

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!)

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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**.

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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.

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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.

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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.

