

The Health and Sport Committee Health and social care integration - Written Evidence from Paths for All

Summary

- **Many of the projects we support are engaged with health and social care at a local level**
- **There could be greater engagement and we are keen to continue to encourage this**
- **This is a key opportunity for effective preventative spending**
- **Physical activity brings a range of health, social and well-being benefits**
- **Walking is the most accessible form of physical activity and represents extremely good value for money**
- **The promotion of walking should be at the heart of health and social care and the National Walking Strategy is key to embedding walking in our daily lives**

Background

Paths for All is a Scottish charity founded in 1996. We champion everyday walking as the way to a happier, healthier Scotland. We want to get Scotland walking: everyone, everyday, everywhere.

Our aim is to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub.

We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

Our work supports the delivery of the Scottish Government's National Walking Strategy, the Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland, the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, community and workplace health walking, path network development and active travel policy development.

We are a partnership organisation with 29 national partners. Our funders include the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Macmillan and The Life Changes Trust.

The National Walking Strategy

The National Walking Strategy makes the links between active travel, health and environment. It has three strategic aims:

- **Create a culture of walking**
- **Better walking environments throughout Scotland**
- **Ensure easy, convenient independent mobility for all**

The most recent Scottish Household Survey results show that for the fifth year in a row, more people are walking recreationally. 69% of the population now walk regularly for recreation, an

Paths for All is a partnership organisation; for a full list of our current partners please visit our website.

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increase of 5 percentage points from last year and strong endorsement of the National Walking Strategy. The greatest increase between 2014 and 2015 was in those aged 75 and over, who are amongst those most likely to be inactive

Engagement with the integration authorities

We do not generally have direct engagement with the integration as we are not, for the most part, working directly at a local level with the community and/or health and social care professionals.

That said, we do currently support projects right across Scotland – including 149 walking for health projects. Many of these projects do engage with health and social care at a local level.

Our view is that there could be greater engagement and would like to encourage this. We believe walking for health can play a valuable role in the health and social care agenda in terms of prevention, treatment, social support, carers support and access/signposting to other services.

Walking for Health

The national Walking for Health programme, managed by Paths for All, consists of 149 local projects delivering volunteer led health walks in communities across Scotland. We are working with health professionals and Community Planning Partnerships to signpost these opportunities more widely. <http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa/health-walks/health-walks.html>

As well as providing a supportive environment to encourage regular physical activity, health walks also help to manage and prevent other long terms conditions that arise because of obesity such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer and stroke.

We asked walking for health projects about their experience. Had their project been engaged in the process as local delivery agents? Did they have any feedback on engagement, or lack of it, with the integration authorities? Given the short timescale the responses have been limited but there seems to be a mixed picture illustrated by these quotes:

We are one year into integration and we are not much involved in change but our key partners are.

...positive developments so far...

As a whole we are working with H&SCP to raise awareness of all components of the programme and will continue to do so.

We currently have no active lines of communication or clear avenues for developing, programming or promoting our menu of walks with local councils and health boards.

We have not been asked to take part in consultations by the local Health and Social Care Partnerships.

The project is mentioned in the Strategic Commissioning Plans - we think that our local contacts at the NHS, wrote us into the plans.

We intend to continue to encourage dialogue between the projects we support, their partners and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

Relevance of Paths for All work

We are keen to support projects to build on the current engagement and work in partnership to support people to get more active.

Through our Dementia Friendly Walking project we are providing training, funding and support to make the Walking for Health network dementia friendly. We are also working to raise awareness about the benefits of walking for people living with dementia.

<http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa/health-walks/dementia-friendly-walking.html>

Our Strength and Balance programme offers training and resources to help combine strength and balance exercises with advice on walking to help older adults stay active and independent.

<http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa/health-professionals/strength-and-balance.html>

Paths for All can offer support, advice and guidance on opportunities for walking .

<http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa/health-professionals/health-professionals-and-walking.html>

Getting people active through walking is a key way to support better health and longer healthy lives – taking pressure off health and social care services. We believe that the promotion of walking should be at the heart of our health service and the National Walking Strategy is key to embedding walking in our daily lives. This is a key opportunity for effective preventative spending.

The benefits of physical activity

Physical activity is the “best buy in public health” (Faculty of Public Health)

If a medication existed which had a similar effect to physical activity, it would be regarded as a ‘wonder drug’ or ‘miracle cure’ (CMO 2009)

Physical activity has a raft of health and well-being benefits. For example - benefits (reduction in risk) for adults and older adults: CMO 2011 ‘Start Active, Stay Active’

Type 2 Diabetes	- 40%
Cardiovascular Disease	- 35%
Falls, Depression and Dementia	- 30%
Joint and Back Pain	- 25%
Cancers (Colon and Breast)	- 20%

The Scottish Government’s Active Scotland Outcomes Framework describes Scotland’s ambitions for sport and physical activity and the key outcomes over the next ten years. The headline measure of progress is the proportion of the population who meet the recommended level of physical activity. This is a National Indicator.

Walking – value for money

Walking is the most likely way all adults can achieve the recommended levels of physical activity (NICE 2012)

Walking is highly cost-effective and demonstrates that prevention really is better than cure. The health risks of inactivity are stark – 7 Scots die every day due to inactivity, often long before they have to. Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport – National Walking Strategy 2014

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) study to analyse the impact of the Glasgow Health Walk programme revealed that for every £1 invested in Health Walks in Glasgow, there were £8 of benefits generated for society. Two further SROI studies, in Stirling and the Scottish Borders, showed that for every £1 invested in Health Walks £9 and £8 worth of benefits were delivered respectively.

Health Walks deliver an array of social benefits including making people fitter, healthier and improving their mental health. This in turn makes cost savings to the NHS and local authorities such as reduced spend on care and prescriptions due to clients being more fit, healthy and able.

There is a clear need for increased and sustained funding to support physically active lives – and, in this context, promotion of walking offers the best value investment. There should be better coordination between funders (including Lottery) and the delivery of key policy outcomes.

We would be delighted to provide more information on any aspect of this if that would be helpful.

Paths for All

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