

MSP commends Health Walks for mental wellbeing

The Scottish Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, Jenni Minto MSP, has praised the role of community Health Walks in supporting mental wellbeing at the Gyle Park in Edinburgh.

Meeting with representatives from [Paths for All](#) and volunteers from Ageing Well and the Friends of Gyle Park group, the MSP took part in a Health Walk – a walk that regularly takes place on the newly upgraded paths in the park.

Edinburgh Leisure and NHS Lothian's Ageing Well Project offers subsidised city-wide activities that encourage active living and socialisation for over 400 older adults. In 2023/24, nearly nine in 10 (87%) participants reported feeling happier after an activity.

Jenni Minto MSP, Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, said: "It was fantastic to join this Health Walk and see first-hand how these walks have such a positive impact on your mental wellbeing.

"Access to quality green spaces is vital for our mental and physical wellbeing. These community Health Walks play a crucial role in reducing isolation, boosting mood and physical activity levels, and connecting people with nature in a supportive group setting."

Taking place during both National Walking Month and Mental

Health Awareness Week, the visit highlighted the important role walking and accessible outdoor spaces play in supporting good mental health.

Cat Wilson, Active Communities Project Officer, Edinburgh Leisure said: "Our Ageing Well programme delivered an impressive 481 walks, recording almost 6,000 visits in the last year.

"The programme aims to support older adults to be physically active every week and provides a fantastic way of meeting like-minded people in an enjoyable and safe setting.

"This in turn has positive effects on their mental health, including increased confidence and a more positive outlook and for those participants living with dementia provides a safe environment for social interaction."

The Health Walk group make use of newly upgraded paths that have been improved by Friends of the Gyle Park. They received £87,203 towards improvements of the pathways to enhance accessibility from the Ian Findlay Path Fund (IFPF), a grant fund run by Paths for All and supported by Transport Scotland.

Kirsty Rankin, Walking for Health Manager at Paths for All, said: "Paths for All is proud to support programmes like the Ageing Well Health Walks that are reducing inequalities in access to physical activity.

"Everyday we hear stories of how going on a short walk can boost your mood, reduce stress and anxiety and allow you to connect with nature and your community, and we encourage everyone to put a spring in their step this Mental Health Awareness week."

The £1.5m Ian Findlay Path Fund (IFPF) supports the improvement of local paths within and between communities, making it easier for people to choose active travel and public transport for everyday journeys for a happier, healthier,

greener Scotland.

The IFPF will re-open for new applications on the 27th May, community groups interested in applying for funding can reach out to the Ian Findlay Path Fund team at IFPF@pathforall.org.uk.

For more information about Paths for All, and to find your local Health Walk, visit: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health>

