

## Walk to Work: letter to employers

Thank you for your interest and support for the Travel to Work study in which we are examining the way people travel to and from work. We are pleased to say your workplace has been randomised to receive the Walk to Work programme. This means a Walk to Work promoter from your workplace will receive brief training and will then contact employees who are taking part in the study to provide them with information about including more walking in their commute. Those who are interested will be offered support and encouragement by the Walk to Work Promoter during the following 10-weeks of the programme.

This **Walk to Work Employer's Pack** contains three booklets. Two of the booklets are for information only: 'Taking One Step at a Time' is for employees taking part in the study, and the Walk to Work Promoter's booklet provides guidance for the promoter. The third booklet is for you as an employer/manager.

**The Employer's Booklet contains information about the benefits of walking to work, and ideas about the ways in which employers/managers may be able to provide support for walkers.** These range from putting up posters, to offering financial incentives or improving washing facilities. The ability of workplaces to implement these ideas depends on many factors including the size and structure of the workplace and work routines. However, **we hope you will be able to consider whether some of the ideas could be implemented to support the role of the Walk to Work promoter in your workplace.** There is also space for you to comment on any barriers, opportunities or costs involved. In addition, the Walk to Work Employer's pack contains posters to encourage walking to work. We have also provided these for the Walk to Work promoter who may require your permission to display them in appropriate places in your workplace.

**We will contact you soon (by telephone and/or email) to give you the opportunity to raise any issues or queries about the Employers Pack.** In addition, please do not hesitate to contact me (my contact details are above) or your local researcher (see below) if you have any questions or suggestions about the study and the Walk to Work programme.

*[contact details]*

## Walk to Work: main content of employers' booklet

### Introduction

This booklet provides guidance for employers who are taking part in the Travel to Work study and have been asked to support walking to work. We hope you find the information useful. In addition, posters will be provided for display in the workplace.

### The Travel to Work study

The aim of this study is to examine whether it is possible to increase the amount of walking that people do during their journey to and from work. **Walk to Work promoters** will be recruited and trained to encourage other employees to walk to work. Those living further away will be encouraged to combine public transport with walking, or to park their cars further away and walk the rest of the journey. Everyone taking part in the study will be given the **Taking one step at a time** booklet and a pedometer. Those who want to try to increase walking will be helped to identify safe routes and encouraged to set goals for walking to work. Extra encouragement will be provided through regular contacts from the Walk to Work promoters over a 10-week period.

### Walking to work: Benefits to the employer

There are potential benefits to employers if their employees increase walking during the daily commute. These benefits may include:

- Increased concentration and mental alertness of staff
- Better timekeeping because of greater certainty over the timing of the journey
- Improved public image as a result of being seen to support the environment
- Reduced demand for car parking space
- Contribution to the organisation's sustainability objectives
- Improved health and wellbeing of staff, leading to reduced absenteeism and increased productivity
- Reduced employee stress

- Improved team spirit amongst employees who support each other to walk to work

### **Benefits for the employee**

Some employers may feel it is not really 'their business' to say how their employees get to work. However, taking a genuine interest in the health and wellbeing of employees can contribute to staff morale. It is worth thinking about how employees can benefit from incorporating more walking within their journey to work.

### **Walking as active 'transport'**

Walking is such a familiar activity that people may not think of it as transport, but it has many benefits as a method of 'active transport'. Walking:

- Does not require high fitness levels
- Can be done at a pace that suits the individual
- Can be done by most people of all ages
- Can be less stressful than driving a car or using public transport
- May not take as long as people think, and may even be quicker than other forms of transport
- Makes it easier to plan journey times and get to work on time
- Does not involve worries about traffic jams and parking issues
- Is free and can save money on fuel, parking or the cost of fares

Cycling is often promoted as an alternative to car use, but there are good reasons to promote walking for those who are not keen to cycle:

- It is perceived as a safer and cheaper option
- No special equipment is required
- Walking is less likely to involve direct competition with motorised traffic for road space
- For longer journeys, walking can more easily be combined with other transport modes such as buses and trains

### **Physical activity guidelines**

The Department of Health recommends that people should be active every day. A good way to do this is to build activity into the daily routine - such as walking to work. For general health, adults should aim for 30 minutes of **moderate** intensity physical activity five times a week. This activity can be built up in bouts of 10 minutes or more throughout the week. Walking to work can be a great way to reach these targets. Adults should also minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods. Helping more staff to walk all or part of their journey to work is a low-cost strategy for improving their physical and mental health.

A daily commute on foot can:

- Reduce the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, dementia and osteoporosis
- Help prevent high blood pressure
- Help control your weight
- Help maintain good mental health and ability to cope with stress

### **Encouraging walking to work during the Travel to Work study**

As an employer it may seem difficult to know how to promote walking to work. This is a challenge faced by other employers and managers. Below there are some ideas that you may be able to implement in your workplace to support people who want to try walking to work.

### **Recruiting and encouraging a Walk to Work promoter**

The Walk to Work promoter needs to be enthusiastic about walking, and able to provide support and encouragement to others. For the Travel to Work study, the promoter will be trained by the research team and provided with resources to support walkers. They also need to be given time and support to perform the role in the workplace. Trying to change travel behaviour is a difficult task, so remember to give some acknowledgement and praise for their efforts.

### **Flexible working hours**

Flexible working hours may enable employees to combine their other responsibilities with the walk to work e.g. the 'school run' or other caring responsibilities. It is also helpful if work patterns can be adjusted to fit with public transport e.g. train or bus timetables. Supporting staff in this way can mean a happier, more loyal workforce.

### **Providing bus and train information**

Providing information about the nearest bus stops and train stations, as well as calculating the distances and best routes to the workplace, can reassure employees that some journeys are more straightforward than they may have thought. Keeping some up-to-date bus and train timetables on site will help people to plan their commute and include some walking in their journey to work. Consider setting up travel champions to be experts in their chosen mode of travel (e.g. bus, train, 'park and stride'), who are able to give information about transport routes, timetables and maps of the area.

Combining active travel and public transport can help adults achieve their physical activity levels. A brisk 10-minute walk to and from the bus stop every day will make an important contribution to their physical activity levels and has important health benefits.

Discounts or subsidies for public transport may encourage employees to change their travel behaviour. If an employee gives up a valuable parking space, are you able to pass on the saving to them? Alternatively, check if the local bus or train operator is willing to offer discounted tickets.

### **Local distances to the workplace**

Many people overestimate distances and the amount of time it would take them to walk. The Walk to Work promoter will be given posters which can be adapted to include estimated distances and times for walking from local transport stations to the main entrance of the workplace. It may help if these are displayed in prominent areas of the workplace. Google Maps or Walkit.com can help with calculating walking distances and routes. It usually takes a healthy adult 15-20 minutes to walk one mile. If public transport information and walking directions are promoted as the preferred mode of travel for visitors in all company literature, employees may be more inclined to accept active travel messages for themselves.

### **Mileage allowances for walkers as well as motorists**

Many employers pay a mileage allowance for people who use their cars for company business. Some employers are now encouraging active travel by including a mileage allowance for cyclists. Why not be one of the first employers to provide a mileage allowance for those who walk to meetings? Allowing 15-20 minutes to walk a mile between meetings gives 'thinking time' that is not always possible when having to concentrate on driving or cycling. At 20p per mile a 'walking allowance' will not cost the business much, but is a strong statement of support for walking as active travel.

### **How to make parking restraints more acceptable**

Introducing car parking restraints (e.g. permits and charges, or fewer parking spaces) can cause tension in the workplace. However, it is one of the most important influences in how employees travel to work. Below are some ideas which may help to make this more acceptable.

- Provide information about how savings/revenue will be used to **support employees to use other methods of travel**, for example:
  - subsidised bus or train passes
  - subsidised walking shoes or wet weather clothing (you may be able to negotiate a discount with a local shop)
  - free rucksacks for carrying laptops and papers
- **Improve facilities to support active travel**, for example:
  - lockers
  - cloakroom facilities with drying space for coats and jackets
  - wash basins in private cubicles to enable employees to 'freshen up' in privacy on arrival at work
- **Give incentives**, for example:
  - provide free umbrellas, shoe bags, torches, reflective clothing or strips (you may want to add your workplace logo)
  - instigate and publicise a 'walking mileage allowance', for example 20p per mile

### **Communication and support**

It is important to communicate regularly with employees about travel related issues. For example:

- Give regular information about ideas, competitions and events (such as Walk to Work week)
- Provide the latest information about public transport timetables
- Remind employees about special offers you have negotiated with local shops or any 'freebies' you are giving to walkers
- Encourage employees who live in the same locality to consider walking together
- Refresh any posters to keep the information up to date

- Set up an internal communication system (e.g. intranet site) to give real-time information on public transport and timetable changes

### Financial help for employers

It is worth contacting the local authority, regional Travel Plan coordinator or a relevant third sector organisation to see if there are any grants or funds available for employers who are promoting sustainable travel. For example, matched funds may be available for lockers or improvements to washing facilities.

### Useful websites

The following websites give useful information and encouragement to people who want to be more active and walk to work:

- [maps.google.co.uk](http://maps.google.co.uk) - can be used as a walking route planner
- [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk) - lots of resources to encourage walking
- [www.walk4life.info](http://www.walk4life.info) - find a walk and track your progress
- [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/10000stepschallenge.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/10000stepschallenge.aspx) - information and encouragement to increase your daily step count
- <http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/> - support to get active, stay active
- <http://traveline.info/> - sustainable travel advice
- [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) - lots of information about healthy active travel
- [www.dft.gov.uk/think](http://www.dft.gov.uk/think) - the government's road safety campaign website

## Employers' booklet: sections for recording support for walking

### Recording support for your Walk to Work promoter and employees

We hope you find the booklets and resources helpful in encouraging employees to increase walking during their journey to work. We would be grateful if you would note any measures you have taken to support the Walk to Work promoter in your workplace as part of the Travel to Work study. We would like to assess the time and cost involved for employers and managers in trying to support active travel, as well as the opportunities and barriers involved when trying to promote walking during the journey to work. We know it is not easy to change travel behaviour and so the information you provide is valuable to us.

Please record in the table below any measures you have taken to support the Walk to Work promoter and your employees to increase walking during the journey to and from work. In the cost column, please write '0' if there is no cost to the workplace, or 'not known' if you do not know the relevant cost.

#### Financial

Activity	Please give brief details of what was done and any opportunities or barriers	Cost to workplace
Subsidising public transport use		£ _____
Subsidising shoes or wet weather clothing		£ _____
Negotiating discounts with local outdoors/sports shops		£ _____
Walking mileage allowance		£ _____
Other financial incentives/ items given to employees		£ _____

#### Facilities

Activity	Please give brief details of what was done and any opportunities or barriers	Cost to workplace

Provision of lockers and storage		£ _____
Improvements to cloakrooms / drying facilities /washing facilities		£ _____
Other facilities provided or upgraded		£ _____

**Please also give brief details of other support given for walking to work**

***Information and support***

Encouragement given to Walk to Work promoter	
Walking competitions, events	
Calculating and/or providing distances to the workplace	
Providing public transport timetables and information	
Posters displayed in key areas to promote walking to work	
Other information or support for employees about walking to work	

***Employee contracts***

Changes to working hours	
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**While you have been taking part in the Walk to Work study, have you been successful in gaining any funds to promote walking to work?**

***Financial – income or savings***

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Please give brief details of what was done and any opportunities or barriers</b>	<b>Income/ savings to workplace</b>
Funding gained to support walk to work initiatives		£ _____
Any other income or savings from changes linked to promoting walking to work		£ _____

After the 10-week period in which the Walk to Work promoter undertakes their role, we will contact you with a short questionnaire to complete about any measures you have been able to implement as an employer/manager, and the opportunities and barriers to promoting walking to work in your workplace. We may also ask if you are willing to be interviewed. You may find your notes in the table above helpful in prompting your memory.

**Thank you** for your interest and support for the Travel to Work study.