

WALKING FOR HEALTH



Walk Leader role description

The Walking for Health programme aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland by encouraging them to increase their level of physical activity through participation in regular health walks, which last from 10 minutes upwards.



Role

Walk Leader

Purpose

To lead short, accessible, community-based health walks for people wishing to improve their health through regular physical activity.

Specific tasks and duties

- Commit to leading walks on a regular basis.
- Research and plan routes for walks, and identify any potential hazards/risks.
- Be familiar with the hazard identification/risk assessment and the route you are walking.
- Ensure that new walkers complete a health walk questionnaire before they take their first walk and schedule annual updates.
- Keep participants' information confidential.
- Keep a written register for each walk.
- Welcome the walking group and give a brief talk before starting off, including information on the walking route and potential hazards/risks.
- As a front leader, indicate to walkers when to start their brisk walking, when to cool down and, if necessary, when to change direction.
- As a back leader, carry the first aid kit as well as a whistle or mobile phone. Ensure that everyone completes the walk, or if anyone needs to stop early, ensure they get back to the start safely.
- Attend regular supervision and support meetings.
- Assist with developing a walk programme and help publicise the Walking for Health programme.

Requirements

- Enthusiasm for walking.
- Good communication skills.
- Friendly, sociable personality.
- Reliability and punctuality.
- Non-judgemental attitude.
- Willingness to undergo basic training and work as part of a team with other leaders.

Location

Walks can take place in urban or rural areas throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland as long as the route has been assessed as suitable for health walks. Walk Leaders are encouraged to join an already established group within their locality or establish a new walking group with support from their local Walking for Health Coordinator.

Training and support

All Walk Leaders will be required to attend a one day health walk training course prior to leading any walks. Walk Leaders are encouraged to attend emergency life support/first aid training. In some areas, this may be organised by local Walking for Health Coordinators. Additional training sessions will be organised to

address any specific areas identified by Walk Leaders.

Insurance cover

Free health walk insurance cover is provided for trained Walk Leaders who are leading health walks in a voluntary capacity independent of any established organisation. Insurance covers health walks throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland. To be covered, all Walk Leaders must ensure they are registered on a database held within their local Health and Social Care Trust. In addition, Walk Leaders must:

- complete a hazard identification/risk assessment of the walking route;
- maintain a register of all people on the walk;
- ensure that each participant has completed a health walk questionnaire.

Those leading health walks within their role as an employee or volunteer with a group or organisation must ensure they have appropriate insurance cover.

Please note that for insurance purposes, a parent or guardian must accompany children under the age of 18 on a walk.

Resources provided

All new Walk Leaders will be provided with a luminous safety bib. Other resources may be available from local Walking for Health Coordinators.

Supervision

Regular network meetings will be organised by the Walking for Health Coordinators to provide Walk Leaders with the opportunity to discuss any concerns. The coordinators can also be contacted by telephone or email to discuss any issues or concerns.

Commitment

Walk Leaders will be able to participate for as few or many walks as they wish, although it is hoped they will wish to participate on an ongoing basis.

Accountability

Walk Leaders are accountable to their Walking for Health Coordinator:

