

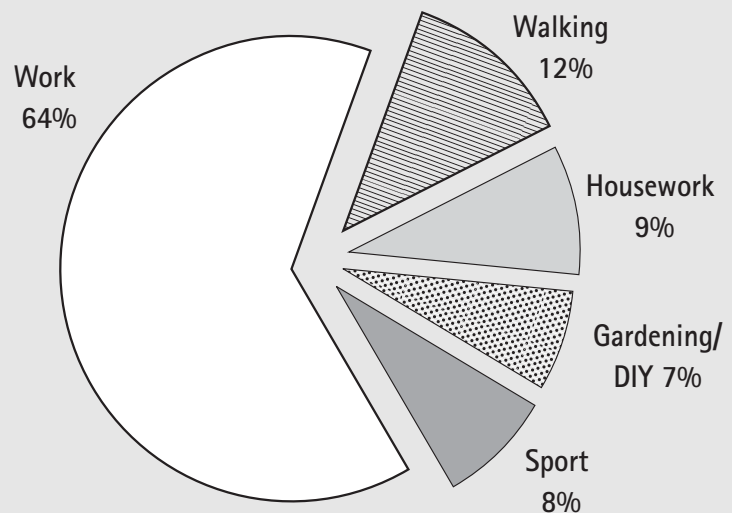
# Active travel as physical activity promotion

*"Physical inactivity is a cause of ill-health for millions of people. Our strategy, 'Let's make Scotland more active', sets challenging targets: 50% of adults and 80% of children to reach minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022. To meet these targets we must help inactive people to build activity into their daily lives. Encouraging walking and cycling will be key to our success."*

*Mary Allison, Physical Activity Co-ordinator, Scottish Executive*

## Physical activity: it's not just sport

contributions to total activity among the active population



Source: NCSR/UCL/Health Survey for England 1998/UK Data Archive

Sport accounts for 8% of the total physical activity carried out by active adults in this country

Changes to the way we live, such as the growth in car use, have led to increasingly sedentary, inactive lifestyles. This inactivity can lead to health problems, such as obesity and coronary heart disease. Moderate intensity physical activity of at least half an hour (adults) or an hour (children) on five or more days a week is the minimum recommended by the Department of Health to maintain health<sup>(1)</sup>. Ideally we should all be taking more than this for maximum health benefits.

Sustrans believes that one of the easiest ways to reach the recommended daily amount of physical activity is to incorporate it into the daily routine, such as by walking or cycling to school or work. This "active travel" approach means that extra time does not have to be found for activity, and encourages a habit of being active, particularly important for children.

For this reason, it is important to make changes to the environment allowing people to choose cycling and walking. The National Cycle Network now carries almost 100 million active journeys a year<sup>(2)</sup>, both walking and cycling, and usage levels continue to rise faster than the Network expands. 72% of users say that the existence of the Network leads them to be more physically active<sup>(3)</sup>.

Although many policymakers' minds turn to sport for the promotion of physical activity, many other options are available and many people will not choose to engage in sport.

Over the last few years, physical activity programmes have been set up across the country, to support people beginning or returning to cycling and walking and build confidence and ability in a safe, secure environment.

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*The National Cycle Network, with 100 million walking and cycling journeys a year, is an important environmental intervention promoting public health*

## Types of active travel promotion projects

Programmes aimed at individuals tend to focus on those at higher health risk, such as cardiac rehabilitation patients. They are usually designed to make participants more able, so that they can graduate to a group programme.

Group programmes often have trained volunteers as leaders. Small, social, beginners' groups, which meet on a regular basis, play a large role in encouraging confidence and walking and cycling skills, as well as providing an incentive to keep going.

Participants can use these skills outside the group, ideally to replace a journey that would otherwise be made by the private car. Schemes are usually local, and so introduce participants to local cycling and walking routes.

The Countryside Agency's 'Evaluation of a health walks scheme' found that "just over half the participants did more walking in addition to the led walks", and that "these people were more likely to walk rather than drive"<sup>(4)</sup>.

Participants can also move on to further challenges, for example to become volunteer ride or walk leaders, or join a beginners' running group, rambles' group or cycle touring group.

An indication of the long-term impact of these schemes comes from the Salisbury Doorstep Walks initiative. More than 18 months into the project, 1 in 5 participants were still walking further and were still using the project resources to identify all new routes<sup>(5)</sup>.

This information sheet includes case studies of a number of schemes and also some general information on setting up and running this type of physical activity programme.

# Case studies

## "Walking the Way to Health" Initiative and Paths to Health

Walking the Way to Health (WHI) is an umbrella scheme set up in England and Wales by the Countryside Agency and British Heart Foundation, to support and co-ordinate local health walks. At the national level it provides training, marketing materials, innovations such as the Step-0-Meter campaign and an accreditation scheme to recognise and raise the quality of local work. Regional case officers provide local advice and support along with networking opportunities for local groups. A learning network is about to open, giving everyone the opportunity to share the information and learning.

*"In England we are more than half way to our target of encouraging more than a million people to walk more. We are supporting around 300 local walking for health schemes; we have trained 6,000 volunteers and are working with 150 Primary Care Trusts. The impact we are making on the quality of lives of some of our participants is astounding."*

*Peter Ashcroft,  
WHI Manager*

Contact: *Jasia Krabbe,  
Countryside Agency,  
01242 533258,  
jasia.krabbe@countryside.gov.uk  
www.whi.org.uk*

In Scotland, Paths for All and Scottish Natural Heritage have created a sister programme, called Paths to Health, now rolling out local schemes across the country.

For further information contact: *Lindsey Gray or Angie Hawkins,  
Paths to Health (Scotland),  
01259 218855,  
info@pathstohealth.org.uk or  
lindsey.gray@pathstohealth.org.uk*

Wales now have two case officers for Walking the Way to Health, and a number of local projects have been set up. For further information contact:

*Ageliki Politis,  
North Wales,  
01248 385799,  
a.politis@ccw.gov.uk*

*Miki Miyata-Lee,  
South Wales,  
029 2077 2459,  
m.miyata-lee@ccw.gov.uk*

The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland has published "Walking and cycling opportunities in Northern Ireland" listing the organisations involved, available from:

*Kim Kensett,  
Eastern Health and Social Services  
Board Area,  
028 9032 1313 ext 2447,  
kkensett@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk*

*Nicola Browne,  
Northern HSSBA,  
028 2563 5575,  
nicola.browne@homefirst.n-i.nhs.uk*

*Angela Corr,  
Southern HSSBA,  
028 3752 0500,  
acorr@adhsst.n-i.nhs.uk*

*Magella Magee,  
Western HSSBA,  
028 7186 5127,  
mmagee@westcare.n-i.nhs.uk*

## Knowle West Healthy Walking Group

This scheme is part of Bristol Walking the Way to Health, and encourages local people to walk for the health benefits. The scheme targets people of all ages, including those with disabilities and recovering from illness.

Walks, led by trained volunteers, take place on several days of the week to encourage people to come along

regularly. The social side is very important, and walks usually finish in a café where people can gather to socialise and discuss upcoming walks.

The walks take a variety of themes, including local walks, visits to local attractions, natural history walks with a local expert and 'mystery' walks! They are usually free, with charges made only for transport, entry to attractions and refreshments where necessary.

Contact: Cheryl Martin,  
Knowle West Development Team,  
0117 3773 461,  
cheryl\_martin@bristol-city.gov.uk

## Exeter Walking Project and Stroll On, Exeter!

The Exeter Walking Project is a partnership of Exeter City and Devon County councils and Sustrans, supported by the New Opportunities Fund. It was established to help develop a walking strategy for Exeter, and to increase the amount of walking as transport in and around the city. Work was undertaken on walking links, providing routes between areas and improving footways.

A pilot route between St Davids station and the city centre has been signed using walking times rather than distances, as many people are unable to judge distance.



© Philip Inshall

Many people find walking time a more useful guide than distance

A walking group, Stroll on, Exeter!, was also set up as part of the strategy, aimed at local people. It is a health walks scheme with six walks a week, and a seventh, evening walk during the summer months. Trained volunteers lead the walks and participants are recruited through publicity at local healthy living centres, GP surgeries, community centres, cardiac rehabilitation programmes, libraries and by word-of-mouth from existing participants.

Contact: Jacqui Stevens,  
Wonford Community Hall,  
01392 436369,  
strollonexeter@fsmail.net  
<http://beehive.thisisexeter.co.uk/strollon>

## Health on Wheels

Health on Wheels, funded by the Department of Health and managed by Life Cycle UK, aims to improve people's health through cycling. Participants are referred from GP surgeries and hospital specialist clinics with conditions including hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, overweight, arthritic conditions and chronic pain.

Participants are offered one-to-one cycle training over a six week programme, tailored to individual needs and suitable for beginners or those returning to cycling. Health on Wheels also provides free route planning to avoid heavy traffic, information about local rides and events, and the loan of a bicycle if needed. Life Cycle UK has a pool of experienced cycle training instructors who have completed specialised cycle training, First Aid and basic life support skills.

The individual sessions are arranged at the participant's convenience, usually starting from their own home to familiarise them with local routes.

Contact: Paul Wheatcroft, Health on Wheels Coordinator, Life Cycle UK,  
0117 934 2746,  
health@lifecycleuk.org.uk



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Cycle trainer Veronica Pollard with trainee Valerie Robson, returning to cycling after major heart surgery and 35 years off the bike



© Pete Stevens

Stroll on, Exeter! walkers cross the new Millers Crossing bridge in Exeter

## Cycling for Health

Cycling for Health was developed by Cycling Projects and Stockport Centre for Health Promotion. It is an eight week programme, aimed at people who have completed Phase 3 cardiac rehabilitation. Initial funding was from the DfT's Cycling Project Fund, matched by Stockport Health Promotion.

Participants join led rides along local routes, increasing their knowledge of places to ride. Friends and family are encouraged to come along. Participants also receive training on road safety and bicycle maintenance.

Patients who completed the first course have now formed their own cycling club, endorsed by the British Heart Foundation. Cycling for Health also welcomes participants referred by their GP for other health reasons.

Contact: *Ian Tierney*,  
Cycling Projects,  
0161 745 9099,  
[ian.tierney@cycling.org.uk](mailto:ian.tierney@cycling.org.uk).

## Pedal Back The Years

Pedal Back The Years in Cornwall is a programme of easy, led bicycle rides, run by a 20-member partnership, including Sustrans. The major funders are the Countryside Agency (Rural Transport) and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Sport Action Zone.

Target groups for Pedal Back The Years are:

- sedentary adults
- adults with minor, stable physical limitations, e.g. pre and post natal women, people with disabilities and people with weight control problems
- people with depression and mild anxiety
- communities with a high proportion of disadvantaged and socially excluded people.

Participants are sign-posted to the project from various sources, including front line community

workers and general practitioners, and through advertising.

Cycles are provided by local cycle hire firms, and the rides take place on trails or quiet roads. Each ride is led by two trained support riders; one leads and the other rides at the back, to ensure that participants are comfortable and no one gets left behind.

Contact: *David Readman*,  
Pedal Back The Years,  
01726 627816,  
[enquires@pedalbacktheyears.info](mailto:enquires@pedalbacktheyears.info)  
[www.pedalbacktheyears.info](http://www.pedalbacktheyears.info)

© Lindley Owen



*Pedal back the years riders enjoy the fun and adventure of cycling as well as camaraderie and relaxation*

The pilots will run for 2 years; evaluation results will be shared with interested groups nationally such as Health Authorities, local government and PCTs.

The goal of the West of Cornwall PCT LEAP project is to create a partnership of the health and leisure sectors to provide information and support for people at risk of or recovering from conditions such as heart disease and stroke, some cancers, type II diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, musculo-skeletal

problems, obesity, falls and accidents and mental ill-health.

A team of four 'Activators', with specialisms in young people, older people, partnership with referral agencies and development for providers will provide a support

network to encourage and support people aged between 13-16 and over

At Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport, patients who have completed Phase 3 cardiac rehabilitation or with other health conditions are given short talks on local physical activity initiatives from:

- a Stockport Sports Trust gym instructor
- the Walking for Health co-ordinator
- the co-ordinator of the local physical activity referral scheme
- and one of the PCT's cycling development workers about 'Cycling for Health'.

Patients can then chose to attend one of these four options as appropriate.

Contact: *Anna Twelves*, Stockport Primary Care Trust,  
0161 426 5090, [Anna.Twelves@stockport-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:Anna.Twelves@stockport-pct.nhs.uk)

## Local Exercise Action Project (LEAP)

Ten Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in neighbourhood renewal areas across England are running pilot schemes to help people increase their physical activity, via a £2.6 million programme funded by the Department of Health, the Countryside Agency and Sport England.

55 to become more physically active in their own locality.

For further information on the LEAP projects visit: [www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/healthandsocialcaretopics/healthyliving/localexerciseactionpilots/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/healthandsocialcaretopics/healthyliving/localexerciseactionpilots/fs/en)

For further details on the West of Cornwall PCT LEAP please contact: *Alex Ollivier*, Health Promotion Cornwall, 01209 216967,  
[Alex.Ollivier@centralpct.cornwall.nhs.uk](mailto:Alex.Ollivier@centralpct.cornwall.nhs.uk)

# Setting up a scheme

## How do you attract participants?

Schemes can be 'self-referral', where participants decide for themselves to attend, and either just turn up or register in advance as the scheme requires. An alternative approach is to promote the scheme to general practitioners and community health workers, so that they can 'recommend' patients to the scheme.

This type of scheme is sometimes also known as an 'exercise referral scheme', but 'recommend' is usually the preferred term in the health sector as it reduces the implication of potential liability on the health professional.

Both approaches rely on good marketing of the events to ensure that potential participants are informed.

## Getting local support

The local authority should have cycling, walking and health promotion officers who will be able to offer support and advice, and may help assemble funding. NHS trusts, including PCTs, are naturally active in physical activity promotion and should be able to recommend patients, though you may need to gain their trust.

Community and other local groups, including Ramblers and cycle clubs, may know of local funding sources, and can assist with volunteers and other local contacts. You could also pool needs; for example, save money by arranging first aid training for more than one group.

## Practical considerations

A reasonably detailed project proposal and budget will enable you to plan all aspects of the scheme, and will help with the ongoing planning. It will also provide evidence to potential funders that your scheme is well planned and managed. You will need to include:

- evidence of need
- target groups
- project objectives and timescale
- budget
- route identification and risk assessment
- health and safety
- insurance
- equipment
- volunteer recruitment
- clearance for working with children and vulnerable adults, if necessary
- training and management
- event promotion
- monitoring and evaluation
- and other elements unique to your scheme.

## Will they keep coming?

A good scheme offers:

- regular sessions
- enthusiastic leaders and volunteers
- opportunities for socialising
- a variety of different routes and types of events
- regular communication
- incentives, such as discount at local outdoor stores, as a reward for regular attendance.

Walking the Way to Health and Paths to Health have a range of publications, many available for free, giving advice and suggestions on marketing schemes, planning routes and producing materials.

## Monitoring & evaluation

These days, monitoring and evaluation are no longer optional. Funding bids which omit monitoring are unlikely to succeed, and no NHS body will offer follow-on funding without evidence of success. Evidence from your scheme will also contribute to policy formulation and support this approach to physical activity promotion. From the project management point of view, feedback from your participants will allow you to make any changes necessary to maximise the success of your scheme.

Many existing schemes use self-completion questionnaires to gain information from participants, but sometimes more robust evidence is required, such as blood pressure monitoring. You may need clearance from your PCT Local Research Ethics Committee, so it is advisable to discuss your evaluation and monitoring programme with them while you are planning your scheme.

## Further information

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"Walking the way to Health"  
Initiative [www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)

Paths to Health  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk/pth](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pth)

Cycling for Health email group  
[www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/](http://www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/)  
[healthonwheels](http://healthonwheels) (run by Life Cycle UK)

CTC – The UK's national cyclists'  
organisation  
[www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)

The National Centre for Volunteering  
[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

The Ramblers' Association  
[www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)

The Department of Health  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

Central Office for Research Ethics  
Committees  
[www.corec.org.uk](http://www.corec.org.uk)

Criminal Records Bureau  
[www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)

Women's Running Network  
[www.womensrunningnetwork.co.uk](http://www.womensrunningnetwork.co.uk)



## Useful reading

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Department of Health, 2001 Exercise  
Referral Systems: A National Quality  
Assurance Framework,  
[www.doh.gov.uk/exercisereferrals](http://www.doh.gov.uk/exercisereferrals)

Faculty of Public Health, July 2001  
'Let's Get Moving – A physical  
activity handbook for developing  
local programmes'

## References

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- 1 **Department of Health**, quoted in Health Development Agency, 'Physical Activity: Introduction'
- 2 **Sustrans**, 2003 Network News issue 20
- 3 **Sustrans**, 2003 National Cycle Network user monitoring report 2002
- 4 **Countryside Agency**, 2000, 'Evaluation of a health walks scheme', Research Notes, CRN 6
- 5 **Sustrans**, 2002 Active Travel Newsletter Issue 2

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