



Walking for Life! Project



Background

Walking for Life! is a 3 year pilot project (December 2006- December 2009) jointly delivered between Shropshire County Council and Shropshire Primary Care Trust with funding from Sport England and Natural England. This partnership was developed because increasing levels of physical activity, improving health, and improving access to the countryside were identified as synergistic objectives.

Initiatives encouraging people to walk in the countryside were identified by both Shropshire County Council and Shropshire Primary Care Trust as ways to provide physical and mental health benefits, encourage strong communities, and protect against social exclusion.

The Walking for Life! project indicates a new local commitment to bring together the countryside agenda with the public health agenda.

Vision

- To provide a continuum of walking and other physical activity opportunities to encourage all people, particularly those who are sedentary or inactive, to get active and stay active.

Aim

- To increase physical activity participation levels of the people of Shropshire; in particular those who face greater barriers to physical activity e.g. older people, people with mental health issues, people with learning disabilities.

Key Objectives

- Develop and improve opportunities for people to walk and exercise on the doorstep and in Shropshire's countryside. To be achieved through 3 main initiatives:
 1. Walking for Health Schemes
 2. Independent Walking
 3. Active Volunteering
- Develop a marketing led approach to branding and promoting physical activity and exercise opportunities
- Strengthen local delivery and build and sustain partnerships
- Evaluate and Monitor Project outcomes

Achievements

Walking for Health

There are currently 10 'Walking the Way to Health' schemes in the county, 9 of which have achieved the new 'Walking the Way to Health' accreditation standard. There are also two groups currently in development both of which are being created through links with the Patient Support Groups at the local Medical Centre. All of the groups are now using the new WHI Outdoor Health Questionnaire.

As a result of an audit of the existing groups a new model for Walking for Health in Shropshire has been developed, which focuses on ensuring there is entry level Walking for Health provision across the county, and participants are encouraged to progress through 3 levels of walks to increase their levels of physical activity. Walking for Life! is in the process of applying for funding to recruit district co-ordinators to implement this model.

Independent Walking

A series of leaflets called 'walks from your doorstep' have been developed showing short circular walks in targeted areas around Shropshire's market towns; Market Drayton, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Highley. The leaflets were officially launched through a series of events in October 2007, and to date have been positively received.

Work is currently underway to produce similar walks leaflets in:

Whitchurch, Wem, Market Drayton, Ellesmere, Bridgnorth, Cleobury Mortimer, Loppington and Pontesbury

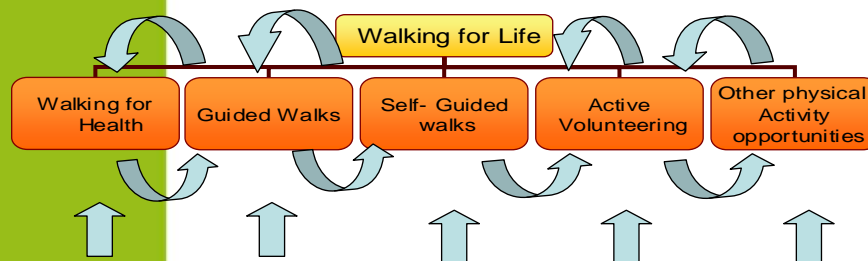
Active Volunteering

A working group focusing on co-ordinated promotion of Active Volunteering opportunities across the county has been formed; as a result a signposting guide to the wide variety of Active Volunteering activities for 2008 has been developed. Work is currently underway to develop a 'Shropshire Activities' website which will include details on Active Volunteering through links to other organisations websites e.g. Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and The National Trust.

A seminar is being held in July with the aim of bringing together the variety of volunteering providers to discuss other ways that we could develop a joint working approach, possibly based on the 'Worcester Wardens' model e.g. joint training events.

Walking for Life Continuum of Activities

The diagram below demonstrates how these three main initiatives can be brought together to develop a continuum of activities for an individual to become involved in, in their local area. Individuals can join the continuum at any activity and can move either way along the continuum. Walking for Life! is currently developing focus groups in each district to enable the existing provision to link together and create pathways between the activities;



Marketing

A distinctive Walking for Life! logo and branding has been created which is currently being used on all the project's publications. A marketing group has been formed in order to ensure the brand gains the appropriate recognition and has also worked to develop key health messages for the project.

Evaluation and Monitoring

A Walking for Life! database has been developed, into which the data collected in the Outdoor Health Questionnaire is inputted. In addition to this, infra-red beam counters have been installed on the independent walking routes in order to identify and increase in usage of the routes as a result of production of the leaflets.

For more information please contact:

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