

Living Streets helps communities find their feet

Living Streets is the national charity that works to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Since 2008, we have helped **150 communities** across the UK reclaim their streets for walking and negotiate over **£400,000** worth of street improvements from local authorities.

Communities have swapped graffiti, dog mess, litter, broken glass and unnecessary bollards for improved lighting, new litter bins, public benches, dropped kerbs and smoother footpaths.

As a result, not only are people walking more and leading healthier lifestyles, but they also feel more secure on their streets and a greater sense of community. In recognition of their achievements, over **25** Living Streets awards have been presented to these neighbourhoods.

This has all been achieved through our 'Fitter for Walking' project, which aimed to improve the local environment and get more people walking. The project was made possible thanks to a Big Lottery grant of £1.7 million, as part of a consortium of sustainable travel organisations, led by Sustrans.



Brandling, North East, receive their award

"The street audits are excellent and I'm really impressed with them. I think the whole concept and the way they are done is fantastic and its something we really should be supporting."
Local authority partner, West Midlands

The project

Our five dedicated project coordinators worked closely with community groups across the country - from residents' associations and allotment groups to schools and scout troops. Each community chose which areas they wanted to improve, and how.

Street audits took place, where people looked at the physical and social barriers to walking, and these led to proposals to the local authority for street improvements. Celebratory events, such as nature walks and street parties, were also held to raise awareness of walking and engage the community.

The project was universally welcomed by local authorities and communities alike, and the coordinators acted as a vital link between the two and a catalyst for change. Many people reported an overwhelmingly positive impact of the project on the daily lives of people living in the area.

The full project evaluation, together with short films and stories about how communities have transformed their neighbourhoods, can be found on our website at www.livingstreets.org.uk/ffw.



Launch of a 'Walking Map' along an improved path in East London



"It's a doing thing, which is quite unusual because lots of people like to talk about things for several years before ever enacting anything!"
Neighbourhood Group Leader, North East

The results

The project was independently evaluated in three ways:

1. Confidential interviews and focus groups with community members, local authorities and Living Streets staff; pedestrian counts; route user interviews and residents' surveys, by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC)
2. Collection and monitoring of pledges from individuals, collected by Sustrans
3. An economic evaluation undertaken by the University of West of England.

Overall, the results showed:

- **150** communities were helped in **12** Local Authority areas across **5** regions of the UK
- Over **£400,000** worth of streets improvements were made by Local Authorities
- Over **10,000** people out walking in their neighbourhoods
- **86%** of the projects resulted in more pedestrians walking in the area
- **78%** of individuals who signed up reported an increase in their day-to-day walking levels
- **64%** of these still reported an increase in walking six months later, showing long-term impact
- Up to **46:1** benefit cost ratio for decreased mortality as a result of more people walking.

"From our point of view, Living Streets are vital. Their expertise at engaging the community, getting local bodies together... as an outside source, it's more beneficial." Local authority partner, London



Streetside planting in Lanesfield, West Midlands



Launch of a new village green in Hall'ith'wood, North West



Launching a new path and crossing point in South Yorks

"It's like reclaiming back the place that you live and just making the healthy choice."
Community member, North West

The future

This intervention was unique in combining changes to the physical environment with walking promotion. The communities not only reported an increase in walking but also greater social cohesion, highlighting the importance of removing social as well as physical barriers to walking.

Following the successful evaluation results, the BHFNC have recommended the project for national roll-out. We have now developed the intervention into a package, available to all local authorities and commissioners, which enables communities to work with their council to remove barriers to walking. For more information, please contact jack.skillen@livingstreets.org.uk or call **020 7377 4912**.



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