



Yorkshire and the Humber Case Study: Walk Buddy Scheme

Natural England has funded eight Green Exercise projects with local partnerships around the country. Green Exercise connects people to nature and their local green spaces, and is one of the most cost-effective ways of improving the nation's physical and mental well being. Green spaces can encourage us to be more active by providing facilities to walk, cycle and play, but being in nature also helps to reduce stress and generally improve mental health.

The Walk Buddy Scheme is one of the projects for Natural England's Yorkshire and the Humber region. It offers 1:1 support to people who lack the confidence to walk alone or to join an existing walking group, and for those who need a little extra help to get them out and walking. Individuals can receive 1:1 support for at least six sessions (this could be more/less depending on the progress of the individual), with a view of them joining the existing Walking the Way to Health groups in

North Lincolnshire. Managed in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council, the project works closely with NHS North Lincolnshire, Voluntary and Community Organisations, Local GPs and other Health Professionals, taking referrals for individuals who need to become more physically active. The scheme is extremely flexible, and we walk at a pace, distance and time that's suits each individual. People are also able to self refer onto the scheme.

So far the buddy walk scheme has seen 15 people taking up the 1:1 support, with a further 75 expected to take it up before the project finishes in February 2011.

Barbara Lobley joined the Walk Buddy scheme in November 2008. In May of that year, Barbara slipped a disc in her back and was 'bed ridden' for 12 weeks. Barbara was already overweight at this time and gained even more weight through being immobile. In July she regained her mobility, and with the doctors permission, started a food replacement programme to try and lose some of the weight she had gained. In August she was referred to the gym by her GP where her Fitness Instructor told her of the Walk Buddy Scheme. With the permission of her GP, Barbara started the Walk Buddy Scheme in November.

"Due to my weight I wasn't very mobile at all. This scheme has given me the opportunity to lead a more active life. I've been able to meet new people and it's given me the motivation to carry on with my weight loss programme".

Barbara Lobley

Over the six week Walk Buddy scheme, Barbara has seen an increase in the amount of steps she is able to take, and has progressed to the short led walks in North Lincolnshire which she now attends on a weekly basis. So far, Barbara has lost an incredible 9 stones, and is continuing to lose weight through her more active lifestyle and diet.

Contacts

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"Due to the increase in my exercise levels, my doctor has reduced the amount of medication I'm taking"

Barbara Lobley.

