



WALKING CONNECTS

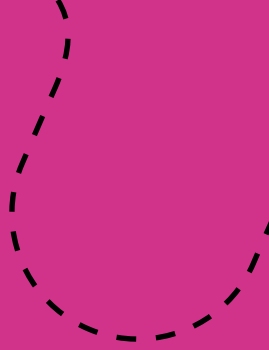
TACKLING LONELINESS
IN ADULTS OVER 50





“Physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age.”

World Health Organisation



WE ARE LIVING STREETS, THE UK CHARITY FOR EVERYDAY WALKING.

We want walking to be the natural choice for everyday, local journeys.

We want to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people of all generations to enjoy the benefits the simple act of walking brings. For over 90 years we've been a beacon for walking. In our early days, our campaigning led to the UK's first zebra crossings and speed limits. Now our national campaigns and local projects deliver real change to overcome barriers to walking and our ground breaking initiatives encourage millions of people to walk more.



WHEN WE REFER TO 'WALKING' IN THIS BOOKLET, WE INCLUDE PEOPLE WALKING WITH THE USE OF MOBILITY AIDS, INCLUDING WHEELCHAIRS.





WALKING CONNECTS

The simple act of walking has a hugely positive impact on our physical health and mental wellbeing. Not only is it good for our health, but walking also brings a whole host of social benefits, such as forming friendships and creating more connected communities.

Our exciting new initiative **Walking Connects**, funded by the Department of Transport, aims to connect and inspire people aged 50+ to get walking to help tackle loneliness.



Many people over 50 are physically inactive, feel socially isolated or are at risk of becoming so. Getting out and about in our neighbourhood is a vital way of maintaining independence and feeling socially connected. However, many of us feel discouraged from walking due to poorly maintained and cluttered pavements, inadequate crossings, feeling unsafe or a lack of places to rest.

Walking Connects inspires over 50s to get out and about on engaging led walks and provides the opportunity to voice their need for changes to their local walking environment.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Walking Connects is delivered in four areas in England: Bolton, Lancashire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wigan.

Our dedicated delivery team aims to rally up volunteers to be trained as **Walk Leaders**. These Walk Leaders then go on to host fantastic local **Led Walks** in their neighbourhoods.

We deserve our streets to be uncluttered, safe and accessible for all. That's why we are also enlisting a team of volunteers

to carry out **Community Street Reviews**. Volunteer Community Street Reviewers are trained and supported to make recommendations on how to improve their local walking environment.

We want our work to help connect people! That's why we're also aiming to set up **Local Groups** in each area. These groups will allow people to keep in touch and join together to improve their local streets.



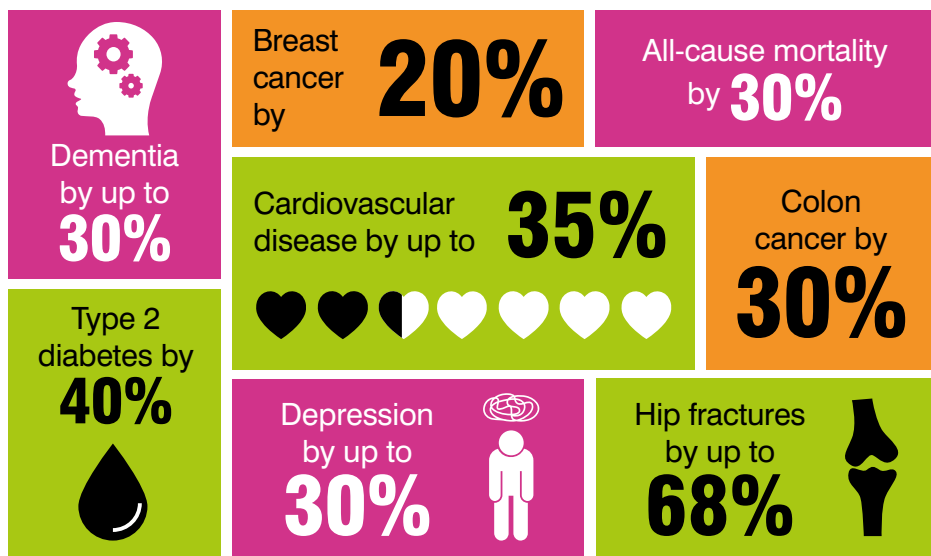


WHY WALK?

We all change as we get older, but what matters is how well we age. By keeping physically active, we can help reduce the risk of illness in both the short and long-term, preserve memory and cognitive ability, and reduce the possibility of falls.

Walking is a great exercise choice for adults over 50 as it's gentle and low impact but brings plenty of health benefits. The Department of Health and Social Care recommends that older adults should aim to be physically active every day, even if it's just light activity, and do at least 2½ hours of moderate intensity exercise a week.

REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY REDUCES YOUR RISK OF:



Source: Public Health England (16 October 2019) Physical activity: applying All Our Health.



As well as all of the physical health benefits walking brings, a recent major study¹ of older adults found that those who spent approximately 2½ hours a week walking were more socially active and had a sense of better overall wellbeing.

¹ Source: Walking to Wellbeing: Physical Activity, Social Participation and Psychological Health in Irish adults aged 50 years and Older, The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing

“Physical activity and social interaction are vital to a person’s wellbeing, in particular as they go through middle age and beyond. I wholeheartedly support Living Streets’ ambition to encourage manageable, affordable exercise and combat social isolation through the simple act of walking.”

Darren Holmes – Public Health Officer, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

“Being a project coordinator for Walking Connects is an amazing job. The interest and enthusiasm we find from local people and organisations to take part is infectious and reinforces how important the initiative and its aims are. Supporting people to get out there and explore, from their own doorstep, no matter how far or for how long, gives me the motivation to get out of bed each day.”

Charli Brunning – Walking Connects Project Coordinator, Living Streets

“My stamina is much better and I can walk more than I did. I’m also noticing more things as I walk than I used to because we talk about the things we see on our walks. I’m more aware of the trees and beautiful flowers rather than just walking from A to B. Walking isn’t a chore; it’s a joy! I feel more alert and I really look forward to the walks, anticipating when they are and where we will be going next and I’m excited.

I feel happier now as well, being part of the group. One of the ladies, Pauline, and I have really hit it off and have become friends and we’re still keeping in touch.”

Sheila – led walk participant, Walking Friends Wales



LED WALKS



Our led walks are the ideal path to explore your neighbourhood in new and inspiring ways. You could be missing out on fascinating historical architecture or secret havens of natural beauty right on your doorstep!

Our volunteer **Walk Leaders** are local people trained to deliver interesting, low-impact walks of around 30 minutes at a steady pace, tailored for those over 50. Our led walks are designed to

be safe and accessible to all. Carers or family members are always welcome to join too.

Along the way there are plenty of opportunities to stop and admire all the sights and sounds of the local area. It is also a brilliant way to meet new people and have interesting conversations. Some walks even end up in a café with groups chatting over a cuppa!

WALK LEADERS

Are you passionate about walking in your local area and want to help create a more connected community? Take the next step and become a volunteer **Walk Leader!** Leading walks is a great way to share your own enthusiasm for getting out and about as well as showcasing your local knowledge.

AS A WALK LEADER YOU WILL:



Plan and lead walks between 20-30 minutes for small groups, ensuring the route is fun, accessible and safe.



Help people discover their local area.



Give people the confidence to walk on their own as well as in a group.



Involve local communities and organisations.



Demonstrate all the benefits of walking.

We will support you all the way to becoming an amazing Walk Leader. There is a fun day of training where you will be able to meet fellow Walk Leaders, join other walks for inspiration and receive regular support from our Project Coordinators.



JOIN OUR GROUP OF VOLUNTEER WALK LEADERS TODAY!



COMMUNITY STREET REVIEWS

We should all be able to walk on safe and accessible streets that are free from clutter and pollution. Our **Community Street Reviewers** assess whether the local areas are accessible for everyone noting issues such as uneven pavements, a shortage of seating or a lack of safe crossings. If these issues are important to you, why not become a volunteer Community Street Reviewer yourself?

AS A COMMUNITY STREET REVIEWER, YOU WILL:



Review at least one area in your neighbourhood documenting any obstacles for those wishing to walk



Share your observations and recommendations



Support Living Streets by writing a report of your findings, which will then be sent to the local authority



Help to improve your local area to encourage more walking

Our Living Streets Project Coordinators will be on hand to support you every step of the way. You will receive training on how to conduct the review along with all the necessary resources.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE TO YOUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, GET IN TOUCH TODAY AND VOLUNTEER AS A COMMUNITY STREET REVIEWER.

LOCAL GROUPS



Our **Local Groups** create change one street, community, town and city at a time. They are made up of passionate and committed local people who represent the voice of their neighbourhoods, making streets easier, safer and more accessible for everyone.

- We currently have 75 Local Groups across England, Wales and Scotland.
- Our Local Groups often organise around a focus, like walking to school, walking for wellbeing, road safety, accessibility and more.
- Living Streets Local Groups are innovators for change, helping inform our action with projects like Cut The Clutter and the Parklet campaign.
- They speak out on the changes they want to see to make walking accessible and inviting in their community.

WE SUPPORT LOCAL GROUPS WITH:

- Weekly Zoom drop-ins;
- Events funding;
- Start-up grants;
- Materials and clothing for walking in all weathers;
- Insurance for events;
- Promotion of their work through our blog.

Walking Connects aims to set up Local Groups in Bolton, Lancashire, Stoke-on-Trent, and Wigan.





WALK WITH US

If you'd like to find out more about Walking Connects or want to get involved, please get in touch with one of our Project Coordinators listed below.

CHARLI BRUNNING LANCASHIRE (BURNLEY, PENDLE AND WYRE)

Charlotte.Brunning@livingstreets.org.uk | 07936 951182

LIZ NEARY BOLTON, WIGAN AND LEIGH

Liz.Neary@livingstreets.org.uk | 07593 578158

PREET SANDHU STOKE-ON-TRENT (HANLEY AND LONGTON)

Preet.Sandhu@livingstreets.org.uk | 07718 970820



If you would like to join or start a Local Group in Bolton, Lancashire, Stoke-on-Trent or Wigan, please get in touch.

AMY FOSTER

Amy.Foster@livingstreets.org.uk

LIVINGSTREETS.ORG.UK/WALKINGCONNECTS

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