

Final Evaluation of the Walk Once a Week (WoW) Scheme (Wavehill, 2012)

The WoW project – an incentive-based Primary school walking intervention – started in London and has since grown to include around 1800 schools across England. The project received approximately £800,000 in funding from the Department of Health (DH) to expand WoW and introduce it to approximately 750 new schools across England. An evaluation of the project was commissioned to run parallel to the two year funding programme 2010-2012.

Key findings from the 2010 – 2012 evaluation surveys

The following results were obtained from pupil hands-up surveys held each year from 2010 to 2012 (n = approx. 20,000 per year)

- Pupil walk-to-school rates increased from a pre-intervention baseline of 43% in 2010 to 54% in 2012; peaking at 59% in 2011.
- The number of pupils being given a lift fell from 43% in 2010 to 28% in 2012.
- If given a choice, more children would choose to walk in 2012 than 2010 (41% compared to 32%), and fewer would choose a lift (28% compared to 18%).

Teachers were supportive of the programme with 90% finding it easy to run.

The independent evaluation concluded that: the WoW project has been a success and the number of pupils walking to school has increased. The impact is highest in year one, suggesting that the reward and novelty of the badges peaks within 12 months; however, continued use of WoW beyond this initial first year still leads to a sustained increase in walking far above the baseline.

Hertfordshire Walk to School Outreach Pilot Project (Wavehill, 2012)

The overall aim of the Walk to School Outreach (WSO) pilot was to increase the number of children walking or travelling actively to school, rather than using other transport options.

The WSO project was a pilot study which was designed to test the hypothesis that by offering more intensive walk to school support and tailoring interventions to target local walking barriers, better walking outcomes could be achieved than the national campaign which is more focussed on rewards and uses more of a 'light touch' approach. A range of enhanced interventions took place. Some were designed to increase the range of walking rewards and resources (t-shirts, pencils, etc.) and some were activities to raise awareness and participation.

The analysis of the travel mode data from pupil hands-up surveys shows that:

the proportion of children walking to school increased from 46% to 53%, while the number walking part of the way (through park and stride) increased from 8% to 18%;

the proportion of children who were driven to school fell from 36% in 2011 to 19% in 2012 achieving a key target for the project.

(N = 3,800 before and 2,800 after)

These are all positive outcomes which indicate that the outreach approach is successful.

The teachers surveyed supported the walking interventions and found them easy and quick to run. Strider visits and special assemblies were the most effective activities, with the core WoW resources of badges and wall charts proving the most effective resources. 87% of teachers at participating primary schools noted that they would like to continue the WoW activities, which suggest that the interventions and the benefits should be sustainable.

Living Streets Walking Works – Pledges - Follow up survey results (Sustrans, 2012¹)

Walking Works is a Living Streets project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of the Travel Actively portfolio. In total 33,657 individuals completed Walking Works pledges between 2009 and 2011, 457 of these completed the follow up survey. This report presents direct comparisons of responses on walking levels and physical activity.

Before the project 35% of respondents who made a pledge at registration were achieving the recommended levels of 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days per week. After the project this increased to 49% of pledge respondents. The proportion of respondents walking for some or all of their journey to work on five or more days per week increased from 38% to 44% and from work increased from 35% to 44% as a result of the programme. The proportion of respondents who walked at lunch time on five or more days a week increased from 21% to 26% as a result of the project. The proportion of respondents who did not walk at lunch on any days of the week decreased from 26 % to 22%. The number of respondents who walked for other journeys during the working day on five days a week increased from 26% to 34%.

Change in levels of walking for different purposes

- 32% of 423 respondents said the amount of walking they do for journeys to work had increased
- 33% of 424 respondents said that walking from work had increased
- 43% of 427 respondents said lunchtime walking increased
- 59% of 444 respondents said that the amount they walk for leisure had increased.

Following the redesign of the Living Streets website in 2011 a question was introduced about overall walking, 94% of 31 respondents felt that their overall level of walking had increased since making their Walking Works Pledge.

Changes to main mode of travel

Only participants using the redesigned Living Streets website were asked about their main mode of travel to work, of these, 30 responded at both registration and follow up. The percentage of respondents travelling on foot for all of their journey from remained at 23% between registration and follow up.

After participation

Respondents were asked which statements applied to them after taking part in the project. The most common responses were “I feel fitter” (54%), “I feel more healthy” (50%), “I am more active” (44%) and “I feel less stressed” (44%).

Value of health benefits

Health benefits from increased walking levels can be assessed through the World Health Organisation (WHO) Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) which puts an economic value on reduced mortality. The number of beneficiaries was calculated based on the proportion of survey respondents that were walking to and from work on three or more days per week following participation, having not reported this at registration. This was deemed to be the level required for a participant to be described as a ‘regular’ walker as it would involve walking on over half the days in a typical working week. The calculated number of beneficiaries was 2,798 assuming that survey respondents were representative of all participants. The mean average time reported

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walking to or from work was 15 minutes. Based on this, a journey time of 30 minutes per working day was applied. This increase in mileage was inputted into the WHO HEAT tool, and the current value of reduced risk of mortality resulting from the new walking trips, when accumulated over 10 years, was estimated by HEAT to be £3,881,000 in total.

Absenteeism

Studies have demonstrated that increased physical activity can reduce absenteeism though fewer short term sick days among a working population. Based on the increase in physical activity reported in section 4.2; 14% of people are now achieving at least 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days per week who were not previously doing so. The calculated number of beneficiaries was 2,363 assuming that survey respondents were representative of all participants. The economic benefit of this through reduced number of sick days is estimated to be worth £ 1,117,000 accumulated over 10 years.

Benefit cost ratio

Using the absenteeism value and HEAT calculation summarised in the table below a benefit cost ratio can be calculated based on the health benefits of the Walking Works programme.

Table - Economic value of health benefits from the Walking Works programme

Table 4-1 Economic value of health benefits from the Walking Works programme

	Value
HEAT for walking	£3,881,000
Reduced absenteeism	£1,117,000
Total benefits	£4,998,000

Value

This value does not account for any reduction in walking levels over time as some participants return to their previous behaviour patterns. Academic research suggests that this would have an impact on the long term effect of a behaviour change intervention. Sensitivity testing has been done to assess the impact on the BCR if only 50% of beneficiaries maintained their changed behaviour over the 10 year evaluation period (see table 4-2).

Table - Sensitivity testing of BCR calculation

Table 4-2 Sensitivity testing of BCR calculation

	100% maintained change long term	50% maintained change long term
Total benefit	£4,998,000	£2,499,000
Total cost of project	£563,136	£563,136
Potential BCR	8.9:1	4.4:1

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¹ Sustrans (2012) Living Streets Walking Works – Pledges - Follow up survey results