



# What does a Walking Champion do?

“Inspire others  
to walk more



## Who can be a walking champion?

Anyone who has a passion for walking and all the benefits it can bring

- By motivating a friend or small group of friends to join you for short walks
- Being a driving force in your family to get them out and about walking together
- Inspiring your work colleagues to walk more. Perhaps you are already in a health ambassador role?
- Spread the word to your community or groups that you are being active through walking and they're invited to join in.

## What would I be signing up to?

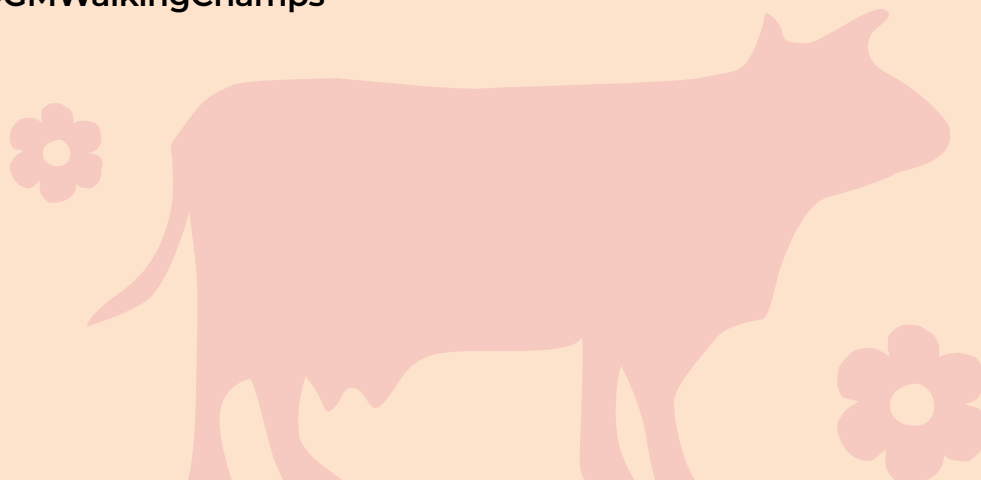
- Becoming a walking champion will not involve being signed up to anything apart from sharing your passion
- GM Walking would love to hear about your progress so we can learn what's working well [@GMWalks](#) [#GMWalkingChamps](#)

## Things to consider that will enable successful walks

- Who to encourage to walk?
- Where to start from, a place to meet.
- The time and duration
- Where to go, what route to take?
- How to make it regular, keeping walkers motivated
- How to encourage independent informal walking
- The weather

## Who to encourage to walk?

- Start by simply asking one or two friends or colleagues to go for a walk
- Walk with a colleague or two for a break, at lunchtime or as part of a meeting.
- Arrange with a colleague to walk with them all or part of the way to / from work. Maybe arrange to meet or drop off others along the route.
- If you are a parent at home with children, suggest walking together, or pram push, to the local park or shops
- When with family and friends suggest a stroll after dinner
- Initiate a regular walking time with a friend



## Where to start from, a place to meet

Whoever you are walking with (work colleagues, friends, family or your community group) it is good to start and finish at a suitable venue. Somewhere with cover and toilet facilities if possible. For example;

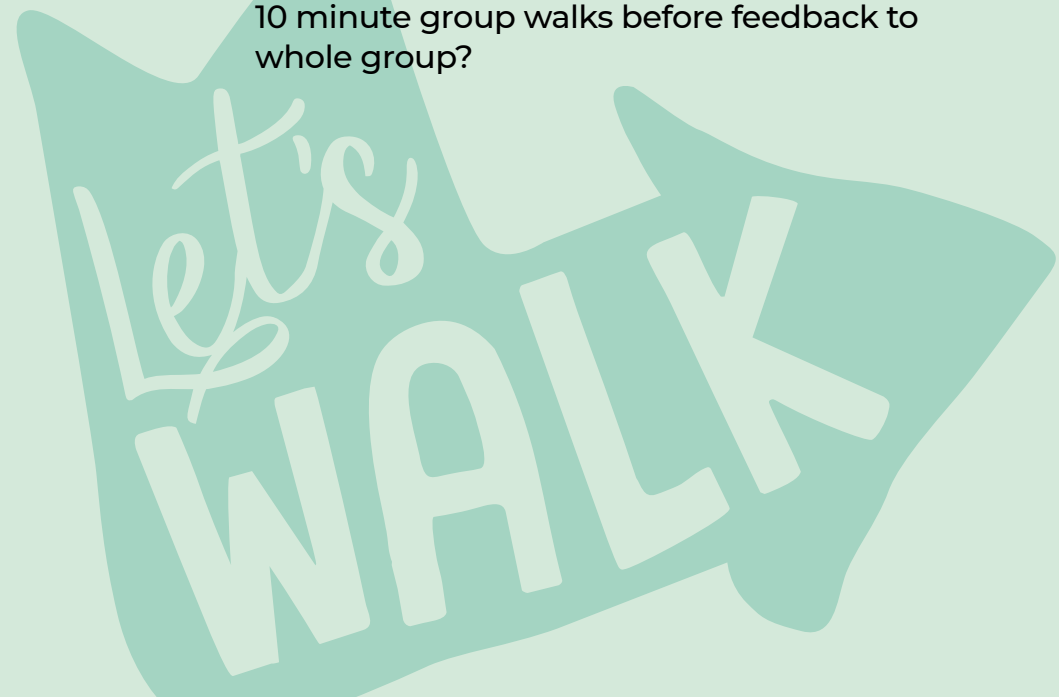
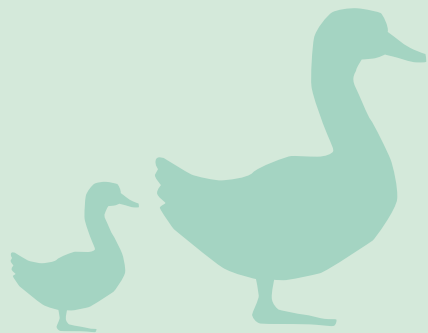
- Families - meet at someone's house, or plan to visit family members as you walk to pick them up
- Work colleagues - meet at the office or reception area
- Wider community and businesses - meet at a local library or community centre, or even the local pub

A venue gives people the opportunity to socialise, a significant reason why people enjoy going on a walk - it's a great motivator.

- Meeting at a suitable venue will give Informal Walking Champions the opportunity to;
- Explain to everyone the aims of the walk
- Have somewhere to return for refreshments
- Provide an opportunity for people to socialise and suggest more opportunities to walk.

## How long to walk, the time and duration?

- Planning ahead will help you to choose a time and duration that suits your intended walkers.
- Remember, you are also there to enjoy the walk, so make sure it's good for you too!
- Decide on the duration of the walk remembering that shorter walks still have numerous health benefits **#ThatCounts**
- If the walk is over a lunch break or at a time allowed by an employer, a 10 – 20 minute brisk walk (moderate intensity) will energize the walkers for increased productivity in the afternoon.
- Think about your meetings at work, could they be arranged as walking meetings?
- Could small group discussions be planned as 10 minute group walks before feedback to whole group?



## Where to go, what route to take

- In most urban areas there are lots of possible streets to walk down. You may wish to choose the quieter streets or the ones that pass a café or shop or perhaps link to greenspaces. You don't need to do the same route each time you go out, mixing it up keeps it interesting.
- A short walk on easy terrain such as pavements is suitable for most people.
- Make sure the route is easy to follow
- Where possible suggest routes that visit green space such as a local park or a stretch of canal
- If in town, explore routes with places of interest such as historic buildings, interesting architecture and local history
- A circular route that passes a few different joining points along the way
- Encourage walkers to walk independently when they know the route or become familiar with the area
- GMWalking can help you find a walking route to explore in Greater Manchester

You can plan routes using apps such as [mapmywalk](#) or for a monthly subscription, using [Strava](#) or [Ordnance Survey](#).

## How to make it regular, keeping walkers motivated

- Create a welcoming informal atmosphere especially for new walkers
- Praise everyone's effort and set a tone where everyone is supportive of one another
- People love to walk and talk, try to listen and chat to everyone
- Remember to keep the walk informal, you are enabling the walk, not being a walk leader. Anyone can help and contribute
- Show your enthusiasm for walking and be knowledgeable of the many health benefits, share these with the walkers
- For those that want to, help walkers make a pledge/ set a challenge. For example i) aim for 5,000 steps a day, then work towards 10,000-steps a day; or ii) walk for 10 minutes at a time and work towards 30 minutes
- Encourage people to walk at a level they are comfortable with and build up slowly
- Create or join a social media group to share your informal walk experiences and photos.
- Share other walking opportunities [@GMWalking](#) website has many walking groups listed
- Encourage walkers to try [The Active 10 app](#), a free download from the NHS website. It will track how long and how fast you have walked, it can set goals for you to work towards and rewards your progress

## How to encourage independent informal walking

As an Informal Walking Champion you can encourage people to walk more independently, to make walking a habit and incorporate more walking into everyday life. If everyone walked a mile every day it would make a huge difference to the health and wellbeing of the Greater Manchester population **#GMDailyMile**

Encourage and enable more people to:

- Walk for a break, get away from the desk at home or place of work, to stretch the legs and spend less time sitting down. Just 10 minutes walking will recharge the batteries and clear the mind, helping you re-focus.
  - Walk to work or park the car further away from work. If using public transport, encourage getting off a stop early and walk to your destination, gradually increasing the walking by getting off even earlier.
  - Walk to meetings. Promote the benefits this gives - time to think ahead and a great way to prepare for a meeting without the distraction of traffic and no parking issues
  - Host a group walking meeting. Walking meetings can reveal creative thinking and a different conversation. Walk and talk discussions are better suited to a small group (2 or 3 people).
- Visit family and friends on foot. Let people know you are doing this and tell them it makes you feel great!
  - Pop to the local shops for small items, or head out for a meal on foot. If you have not done it before. You may even discover new places by walking locally.
  - Walk to a gym session or exercise class. A brisk walk is a great warm up for more strenuous activity and a stroll home is a great way to cool down



## The Weather

...A Great British topic of conversation. Talking about the weather is a British pastime; mention it and, no doubt, a conversation will start.

As an Informal Walking Champion:

- This is an opportunity to get walkers to anticipate and appreciate our ever changing weather.
- Show your enthusiasm for the diverse weather and seasons experienced in Greater Manchester.
- Take advantage of good weather walks to share your experiences of footwear and clothing to suit the changing seasons. Encourage others to share their knowledge and experience. Motivate walkers to keep walking whatever the weather.
- Remind walkers that little or no specialist equipment is needed to go for a walk. Just a waterproof coat and shoes with a good grip that keep your feet dry.
- Provide walkers with weather information. Share the [MET Office app](#)

- Set a good example and keep on walking. Even a drizzly blustery walk with friends can blow the cobwebs away and can be great fun and very invigorating. Your return to a warm workplace, your home or even the local pub will help you feel ready for anything, and deserving of refreshment!
- On regular walks observe and point out the changing scenery as the seasons roll past with the ever-changing colours and light.

### A final point...

As an Informal Walking Champion keep the atmosphere social and INFORMAL, let other walkers contribute in any way. Keep an eye out for enthusiastic, self motivated individuals who might like to support you to get more informal walks going, possibly becoming Walking Champions for their organisations.

Spread the word; point them in the right direction  
[www.gmwalking.co.uk](http://www.gmwalking.co.uk)

## Get in touch

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