



Step out Sheffield 2019 Annual Report

Step out Sheffield has now completed three years as a volunteer-led, not for profit organization. In 2018-19 we started to develop three more walks and provided four volunteer walk leader training days that provided between them another 20 keen and able volunteers. Walker attendances on most walks continue to grow. The systems in place to support our volunteer walk leaders and to ensure the safety of our walkers are robust enough to allow the scheme to expand and we have, as an organization, grown in both size and in confidence since April 2016 when a steering group made up from concerned volunteers took over from the council backed scheme and launched Step out Sheffield.

The two biggest things affecting Step out Sheffield in the 2018/19 financial year were the Rambler's take-over of Walking for Health and the replacement of the data protection law by 'general data protection regulations.'. The former meant that all promotional material, information sheets and letterheads had to be modified to incorporate the new Ramblers:Walking for Health logo. The latter meant that at each of our walks, everyone who joined before 1st June 2018 had to sign to say it was OK for Step out Sheffield to keep their contact information, an exercise that took a great deal of time and patience.

Our volunteer treasurer made a number of successful grant applications. In particular, a total of £1,668 was awarded from Council Ward-Pot funds to help towards the administration costs of providing our project.

Some of our walking groups already had bank accounts and were able to apply directly for funding. Our volunteer treasurer offered to help other groups set up bank accounts and to apply, on their behalf for financial support. As a result, several more walking groups successfully applied for funding and set up constituted groups to administer the funding. This has not only brought individuals within these groups closer together, but it has also fostered relations between groups when funding for trips has been provided on the basis of it being made available to all registered health walkers in the area.

The quarterly networking meetings are also doing well. These meetings are for volunteers and their partners. In August 44 leaders enjoyed a walk in Ecclesall Woods followed by afternoon tea. In November 39 leaders walked along the canal tow-path from Meadowhall to the Canal Basin there they enjoyed a welcome cuppa and a noisy catch-up the Dorothy Pax. In February 2019 71 volunteers enjoyed a very tasty pie & pea luncheon at Hillsborough Arena. These events provide an opportunity for the volunteers from any given walk to socialize amongst themselves, something that isn't possibly whilst they are 'on duty'. They also provide the opportunity to meet up with volunteers from different walks to exchange anecdotes and ideas.

Four volunteer walk leader training days were held throughout the year and, as a result, the number of leaders now regularly volunteering for us has risen to 160. Walker attendances rose once again over the past year.

Three new walks were started in the 2018-19 financial year and all are doing well. In June 2018 a walk in Bolehills Park, Crookes was established. Much of the groundwork for this walk was done by Grace Weatherburn, a Drinkwise Agewell Resilience worker, and Drinkwise Agewell continue to have hands-on involvement with this walk each week. In October, two more walks began. All eight members of staff in the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) sustainable travel team underwent volunteer walk leader training. They provide a 45-minute city-centre walk on Wednesday lunch times. They offer a choice of walks, some of them themed, and a rota ensures that two staff members are available every week to deliver them. John Pearson, Sheffield Wednesday Football Club (SWFC) Community Programme coordinator trained as a walk leader and was instrumental in helping establish a walk from Hillsborough football stadium each week. Most weeks he is able to provide a mini-bus to transport walkers to the start of their walk. At the time of writing, walker numbers are such that this system works well.

In November 2018 we welcomed four medical students on a four-week placement with us. They each attended three different walks every week to compare and contrast the way we cope with different terrain, different numbers of walkers and different levels of fitness. The main benefit to us was that two of the students trained our coordinator to edit and update the Step out Sheffield website. This is particularly important because an increasing number of enquiries come via the website.

We are very grateful for continued support from SYPTTE in the form of another print run of our programme leaflets. Their design team also drafted and produced certificates for those walk leaders who had completed more than 10 years of regular volunteering and all walkers and leaders who had attended over 500 walks. One gentleman had, in 10 years of walking with us, clocked up just over 1,500 walk attendances!

2018-19 has been another year of consolidation. We were able to build upon the successes of our first two years, and improve the sustainability of the scheme. All the leaders in the scheme are now familiar with who to contact if and when the need support, be that holiday cover or additional registration forms. The walks are all ticking over nicely and the nine volunteers on the management committee are now comfortable meeting quarterly.

In the year ahead, we need to maintain our walk leader training levels in order to maintain safety standards and, in the continued absence of core funding for the scheme, we aim to maintain our existing partnerships and hopefully develop new ones in order to maximise our sustainability.