



Scottish Health Walk Network:

A guide to restarting Health Walks
post Covid-19 lockdown



The Paths for All team are here to support the restart of your Health Walk projects as we begin to ease out of lockdown. We've prepared this guidance document to help you plan, develop and evaluate the restart of Health Walks in your communities.

The Scottish Government plans for easing lockdown measures have begun to be implemented and this will continue over the next days, weeks and months. It is now appropriate that we as a network and you as a project lead begin to think about how and when we will adapt to what's possible and realistic in restarting Health Walk activities.

In issuing any advice on restarting Health Walks, we will be completely driven by official Scottish Government advice and all advice will be 100% focused on keeping yourselves, walkers and volunteers safe, whilst at the same time acknowledging the risk that continued isolation and inactivity brings for our mental, social and physical health.

We'll work together to share ideas, thoughts and challenges. We need your insights and your experience of delivering in your communities to help develop the best information and resources for getting Health Walks started again.

We also need to acknowledge the impact that the lockdown has had on us all as individuals too. Many of us are finding this situation incredibly stressful, struggling to do our jobs from home, juggling families and caring responsibilities and dealing with worries for families and friends. If we accept that getting back to 'normal' will be a gradual process, that we don't need to do everything immediately, we can try things out and see if they work, we can ask for help and most importantly we look after ourselves well. If we do all this we'll be in a stronger position to support the walkers and volunteers that we work with.

Health Walks are needed now more than ever as we support people to reconnect with their communities and rebuild their health. We're confident that as a network we can work together to get people walking again as soon as possible.

A guide to restarting Health Walks

Shielding groups

For many projects, some of your walkers and volunteers may be in the shielding groups, so for them, any easing of restrictions may still be uncertain, and they may be prevented from re-joining Health Walks and other community activities for some time. We need to be aware that for this group, and for those who live with and support them, this may be extremely difficult and be aware of how this change may be making them feel (left behind, anxious of being forgotten, frustrated). It is important that you keep in touch with this group, see the information provided in the Slack NetworkChat on ['Keeping in touch with your volunteers and walkers'](#).

Inactivity and loss of confidence

Hopefully many walkers and volunteers will be eager to get back to the routine and friendships of their groups once we can restart walks. For many though, the weeks of lockdown will have affected their ability to re-join their walk. For some, the forced inactivity will have caused physical deterioration and deconditioning and they may be unable to walk for the length of time or at a pace that they could before. Thinking about introducing a wider range of 'levels' of walk might be helpful initially or starting out with very short slow walks to help get walkers' fitness up, or even replacing your walks with outdoor Strength & Balance sessions to start with.

For some the anxiety and worry of the virus will have affected their confidence, both in terms of social interaction but also of being out in the community again and the risk of contracting Covid-19. This might be particularly the case for those with long term conditions. It's important to stress to volunteers and walkers that walks will only restart when it's safe and appropriate to do so and we'll take no risks when it comes to the health and safety of everyone involved. Buddy walks on a one to one basis and a role for volunteers talking through any worry's walkers have, maybe beneficial in the short term.

Rebuilding your group

You might want to get walkers and volunteers together before walks start, in an appropriate physically distanced way or online, through social media, to ask them what their worries, concerns, ideas and suggestions are. It would be useful to establish well in advance how many of your volunteers are willing to restart their walks straight away when the Government guidance allows. From there you can establish how many of your walks you can restart, or plan to add more walks to allow for better physical distancing and to comply with the restrictions.

If you change the days, times or meeting points of your walks please make sure you update your website and also [update the Walkers Database](#), as this is the data that the public see on our Find a Health Walk webpage. Walk risk assessments may need to be updated, outlining the measures we are taking to reduce the risk of infection. Refer to the NetworkChat about [Checking your routes, updating Risk Assessments & finding new routes](#).

We all know how important the end of walk cup of tea and chat is. Think about how we can continue to do this while physically distancing.

- Could we break into smaller groups with a takeaway drink or suggest walkers bring a flask to drink outdoors?
- Find a large quiet greenspace to meet in?
- Try some fun games or activities that we can do after the walk while physically distancing, like Body Boosting Bingo?
- Consider how we involve those who may still be shielding at home in the activities of the wider group so support them to feel included.

Scenario planning through lockdown phases

At the moment it isn't possible to be certain about the future scenarios around how and when we get back to a normal way of working. We'll therefore layout possible scenarios and how we might work within them to get Health Walks restarted safely and sensibly.

We have used the principles of scenario planning to develop actions for each of the four phases, based on the Scottish Government's route map through the crisis.

The planning is based on the Scottish Government's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) framework for decision making](#) published 23 April 2020 and [Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#) (the route map) published 21 May 2020.

Timescales

It is likely that physical distancing and increased hygiene measures will be required in some way until there is a cure or vaccine available to all. This could take up to 18 months. At the time of writing, we are in Phase 2 (19th June). There are currently no confirmed timescales for movement through the phases although at the moment the earliest it would be possible to move to Phase 3 is the 9th July. The Scottish Government will announce any changes to the Phases with prior notice and we may move forward or back through the phases at any time.

In planning the restart of Health Walks all projects should also check, if applicable, their managing organisation's policy and decisions on the commencement of any public activities and complying with this takes precedence over the guidance set out below.

Here are a few overriding principles it could be useful to consider as Scottish Government Guidance changes:

Keep informed: The UK Parliament and the devolved governments have different timescales and rules around easing lockdown as we've seen. News is likely to change quickly, so ensure you are getting updates from credible sources. Paths for All will update [our Covid-19 statement](#) and this guidance, as things change in relation to walking activity.

Reflect & Plan: Take time to consider how your project's walkers, volunteers and staff will be impacted by easing lockdown and what support they may need during this time. Things will not immediately 'go back to the way they were', we'll need to work through small changes, often. Consider what your project has learned during this time and what aspects we could maintain and should be carried forward - this is a chance to make your project stronger and more resilient. Have you found new ways of communicating, have volunteers stepped up to help with new roles that you can continue, have you had more time to plan and has this been beneficial?

Communicate: The messages in the news can be confusing. It is important to make sure your volunteers are clear about your continuing expectations and remind them of how you will inform them of any changes if/when they happen. It might be helpful distribute clear guidelines for volunteers as you ask them to restart walks, Paths for All have produced [Volunteer Walk Leader Guidance](#). Clear Do's and Don'ts can help alleviate stress about what's 'allowed' and expected. Ensure that you communicate using a range of methods, so you don't exclude those who aren't online or don't use social media.

Reassure: Walkers, volunteers and staff will be eager to know what your project's plan for the future will be, so ensure your plan is shared transparently with all in a timely manner, once you're able to. Make sure you remind all volunteers how important their role is and that they are needed more than ever just now as we look to support people to re-engage with their communities and tackle issues brought about by inactivity and isolation.

Understand: Walkers, volunteers and staff may have widely different circumstances and feelings about new measures to ease lockdown and therefore may be affected in very different ways. Communications should encourage dialogue so that everyone can feel as comfortable as possible with any changes you may make. Be understanding and flexible in your project's approach so that everyone can be supported as much as possible to re-engage. Also make it clear that there is no requirement or pressure for walkers or volunteers to participate, and that no one should be expected to do something they aren't comfortable with. Undertaking an informal survey might help you have a better understanding of the volunteer capacity still available to you and the number of walkers who are hoping to re-engage at each phase.

Remain Flexible: The Government has stated that easing lockdown measures will be based upon many factors and statistics supporting that this is safe; there is not a guaranteed timescale and it may not be a straightforward path from lockdown to 'normality'. It is therefore prudent for us to have contingency plans if lockdown measures are eased at a slower pace than planned or are even reinstated for a certain period of time. Again, clear and effective communication will be key here. Continuing to support our walkers and volunteers in a consistent way throughout this period of change will be a challenge but is ultimately the goal.

We're producing new and amending existing resources to support the network, these will be updated regularly and are available on the Members Area of the website:

- [Risk Assessment Template Covid-19](#)
- [Guidance and Flow Chart for Volunteers restarting Health Walks](#)
- [Buddy Walk Guidance](#)
- [Walk Agreement Card Covid-19](#)

Summary of the Four Phases of the Scottish Government's Route Map Through the Crisis relating to Health Walks

Lockdown (Phase 0)

This recovery phase consists of lockdown conditions. Message is 'Stay Home', with outdoor exercise being one of the reasons people may leave their homes. Indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities are closed. Advice is to avoid outdoor recreation that isn't running, cycling, or walking and to stay local. For example, no non-essential car journeys. Remote working is the default position. We have moved out of this phase but may return if the virus increases significantly.

Phase 1

In this recovery phase people can socialise with one other household outdoors. Any permitted physical activity that maintains physical distancing is allowed with one other household, outdoors. Restrictions are eased on the types of outdoor activity allowed. Some outdoor facilities are allowed to open, if they can maintain physical distancing and good hygiene. Indoor facilities remain closed. Travel for sport and leisure purposes is discouraged, instead people are advised to walk, wheel, or cycle locally for recreation. 'Stay home' message in place. Outdoor based work can resume.

Phase 2 (Current Phase as at 19/6/20)

As the virus is controlled, we will see restrictions eased further. Outdoor gatherings are permitted with a maximum of 3 households and 8 people, complying with physical distancing and you should not meet people from more than two other households each day. Members of an extended household are considered to be one household in relation to the other legal requirements on outdoor gatherings. People are also able to go inside another household to use the toilet. Driving for leisure and exercise purposes is allowed with an approximately 5 mile radius.

Phase 3

This recovery phase will bring us closer to feeling 'normal' as Test and Protect is working across Scotland and the virus is suppressed. At this stage people can socialise across multiple households outdoors and indoors. Indoor facilities are opening up if they can demonstrate good hygiene and physical distancing is practical. Auxiliary facilities are open. Car travel beyond the local area for leisure and exercise is allowed. Public transport is operating full services.

Phase 4

In this final recovery phase, the virus remains suppressed and is no longer considered a significant threat to public health. A vaccine may be in circulation, but society remains alert to the virus. Almost all facilities are operational again and there is an increase in the number of people who can attend live events.

Phased approach to restarting Health Walks: This table outlines the implications of the 4 Phase approach for Health Walks and provides guidance on considerations and actions. There is no pressure or expectation about when you restart Health Walks as this must be done in partnership and consultation with your volunteers, walkers and managing organisation. The Walking for Health Team at Paths for All is available at any time if you need advice, guidance or support.

Principle	Prompts	Implications				
		Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Participation and Delivery of Health Walks	<p>What can we deliver safely and within the guidelines?</p> <p>What might need to change in how we deliver Health Walks?</p> <p>Ensuring adequate risk assessment in place</p>	No Health Walks are delivered.	<p>No Health Walks are delivered.</p> <p>Potential for delivery of 1:1 Buddy Walks (see Buddy Walk Guidance Document) or 1:1 Strength and Balance sessions outside.</p> <p>Travel to health walks permitted if 5 miles or less.</p> <p>Risk assessments of existing or new routes could be carried out in advance of walks starting to ensure physical distancing is possible. (See Revised Risk Assessment Template).</p>	<p>Outdoor gatherings are permitted of up to 3 households and a maximum of 8 people. This gives limited potential for Health Walks to restart, maintaining physical distancing measures, given they would need to consist of only 1 volunteer and walkers from 2 different households.</p> <p>Volunteers leading walks would need to ensure they didn't meet with any other households that day.</p> <p>Small group Strength and Balance sessions could be held outdoors, following the guidance above and limited to 3 households.</p>	<p>Health Walks can be delivered maintaining physical distancing measures while complying with any restrictions on group and household numbers.</p> <p>Numbers of people allowed to gather outside may increase, allowing larger group sizes.</p> <p>Consider different levels of walk and/or Strength and Balance sessions as walkers may have lost confidence and physical capability.</p> <p>Indoor Strength and Balance sessions can restart, with</p>	Health Walks operating as 'normal' probably without the need for physical distancing, but with increased hygiene measures.

			<p>Travel is only permitted around 5 miles from home.</p> <p>Consider pilot walks with Volunteers first, to test new protocols and increase confidence.</p> <p>Plan for the development and delivery of group walks in Phase 3 if there is capacity and demand but with smaller group sizes or existing walks with staggered start times to reduce group size.</p> <p>Route risk assessments to be reviewed and revised if necessary.</p> <p>Consider development of an online or phone booking system to limit and control numbers as required once walks restart.</p> <p>Live online Volunteer Walk Leader training delivered.</p>	<p>appropriate hygiene and physical distancing measures in place.</p> <p>The number of walks delivered may increase as volunteer capacity increases.</p> <p>Face to face Volunteer Walk Leader training can resume with appropriate physical distancing measures.</p>	
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Inclusion to Health Walks	<p>Think about how we welcome, engage and connect people in each phase</p> <p>Removing barriers</p> <p>Engaging new participants</p> <p>Providing training opportunities</p>	<p>Communication to all walkers regarding the suspension of Health Walks.</p> <p>Initial outreach via, phone, email, printed resources and social media to walkers and volunteers with offer of support and information about keeping physically active.</p>	<p>Ongoing communications to all walkers and volunteers to retain social connections, reduce isolation and encourage physical activity, via phone, video calls, email, social media and printed resources.</p> <p>Opportunity to consult walkers and volunteers about concerns/ suggestions around restarting Health Walks and assess likely demand and volunteer availability. Use a range of methods to ensure inclusion and opportunities to give feedback.</p> <p>Consider producing 'What to expect on your Health Walk' guidance for walkers based on your project's procedures.</p> <p>Option for providing PFA online Walk Leader training for new volunteers to meet demand.</p> <p>Consider an induction for existing volunteers on new protocols and guidance in advance of walks starting</p>	<p>If restarting with 3 household groups, communicate clearly how and when walks are restarting and the measures that are in place to ensure safety.</p> <p>It's likely that communication will be limited to a small number of walkers and volunteers (possibly those most in need) if restarting walks on a small scale or trial basis.</p> <p>Communicate the requirements of walkers and volunteers when participating (see the revised Walk Agreement Card).</p> <p>Continue to communicate and involve those walkers and volunteers who are unable or unwilling to rejoin walks at this time, or if your project isn't restarting walks in Phase 2.</p>	<p>Continue to promote the walks to existing walkers and if capacity allows, start to promote more widely in the community to support those who would benefit from being more active.</p> <p>Ensure information about the walks is up to date on your website and the Walkers Database.</p> <p>Consider messaging and reducing the length/intensity of walks to encourage those less active to join or rejoin.</p> <p>Sharing photos and feedback from the walks may help to reassure people.</p> <p>Provide ongoing support to Volunteer Walk Leaders to address issues and concerns as they arise, including peer</p>	<p>Continue to review capacity within the context of physical distancing guidance and work to further increase participation by the inactive.</p>
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			(see Guidance for Volunteer Walk Leaders and Returning to your Volunteer Role docs).	Provide ongoing support to Volunteer Walk Leaders to address issues and concerns as they arise, including peer support, regular communications and feedback.	support, regular communications and feedback.	
Partnerships	Think about the possible organisations that could help with your planning for each phase. Nurturing existing partnerships Developing new partnerships	Continue to engage with Paths for All and the Scottish Health Walk Network to share learning, ideas, best practice and resources around staying active at home and safe independent walking.	Continue to engage with Paths for All and the Scottish Health Walk Network to share learning, ideas, best practice and resources around staying active at home, independent walking and restarting health walks. Where appropriate, liaise closely with the project's host organisation to ensure you are following their guidelines around restarting and risk assessment. Connect with local and national volunteer organisations if there is a requirement to increase volunteer Walk Leader recruitment.	Continue to engage with Paths for All and the Scottish Health Walk Network to share learning, ideas, best practice and resources around staying active at home, independent walking, restarting and delivering health walks. Work with local community organisations and Health and Social Care partners to promote the restarting of Health Walks as and when appropriate and encourage participation. Engage with local leisure providers and greenspace managers if required to ensure that any routes identified are open, safe	Continue to engage with Paths for All and the Scottish Health Walk Network to share learning, ideas, best practice and resources around delivering health walks. Seek out new partnerships to help reach people who could benefit but aren't currently participating e.g. bereavement groups, rehab groups etc.	Continue to engage with Paths for All and the Scottish Health Walk Network to share learning, ideas, best practice and resources around delivering health walks. Reconnect with partners with whom contact had to stop/reduce due to Covid-19 e.g. care homes, GP Practices.

				and appropriate if/when walks restart.		
Places for Health Walk activities	<p>Think about how you will use facilities and outdoor spaces within each phase.</p> <p>Protecting the safety of participants while participating</p> <p>Reviewing plans on an ongoing basis</p>	All facilities closed and stay at home message in place.	<p>No indoor contact permitted and no cafes, toilets etc available.</p> <p>If 1:1 walks delivered, use quiet routes to ensure physical distancing.</p>	<p>No indoor gatherings allowed and outdoor cafes remain closed. If allowed to open during Phase 2 and where available, they could be used for post walk gatherings.</p> <p>When risk assessing routes, identify where there is the need for wider pavements or other infrastructure improvements to make walking safer, this can be fed back to the local authority as they may be able to implement temporary infrastructure improvements.</p>	<p>Post walk social gatherings can go ahead where appropriate facilities exist and are open.</p> <p>When walking in groups be aware if it's making it more difficult for the general public to walk, i.e. large groups or long lines that it could be hard to avoid. Sports fields/pitches may be an option for some walking loops/laps in the short term.</p>	<p>Post walk social gatherings can go ahead where appropriate facilities exist and are open.</p> <p>Volunteer events and Health Walk social events can resume indoors.</p>

FAQs

- 1. An issue I am concerned about is that we have a number of people I know who have had shielding letters but have been out walking. Where do we stand if the shielding continues but someone decides to join our walk?***

Those shielding have been asked to take additional steps to minimise their chance of catching COVID-19 until at least 31 July. It is now confirmed that people shielding should consider spending time outdoors from 18 June. Those shielding should still only work from home and should avoid shops, pharmacies and other situations where their ability to maintain physical distancing is affected. It is advised

those who are shielding maintain physical distancing, do not to meet with members of another household indoors, and those who are shielding should not form extended households.

It is advised that people shielding can go outdoors for a walk, wheel, run or cycle. You can also take part in non-contact outdoor activities such as golf, hiking, canoeing, outdoor swimming, angling, etc. You should maintain strict physical distancing at all times, even if you live with the person you are out with. This means keeping 2 metres (or three steps) away from other people at all times, choose times and areas that are quiet, if you can. You can now meet up with another household outdoors, including in gardens, but following advice on physical distancing. You should not meet more than 7 people at once, nor with people from more than 1 household per day.

The guidance states 'Shielding is for your personal protection. While it is your choice to decide whether to follow these measures, the Chief Medical Officer strongly urges you to do so'. Our recommendation is that everyone follows Government advice for their personal circumstances. This information is to be updated again for the shielding group and at the moment is in place until the end of July. It is the walker's decision whether to follow this advice. If they wish to join the group against official advice, they do so at their own risk and the project is not responsible for any subsequent implications.

2. We were wondering what the thoughts were on walkers and volunteers who were over 70 coming back to take part in or lead walks? They are in the moderate risk category.

All walkers and volunteers should at all times be encouraged to follow government advice. It is an individual's choice whether or not to participate in Health Walks, providing they act in accordance with the Walkers Agreement. Individuals are encouraged to assess the likely and possible risks of participation (and non participation) depending on their own health and personal circumstances. They should consult a medical professional if unsure.

3. Will we need to add symptoms into our walker's agreement for a point of reference and reminder?

Yes, we have developed an amended Walk Agreement Card that asks Walkers to confirm that they don't have [symptoms](#) and shouldn't be self-isolating as per Government guidelines. The agreement should be read out at the start and it should be made clear to walkers that participation in the walk implies consent with the statement. Walkers should also agree to be willing to have their contact details passed on if required for Track and Trace purposes if a group member goes on to develop symptoms.

4. How should we be managing falls during walks as lockdown lifts (and if physical distancing is to remain in place)?

If someone falls and they need emergency medical attention, volunteers must call 999 as normal. In situations where there is no need for immediate medical attention, or for minor first aid only, Public Health Scotland's advice for volunteers is 'At times you might be carrying out very specific activities, outwith a premises, where it is not possible or practical to guarantee the minimum of 2 metre social/physical distancing measures. In these circumstances we recommend that you [read the Scottish Government advice on facial coverings](#).' We recommend that volunteers carry a face mask or covering and hand sanitiser for this purpose, but no one should feel obligated to put themselves in a position in which they feel uncomfortable.

5. *Are face masks/coverings being recommended? Although we are outdoors physical distancing may be difficult?*

No, current Government advice is that there may be some benefit in wearing a facial covering when you leave the house and enter enclosed spaces, especially where physical distancing is more difficult and where there is a risk of close contact with multiple people you do not usually meet. Examples include traveling on public transport or entering a food shop where it is not always possible to maintain a 2m distance from other customers. There is no evidence to suggest there might be a benefit outdoors, unless in an unavoidable crowded situation, where there may be some benefit. While walkers are observing the 2m distance this will not be considered a crowded situation. However, walkers and Volunteers are entitled to use a face mask or covering if they wish.

6. *Can all of the Paths for All Strength & Balance exercises be done in an outdoor setting?*

This partly depends on suitable outdoor furniture (benches, handrails etc) and a flat surface to stand on being available. Walkers should wear gloves or use hand sanitiser when touching outdoor furniture and wash hands when returning home. It may not be possible or safe to complete all exercises in all locations with all groups and physical distancing needs to be maintained at all times. A risk assessment should be carried out prior to demonstrating the exercises.

More questions? Get in touch with your local Development Officer who will be happy to help.

Useful Links

Scottish Government Guidance on Phase 2 Restrictions

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/staying-safe/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/exercise-and-activity/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/meeting-others/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/shielding/>

Official NHS Advice on Covid-19, Guidance for Different Groups and Physical Activity

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/healthy-living/coronavirus-covid-19-physical-activity>

Support and Resources for Volunteering during Covid-19

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/covid-19/>

Information and Resources on Best Practice in Reducing Covid-19 Risk while Volunteering

<https://www.scdc.org.uk/supporting-communities-safely>

Paths for All's statement relating to our work and walking activity

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/our-response-to-covid-19>