



Walking for health

Group: *'Mums on the move', Shankill
Sure Start Mums and Tots*

Council area: *Belfast City Council*

▶ Background

The group has been running for two years and is actually made up of three separate groups from the Alessie, Martin and Hanna centres. They walk in the greater Shankill area of Belfast.

The three groups meet up approximately four times a year for a day out to walk together further afield.

The aim is to help mothers and their young children enjoy some physical activity out in the open air.

The group is run by a health visitor who is well aware of the many health benefits that come with walking and she is keen to help mothers and their children to become more active.

▶ Getting started

Dympna Eaton, a health visitor, was approached by the local health promotion department and offered walk leader training. Dympna understands the many health benefits of walking, both physical and mental, and so was keen to use it to help improve the health of the mothers and children in the area.

▶ Membership

The groups by their very nature are constantly changing with many mothers coming and going. There are regularly seven mothers per walk with upwards of 23 on the 'joined up' walks.

The group currently has two trained walk leaders.

Programme

The walks are based locally except when the groups come together and a bus is organised to take them to various places across Northern Ireland. Examples of locations visited include the Lagan towpath, Rowallan Gardens and the Belfast hills.

Organising walks that suit everyone is difficult, especially when you want to encourage the toddlers to walk rather than simply be pushed along in a pushchair. To help cater for this, the longer, more arduous walks also have a shorter, easier alternative available.

Advertising

The group is advertised periodically in the Shankill Mirror and a calendar of events is produced for display in the three centres from which the groups walk. For the organised away days, flyers are produced and made available to the wider community.

Cost

There is no charge for the walkers. Funding has been made available through the Sure Start programme and the Eastern Health and Social Services Board has provided funds for hiring a bus for the away days.



'Mums on the move', Shankill Sure Start Mums and Tots

▶ Evaluation

The walking group was evaluated approximately one year ago with walkers asked for their views as to the usefulness of the group.

▶ Key impacts

Dympna deals with some mothers who have post-natal depression and she finds that being able to refer them to the walking group works very well. She said: "Walking is very non-threatening compared to saying 'go to the gym'".

Dympna knows the huge potential for health improvement that exists in a walking group: "Walking provides a great opportunity for people to get together in an informal and relaxed setting. People who are under pressure tend to 'close themselves in', but when out walking they can relax and are more receptive to the advice that I can give them." She wishes she had more time to dedicate to running the group but this is just one of the many things that she is involved in.



The weather is a problem and this is difficult to manage particularly because of having young children to consider. Despite these difficulties the group continues with much positive feedback from the mothers.

▶ Future developments

If funding is no longer available to cover the hire of the buses for away days it will limit the scope and make the programme less interesting for everyone.

▶ Recommendations

You need someone with as much time as they can to really take on the project and organise things as best they can.

▶ Contacts

Dympna Eaton

Health visitor (Alessie Centre)

Tel: 028 9087 4000



Designed and produced by:

Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland

18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS.

Tel: 028 9031 1611 (voice/minicom). Fax: 028 9031 1711.

www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk