A stylized human figure composed of thick, curved lines in blue, yellow, green, pink, and orange. The head is a blue circle, the eyes are yellow circles with blue pupils, and the body is formed by the other colored lines.

Creating **hope** through **action**

Walk & Talk: steps to wellbeing

Mental Health Awareness Week

Monday 13 May – Sunday 19 May 2024

www.mindingyourhead.info

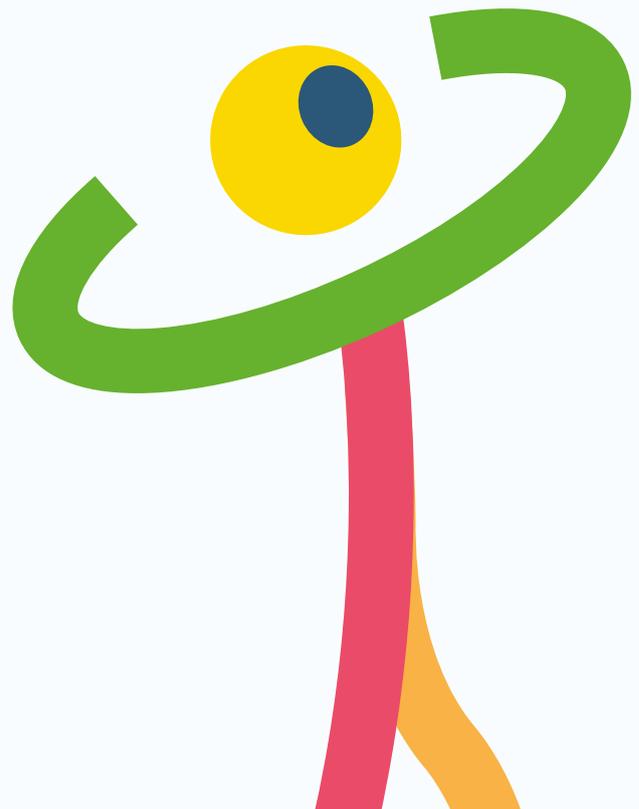
Tips and ideas to organise
your own Walk & Talk
event to promote mental
and emotional wellbeing

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Take 5 steps to wellbeing

Most of us know when we are mentally and physically well, but sometimes we need a little extra support to keep well. Take 5 sets out five simple steps to help maintain and improve your wellbeing.

We can all try to build these into our daily life – think of them as your ‘five a day’ for wellbeing. You can request some Take 5 flyers and resources to share with those attending your Walk & Talk event from local health improvement teams – see the useful contacts page.

Connect

Connect with the people around you, with family, friends or neighbours, at home, work, school or your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



Be active

Exercising makes you feel good so discover a physical activity you enjoy like going for a walk, cycling or dancing. Choose an activity that suits your level of mobility and fitness.



Take notice

Savour the moment, whether you are eating lunch, walking on the beach, or sitting in the garden. Be aware of the world around you and what you're feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



Keep learning

Don't be afraid to try something new – rediscover an old hobby or interest or simply set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.



Give

Do something nice for a friend or stranger. Smile, thank someone, volunteer your time or consider joining a community group. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.



For more information visit

www.mindingyourhead.info/take-5-steps-wellbeing

<https://communitywellbeing.info/take-5-steps-to-wellbeing/>

[Youth Wellness Web – Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership \(CYPSP\) \(hscni.net\)](#)

[Physical activity | nidirect](#)

How a Walk & Talk can create hope

Organising and going on a Walk & Talk with a friend, family member, colleague or as part of a group can show you and others how easy it is to start adding the five steps to wellbeing into daily routine – creating hope that it is possible to take steps to protect and improve wellbeing.

When it comes to our wellbeing, other people matter. Evidence shows that good relationships with family, friends and our wider communities are important for our mental and physical wellbeing. That's why "Connect" is one of the Take 5 steps to wellbeing.

Being active also has a great impact on our wellbeing and how we feel. Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get active – yet many people overlook its positive impact. Remember any activity is better than none, a moderate intensity walk has lots of health benefits and counts towards your [150 minutes of weekly recommended physical activity](#).

Following your Walk & Talk, discuss and plan future walks to make it part of a weekly or monthly routine and keep taking steps to wellbeing together.

This routine will help increase physical activity levels and can create hope that people can improve their activity levels and wellbeing. It can also help build stronger, wider social connections which can help us feel happier and more secure, and give us a greater sense of purpose.

Building relationships through regular walks and talks can provide an opportunity to share positive experiences, and can give us emotional support. It might also give us a chance to support others.



Planning your Walk & Talk event

Set a date and time

Choose a date and time which is convenient for you and the people you plan to invite. You can hold your event any time – why not aim for Mental Health Awareness Week Monday 13 May to Sunday 19 May 2024?

Invitations

Decide who you want to invite and get the word out. You can invite just one person, a group of friends and family, or make it much bigger and invite your neighbours and people from your local community. You might want to organise your event in your workplace or group/organisation and invite your colleagues and/or service users. The more people you invite, the more people you will help connect and get active. Remember if you are organising a group walk you will need insurance.

Remember to promote your Walk & Talk event using a poster. Don't forget about the power of social media, you can share your invitation online too!

Planning your route

When planning a walk, it is important to ensure that it is suitable for the ability of the walkers joining. Start out on flat, even and wide surfaces for walkers. Ideally, follow a common walking route in your local area.

When choosing a walking route, it's helpful to consider the following:

Location – Where is the walk? Are you starting and finishing in the same location? Is it local or is transport needed? Is there public transport or parking nearby?

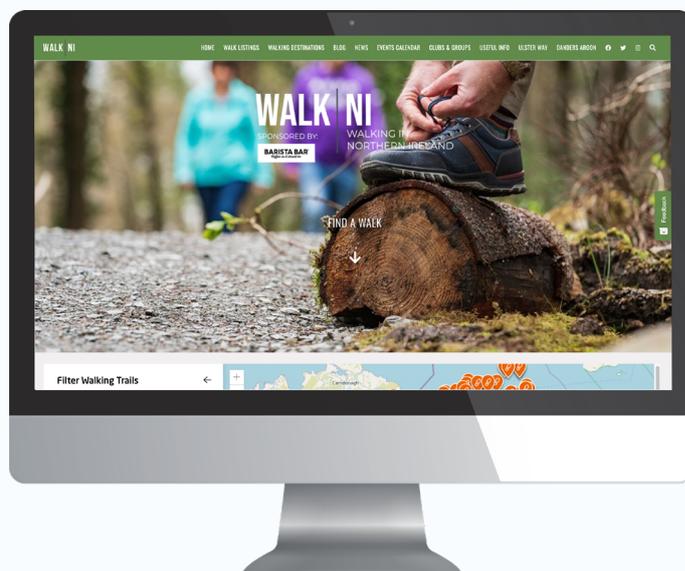
Risk assessment of route – Identify potential hazards on the route, such as muddy paths, inclement weather, fallen branches, uneven surfaces.

Accessibility – Is the route suitable for walkers of all abilities? Are there resting points, toilet facilities, and adequate lighting?

Footpaths – Try to choose paths that are wide, well maintained and flat.

Length of walk – Walks should be at least 10 minutes and will depend on the ability and fitness level of walkers.

WalkNI.com is a great online resource for walkers in Northern Ireland. It provides up-to-date information on walking routes with route descriptions and maps for over 200 short, medium and long-distance walks.



Make a list of tasks

By making a list of tasks and deadlines you can help to avoid any last-minute panics. If you are planning a big event you may want to ask your colleagues, friends or family to help you. Some tasks you might want to consider include:

- Who will greet walkers?
- Who will people contact if they are running late or can't make it?
- If walking in a big group who will walk at the start and end of the group?
- If walking as part of an organisation/group – do you have insurance to cover this activity?
- Who is going to take the lead on making this a regular activity if the individual or group wants?

At your Walk & Talk event

- Make everyone feel welcome.
- Introduce yourself and briefly explain the background of the event – it's to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Week, and show how 'being active' and 'connecting' is good for wellbeing.
- If people don't know each other, help them introduce themselves to others. You could even share the "how to talk to anyone tips" before your event.

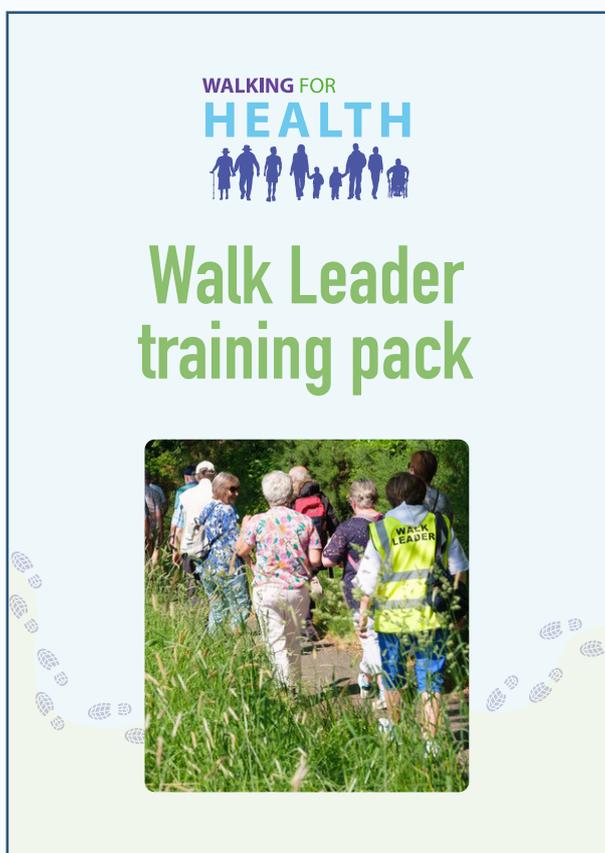


Walking for Health

Walking for Health is delivered by Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland and is supported by the Public Health Agency (PHA). All Walk Leaders are provided with training updates, networking opportunities, and advice and support on establishing, promoting and running a successful walking group. Insurance cover is also provided.

If you are interested in attending walk leader training and leading regular walks, you can contact the people below or visit www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/walking-health-programme for more information.

| Name | Email | Trust |
|-----------------|---|---------------|
| Wendy McDowell | Wendy.McDowell2@setrust.hscni.net | South Eastern |
| Nicola Arbuckle | Nicola.Arbuckle@northerntrust.hscni.net | Northern |
| Ben Hanvey | Ben.Hanvey@belfasttrust.hscni.net | Belfast |
| Camilla Lowry | Camilla.Lowry@westerntrust.hscni.net | Western |
| Clare Drummy | Clare.Drummy@southerntrust.hscni.net | Southern |



How to talk to anyone – tips

Everyone sometimes finds it difficult to start a conversation, and keep it going. If you, or someone you know that is joining the Walk & Talk event is shy or introverted, share these tips on how to talk to anyone.

Try to relax

Remember the other people are there because they want to connect and talk with other people too. If you need to, take a few slow deep breaths before you join the Walk & Talk event.

Start by asking someone a question

The question could be about the event – how long did it take them to get here? Do they think it could rain – or that you need suncream? Do they know the walking route? This is an easy way to strike up a conversation.

Use your surroundings as a way to keep talking

Take notice of what is around you, point out something you like about the environment, or the individual (for example tell them you like their coat and ask where they got it). You can also ask them what they think about something 'What do you think of the local councils doing No Mow May?'

Maintain the conversation by listening

Everyone likes to be heard, give the other person your full attention, and try to maintain eye contact. Once the conversation is started, remember the rule 'listen first, speak second', and try not to jump in when the other person is talking.

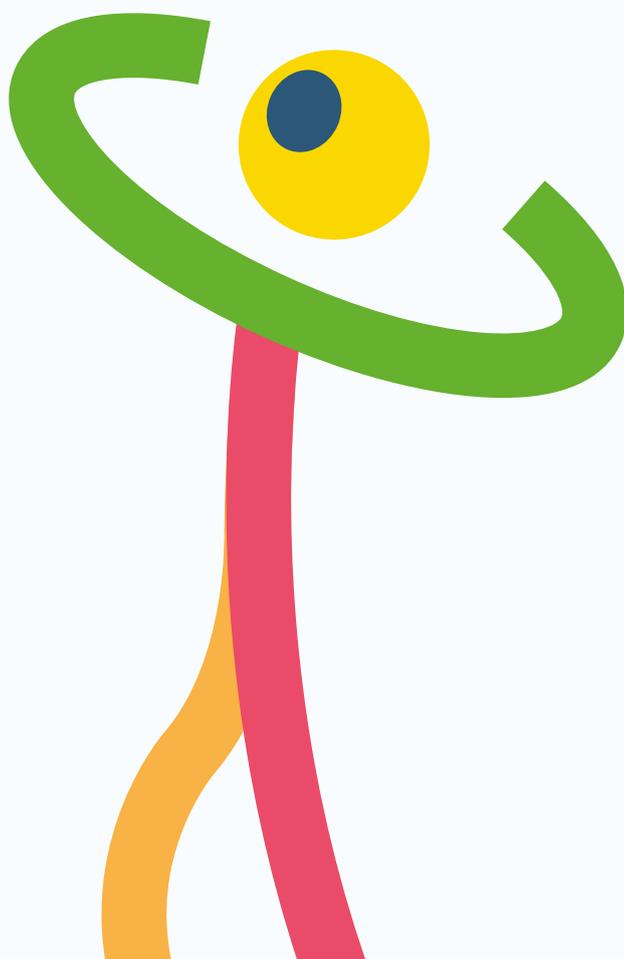
Keep the conversation going

Talking about things you have in common; give compliments; share something about you, perhaps a book you've read or a TV show you've watched; talk about current events; answer the other person's questions. Remember it's okay to change the topic.

Remember

Be open minded, non-judgemental, and don't make assumptions about the other person. Silence is a normal part of conversation, but if you feel it is going on too long, change the topic by asking a new question, or observing something.

Most importantly: Keep talking and connecting to new people and those you already know.



Other connecting ideas

There are lots of ways to connect with others and build stronger, closer or new relationships:

- If possible, take time each day to be with your family or friends.
- Arrange to meet with friends you haven't seen for a while.
- Find out what's on at your local community centre and local churches – many host social groups open to all.
- If there is something that you are interested in, join a group or club about this – if there isn't one, why not set one up?
- Have a go at a sport or hobby you always wanted to try.
- Speak to someone new today – even if it's just saying hello to someone in the street or in a shop.
- Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group. Visit www.volunteernow.co.uk for ideas.
- Make the most of technology. WhatsApp, Skype and FaceTime are a great way of staying in touch with friends and family, particularly if you live far apart.



Other ideas to be more active

Being active is easier than you think. Building physical activity into your day is a great way to stay active, particularly in busy times. Standing rather than sitting when you can, parking the car further away from work or walking to shops or work are great ways to add more activity into your day. Remember any activity is good, start small and gradually build up. Every movement counts! It's never too late to start.

Other ideas include:

Walking

As mentioned previously, walking can really benefit your health, both physically and mentally. Walking is the perfect form of physical activity – it's free, doesn't require special equipment and it's accessible. Why not try adding more steps to your day? If you would prefer to walk in a group there are a number of Walking for Health groups across Northern Ireland catering for a range of abilities and fitness levels which are open to the public. If you are a keen walker and would like to lead walks in your local community Walking for Health offers Walk Leader Training across Northern Ireland.

Get on a bike

Cycling is a healthy, low-impact exercise that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, from young children to older adults. It is also fun, cheap and good for the environment. Alternatives such as hand cycling and recumbent tricycles can make cycling accessible to more people.

Find a cycle route on [The National Cycle Network](#)

Jog or run

Couch to 5k is a great way to get active. It's a running plan for beginners. If you have never run, or it's been a while, you could try doing a Couch to 5k. Many local councils will run Couch

to 5k programmes to support you along the way or there's a podcast version available from the [NHS website](#).

If you fancy jogging or running as part of a community, Parkrun might be for you. It's a free community event where you can walk, jog or run 5k; you can also volunteer. Parkruns take place across Northern Ireland every Saturday morning. Junior parkrun is 2k, dedicated to 4-14 year olds and their families, every Sunday morning.

Parkrun is positive, welcoming and inclusive, there is no time limit and no one finishes last. Everyone is welcome to come along. Find out more on [parkrun UK's website](#)

Gardening

Got a garden? Or do you have access to a shared garden or allotment? Get your green fingers on and go for it. A few hours of solid gardening (digging, planting, mowing and weeding) is a great way to get active.

Find out about activities available from [The Conservation Volunteers in Northern Ireland](#)

Swimming

Swimming is a great way to get active, and is low impact if you have issues with your joints. There are public swimming pools in every part of Northern Ireland. You can find out details about local swimming pools from your local council website.

Chair-based exercises

If you have limited mobility, chair-based exercises are a great place to start. Most local councils offer these classes and you can find out more on your council's website.

For more information visit:

[Physical activity | nidirect](#)

Useful contacts

To request Take 5 flyers, mental health and emotional wellbeing service directories and any other resources which may be available to give out to those attending your Walk & Talk event please contact:

| Area | Contact |
|---------------|---|
| Western | Sonia.Montgomery@westerntrust.hscni.net |
| Northern | HealthandWellbeing.TrainingBookings@northerntrust.hscni.net |
| Belfast | health.improvement@belfasttrust.hscni.net |
| South Eastern | Laura.McAllister2@setrust.hscni.net Brien.frazer@setrust.hscni.net |
| Southern | PWB.Resources@southerntrust.hscni.net |

For further information about this campaign please contact:

| Area | Name | Contact |
|---------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Western | Sonia Montgomery | Sonia.Montgomery@westerntrust.hscni.net |
| Northern | Advised on inquiry | HealthandWellbeing.TrainingBookings@northerntrust.hscni.net |
| Belfast | Clare Flynn | Clare.Flynn@belfasttrust.hscni.net |
| South Eastern | Laura McAllister Brien Frazer | Laura.McAllister2@setrust.hscni.net Brien.frazer@setrust.hscni.net |
| Southern | Debbie Smith/ Deirdre McParland | Debbie.Smith@southerntrust.hscni.net; Deirdre.McParland@southerntrust.hscni.net |
| NIAS Staff | AnnMarie McStocker | annmarie.mcstocker@nias.hscni.net |

Services available to support mental and emotional wellbeing

You can download a [directory of services available to support mental and emotional wellbeing](#) for your local Trust area.

Lifeline

Call: 0808 808 8000

Textphone: 18001 0808 808 800

Textphone can be accessed using the NGT Lite App.

Lifeline is Northern Ireland's crisis response helpline for people experiencing distress or despair. Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Calls to Lifeline are free. Lifeline provides support to people of every age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation living in Northern Ireland.

Lifeline also offers support for people who are worried about someone else.

Helping someone who is thinking about suicide

- 1 – Approach the person and ask. Show you care, ask clearly and directly if they are thinking about suicide.
- 2 – Listen, give support. Let them explain their feelings. Tell them you have to take any thoughts seriously.
- 3 – Get help. Tell them you will support them to find help. Get professional help straight away. Call 999 in a crisis. Remove potential means of suicide and don't leave them alone.