

## **Guildford Health Walks – Risk Assessment Best Practice (Oct. '25)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to keep our individual walk risk assessments short, this Best Practice document details what we need to do to curtail risks on all our walks:

- All volunteer walk leaders must have received walk leader training from the GHWs Training Coordinator.
- The walk leader, in liaison with his/her back marker (and middle-marker, where applicable) is responsible for ensuring, within reason, that the walk is safe.
- First Aid training is available to all walk volunteers (it is not obligatory); First Aid training is valid for 3 years. Training can be arranged through the GHW's Volunteers Training Coordinator, [volunteers@Guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@Guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk).
- The walk leaders must ensure the safety of walkers – ask walkers not to wait in car parks – the meeting points of all walks should be in a safe pedestrian space.
- Except in exceptional circumstances, a scheduled walk should always go ahead unless it is too icy or dangerous to walk. It is not possible to identify every such circumstance.
- Children and adults with special needs are allowed on the walks if they have a supervising adult with them.

### **Before the walk**

- It is advisable to recce a route, especially after turbulent weather or heavy rain, so routes can be adjusted to be safe for walkers.
- There are risk assessments for established routes (updated annually in January) that you should consult when following a particular route for the first time. These can be obtained from the Walk Group Coordinator. If you are planning a walk that does not broadly follow one of these established routes, then you must complete a risk assessment explaining how to mitigate identified risks for this route; you should use the risk assessment proforma (no 9), which can be downloaded from the GHWs website (<https://www.guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk/ourvolunteers.html>) or obtained from the Walk Group Coordinator.
- If walker numbers exceed 18 or if the terrain is challenging, it is recommended that the walk leader appoint a middle marker.
- The walk leader and back marker (and middle-marker, where applicable) must wear yellow GHWs highviz walking vests, and the leader should also take the following:
  - A charged mobile phone (with the mobile no's of other walk leaders within his/her walk group, or to call 999 in case of an emergency);

- A bottle of clean water (to wash out grit from any scrapes/falls) (we do not provide plasters or any medication);
  - Whistle (comes in useful should the back- or middle marker need to urgently get the attention of the leader);
  - Space blanket (to keep a walker warm in case shock sets in after an incident);
  - Blank ICE cards (to hand to all new walkers);
  - A copy of the Incident & Accident Report Form;
  - It is recommended to have the British Red Cross First Aid app, and also the WhatThreeWords app on your phone.
- The walk leader and back marker (and middle-marker, where applicable) should have a brief meeting before the walk starts to ensure they are clear on the route and to be aware of any walkers who may need extra assistance.
  - Just before setting off on the walk, the walk leader will explain briefly the general route and point out any potential risks – for example, a busy road that will need to be crossed. They will remind walkers with dogs that they must be kept on a short lead, and ask that if a walker decides to leave the walk early, they should inform the walk leader or back marker. Everyone should be reminded that they walk at their own risk.
  - All walkers should be reminded to carry a form of identification with them and a completed ICE card on their person, as well as any necessary medication. Additionally, walkers should, if possible, have an ICE (In Case of Emergency) contact on their mobile phones.

### **During the walk**

- Remember that people walk at their own risk and all the walkers are adults. It is sufficient for you to advise walkers to be careful. Walk leaders are to ensure to not take walkers along a route that is unusually and obviously dangerous – for example, a patch of ground that is underwater, or a narrow path that is also a bridleway (Dark Lane in Shere).
- Incidents where walkers are injured are rare. However, falls do occur occasionally, and sometimes walkers feel unwell. The procedures for what to do in such circumstances are set out clearly in the *GHWs Incidents and Accidents Report Form Guidance* (available on our website under Existing Volunteers, no 4). It is also advised that walk leaders familiarise themselves with this policy before leading a walk. In case of an incident/accident, the walk leader needs to complete the incident report form (no 5 available at (<https://www.guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk/ourvolunteers.html>)) and email it to [incidents@guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk](mailto:incidents@guildfordhealthwalks.org.uk) copied to the Walk Coordinator.

### **After the walk**

- Walk leaders will need to do a final check of the register to ensure all walkers have returned with the group. If the Walk Group Coordinator is not with you, please ensure

that you pass a copy of the register to them within the next few days. We need to maintain a record of the number of people who walk with us.

- It's recommended to provide feedback to the Walk Coordinator if a route had to be changed, any potential incidents occurred, or walkers who may have found the going tough. This includes details of any walkers who are unable to complete the walk, along with the reasons why.
- Optional best practice: Some walk leaders keep a record of the walks they lead, including details of the conditions, date, number of walkers, and any additional notes. There is a space on the register for comments to add this information.