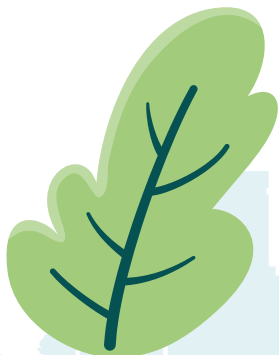


# WALK AND TALK



A guide to setting up a walking group



# About Muslim Women's Network UK

The Muslim Women's Network UK ([www.mwnuk.co.uk](http://www.mwnuk.co.uk)) is a national award-winning charity based in Birmingham. It started as an informal group in 2003 and began formally operating from 2008. The Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) works to improve the social justice and advance equality for Muslim women and girls in Britain. It does this by conducting research, operating a faith and culturally sensitive helpline and counselling service ([www.mwnhelpline.co.uk](http://www.mwnhelpline.co.uk)), delivering campaigns, producing resources, providing training, policy influencing and advocacy work.

MWNUK is also a membership organisation and provides a space for members to share views through blogs and videos via [www.mwnhub.com](http://www.mwnhub.com).



# MWNUK Walking Project

Women from some minority ethnic groups are more likely to report being in poor health. In 2022, MWNUK received a grant from Sport England to set up walking groups to encourage women to become more active and improve their health and wellbeing.

Even though the walking project has ended, this guide has been produced for anyone wanting to set up a walk group (independent of MWNUK). It provides advice on planning walks and what to consider.



**Legal Disclaimer:** The information provided in this guidance is for information only. Muslim Women's Network UK will not be liable for damages, losses, liabilities, costs and expenses arising from the use of the advice provided.

# Setting up and planning the walk



Walking is easy to organise without the need for equipment and venue hire. As walking is cost free, this activity is more inclusive, especially for those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, which is even more important given the rise in cost of living and higher amounts of poverty amongst this group of women.

## Follow these 10 steps to set up and plan your walk:

### 1 Naming the group

When sufficient numbers of women have been recruited to the Walk Group, a WhatsApp Group should be set up for it. A fun name could be assigned to the group.

### 2 Group size

The size of the group should be considered so it is manageable. Perhaps no more than 20 participants should be considered.

### 3 Choosing a location

A location should be chosen which is accessible to the walkers and suitable to their walking ability.



### 4 Choosing the day and time

It is recommended that walks take place during daylight hours taking into consideration the shorter days in the winter when determining the times for the walks. Also, times should be chosen that best suit the needs of the group. For example, if women have school age children, school run hours may need to be avoided. Walk leaders should also consider whether their cohort women prefer to do the walks on weekdays or weekends.

### 5 Communicating with the group

Walk leaders must ensure they carry a mobile phone with them on the walks. Once the location, date and time of the walk have been determined, this should be posted on the WhatsApp chat group. For those who do not have a WhatsApp group, then alternative methods of communication should be used e.g. text, phone, email or using Whats App of a family member. On the day, walk leaders should try and interact will all group members.

### 6 Meeting point

The meeting point should be clearly described on any communication and walkers should be asked to arrive at the chosen location 15 minutes before the start of the walk.

### 7 Advice for walkers

Walkers should be advised to wear comfortable and suitable footwear for walking such as flat shoes or trainers. Depending on the weather, they should also be advised on wearing a waterproof jacket, hats and sun-cream as well as bringing a water bottle.

### 8 Weather conditions

The weather forecast should be checked on the day before the walk and on the morning of the walk. The information should be used to plan accordingly e.g. alter time, day or route. Any decision to cancel the walk should be communicated to all of the group members.

### 9 Breaks

Walk leaders need to be aware of the fitness of members on the walk and allow short breaks as necessary if members are struggling. Walk leaders should especially take note of first-time walkers who may have underestimated their ability for the grade and distance of the walk.

### 10 Set walking goals

Walk leaders could consider setting walking goals such as setting either time period or distance for walking, which could be gradually increased. Using a step counter such as on a mobile phone app, participants could be encouraged to count their own steps or this could be done by the walk leader.



# Setting the rules for walkers

**Set rules and share them with walk participants and these could include:**

- Treating all walkers in the group with respect and dignity
- Following the walk organiser's directions and pace of the walk
- Keeping in a single file where appropriate such as in cropped fields
- Informing the group in good time before the walk if one is unable to participate
- Wearing suitable clothing and footwear for the weather and location
- Letting another walker know if needing to slow down and drop behind the group
- Informing parents that it is their sole responsibility to supervise children accompanying them



## Dealing with walk group member disputes

If a conflict or confrontation occurs between members of the walk group, the walk leader should ask them to remain calm and take time out for a moment. Those involved should be reminded to be respectful of other walk members and the walk leader. If necessary, the walk leader could attempt to, away from the rest of the group (and before the walk is continued) to reconcile the parties.

If an agreement cannot be reached then the walkers should be asked to agree to differ but be civil and sensible. They could also be asked to walk apart to minimise conflict.



## Considering accessibility

Everyone should be able to enjoy the outdoors. However people with limited mobility such as wheelchair users and the elderly may face difficulties on rough terrain over a long distance. These factors should be accounted for. In these situations, a more levelled and shorter pathway should be taken such as on towpaths near a canal.

Walk leaders should conduct some research prior to deciding if a particular route is within everyone's capability and consider other facilities that may be needed such as regular rest stops; accessible toilets; extra wide parking spaces; or accessible public transport. If possible, pick a walking route that is within a reasonable distance for most of the group to reach easily.

# Health and safety

To ensure the safety of the walkers, walk leaders should take the following precautions:

## First Aid Kit

Walk leaders should carry a basic first aid kit and it is recommended that a first aid training course is undertaken. Free courses are available face to face and online.

## Red Cross Mobile App

Walk leaders should download the British Red Cross first aid mobile application on their mobile phones as it contains very useful information, including videos of what action to take in common emergencies.

## Injuries

Any injured parties should be helped to the end of route. If they are unable to continue, they should be helped by arranging safe transport back to the start point and / or home. This may involve arranging a taxi or someone waiting & collecting them after returning to the start. If necessary, the walk should be abandoned - the safety of everyone is the first priority.

## Road safety

Walk leaders should ensure they are aware of highway code [www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code) and use it where it is appropriate. For example, walking on the pavement and when crossing major roads using crossings and gathering the group together and so that they can cross at once when there is a gap in the traffic. On roads in general, the group should walk in single file and face the oncoming traffic. Where it is not possible to face the oncoming traffic, then particular care should be taken when walking around bends in the road.

## Countryside Code

Walk leaders should ensure they are aware of the Countryside Code [www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/paths-in-england-and-wales/enjoying-the-countryside/the-countryside-code.aspx](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/paths-in-england-and-wales/enjoying-the-countryside/the-countryside-code.aspx) e.g. not blocking paths, leaving property as they are found, following warning signs and closing gates.



## Vulnerable people

Extra attention should be given to children, elderly and those with special needs, disabilities or wheelchair users in the group. Simple routes should be chosen with flat surfaces. However, children should only be allowed to attend if they are accompanying an adult and it should be made clear that they would be the responsibility of that person.

## Pushchairs / Wheelchairs

If any participants use the wheelchair or bring a pram or pushchair, then an appropriate route should be chosen which has a flat surface.

## Clothing and footwear

Walkers should be advised to wear comfortable footwear and if necessary warm and water proof clothing. If walks take place in the dark or during the winter when visibility may be poor, walkers should be advised to wear reflective clothing.



## Dogs

If any walker wants to bring a dog on the walk with them, it is important to check with the rest of the group if they are comfortable with this. However, guide dogs should always be allowed.

## Lost person or group

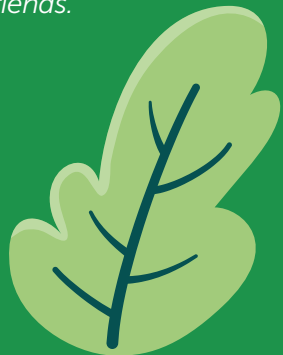
If anyone becomes separated from the group, the walk should be stopped and the lost person contacted. If the person is not contactable, the last time & place the lost person(s) was seen should be established. Steps should be re-traced to the last contact point and a search conducted for a small distance of any alternative routes or places they may have gone. If the person is untraceable and then the police should be contacted and the emergency contact informed.

# Who is the walk group for?

You may want to make your walk group for anyone or you may want to consider aiming it to a particular cohort of people such as:

- New mums
- Parents and children
- Elderly / retired people
- Domestic abuse victims
- People with particular health conditions e.g. diabetes
- People with disabilities
- New migrants
- Students
- People who have poor mental health

*This is not an exhaustive list and only are examples of different groups that could be involved. Walks with people who have much in common and are relatable to each other could make the walk more meaningful and easier for people to make friends.*



**All participants must be aged 18 or over. Walk leaders should consider whether children are allowed to accompany the parents taking part in the walks. If children are permitted, then it should be made clear to parents, that they will be the sole responsibility of the adult bringing the children on the walk.**



## Types of walking routes

Walk leaders should set a pace of walking within the capability of the entire group. This also applies to choosing the location. Walk leaders may choose to stick with the same location or vary it with each walk or every month. Over time as the walkers become more experienced, Walk leaders may wish to increase the difficulty levels of the walks by increasing the distance or where there are more inclines. The following are ideas for location for where the walks could take place:

### Parks

Local parks are full of green spaces and natural beauty and can make an easily accessible meeting place. For those who don't mind travelling further, visiting large country parks usually situated in the countryside can make walks more interesting.

### Trails

These are safe and well-maintained routes that consist of paths, stairways, bridges, vegetation and waterways and are one of the best ways to get people into walking.

### Towpaths

These are paths which run alongside canals or navigable rivers, most of these paths are local and are easy to walk across as well as providing a calm and scenic environment.

### Woodland

Walking through the woods allows people to get closer to nature and appreciate the natural beauty but not every path in a forest is safe and may not be everyone's cup of tea! It's also important to realise these paths will most likely be a further commute.

### Heritage

Walks could be used as an opportunity to connect women to local heritage through local historical places of significance giving them a chance to learn something new. Walk leaders could carry out research ahead of the walks to find out about the history of any sites that may be encountered on the routes. This information could then be shared during the walks.

You could download mobile apps to help with suggestions for walks and other information such as weather conditions, if the walk is dog, child or bike friendly, reviews, ratings, ease of walk, distance / elevation, directions, photos, activities, wildlife, rivers.

# Insurance

If you are setting up the walk as an activity being delivered by your organisation or community group, then you will require employer's liability insurance as well as public liability insurance. The insurance cover will provide legal protection in case of accidental injury to another person or damage to third party property.

**Note: Organisations could also ask first time attendees to complete a registration form and waiver form and keep a log of any accidents / falls.**



## Promoting the walk group

### Highlighting the benefits of walking

Walk leaders should promote the benefits and the positive impact of walking such as:

- Improving general health
- Building fitness
- Improving general mental health
- Reducing stress
- Reducing isolation
- Making new friends
- Improving motivation
- Improving sleep
- Giving something to look forward to and break away from daily chores or routine

**Note: Studies show that exercising 30 minutes a day reduces a person's risk of diabetes by...**

# 25%

### Marketing the walk group

Walk organisers / leaders could promote and raise awareness of their walk groups by:

- Posting on social media
- Posting in local newsletters
- Sharing at local events
- Informing friends and family
- Ask local organisations for help to spread the word
- Contacting local link workers and asking them if they can inform people about the walks who have been referred into the social prescribing scheme\*
- Posting on websites

*\*Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services. People are referred to link workers from a wide range of local agencies, including general practice, pharmacies, hospital discharge teams, fire service, police, job centres, social care services.*



# Promoting other services and information

## Awareness days

There are numerous awareness days throughout the year such as World Menopause Day, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, International Women's Day, Black History Month, Islamophobia Awareness Week, Mental Health Awareness Week etc. You could use these campaign days as hooks to have a discussion and raise awareness of topics.

## Involving walk visitors

Once the walk group has been established, it can provide an opportunity for services to reach out and speak to your participants and provide information during the walk that would be beneficial to them. For example, if your walkers are minority ethnic women a nurse could talk about the importance of having cervical smear tests to pick up signs of cancer early because the screening rates are lower in ethnic minority women.

Other relevant health issues for this group could also include, blood / organ donation, diabetes etc. In addition to representatives from the NHS, others that could be considered could include: mental health charities, women's charities, sports associations, local policing etc. The walk visitors could also be linked to annual campaign awareness days.

## MWNUK services

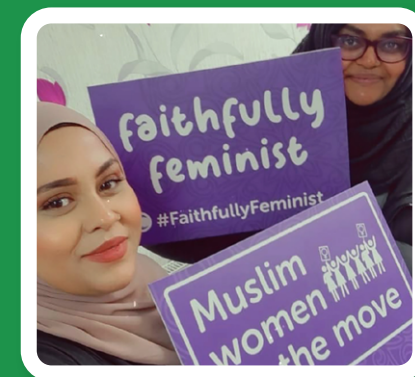
If appropriate, walkers could be made aware of Muslim Women's Network UK including becoming a member, and about its helpline and counselling service as well as the domestic abuse safety mobile app, Amal. MWNUK can provide information and helpline cards that could be handed out. They could also be notified about the charity's social media accounts and encouraged to check and follow them.

 Muslim Women's Network UK  
 MuslimWomenUK  
 MuslimWomensNetworkUK

# Data collection

If you are setting up the walk group as a part of an organisational / community group activity, then any personal information collected from each group member whether through email, WhatsApp or in person, will need to be held confidentially and securely. Details gathered may include: full name, mobile number, emergency contact number, home address and allergies among others.

You will need to adhere to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and further information can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website: [ico.org.uk](http://ico.org.uk)



## Learning and celebrating

Collecting positive and negative feedback from the group of walkers can be used for learning to improve satisfaction of the walks. Walk participants may leave with new people joining. If you manage to keep the walk group going, then do celebrate your milestones and take photographs (with permission), which could also be shared on social media to promote the walk group.





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