

Walking Befriending

A toolkit for brand partners
and local organisations



Introduction

This toolkit is designed for any organisation seeking to set up walking befriending as a standalone service, or as part of existing befriending or home visiting delivery. The project is ideal for older people who are inactive and would benefit from introducing regular exercise into their weekly routine.

We know for many older people starting regular physical activity can be daunting, whether it's for the first time or they are returning after a period of inactivity. We found that any walking activity was an easy way to motivate older people to start and continue moving.

Walking Befriending pairs older people with a volunteer befriender, for weekly walks in their local area. Walking has been shown to be the safest activity that can help an older person improve their health and has a positive impact on their overall wellbeing. With the support of a 'walking buddy' this form of exercise is more enjoyable, helps give older people the confidence to walk and can encourage them to keep moving when they find it harder to stay motivated.

By sharing some of our insights and experiences from the last two years, we hope this toolkit will act as a guide to help you deliver your own Walking Befriending activity.

What is Walking Befriending?

Walking Befriending is part of our befriending service and provides volunteer befrienders to accompany an older person on 1-2-1 short walks in their local area.

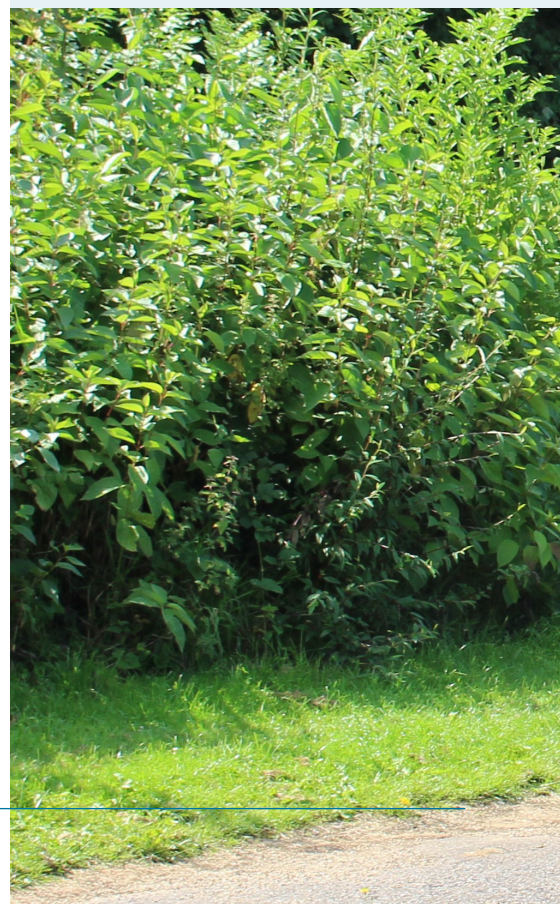
By starting off with short walks, and with an emphasis on staying in the local area, we were able to engage a wide range of people, including those who were living with long-term health conditions, had experienced a significant life event (e.g., bereavement, period of ill health) and those who were lonely or at risk of loneliness. The service is also suitable for people who don't wish to take part in group activities, but still desire companionship.

By giving the older person ongoing encouragement and friendly support, the befriender can help people overcome the barriers that stop them from staying active in later life. This may be nervousness when walking alone, worry about personal safety, lack of motivation and mobility issues.

In addition to supporting older people to stay active, the service is a great way to encourage new volunteers to the charity. It provides opportunities to increase volunteer recruitment from a wide range of volunteers and also encourages the volunteer and client to explore the local community.



Our walking befriending service recruited 73 clients who were paired with a volunteer walking befriender. Over 80% of these pairs walked together for at least 3 months, with many (over 60%) continuing to walk together for 12 months.



What is in this toolkit?

This toolkit covers how to develop your own walking befriending activity, with space to leave your own notes along the way.

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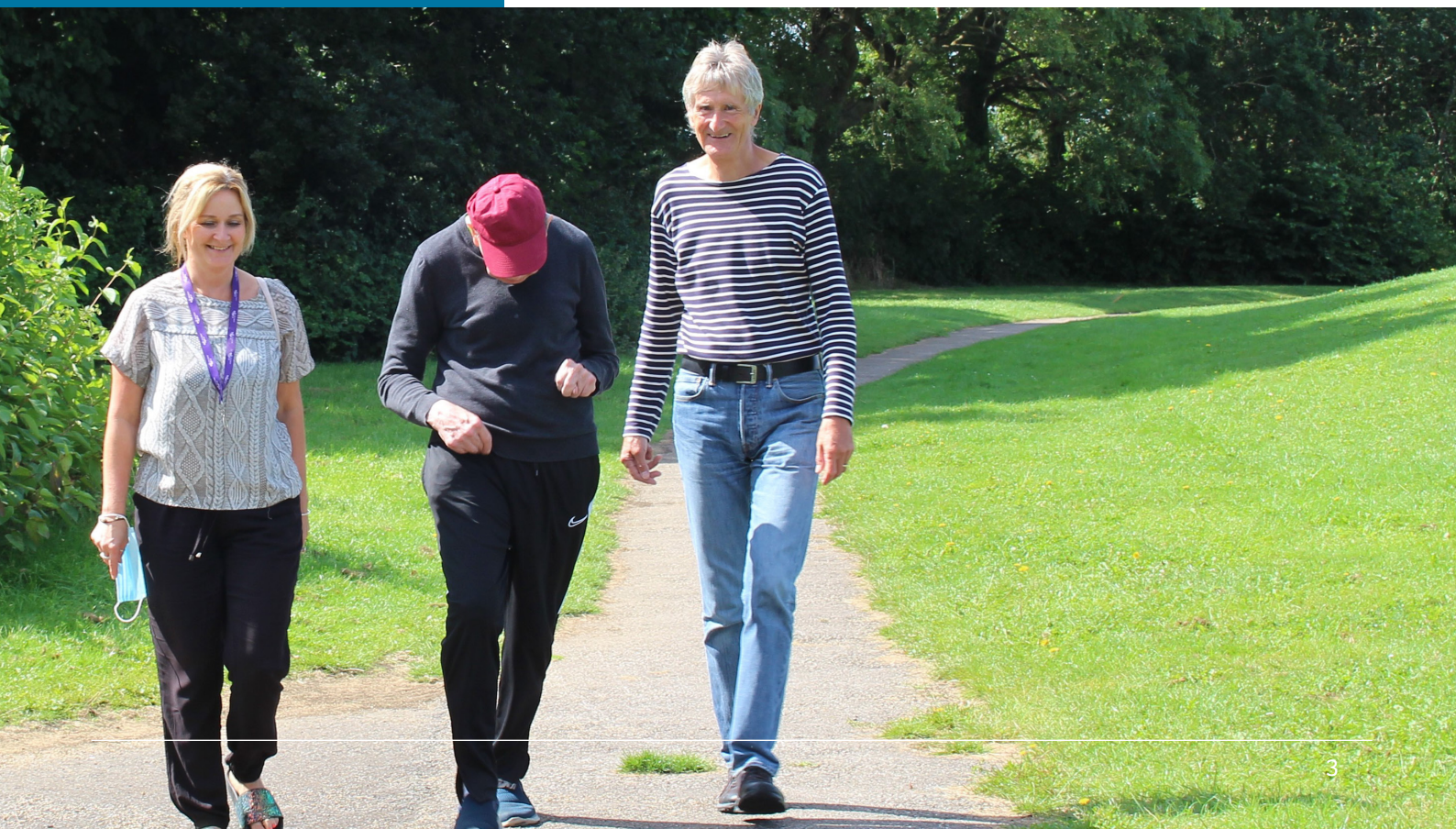
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Initial project development

Identify your target audience

Understand who you want to help. The service can be general, available to all older people or you may wish to target a specific cohort of people depending on organisational focus or strategic aims e.g., older people living alone, older carers, people living with dementia. Create a list of eligibility criteria, to help manage the flow of people being referred to the service.

Identify local needs and existing provision

What is available in your local area? Are there organised health walks and established walking groups? This is important to ensure services complement each other, aren't duplicated, or may offer follow on opportunities for people who build up enough confidence to take their walking further/for signposting.

It might be useful to trial the service in a small defined locality e.g. if based in a large county or city, initially sticking to a specific area or borough can help when focusing promotion, recruitment and building links with local organisations, whilst ironing out any kinks in delivery.

Develop partnerships

Speak to local organisations. It's useful to establish links with key organisations in the local area to aid recruitment (client and volunteer), connect with physical activity organisations, in addition to other organisations already known to you.

It can take time to create links with new partners, but this is especially important if you want to engage with a niche audience i.e. the bereaved, older carers, stroke survivors. Identify key contacts linked to your target audience and start the conversation early.

Don't neglect your existing contacts – reach out to organisations/groups you already have good referral pathways with. Do this alongside building relationships with new partners, to share the service with wider networks.

Consider client referral mechanisms – If your walking activity is to be part of an existing service, engaging with current clients can help to kick start your project (this works for pilot projects or full service).

Our service was aimed at people who had experienced a significant life event such as bereavement, time in hospital or were at risk of loneliness.

Clients span the age range 58 to 96 and 73% lived on their own.

Our key organisations included parish and town councils, faith groups, GP network, University Hospitals, Local Authority Sports Development & Adult Social Care Teams.

Promoting to encourage referrals

Promoting the service is key to reaching older people who would benefit from the service. Marketing your walking activity is best approached with a two-pronged attack;

1. Choose methods that will reach older people directly (local newsletters and publications, leaflets/posters distributed by staff),
2. Raised awareness of the service will generate referrals from their family and carers (social media channels, community venues).

Below are some points to consider.

Promotion

Let people know what the service is – if you must, rename it and make it clear what the service does. We have a long history delivering befriending in our area, so it made sense attaching the ‘walking’ descriptor to what we were already doing – to differentiate it from the existing service, and allude to physical activity.

Keep your website up to date with the latest photographs and case studies/ feedback from participants. Try to use engaging, encouraging images of people enjoying the activity and being outdoors in all seasons.

Create posters, flyers to share with community organisations and their networks. This can be changed seasonally to emphasise a year-round service. Social media content can be created as the service grows and will form important ongoing promotional opportunities. Use realistic but positive images.

Word of mouth is important – ensure the activity is promoted within the organisation. We found that many referrals came through our existing services, including social prescribing.

Establish new referral routes; this could include Social Workers, bereavement support, dementia services, social prescribing link workers, community mobilisers/people working at neighbourhood level.

Having a clear message, with a simple sign-up process will encourage self-referral from potential clients.

Notes:

- ? Where do your referrals come from?
- ? Who would you like/need to engage to encourage new client referrals?

Assessing suitability and managing barriers

There may be times a client comes forward to take part in the service, but it becomes clear they aren't suitable or may not benefit from the activity.

It's advisable to **speak to or meet the client** at the start to explain how the service runs and to pick up on any issues they might have early on. For example, we found that some clients who were referred by family, weren't really motivated to start walking, and this led to them quickly losing interest; clients who self-referred had a higher rate of retention.

A detailed registration form is essential to capture as much information as possible at the start, including long-term health conditions, recent falls or hospitalisations. This is important to help clarify the older person's capabilities and ensure the volunteer befriender is aware of anything that might be a barrier to their progress.

We chose to complete the registration form at the client's home. Following this, the Co-ordinator might take a brief walk with the client outside – this is particularly helpful to **assess a client's mobility** if they use a walker/walking aid. It helps us assess the client's current walking ability, and ensures the volunteer is aware of any additional needs before their first walk.

If any clients are not deemed suitable for the service, it is important that they are referred to alternative opportunities, either within the charity or in the local area.

“Very fortunate to have met Fred. He's punctual, plans interesting walks and I enjoy talking with him during our time. He empathises with my needs, physical and mental in a caring manner. He sets realistic challenges where I'm stretched to do more.”



Staff and volunteer resource

It's important to recognise that at the heart of service delivery are the staff and volunteers. They are essential in providing structure and play a significant role in the ongoing support for the older person.

How is the service structured

To set up a service of this nature, there needs to be at least one Co-ordinator. It may be helpful to have additional admin support, paid or volunteer, to support the service as the needs grow, and may include collating monitoring and reporting information. A pool of volunteers is needed on a ratio of 1:1, although some volunteers have been willing to visit more than one older person.

Like any other service, you will need to draw on small amounts of staff support, namely Volunteer Co-ordination (DBS checks etc) and communications support to produce leaflets and posters and to promote online and in physical locations.

Of those who participated for at least 3 months, 77% increased their walking activity (either the number of days they walked each week, or the duration of the walk or both the number of days and the duration). 30% of these participants reported they didn't walk outside their home at all when they joined the service.

We targeted local walking groups, older people's community groups and promoted the walking befriender role through Community Action MK to encourage new volunteers to the service – we have about 70 walking befrienders (mostly aged 50 – 69).

People furloughed due to Covid-19 increased our volunteer pool over the period. Some walking befrienders had to shield through lockdown, in some cases we were able to match their clients with a temporary replacement, to allow their walks to continue.

The role of the Co-ordinator

It is essential to have a Co-ordinator or person in charge of matching clients and volunteers. The Befriending Co-ordinator manages the team of volunteers, gives a short walk-briefing before the start of the service, and is the primary contact for any issues and ongoing support needs of the volunteer.

This role might be for an individual or shared between two people, depending on the size of service.

Do not underestimate the importance of the matching process

– based on a befriending model, pairings that prove to be the most successful are where people have been matched based on shared interests, where they live, availability during the day etc. Age and gender can also be important in the matching process, sometimes clients prefer a more mature, or a younger befriender and most of our clients prefer to be paired with someone of the same gender.

Based on the information given by both parties, the client and volunteer are matched, and a date is set for the first meeting between the volunteer, client and the Co-ordinator at the client's home. We chose to have all parties meeting together for the first time at the client's home, but you may prefer to conduct separate face-to-face visits.

At the first meeting, the Co-ordinator would arrange to meet with the volunteer 20 minutes earlier to run through training highlights and safety information. When everyone is together the client signs the registration form and completes a **baseline survey** (We tracked clients using three surveys - Sport England's Short Active Lives survey to measure physical activity, ONS Loneliness measure, a combined survey to measure loneliness, and Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWEBS) to measure overall wellbeing)

The volunteer and client agree the date and time of the next walk, which is recorded by the Co-ordinator. The pair are now signed off to start their walks together.

The Befriending Co-ordinator is the lynchpin of the service.

The matching process can be time-consuming but is at the heart of a successful service. Our Co-ordinator kept in regular contact with the volunteers via email, hosted befriender gatherings twice a year, and held a celebration event bringing together 'walking pairs' for a short walk, followed by lunch.



Volunteers and training

In our volunteer recruitment, volunteers were initially asked to commit to a one-hour visit, once a week. With a range of walkers, this allows time for arrival, a walking session and time to chat/socialise together at the client's home; volunteers were happy to spend longer on their walks as the relationship and the client's fitness improved, or make visits more than once a week.

Unless your delivery runs for a set length of time e.g., 12 weeks, 6 months etc, volunteers will be recruited on a rolling basis, and their start dates will differ. To support the training requirements, it is important to have the mechanisms in place to address the most important training needs first.

Basic Walk Training can be provided in house, using a mixture of online resources or the ones developed during our project. Resources are available in the appendices at the back of this document.

The most important aspect of the training covers safety and what to do in the event of an emergency. Make sure clear procedures are in place, and your volunteers know what to do and who to contact in an emergency.

A "train the trainer" approach can be utilised if there is the opportunity to attend walk leader training locally (often provided by local authority or group walking providers) with some adapting needed to simplify for 1-2-1 walks, as opposed to group walks. This will ensure resources stay within the organisation and can be used to train individuals or small groups of new volunteers, when necessary.

Walk training should be provided in parallel to any mandatory training provided by the organisation, including personal safety/lone working, safeguarding and an overview of the organisation. This will offer opportunities for personal development, and enable new and existing volunteers to identify other services that can support the wider needs of the older person.

Volunteers might benefit from completing a '**Befriending Journal**' once a month or following each walk, to record their thoughts and experiences over the period. We found this was a good way to remind volunteers of the role they are playing, encourage them to share how the client was progressing and offer feedback to help review the service.

“It's a comfort having someone to walk with, especially on days when it takes a little longer to get going.”



The ideal walking befriender is:

Supportive and keen to play a role in improving an older person's quality of life.

Someone who understands the benefits of regular activity.

A confident walker

Willing to provide ongoing motivation to the older person.

Empathetic and a good listener.

Understands the importance of communicating with the charity, as they act as a bridge between the older person and the charity.

Walking Befriending Delivery

This project provides a great opportunity to encourage older people to not only stay physically active, but to explore and engage with their local community.

Whilst walks may start in the older person's very immediate neighbourhood, you might find they are keen to venture further afield and take in new sights, or their favourite locations. This should be encouraged.

Duration of support:

Ideally, a walking programme that runs throughout the year is preferable, in order to maximise the benefits of regular physical activity and befriending contact. However shorter programmes can provide an opportunity to focus activity, and help clients move on to other local support, but still receive the benefits of ongoing long-term support.

Time of day:

Time of day: we found many older people preferred walks during the daytime, ideally between 11am-3pm, although late afternoon/early evening walks, can take place during the spring/summer, to accommodate the availability of volunteers and the needs of clients.

Route planning

As the walks start, volunteers should familiarise themselves with the older person's local area. If the volunteer is not familiar with the local area, they should first talk things through with the client to identify suitable walking locations or routes near their home.

When venturing further afield, planning walks in popular locations and known walking routes will ensure walks take place in a safe location, with public amenities and level/maintained paths.

Explore the local area – take advantage of riverside walks, canals, linear parks, and other scenic routes, just be sure to complete a risk assessment that can identify potential hazards and always consider the older persons' physical needs. Volunteers should remain vigilant on their walks, even in areas that are familiar to them.

Seasonal walks

Walk frequency was higher between March and October. We were able to provide walks during the winter, but adverse weather can disrupt weekly walks. During this time, consider taking walking routes that stay closer to home, or if accessible, find places that offer shelter from the elements, e, g. indoor shopping centres, covered walkways.



Our walking befriending pairs enjoy a range of walks, some chose a 'walk with a purpose' such as round their garden, to a local shop or the post-box, when neighbours often stop to chat with them.

Others plan a walk with a social element e.g. round a lake and a visit to the lakeside café. Some have moved on to longer walks that involve driving to a new location.





Volunteers should be aware of the general risks when out on their walks i.e., walking along the roadside, condition of paths, crossing roads etc. It is advisable for the volunteer to do a reccy/dummy run of the route, before walking with the client particularly if either of them is unfamiliar with the area or the older person has greater mobility needs.

Walks will vary in length and duration – 10 minutes might be the starting point for older people who are more frail, with people who are able to walk comfortably/steadily starting from 20 minutes and upwards. Volunteers should spend the first few walks getting to know their client's walking ability.

Many clients reported that they enjoyed the company of their befriender and the service had increased their confidence to walk outside their home. Only 28% of clients were walking outdoors at least 10 minutes once a week when they joined the service. By the end of 3 months this had increased to 85% with nearly 50% walking for over 30 minutes including several who were walking for over an hour.

Costs and fees

Even if setting up a small pilot service, you will incur some costs which will need to be monitored. Some costs are one-off, others are needed on an ongoing basis.



Item	Set up (initial or one-off costs)	Running cost (monthly or annual)	Notes
Salaries			
Other staff costs			
Recruitment			
Training			
Management costs			
Office costs			
Marketing & publicity			
Volunteer expenses			
Equipment			
Other expenses			

We were able to set up and run a two-year project thanks to funding and were able to provide a free service. This ensured we were able to make the service accessible to as wide a group as possible. You may wish to consider charging a small fee to offset costs/cover initial expenditure. This could be paid monthly directly to the charity, to reduce admin time and the need for befrienders to collect the money.

There might be the opportunity to apply for additional funds from local trusts and foundations, or you could open conversations with local commissioners working in Public Health, CCG's etc to explore the appetite for activity of this nature.



Next steps / future planning

As your service/project continues and you look to ways of making it sustainable, here are some suggestions on how you could maintain the benefits of the service:

Integrate the walking activity into your existing befriending service, creating a wider service offer which could also develop to include other activities. Utilising time and resources invested into setting this up can now be drawn on to ensure clients continue to benefit from the positive impact achieved.

Signposting clients to other local walking groups or other opportunities for suitable physical activity that may be available locally. This won't be suitable for all clients, but where appropriate, this will release trained volunteers to help new clients, and ensure participants are able to benefit from a wider range of activities. Consider collaborating closely with other organisations

Review the costing and funding of the service. Consider making a small charge to contribute towards the cost of the service where appropriate; this might be easier to introduce from the beginning of the service, or after a pilot. Alternatively, clients and volunteers may be willing to offer support in fundraising activities incl sponsored walks and community fundraising opportunities, to contribute towards costs to deliver the service.

Encouraging clients who have become confident walkers, to sign up as volunteers. This is a positive outcome, that will still address their need for social interaction, and widen the benefits of the service

You will hopefully have gathered some really powerful evaluation data and client stories demonstrating the positive impact your service has had to date. Use this to shout about the value of your service in promotional material and in any future applications for funding or when seeking collaboration with local groups.

“Walking has helped me get out and explore new surroundings. I love walking, I wait for my volunteer on the doorstep.”



Useful Resources



Walking Befriending
Registration Form

Walking Befriending is run by Age UK Milton Keynes. We hope you enjoy walking with us on a regular basis. To help us understand the benefits to you and the organisation, we need to collect information from you at different times.

Before you start please complete this form so we know your level of fitness and any specific health problems you have.

Please complete in block capitals.

Name

Address

Telephone no

Email.....

Date of Birth

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Do you live alone?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Do you have supportive family/friends living nearby?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

4. Have you had a fall in the last 12 months?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Have you been hospitalised in the last 12 months?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Reason

Length of time

6. Have you experienced a significant life event in the last 5 years?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please tick all those that apply

☐ Bereavement

☐ Divorce

☐ Retirement

☐ Period of ill health/hospitalisation

☐ Other.....

Walking Befriending
Registration Form

11. Being more active is very safe for most people. However, some people should check with their doctor before they start being more physically active.

a. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?

☐ Yes ☐ No

b. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

c. In the past month have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

d. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?

☐ Yes ☐ No

e. Do you have a bone or joint problem (for example, back, knee or hip) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

f. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you ticked yes to any of the above, or know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity you must seek medical advice before you start walking with us.

12. How often do you feel that you lack companionship? (please circle)

hardly ever some of the time often

13. How often do you feel left out?

hardly ever some of the time often

14. How often do you feel isolated from others?

hardly ever some of the time often

15. How often do you feel lonely?

often some of the time occasionally
hardly ever never

7. How did you hear about this project?

8. What currently stops you from walking regularly

☐ Poor mobility

☐ Health problems

☐ No one to walk with/don't like walking alone

☐ Nervous of the local area

☐ Not knowing where to walk safely

☐ Fear of tripping or falling

☐ Lack of motivation

☐ Weather

9. Have you ever been diagnosed by your doctor or health professional with any of the following long term conditions?

☐ COPD

☐ Asthma

☐ Diabetes

☐ High blood pressure

☐ Heart disease

10. Do you have a long term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

If yes, to the above, please tick all that apply

☐ Physical disability

☐ Learning disability

☐ Mental health issues

☐ Sensory disability

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Please tick here that you understand you take part at your own risk and will seek medical advice if appropriate.

☐ Please tick here that you agree to tell your walking befriender if you have any conditions that may affect you whilst walking or if there is a change in your medical condition.

16. In the past 7 days, have you done a continuous walk lasting at least 10 minutes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes,

a. In the past 7 days, on how many days did you do a walk lasting at least 10 minutes? (Please circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

b. How much time did you usually spend walking on each day that you did activity?

_____ hours _____ minutes per day

c. Was the effort you put into walking usually enough to raise your breathing rate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. In the past 7 days, have you done a cycle ride?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes,

a. In the past 7 days, on how many days did you do a cycle ride? (Please circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

b. How much time did you usually spend cycling on each day that you did the activity?

_____ hours _____ minutes per day

c. Was the effort you put into cycling usually enough to raise your breathing rate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. In the past 7 days, have you done sport, fitness activity (such as gym or fitness class) or dance?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes,

a. In the past 7 days, on how many days did you do a sport, fitness activity (such as gym or fitness class), or dance? Please circle

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

b. How much time did you usually spend doing sport, fitness activities, or dance on each day that you did the activity?

_____ hours _____ minutes per day

c. Was the effort you put into doing sport, fitness activities or dance usually enough to raise your breathing rate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Walking Befriending
Registration Form

Walking Befriending
Journal Notes

19. Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future		1	2	3	4
I've been feeling useful		1	2	3	4
I've been feeling relaxed		1	2	3	4
I've been dealing with problems well		1	2	3	4
I've been thinking clearly		1	2	3	4
I've been feeling good about myself		1	2	3	4
I've been feeling close to other people		1	2	3	4
I've been feeling confident		1	2	3	4
I've been able to make up my own mind about things		1	2	3	4
I've been interested in new things		1	2	3	4

20. To what extent do you agree with the statement ' I can achieve most of the goals I set myself'

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Prefer not to say

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree that most people in your local area can be trusted?

- ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Prefer not to say

Using and sharing information

Walking befriending is a local project run by Age UK Milton Keynes. By submitting this form you agree to Age UK Milton Keynes recording your details. Your personal details will be kept confidential and when reporting to funders any data you provide will be anonymised.

By signing this form I confirm that all the information provided is correct. I understand that I will walk at my own risk.

Signed Date

- We would like you to provide regular updates on how the walks are going
- This can be typed/written on this page, email, recorded electronically (audio app on smart phone/tablet) and emailed to the co-ordinator
- This doesn't have to be an essay! – we just want to capture your observations, as it will help us to understand how successful/beneficial regular walks are for our clients and report back to Sport England – Thank you for all your efforts

Name of Befriender:

Age:

Name of Client: (only needed on 1st record, or if visiting more than one person on this project)

Date of walk:

Time of day:

Length of time on walk:

Speed: e.g. slow, moderate, fast - could they talk to you as they were walking?

Location:

Weather conditions:

Any incidents/difficulties: e.g. out of breath, had to stop regularly, did they feel unwell etc

Client feedback or comments:

Befriender comments and observations Please consider, and add your thoughts:

How was the client's mood?

- ☐ happy/cheerful ☐ energetic ☐ content ☐ excited ☐ relaxed ☐ other (please specify below)
☐ sad/low ☐ anxious ☐ indifferent ☐ tired ☐ frustrated

Were you able to chat during the walk? If so, what topics did you talk about?
(e.g. family, the local area, things you spotted on the walk etc)

Were they happy to go for a walk on that visit or did you have to persuade them to leave the house?

How do you feel the regular walks are going? Have you seen any changes in their ability/willingness to walk?

Have they mentioned about walking when you aren't there? E.g. do they go to the shops, pick up a newspaper etc – would they be confident walking on their own?

Any other comments?

Walking befriending

Walking hints and tips

Walking is a great way to stay active; it helps keep the heart strong, strengthens your bones and improve your mood.

We've put together a few helpful tips to help you as you continue waking with your client.

As you start walking

- Clothing: Wearing everyday clothes is fine, just make sure your client has comfortable shoes, and takes a coat/scarf with them.
- Take your time – rushing increases the risk of falling. Take your time, especially during the first walk with your client.
- Check: If your client uses a walking aid (stick or wheeled walker) make sure it is in good working condition before you leave for your walk.
- If your client has long term health problems, or a problem that affects their mobility, increase the length of the walks gradually as they build their confidence.
- Muscle weakness or balance issues may be a factor for some older people who haven't walked for a while - ensure you start your walks at a comfortable pace, which will help the client warm up and let you know how far they can go.
- Start off by choosing familiar routes that are flat and free of obstacles.
- The more you walk, you may want to check out alternative routes, using Google Earth to identify suitable locations nearby. Take advantage of the lakes, canal walks and linear parks in Milton Keynes. The Park's Trust website is a good source of inspiration if you're looking to venture further afield. <https://www.theparkstrust.com/your-parks/>
- If weather is bad, but you still want to walk on that day, consider taking a shorter walk, that is closer to the client's home. Alternatively, the centre:mk shopping centre provides indoor cover against the elements, ample space and plenty of places to take a break (and enjoy a well-earned cup of tea!)

Walking befriending

Walking hints and tips

If your client wants to walk further or do more

Hills, inclines and steps

You may want to choose walks that offer some of these features.

This will help **increase the intensity of your walk**, but can be easily adapted if your client doesn't feel able to complete them.

Walk alongside your client, **focus on each step** - limit conversation, **stop walking** if necessary

As your client continues with the regular walks, you might find they are willing to complete longer walks, or can now walk at a faster pace.

- Small changes: start by adding an extra 5-10mins to each walk
- Aim for a speed that ensures your client is walking at a moderate pace but can still maintain conversation.
- Shorter distances of brisk walking may also be an opportunity to help clients receive greater physical benefit from walking.
- Extending the distance walked, number of circuits on a route or the duration of your walk are good ways to track improvements and help clients achieve more.
- Pedometers or free step trackers/fitness apps downloaded onto a smartphone might encourage some clients to set achievable targets.

Power walk points

On your walk, pick a landmark e.g. building, tree, lamppost and set that as your target

Walk fast until you reach it. Then continue at a normal pace.

You can repeat this as many times as desired through out your walk, but always **make sure the client isn't over exerting themselves**.

Walking befriending

Walking in all Weathers

Don't let the heat, cold, rain or winds stop you from exploring your local area on foot, before going outside remember to be prepared.
Here are a few reminders to help you and your client stay moving all year round.

When it's cold....

Wrap up warm – wear a warm hat, gloves and comfortable clothing.

Make sure your client is wearing comfortable waterproof shoes with good treads.

Avoid ungritted icy surfaces and try to walk where you'll be shielded from the wind.

Choose pathway's that have been cleared of fallen leaves, ice and snow.
Remember if you feel unsure at anytime, change your route!

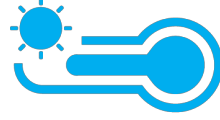
When it's hot....

Stay hydrated – drink water on longer walks or before you set off

Take breaks when necessary – find shade or stop off at a café/pub/ indoor location, especially between 12p.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun is at its strongest.

Wear lighter clothing that will protect you from insects and sun rays.

Don't forget to apply sunscreen or wear a hat whilst you're out in the sun.



Walking befriending

Staying Safe

We want you to enjoy your walks around Milton Keynes. A risk assessment document has been included in your pack, but here are some handy reminders to keep you safe and alert as you walk with your client.

- Ensure you keep your mobile phone fully charged, and have the contact numbers for both the Befriending Co-ordinator and Peartree Centre mainline number. Our office numbers are manned between 9am-4pm.
- Be aware of the condition of pathways and redways as you walk to prevent trips and falls.
- Take extra precaution when walking up and down inclines and descents, and always cross the road at safe crossings.
- When walking by the side of the road, walk against the flow of traffic so you are aware of vehicles coming towards you.
- Generally walks will take place during the day, but early evening walks may be arranged during the spring and summer at the client's request. Adapt your walking route if needed, choose routes or areas where there are more people around.

Be vigilant!
Look out for approaching cyclists and dogs

If your client falls, do not try to lift them

You can give them minimal assistance if they are able to get up, or need help to steady themselves

Always take the safest course of action

If injury is serious, call an ambulance, then alert the Befriending Co-ordinator or speak to a staff member on the main number.

Walking befriending

Staying Motivated

We all have our bad days, and sometimes it may be hard to get your client to go for a walk. Here are some handy ideas to help your client stay motivated and moving.

- Do your walk at the start of your visit - call ahead and get your client to meet you in the garden, or at their door; coat on, ready to walk.
- It's easier to keep walking once you start - even getting out into the garden for some fresh air, can lead to circuits around the garden, or make it easier to go on a longer walk.
- Go somewhere different - sometimes just changing surroundings will lift their mood. Take your client to their favourite local place or landmark - The Parks Trust have information on local art walks, wildlife/nature trails which could offer something different to your usual routes.
- A shorter, neighbourhood walk might be preferred - make the walk focused e.g. walk to the local shops to pick up a paper, a trip to the post box and back, 20min walk around the area.
- Encourage them to stay active throughout the week, even whilst at home - using the stairs, picking up shopping, getting out into the garden etc all helps to keep them moving and in the mindset to stick to their walking routine.
- Set goals or challenges - your client might benefit from setting a new goal e.g. being able to walk for 30-40mins, beat the number of steps from your last walk, walk around each lake in Milton Keynes, a sponsored walk. These can be short and longer term goals - write them down, and maintain your walks to help them work towards their plan.
- Could your client benefit from being around more walkers? The local Walking for Health programme provides group walks in locations across Milton Keynes. If your client is interested in adding more social walks to their routine, why not accompany them on one of the groups shorter walks. For more information, visit [MK Health Walks](#)

Remember there may be some days when your client just wants to chat, and the planned walk cant happen. And that's ok. If it is a persistent problem, there might be an issue they need help with.

Get in touch with the Befriending Co-ordinator to see how Age UK Milton Keynes can help.



We would like to thank Sport England, Open University, Leap, Milton Keynes Council Sports Development, and the staff, volunteers and clients who have helped to make Walking Befriending a much-loved service.

For further information about the service:

ageuk.org.uk/miltonkeynes/our-services/walking-befrienders/walkingbefriendingprogramme/



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