



A Qualitative Evaluation of Paths for All's Dementia Friendly Walking Groups

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#DARG2018

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Introduction

- **Paths for All supports a network of 140 Walking for Health projects across Scotland**
- **Part of Walking for Health plan is ensuring walks are Dementia Friendly. To be classed as Dementia friendly walks must**
 - Establish local partnerships with dementia organisations
 - Consult people with dementia and their carers
 - Provide dementia training for volunteers
 - Identify dementia friendly walking groups
 - Carry out evaluation and training.
- **University of Stirling Staff commissions to evaluate the second year of the Dementia friendly walking project**

Methodology

Evaluate experiences and perspectives of people with dementia and their carers who attend dementia friendly walking group walks

Five walking groups across the central belt.

Walking interviews with people with dementia

Visual methods (photographs during walks) take by people with dementia

Focus groups with walk attendees and walk leaders.

Involvement of three community researchers – older people training in research methods, data collection and analysis

Results

Five themes emerged from the research

- Being with other people
- Being outdoors
- Ethos and Atmosphere
- Feeling Secure
- Leadership and Organisation

Being with other people

- **Opportunities to socialise with other people (not just people with dementia) in a safe and comfortable environment**

Male - There is quite a number of people on the walks who have lost their partners: I lost my wife in the last couple of years - about seven months ago - and I have found this has been absolutely brilliant to come to something like this and meet all these people, and get out the house. It gives you something to focus on instead of sitting at home feeling sorry for myself. It is of great benefit to me. (G3fg)

- **Giving people reassurance and support to get out walking.**

Female - Because I am with group. I would not go out walking myself because I would be frightened. I would not come down to [location] on the bus. (...) I feel that there are probably a couple of the folk in the walk that are like me (with memory problems). (G3Plwd)



Being Outdoors



- **Maintaining fitness and physical activity**

Male - The gym is boring. I think maybe for younger people with the treadmill and running. You get the benefit of getting the walk. It is a recognised thing that people out walking (particularly in the countryside) have a feel good factor. (G1fg)

- **Exploring the environment**

Male - You are seeing parts of the locality that you might not see: the leaders point things out to you - there is this animal, there is this old house or whatever and it is things like that that you would maybe miss. (G1fg)

- **Walking to places safely**

Female - I would not come here myself. I would never get out of here. I would need to run into one of those offices and shout for help. (G3Plwd)

Ethos and Atmosphere

- **Reinforcing independence**

Male - "Walking. The group here struggle at times because there is a gale blowing. You do not go home. You just keep on working and we go to the café."

- **Beating the weather**

Male - Yes, it is very important - it is something to look forward to from one week to another. The only trouble is if it is a really bad day, but even a bad day - over the last years we could probably count them all on the hand the number of days that we have missed - we have gone out in snow and rain.

- **Supporting each other**

Female - "Some people, when we were going round that walk especially, were unsteady so S advised that somebody try using a pole, which I think S offered to do and she benefited from that. The next time we were out another one of the members, who is not here today, he was a bit unsteady and I asked him if he would like to try a pole. He said he thought it would help. So, we thought we would get some for the group and just leave them here so that if anybody is having a bad day or wants to try one, they are here." (G2fg)

Safety and Security

- **Feeling Safe**

Male - Because obviously we know the routes and we know they are safe - they have been risk assessed. You have to be careful if you take a new route - you would have to look at it first.

- **Feeling confident**

Female - It is part of the group - it is part of belonging. When you come to our group, we end up belonging to one another. You are brothers and sisters in this group because we all talk to one another and we all have fun together in whatever way we can - just being there for each other.

- **Concerns over safety regarding other path users**

Female - The only thing we have to worry about here is cyclists racing along. If you walk down to the canal - in fact, John was nearly in the canal one time. The best of it was that it was a family group who had the dog and the dog ran (and it was still on the lead) ran round John. It meant the lead went right round his leg, and he was at the edge of the canal

Leadership and organisation

- **Appreciation of walk leaders and volunteers**

Female - Actually, the walk leaders are absolutely amazing - they really are. Yes, they are amazing.

- **Supporting people to attend walks**

Female - but I have to be very honest - if it was not for the fact that (walk coordinator) picks me up (she does on occasion), I would not do it because it would take two buses to get here, and I can no longer walk.

- **Relationships with other agencies**

Male - There are also other routes that are, basically, inaccessible because of lack of maintenance of routes or tracks. The impression that I have, and both (friend) and I had a meeting, along with (walk leader), with the Council and I do not know so much if they are not interested or whether their hands are tied, financial or otherwise. (...) It would not take a lot of money to upgrade or improve or manufacture routes, which would give it a bigger assortment. I think that is badly lacking in local government.

Conclusions

Dementia friendly walking programme walks are successful in their aims of encouraging people to attend walks.

Benefits of walking group walks.

- Socialising
- Health and Fitness benefits
- Dementia friendliness of walks
- Leadership and organisation of walks.

Key recommendations

- Ensuring walk leaders and volunteers to receive adequate dementia awareness training and support in order for walks to continue
- Ensure walks in urban and rural areas, as well as different walk options.
- Walks should be dementia friendly, but not exclusively for people with dementia and carers

We are currently evaluating dementia friendly walks programme from perspective of walk leaders and group volunteers.



Any Questions



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