sharing a document, on which we have based this guidance.

Resources

This 'simple guide' will be supported by several resources that Walk Leaders and groups will find useful:

Walking Agreement - a Paths for All document which details the responsibilities of the organisation/ Walk Leader and what is expected from the walkers.

Walking Agreement - Covid-19 version - a Paths for All document which details the responsibilities of the organisation/ Walk Leader and what is expected from the walkers.

Register - this document details the common tasks the Walk Leader will complete during the walk. It also confirms the 'opt-in' by the walker to participate under the above agreement.

Generic risk assessment (RA) sheet - an overview of all the common risk for walking groups. A 'route specific' page (see below) would be attached on top of this for each route.

Template risk assessment form - there will be a sample risk assessment, blank RA form and a generic RA that covers most common hazards when out walking.

Example risk assessment form - completed risk assessment example for guidance. This would be completed and attached to the front of a generic RA sheet.

Insurance statement page - hoping to clarify any insurance questions or queries. This will vary group to group.

First aid guidance - an overview of how Sport Aberdeen expect Walk Leaders to respond to a first aid incident. There will also be some first aid hints and tips and a link to some free online training.

Accident report form - Example sheet for guidance.

To download these resources and to access current Walk Aberdeen information please visit:
www.sportaberdeen.co.uk/activities/walk-aberdeen

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