National Parks Week celebrates wealth of activities which take place in capital’s parks and open spaces

[National Parks Week](http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/visiting/national-parks-week) celebrates the wealth of activities which take place in the capital’s parks and open spaces. One great example are the free health walks organised by [Walking for Health](https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/). Across London there are 40 local schemes and over 200 parks hosting regular weekly walks.

These group walks are led by friendly, specially trained volunteers who are on hand to provide encouragement and support. The walks are short and over easy terrain, and are open to everyone but are especially aimed at those who are least active.

Recently, London Sport has partnered with [Walking for Health](https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/), [Make Sport Fun](http://www.makesportfun.com/about-us/) and 8 London Boroughs to help local schemes promote their walks more effectively.

**Promoting local sport and activity sessions**

Imagine for a moment that you are setting up one of these walks in your local park. How would you go about promoting it to local people?

…..Posters? Leaflets? Bus stop advertising?

Whilst these might seem like good ways to reach local people, you can spend a lot of time and money designing, printing and distributing these.

…and it will probably result in only a few new people joining your session.

Over the past 5 years [Make Sport Fun](http://www.makesportfun.com/about-us/) have tested a variety of methods using posters, leaflets, radio, bus stop advertising, door drops etc. They found that none of these were cost effective for registering new people to attend a local activity session.

**Why aren’t they cost effective?**

* You can’t target them easily to the right audience
* They often don’t get read
* People can’t sign up easily enough, so even if they are interested you have no way to prompt or remind them to actual attend

For example, they found that to get one person to register for an activity session costs about £48 when using leaflets (including the cost of design, printing and distribution). In comparison, recently we have seen several London Boroughs using Facebook advertising to register new people for less than £5 per person.

There are a few reasons why digital advertising (and Facebook in particular) are a fantastic opportunity for promoting local sport and physical activity opportunities:

* **You can reach your target audience there**

92% of UK adults are online, with 77% using Facebook every week. Even for the 50+ audience; 70% are online every day and seven million have a Facebook account.

Source: [PHE Marketing Strategy 2017-2020](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/646715/public_health_england_marketing_strategy_2017_to_2020.pdf)

* **You don’t waste money showing your advert to people who it doesn’t apply to**

For example for your new walking group you could make sure only people who are aged 55+ and live within 10 mins of the park see your advert.

* **People who see your advert and are interested can sign up with one click**

You can then contact them with more details, answer their questions and remind them to attend.

London Sport are working with [Walking for Health](https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/) and 8 boroughs to test Facebook advertising for local walking groups. We’ll be testing everything from the images and text in the adverts, to the follow up support people get once they’ve signed up. The following 8 boroughs are taking part in the pilot:

* Camden
* Kensington and Chelsea
* Enfield
* Harrow
* Richmond
* Wandsworth
* Hackney
* Ealing

**Over the next few months London Sport will be sharing what we learn with the aim of making it simpler and easier for partners to use digital marketing to effectively promote local sport and activity sessions.**

**If you want to find out more about our work in this space, send me an email at**[**chris.norfield@londonsport.org**](mailto:chris.norfield@londonsport.org)**.**