

Life Leisure Confidence Walks

Case Study - February 2024

Life Leisure, supported by Age UK Stockport created the concept of the Confidence walks back in October 2021. The idea was influenced by local people, who when we delivered outdoor walks, found there are a number of barriers that stop them from accessing and making the choice to participate. Barriers such as the weather, the distance, lack of benches and/or rest points, accessible and flat routes all came up and began to help us recognise that confidence affected their choice to be active.

The Confidence walk concept became this opportunity to challenge the barriers, and provide a safer and more achievable option to begin walking more.

The aims of the Confidence walk led to support those with low mobility, low confidence and social concerns, where outdoors with uneven surfaces, accessibility issues and more was not a solution for residents. By utilising a sports hall, with chairs setup in the middle and the space to walk around them, means rest is accessible whenever an individual feels like its needed, as well as providing the best possible conditions for walking.

This has led to the sessions growing in popularity and impactful stories from individuals who attend. The video below highlights the points mentioned and gives insight into the impact it has had on individuals who attend:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMbgZQy1kZE>

Since the launch of the first Confidence walk in October 2021 at Brinnington Park Leisure complex, this session has gone from strength to strength, with an average of 21 people attending weekly until the present time. What is important to mention is the developments that have happened outside of where the first session was delivered:

- We are now delivering another five sessions a week across Stockport, with the most recent session starting in January 2024.
- The purpose and outcomes of the confidence walks have exceeded expectations, as we believe this serves a wider purpose than an opportunity to participate in Walking. Our ethos behind this is as follows:
 - o Engagement tool – We are delivering more social activity which we are seeing success in individuals accessing, for example, a coffee morning, free of charge and with no activity attached, with the sessions all taking place in our hubs. Similar principles have applied to deliver a simple concept which focus on social engagement to improve physical and mental wellbeing.
 - o Inclusivity – The sessions have embedded inclusive practices to enable the provision to include people of all abilities.
 - o Cost – The free charge or low cost on sessions is part of the process to grow on interest and support wider participation in the session. The points above are more integral to engaging participants to attend alongside the benefit of there being a low cost or no charge on the session.

- We have recently featured on BBC Radio Manchester, where interviews were conducted with participants, Life Leisure and Age UK Stockport.
- We have been approached on several occasions to share the types of session across Stockport:
 - o <https://www.gmmoving.co.uk/news/confidence-walks-supporting-people-with-long-term-health-conditions-to-get-more-active>

Feedback examples:

1: Annette - *One of the first people to attend confidence walk, has COPD, uses a frame, lives alone and has expressed she feels lonely and isolated at time, A attends the confidence walk and has the opportunity to meet with friends in a safe and warm environment where she feels confident walking with friends. She now gets a lift with another participant and is in a 'WhatsApp' group so she regularly keeps in touch with others.*

2: Mary - *A trusted member of community, shared the opportunity to discuss the need for seating/benches in the local area, which we are now developing work on. M also helped start up and support the 'walk in the park' session, a level up to the confidence walk, giving people the opportunity to meet and have a short walk in the local park.*

3: Janet - *A keen walking, attended all forums, is keen to develop more community walk ideas, is attending the walk leadership course with the potential of leading local walks and supporting the weekend wellness walks.*

4: Gen - *A wellbeing prescriber, wanted to meet new people in the community as well as getting active, she was signed posted to the boxing and was keen to start walking, however she works full time and so couldn't access our walking provisions, we introduced a evening walk to enable more people to walk with us, Gen attended the evening walks, and was instrumental in helping develop the monthly weekend walk, we are now looking into a more challenging walk to work towards to.*

Future planning:

- Further Confidence walk sessions in partnership with current and new organisations.
- Nordic Walking sessions to provide an alternative and accessible activity through our growing walking and social provision.
- GM Walking festival steering group involvement and shaping of the walks in Stockport.
- Developing of community walks through our partnership with the Transport and Active Travel team to train up volunteers to lead walks.
- Growing Wellness walks which are taking place monthly across Stockport, attracting members, non-members and staff through Life Leisure.

Press release:

www.stockport.gov.uk/news/confidence-grows-in-new-walking-classes

