winter **2008 > issue** 21

PATHS TO HEALTH

WalkMoray - project launch

Networking Event 2008

Adding Steps and Losing Stones!

On the path towards a mentally flourishing Scotland

Good mental health is arguably the highest priority for us as individuals and for the nation as a whole. The Government's new strategy '**Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland**' recognises this. Increasing the mental wellbeing of Scotland is one of the key indicators for success of the SNP Government.

Current statistics tell us that 1 in 4 of us will suffer from mental ill health at some point in our lives. However, we need to do more than simply provide a good service for treating mental illness, we also need to look at the factors that contribute to poor mental health and tackle these.

Three key components for positive mental health are social interaction, control over your life and good physical health.

We know that the most immediate impact of Paths to Health is positive mental well-being. This is the case regardless of whether participants are experiencing mental illness or are simply those who would benefit from being more active.

So what is it that we are doing right?

- There is considerable research which directly makes the link between being physically active and positive mental health.
- Being outside in green open spaces as opposed to more controlled indoor environments.
- Walking groups facilitate positive social interaction.

But is Paths to Health not more about encouraging physical activity?

If physically inactive people are gaining positive mental health through participation then they are going to come back and become more physically active! Win Win!

In this issue, we focus on the range of activity being undertaken by the Paths to Health network which is contributing to a mentally flourishing Scotland.

Walk more, feel the difference – mentally and physically!

www.pathstohealth.org.uk

healthier scotland
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

produced by the Paths for All Partnership

"A day to remember!" - supporting people with dementia

The Alzheimer Scotland South Aberdeenshire Service organises two walking groups, the Happy Hikers and a Nordic Walking Group in conjunction with the Upper Deeside and Donside Walking to Health Project. The walking group and the Nordic Walking Group are for people with dementia and carers of people with dementia.

The South Aberdeenshire Service felt that introducing walking groups would be an ideal activity for people with dementia and their carers. They hoped to increase their quality of life not only through the benefits of physical activity but also by giving people the chance to meet new friends in a relaxed social situation and by giving them the opportunity to remain mentally active.

The groups meet monthly and the walks are organised and led by the local Walking to Health Co-ordinator, Alan Melrose. The number of walkers has increased steadily each month with an average of 20 people with dementia and carers attending. The groups have been treated to some wonderful walks in the local area, with walks being usually about 2-4 miles in length. Before setting off for the walk the route is discussed over a coffee and snack and a healthy lunch is provided for participants on return. Funding is provided by The Upper Deeside and Donside Walking to Health Group and fundraised income from Alzheimer's Scotland and Carers Strategy Funding.

The challenge of including participants in isolated rural areas has been overcome by hiring a mini bus and by asking staff members and carers to provide transport to those who do not have access to a car. The walks are taken at a slower pace that suits everyone, so are inclusive and accessible to all, although twice a year a day out walking in the hills is arranged for more able participants. Participants in the group are often keen to share their own experiences and to reminisce about their childhood in the local area and they are encouraged to do so.

Participants share in the planning and organisation of the walks and have been encouraged to train as Volunteer Walk Leaders with Paths to Health. Three carers and two people with dementia have taken this opportunity and found it to be a most worthwhile experience and use their skills to help with the organisation of the walks.

After most walks, participants are asked to give, where possible, written feedback. All comments have been extremely positive.

"A day to remember, a day to treasure, we could not ask for more."

"Another memorable day. Beautiful unexplored stretch of Dee – interesting wildlife. Great leadership and great company."

Networking Event 2008

The annual Paths to Health Networking Event took place at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow on 25 September 2008. Around 300 people attended the event and enjoyed a day of informative and inspirational presentations from a wide range of speakers involved in health-walking projects across Scotland. Delegates heard talks from health sector and workplace professionals, as well as motivational and entertaining personal accounts from community health-walk leaders and volunteers.

The day was chaired by ex-international rugby star, turned radio and television presenter, John Beattie, who set the tone for a relaxed, informal and enjoyable day. John achieved a perfect balance between humour and audience engagement, while highlighting the key message that regular walking can be a simple and effective way to improve health and well-being.

The day started with an ice-breaker warm-up session by the '60-minute kid', who was joined by another member of Fife Council's physical activity promotion team. To the sound of disco music, together they helped everyone relax and prepare to listen to the programme of presentations. During lunch, delegates were given the opportunity to visit stalls and chat to representatives from other sectors. John Beattie took the floor to start the afternoon session and taught everyone a thing or two about passing a rugby ball and how to scrum before continuing with the central theme of health walking.

The overall aim of the day was to join together and celebrate the efforts and achievements of the networks of people whose hard work has helped make Paths to Health walking schemes so successful. With even more walking projects and developments planned for the future, Paths to Health recognise the invaluable contributions made by everyone. We look forward to next year!

Mental Health and Physical Activity

People with mental ill health often have significant difficulties with diet, higher levels of inactivity and a higher level of smoking than those found in the wider community. This group are twice as likely to die from CHD (Coronary Heart Disease) and four times more likely to die from respiratory disorders. Rates of obesity, diabetes and hypertension are also significantly higher.

PHYSIOTHERAPY PEDOMETER PROGRAMME FORTH VALLEY NHS

As a Physiotherapy Department working with patients with mental health problems in Forth Valley, we have looked to target the patients with significant risk factors for developing chronic disease secondary to their primary diagnosis.

A pilot project was planned using pedometers supplied by Paths to Health as a tool to motivate and encourage patients to increase their levels of physical activity. Pedometers were issued to a small group of younger female patients with guidelines on their use and targets to achieve.

One of the prime reasons given for taking part was that they wanted to lose weight so it was explained that this would be a longer term goal and part of a change in lifestyle which would include healthy eating.

On evaluation we found that the patients who were the most successful in increasing their target number of steps had the opportunity to walk with other people and were monitored on a regular basis on the number of steps achieved. It was also important that the participants were able to experience a positive change in their energy levels and mood.

These findings helped us to set up our new walking programme where we take a group of 8 people with a low exercise tolerance on a weekly walk, gradually increasing the distance and pace using pedometers to motivate and monitor their progress. Each person agrees a level of activity for the coming week. They also have the opportunity to attend a weight loss group where they are given dietary advice and aerobic exercise.

Lynn Speed
Mental Health Physiotherapist
NHS Forth Valley

Adding Steps and Losing Stones!

Kirsten Fullerton is a 21 year old with a packed schedule! During an average week she fits in two sessions of badminton, a couple of trips out on her bike, a daily walk, two evenings at the swimming pool, and starts her day with some sit ups! On top of this she regularly fits in a 5-a-side football match! Meeting with her, she is chatty and talks with enthusiasm about her life and about keeping active.

Exactly a year ago however, the situation was very different: Kirsten was inactive, spent most of her days sitting around in the ward she was living in, and was 5 stone heavier than she is today.

Kirsten at her 21st birthday in 2007 – size 16

Kirsten's story is one of a remarkable recovery. As a young teenager, she was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder: a serious mental health problem that results in difficulty forming and maintaining relationships, extremely unstable emotions and poor self image. Kirsten has spent most of her teenage years living in residential care receiving treatment for her condition.

Things began to change for Kirsten one year ago when she was encouraged by her physiotherapist treating her for back pain at that time to take part in a pedometer programme.

Kirsten and a fellow patient both started wearing pedometers and set a challenge to out-do each other with their daily step count.

"*When I started wearing the pedometer I only did about 300 steps each day as I had got into the habit of just sitting about in the ward.*

Kirsten and her friend soon noticed that their daily step count was rising just by walking round the hospital grounds and wards.

"It was really good fun and we turned it into a friendly competition. The walking challenge was a good laugh for us both and the weight began to fall off and has carried on going down!"

It was this challenge that kept Kirsten and her friend walking in the early weeks, but as time passed, they began to notice that they were losing weight and feeling the benefits in many other ways. Kirsten found that as her daily steps increased, her mood also improved and allowed her to tackle daily life in a new way with more energy and confidence.

"Becoming active has helped give me back control," says Kirsten.

Kirsten in August 2008 – size 10

For more info on Borderline Personality Disorder visit www.bpdworld.org.uk

Who are you?

Who are you?

My name is Irene and I live with my husband in Kilmarnock. I am a volunteer walk leader with the C.A.T.C.H (Community Activity to Community Health) walking groups in East Ayrshire and I also act as a walking “buddy” to one of our walkers.

How did you get involved with the project?

I got involved with C.A.T.C.H through a referral from my own doctor who felt joining the walking group would assist me to build up my self confidence and help me socialise as I was quite nervous about meeting other people and going out on my own.

When did you get involved with the project?

I first started as a walker three years ago and thoroughly enjoyed being part of the walking groups. Two years ago I was asked if I would consider acting as a buddy to a lady who, like me, was nervous about walking on her own. I decided to give it a try and I have found that I get as much from doing this as I am giving to my “buddy”. We have now been walking together for the best part of two years and this year she finally felt confident enough to join the walking group in Kilmarnock. I was really pleased that she found, with support, she could join the group and I have made a new friend. I have also become a volunteer walk leader with the group so my confidence has really risen since becoming part of C.A.T.C.H.

What motivates you to keep walking?

Originally I would have said physical health but the mental wellbeing of being in a sociable group has really boosted my self confidence and I never thought I would say this but I really enjoy being outdoors in the fresh air.

What three things do you enjoy the most about the project?

Definitely the company makes me get out there rain, hail, or shine.
It’s free so there are no restrictions to who can join and no requirements for any special walking gear. It’s fun sharing a good laugh and walking with the group really lifts your spirits. I can’t think of a better way to keep fit and healthy.

For more information on C.A.T.C.H, East Ayrshire, contact Isabel O'Brien on 01563 576701 or isabel.o'brien@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Competition Corner

In this issue of the newsletter we have a competition to win a Paths to Health goodie bag. There are ten words connected to this issue of the newsletter listed below, but there are only nine to be found within the wordsearch. Send the missing word, with your name and address to Elaine Imlack, Paths to Health, Great Glen House, Inverness, IV3 8NW before January 5 and you will be entered into the prize draw. Good Luck!

Congratulations to our lucky competition winner from Issue 20. Mary McDade from Coatbridge correctly identified that the missing word was ‘healthy’.

T	K	M	R	E	M	I	E	H	Z	L	A	Y	P
B	Q	O	W	A	L	K	I	N	G	U	P	H	L
P	K	L	A	C	I	S	Y	H	P	A	Y	T	R
Q	T	H	Z	E	V	H	F	L	R	V	F	L	Y
A	V	O	R	G	B	A	M	E	P	L	N	A	Z
D	Z	O	Q	D	Y	S	H	D	P	K	Q	E	G
D	Y	C	D	Z	N	T	G	K	Q	V	D	H	Q
Z	V	R	X	I	O	A	C	T	I	V	I	T	Y
F	L	D	M	I	Y	L	G	J	Z	W	U	C	P
E	Y	U	S	S	S	O	L	T	H	G	I	E	W
E	C	Y	W	D	K	S	D	M	U	N	C	I	Z
W	H	T	L	A	E	H	L	A	T	N	E	M	P
P	S	S	N	O	I	T	A	V	I	T	O	M	L
R	V	I	H	W	D	V	W	P	N	C	L	H	M

ACTIVITY
ALZHEIMER
EXERCISE
HEALTH
MENTAL HEALTH
MOTIVATION
PHYSICAL
PHYSIOTHERAPY
WALKING
WEIGHT LOSS

Paths to Health – Staff changes

Over the past few months Paths to Health has had many changes.

Fond farewell to Kenny Steele...

After 12 years with the Paths for All Partnership, Kenny Steele, Paths to Health Programme Manager, is moving on. The whole team wish him well in his new role at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. Kenny has managed Paths to Health since it started. His enthusiasm for developing health walks in Scotland is huge and the reach of Paths to Health is well beyond its original aims.

Congratulations to...

Elaine Imlack is now Assistant Development Officer in Inverness.

We welcome new members to our expanding team...

Vicky Stobie and Catharine Idle are Development Officers in Alloa.

Drew Smith is the PR and Marketing Officer in Alloa.

Karell Sime is the part time Administrator in Inverness.

Fiona Kelsall is the full time Administrator in Alloa.

Scheme changes

Vicky Vivers is the new Scheme Co-ordinator for the Walking Works Project in Dumfries.

Annette Macleod has left the post of Scheme Co-ordinator for Moray. We wish her all the best for the future.

Moira Devlin is the new Scheme Co-ordinator for Braveheart, Falkirk.

Enjoyed the read?

If your health walk project has a story to share, why not tell us about it. E-mail info@pathstohealth.org.uk with your story and photographs.

To obtain a large print version of this newsletter please contact Paths to Health.

Paths to Health is part of the Paths for All Partnership

Inglewood House, Tullibody Road, Alloa FK10 2HU

Tel (Alloa): 01259 218855 **Tel (Inverness):** 01463 725152 **Fax:** 01259 218488

E-mail: info@pathstohealth.org.uk **Web:** www.pathstohealth.org.uk

Paths for All Partnership Registered Scottish Charity No: SC025535 Company No: 168554 incorporated 19 September 1996 at Companies House, Edinburgh