

Walking With Care

Taking residents for walks outside of the care home



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Hub

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Foreword

This pack aims to provide care home staff, particularly activity coordinators, with all of the information, advice and inspiration needed to deliver safe successful guided walks for their residents. This pack covers the practicalities of walking with elderly participants, but not how to provide specific care for residents during a walk.

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1. Benefits of Walking

Walking is a free way to stay fit that enables individuals to get out into the local community, and improves mental wellbeing.

The UK Chief Medical Officers have highlighted walking as one of “the easiest and most acceptable forms of physical activity that can be incorporated into everyday life.”

Some benefits of walking are:

Physical Benefits

- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Prevents or manage various conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes
- Lowers blood sugar
- Reduces joint pain
- Strengthens bones and muscles
- Improves mood/mental wellbeing
- Improves balance and coordination

Social Benefits

- It's easy to build up gradually and continue long-term
- Walking with a group makes people feel safer and more confident
- It can easily be incorporated into a day-to-day routine
- Gives residents the chance to interact with their local community

Although the ability to walk reduces with age, the best way to combat this is to continue walking. The risks involved in walking (falls) are outweighed by the damage done by not walking - all of the consequences of a sedentary lifestyle.



2. Purpose of your Walk

The type of walk you plan depends on its purpose and this tends to fall into 3 categories:

- Health and fitness
- Wellbeing and socialising, mixing with others
- Amusement, entertainment, enrichment

Of course, all three would be good, but you should know which of these is your priority.

Health and fitness

Start short and slow, gradually building up the pace or distance each session.

Use pedometers or apps like Strava to record a step count, time spent walking, or distance covered.

You could set a very short loop to walk laps of, (indoors or in a garden first) and set goals to increase the number of laps walked. This is ideal for groups of varying ability, because they can each walk a different number of loops.

Walks designed solely for the purpose of exercise are less interesting, and residents may need to be motivated and encouraged to take part. Use some of the other tips in the categories below to make the activity more engaging.

Wellbeing, socialising

Guided walks are a really effective way to “break the ice” and to help people chat with one another. People don’t feel the pressure of a face-to-face conversation, and the scenery on the walk offers things to talk about.

Pre-plan some topics to talk about during the walk, relating to the places you go and the things you see.

Plan regular breaks to chat, on benches or in attractive areas, and stop for a hot drink at the end.

Invite family members or dogs (on short leads).

Amusement, entertainment, enrichment

Walks are easy to make an enjoyable and engaging activity and can be tailored to the interests of individuals who go on the walk. These walks are ideal for people in wheelchairs.

Some examples of themed walks include:

- History walks
- Nature walks
- Seasonal walks
- Family walks
- Memory walks
- Walking to, or around, a public space to “watch life go by”



3. Choosing the Route

Before you risk assess a walk, you'll need to know which route you're going to take. A good route is key to a safe, successful walk, and there are many factors which determine this.

Whether your walk is starting from the care home, or is in another location you've driven to, take these things into account when choosing your route:

- Access to welfare facilities such as benches and toilets
- Time of year and likely weather, daylight and route conditions
- Length and difficulty of route, and known problem areas or hazards
- Impact on other route users, including walkers, landowners or neighbours
- Avoid steps, inclines, kerbs and poor quality paving
- For longer routes, try to plan in an "escape route" which allows you to get back to the care home/van easily in an emergency (i.e. sudden change of weather)
- Make sure an ambulance can access you at any point
- Distance: gauge residents' fitness by walking around the care home or garden first. It's always better to start small and go from there
- Access to a defibrillator
- Paths suitable for wheelchairs
- Use circular routes for engaging, varied walks
- Use linear routes to keep things simple

Useful tools to search for appropriate routes

Google Maps' 3D function gives you a good overview of what an area looks like, and where the paths are. Google Street View allows you to view finer details like kerbs, steps, pavement quality and other obstacles. The Hub has put many of Stockton's traffic-free paths on Google Street View over the past 2 years, so you can view the quality of the surface of paths.

Things may have changed though - by all means use Google to get a feel for the best route, **but always walk the route yourself before risk assessing it.**

If you aren't local to the area, talk to some locals! Find dog walkers or friendly neighbours and ask them where they would recommend going.



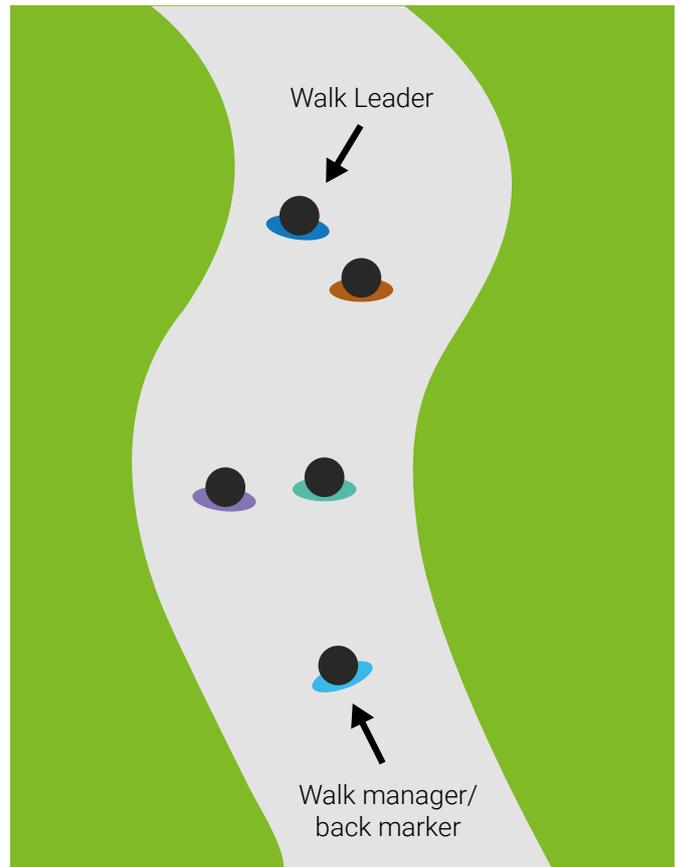
4. Staffing

When walking, the walk manager (person in charge of the walk) shouldn't be at the front. Instead, it's best to designate a staff member as the "walk leader" and place them at the front, this allows the walk manager to keep at the back and oversee all participants.

The walk leader will show the way, set the pace, and will encounter any dangers before other participants do. The walk manager can keep an eye on the whole group and prevent anyone from being left behind.

If you have three or more staff, the walk manager can move freely around the group as the other staff perform the roles of walk leader and back marker.

Make sure each staff member knows what their roles are, and where they should place themselves within the group.



Role	Responsibilities
Walk Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the risk assessment Assign roles to other staff members Deliver a walk briefing to staff and participants Supervise the overall operation of the walk
Walk Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the walk in the right direction Set the pace Encounter any dangers on the route

Walks are good for staff too; a chance to get out of the care home and enjoy the fresh air. Mention this to other care home staff and they may be more inclined to help you deliver the walk!

5. Preparation and Equipment

The correct prep and equipment is essential to a safe and enjoyable walk.

On the day of the walk:

- Ensure residents have good nutrition and hydration before the walk
- Check the weather forecast, and take into account wind speed as well as temperature and rainfall. The Met Office forecast shows possible gust speeds as well as sustained wind speeds, which is important when guiding participants with low balance
- Show photos of the walk to the residents, to encourage their participation and stimulate memories of the walk

The following equipment is key for participants:

- Clothing needs to be warm or cool enough, so layers are ideal. Hats, gloves and scarves are easy to remove as participants warm up whilst walking
- Ensure residents have appropriate glasses and hearing aids
- Footwear - wearing the appropriate footwear (trainers, supportive shoes without any heel or shiny soles) can prevent accidents and falls, and make the walk more comfortable
- Ensure walking aids and ferrules (rubber stoppers) are in good condition

Summer Walks Check List	
First Aid Kit	
Trainers/supportive footwear	
Water	
Medication	
Map	
Risk assessment	
Mobile Phone	
Sun cream	
Sun hats	
Light jacket	

Winter Walk Check List	
First Aid Kit	
Trainers/Supportive Footwear	
Water	
Medication	
Map	
Risk Assessment	
Mobile Phone	
Warm clothes	
Hat/Glove/Scarf	
Spare clothes	

You can add more to these lists, such as documents, certain medication, walking aids etc.

6. Managing the Walk

These are the procedures/guidelines we would recommend you think about when you are starting your walks:

- Ideally you need a group of people with a similar walking ability/ fitness. It helps to keep the group together, but also helps prevent people from over-exerting themselves
- Allow some time for participants to get up slowly and recover their balance before beginning the walk, especially if they have used a vehicle to travel to the walk
- To help set the right pace and keep the group together, place the slowest walkers to the front of the group
- Ensure head counts are done periodically throughout the event
- Watch for stragglers and periodically check that the back marker is in sight
- Be considerate of other route users. For example when approaching an oncoming group do not take up the whole of the path; narrow down to single file
- Monitor progress at known hazard areas and be aware of new hazards which may arise
- Check that assistants are able to guide people as planned and cover road crossings effectively
- Consider the possible need for setting up 'safe return' contact arrangements so that a search can be made for a walk group that hasn't returned on time and can't be contacted

Tiredness and over-exertion are one of the main causes of falls. Monitor participants and look out for these signs of tiredness and over-exertion:

- Laboured breathing
- Profuse sweating
- Excessive thirst
- Excessive yawning
- Uncoordinated movement
- Dizziness and feeling of sickness
- Flushed face/very pale face
- No longer talking or being sociable



7. Emergencies

Walking is a relatively low risk activity, however it is important to prepare for any accidents or emergencies that may happen. Below are some suggestions to take into account should an emergency take place on the walk.

- Call 999
- Have an emergency reporting system so you can contact a nominated person within the care home to explain the issue
- Ensure there is a First Aider, especially if the walk will be in areas that are not easily accessible to emergency vehicles
- During an emergency, having a high ration of staff to residents becomes important. This allows the walk organiser or first aider to deal with an emergency, while another staff member(s) support the rest of the group (i.e. keeping them warm or occupied)
- It is useful to have another staff member in the care home who is able to drive out and collect a resident, or the rest of the group, if needed



8. Risk Assessing

If you have chosen a suitable route, then the walk itself shouldn't present any significant risks. Plotting a route using Google Maps or Strava is good, but you will still need to walk your route first to identify common risks like road crossings, kerbs, slopes or sections of rough surfaces.

Highlight points in the risk assessment that should be mentioned in a staff briefing, so all staff are aware of when to expect them.

Inevitably, things can change on the day, so this is a dynamic risk assessment. Look out for changes during the walk, and make sure you take note of this for next time you deliver the walk.

To help, we've included example documents which you are welcome to use:

Appendix A: Dealing with common risks on guided walks

Appendix B: A blank risk assessment template for a guided walk

Appendix C: A completed risk assessment - A walk from Victoria House Care Home to Stockton's Infinity Bridge

To view and download these documents, or a digital version of this pack, visit

www.thehubstockton.com/carehomes



9. How the Hub Can Help

You know your residents and their needs, but if you get stuck planning a guided walk then we'll do the best we can to help. Two ways we can be really useful are:

Recommending routes

Whether that's from the front door of your care home or places best to travel to, we're happy to suggest routes and destinations, and to help you find the safest route to take.

Advising with risk assessments

If you're unsure how to mitigate certain risks, you can contact the Hub for help. We're used to taking large groups of elderly participants over mixed terrain, so we may be able to suggest some tips to keep everyone safe.



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