



Walk Leader Guide

Our Walks

Welcome to the Mental Health Mates Walk Leader guide, we are so grateful to you for your support and excited to help you get started!

At MHM, our walks are a dedicated safe space for people to walk and talk without fear of judgment. Our Walk Leaders are an essential part of this. Be it in person or online, as a Walk Leader you will help create a safe environment for people to talk, share and listen with other members of the MHM community.

In this pack we will guide you through each stage of organising your own Walk. If there is anything in the pack that feels confusing or overwhelming please email us at hello@mentalhealthmates.co.uk. Remember, we are here to help you.

This guide includes:

- What is a Walk Leader?
- How to register
- Plan your walk
- Walk day
- What ifs
- MHM walk rules



What is a Walk Leader?

At Mental Health Mates, our Walk Leaders are at the heart of our organisation. With their openness, dedication and ability to bring people together, our Walk Leaders are, and continue to be, the reason Mental Health Mates is the inclusive and flourishing community it is today, making a difference to so many people.

Being a Walk Leader is a wonderful opportunity to connect with your local community and provide a safe and supportive environment for your peers. Planning routes, promoting Walks and connecting community members are just a few of the meaningful responsibilities of an MHM Walk Leader. For some members of the MHM community, our Walks are a vital part of their routine, which is why it is important that as a Walk Leader, with our support, you are prepared to commit to the role.

As a Walk Leader you are there to encourage, support and lead your group members, enabling them to experience the positive effects that walking and talking can have on their mental health!

“Leading MHMs Newcastle I feel I have found a little community of genuinely lovely people who want to be there for each other in good times and bad. I certainly never had anyone I could talk openly to about my mental health before getting involved. The relaxed and informal nature of the meet ups helps to ease the nerves and there’s never any pressure to open up, but when we do the support is always there.”

Kate, Leeds Walk Leader

How to register

Please email hello@mentalhealthmates.co.uk with the following:

- Name
- Address
- Email
- Phone Number
- Area you plan to start your walk

We will then set you up as a Walk Leader, providing any additional guidance or support you might need and you can get started.



Plan your walk

Choose your location, date and time

Tips:

Decide on a location that is easy to get to, for example, locations that have good public transport links, clear signage or an accessible central meeting point like a cafe.

You are welcome to start and finish your walk at a local Wagamama. If you wish to do so please email us at hello@mentalhealthmates.co.uk so that we can connect you with the manager at your local branch.

Make sure your location is accessible for all, including wheelchairs and pushchairs.

We suggest planning your walks for weekend mornings or weekday evenings due to MHM member's work scheduling/childcare or medical appointments.

Create your MHM email

We encourage you to create your own MHM email (e.g. mhmwindsor@gmail.com) for the walks so that you won't have to share your personal information. You can create your MHM email address with yahoo, hotmail or gmail and share it with us.

Create your poster

With your new email address, send us your chosen location, date, time and poster to hello@mentalhealthmates.co.uk. We can then advertise your walk or meet up on our website and social channels.

We have a selection of posters for you to add your information to – to access our Poster Guide [click here](#).

Tips

You are welcome to print your posters and share them at local places such as town halls, libraries, hairdressers, doctor's surgeries, or local cafe's. You might also want to contact your local newspaper or find a local publication or community group who will want to promote your Walk.

Social media: Instagram

We encourage creating your own Instagram page to share your posters, walk photos and to connect with us and other MHM members.

For reference, here are some examples of current MGM IG accounts:

[@mhm_beverley](#)

[@mhm.reading](#)

[@mentalhealthmatesandover](#)

Social media: Facebook

Please join our Facebook page [here](#) and email us to be made an Admin in order to share your posters with our Facebook MHM community.

**If you are unable to or would rather not engage with social media this is more than okay. We will always publicise details of your work on our website and through our MHM Instagram account; you will just need to ensure that details are shared locally in some format.*



Walk day

Preparation

- Once you have officially registered, you will be sent a branded MHM lanyard to wear on the day.
- Make sure your phone is charged so that you can be contacted by attendees.
- Have a pen and paper ready for track and trace of attendees.
- Remind your members to bring their own drink or flask for the walk if they want to have their own refreshments.

Arrival

- Introduce yourself! You could say a few words to welcome everyone. Here are a few good ice breakers that Walk Leaders have used before:
 1. 'Do you live locally?'
 2. 'How did you find out about MHM?'
 3. 'Is this your first walk here?'
- Encourage your group members to introduce themselves.
- Run through the main MHM ethos.
- We are a peer support group.
- This is a safe space for people to walk and talk without fear or judgment.
- Our Walks are for you. You can talk as much or as little as you like, as long as you are up and out that is the most important thing!
- Wait for ten minutes at the meet up point in case anyone attending is running late.

Walk

- Make sure you are socially distanced and following the Covid Government guidelines.
- Check in to make sure everyone is happy with the pace you are walking and that no one is being left behind.
- People are free to leave the walk at any time as long as they let you know.
- The most important thing is that people are up and out, they do not need to share anything unless they want to, so do not feel any pressure to encourage people to talk, just being with you and involved is the most important thing.

Finish

- Thank everyone for coming! Congratulate them on joining in and being a part of the MHM community.
- Ask them if they would like you to keep them up to date with plans for future Walks and make sure you have their details if so.
- If you can take a picture of your walk group that is great, however, if members are not comfortable with this then do not worry.
- Some members might like to socialise after the walk and whilst we welcome this please note that we cannot provide refreshments. If this is the case, we encourage people to bring their own provisions (remember, not everyone can afford refreshments in a cafe after.)
- Ask your group members if they would like to become an MHM member and subscribe to our newsletter for more information on upcoming walks and events – this can be done by registering on our website.
- Then please just keep us updated with details of your future walks!



What ifs...

No one turns up?

Meet ups can vary from two to twenty people. However, if only one person turns up, it is still worth it. We understand it takes time to build a group and we want to stress that it is not a reflection on you! Remember, everyone has bad days or emergencies that stop them from attending. Don't be disheartened, we can discuss what extra help might be needed to promote the walk.

I can't do it?

Please do not worry – we will handle it. These things can happen, don't put pressure on yourself! Just be sure to let us know.

The weather is bad?

If the weather is forecasted to be bad, understandably fewer people might turn up than expected. Our members depend on our Walks to be consistent and reliable, so please be prepared to run your walk, come rain or shine!

A member is not coping?

If a member is struggling to cope please always direct them to the support resources listed [here](#).

MHM walk rules

- Walks and meet ups must be a safe place.
- Walks should always be free to attend.
- Please follow the COVID Government guidelines, [see here](#).
- Print out or have a copy of our MHM exemption letter for your walk.
- Please be aware that MHM is not therapy, we are a peer support group. However, we can help direct people to [support resources](#).
- Joining for a tea or coffee is a choice and we realise that not everyone will want or be able to do so.

Thank you

We have shared a lot of information with you, so if you feel overwhelmed or have more questions, do not worry. Please email us at hello@mentalhealthmates.co.uk and we can answer or advise on any questions or queries you might have.

Remember to take it easy. Becoming a Walk Leader is wonderful thing to do, but do not push yourself. Always let us know if you are struggling, we understand and we are here to help.

Thank you for taking the time to read through our Walk Leader guide. Mental Health Mates would be nothing without the incredible Walk Leaders that are passionate about upholding our community. We are so excited for you to lead your meet up and become a part of this community – welcome to Mental Health Mates.

MHM Team,
Xx