

Using Facebook to recruit new participants for walking groups

A digital behaviour change pilot

Interim report - November 2018

This report provides an interim update on initial results from a pilot project coordinated by London Sport. It will be updated in April 2019 upon completion of the pilot.

Background

In April 2018 London Sport launched a digital behaviour change programme in partnership with Walking for Health and Make Sport Fun to support hundreds of “less active” people to join free walking groups across London.

The pilot project set out to use Facebook advertising supported by text message and email engagements to support people to take the first steps to becoming more active by delivering a digital-led behaviour change journey.

“Less Active”

The aim was to engage and support people who are not currently meeting the CMO guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week.

This incorporates people who are currently inactive or insufficiently active.

We used the Sport England “Short Active Lives” survey to assess activity level.

- Inactive (0 – 29 minutes per week)
- Insufficiently active (30 – 149 minutes per week)
- Active (150+ minutes per week)

Why?

Through consultation with local authority public health and leisure teams in London we identified a consistent interest in utilising “digital tools and marketing tactics” to engage and support less active residents to become more active.

However, a barrier for local teams to deliver or commission this type of digital activity themselves was a lack of expertise and knowledge about effective methods

A couple of local authorities had tried Facebook advertising of their walking groups via an agency and were getting great results compared to using leaflets and posters. But they hadn’t managed to make this approach sustainable and cost effective.

So, the pilot set out to test whether it was possible to simplify this process for local authorities; by setting up and managing a digital programme centrally. Making it easier and cheaper for boroughs to tap into the benefits without the hassle.

What was involved?

Ten local authorities signed up to take part in the pilot; Wandsworth, Richmond, Sutton, RBKC, Enfield, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey, Harrow and Camden.

We chose to focus on promoting **free weekly walking groups** (part of the Walking for Health scheme). These weekly group walks are a great option for less active people as they have very few barriers to entry.

“Our free group walks are led by friendly, specially trained volunteers who are on hand to provide encouragement and support, and make sure no one gets left behind. Our walks are short and over easy terrain. They are open to everyone but are especially aimed at those who are least active”.

Natalie Raperport
Ramblers Walking for Health programme

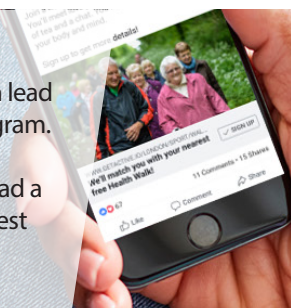
To maximise our chances of success we selected a priority audience who we thought would be most likely to respond to this activity. Based on data about existing walks we identified a focus on **women aged 55+ who lived within one mile of a walking group**.

Each local authority provided a small budget for Facebook advertising (between £400 – £2,400, based on the number of walks they were delivering in their borough).

We set up and ran Facebook lead adverts from the Get Active London Facebook page. The adverts encouraged people to sign up with their postcode, so we could **‘match them to their nearest walking group’**.

Facebook Lead Ad

Lead ads are a type of ad that allows you to run lead generation campaigns on Facebook and Instagram. Rather than directing people to a website to register, instead when someone clicks on your ad a contact form appears within Facebook to request email addresses or contact information.




What was involved continued

Once someone signed up, we would send them details of their nearest walk by email, text message or Facebook Messenger.

We could then provide them with useful information (such as what to wear, and where to meet the instructor for their first walk) and answering any nagging questions that they had.

We incorporated behaviour change techniques (such as **goal setting** and **planning social support**) into these follow up communications to increase people's motivation, capability and opportunity to attend.

We followed up with the participants after four weeks to see if they had attended a walk and will follow up after six months to see if their activity levels have changed.


**Get Active London**

15 June at 16:21 · 🌐

Feeling rushed off your feet?

Take some time for yourself once a week and have a laugh with us on our weekly walks. We don't walk too fast, all groups are led by a trained leader who is on hand to help you, and we stay for tea and a chat afterwards. You'll get fitter and make new friends.

Come and join us!




We'll match you with your nearest free Health Walk!

Sign up today and we will send you information about the group Health Walks in...

WWW.GETACTIVE.IO/LONDON/SPORT/WALKING


👍❤️ Mrudula Patel, Nealam Kainth and 61 others · 4 Comments · 11 Shares

Friday 7 Sep • 11:17




Hi Chris, thanks for your interest in the local Health Walks. We'll match you with the nearest walk in the next day (Monday to Friday) and send you the details. Thank you, Get Active London

Monday 10 Sep • 16:31




Hi Chris, we checked our details and the nearest Health Walk to you is
Holland Park Walk, every Thursday at 10:30 We meet Holland Park Café, W8 6LU. The walk lasts 60 mins and afterwards we might go for a cup of tea, so bring some change. Please arrive 5min before the walk starts. Thank you, *Get Active London*
[image: beacon]

Wednesday 26 Sep • 11:09



Text message



Timings

To date we have run three separate advertising campaigns as follows:

- June: 18 - 30, 2018
- September: 10 - 23, 2018
- October: 15 - 28, 2018

The Facebook adverts ran for two weeks, and we provided four weeks follow up via text message or Facebook Messenger and six months follow up via email for each campaign.

We intend to deliver three further campaigns during January – March 2019.

“In our experience delivering physical activity campaigns, we’ve found that you tend to get a lower response rate during the school summer holidays. This applies even if you are focusing on an older audience.

Also bear in mind that the first two weeks of September (when schools start again) is a popular time this audience to go away on holiday!”

**John Ainsworth,
Make Sport Fun**



Results

Primary measure – how many people sign up and attend a walk?

Across the three campaigns **2,799** people responded to the advert and signed up to be matched with their nearest walk.

We were able to match around **70%** of these people with a walk close to them. (The remaining **30%** were either too far from a walk or were only available at times when there were no walks running).

Each time we delivered a campaign we measured the percentage of people who actually went on to attend a walk.

- Campaign 1 – 8% of sign ups (80 new walkers)
- Campaign 2 – 14% of sign ups (150 new walkers)
- Campaign 3 – 16% of sign ups (130 new walkers)

The increasing effectiveness of each campaign, reflects a process of continual testing and optimisation. This enabled us to improve the process each time and provide better support to the people who signed up.

In total the three campaigns supported around **360** people to attend a health walk for the first time.



Audience - demographics and location

Secondary measures – could we engage and motivate the right audience?

Because we used targeted Facebook advertising the adverts were only shown to **Women aged 55+**. This is a significant benefit to this approach versus other untargeted channels as we found this demographic were more receptive to the adverts – so led to a better return on investment.

The adverts were targeted to be shown to people who live within one mile of any of the walks that we were promoting. We found this to be accurate about **75%** of the time. Meaning **25%** of people who signed up were not in our target areas.

We are currently testing different approaches to try to increase the effectiveness of this targeting, however if you are running highly localised campaigns on Facebook then you may want to take into consideration that you may get people signing up from outside your target area.



Audience - physical activity levels

To engage with less active people, we selected imagery and advertising copy that we believe would be relevant to this audience.

Once several people had engaged with our adverts, we were able to use Facebook to create “lookalike audiences” i.e. find more people on Facebook who are similar to those who have already engaged with the adverts.

We then surveyed people who signed up and found that **55%** of them were classed as inactive and a further **16%** classed as insufficiently active. Meaning in total **71%** of our signups were “less active”.

When compared to the London average for this age group it demonstrates that the approach was effective at recruiting our priority audience of less active people – a typically hard to engage audience.

Activity level	People who signed up	London average (55 - 74 yr olds)
Inactive (<30 mins per week)	55%	28%
Insufficiently active (30 - 149 mmins per week)	16%	18%
Active (>150 mins per week)	29%	58%



What we learned about running a digital marketing campaign

Imagery

Much of the existing imagery we had from walking groups were either pictures of the back of people heads, or out of focus shots of people standing in a line. These tended not to perform well when tested. I.e. the cost per sign up was higher when we used these images.

“Generally, the images that we’ve seen work best in physical activity campaigns are pictures of smiling, enthusiastic faces of someone in the area of doing the activity.”

**John Ainsworth
Make Sport Fun**

Interestingly, in our test, we found that some stock images worked nearly as well as actual images from the groups.

Image that worked well



Image that didn't work well





What we learned about running a digital marketing campaign

Messaging

In our testing we found that the best performing message focused on feeling refreshed and getting more out of your day:

'Get more out of your day! Join a free and friendly Health Walk near you. You'll meet lovely people, get fitter, enjoy a cup of tea and a chat. You'll feel refreshed both in your body and mind. Sign up to get more details!'

What didn't work well was advertising copy that called out a specific subset of our audience i.e. Grandparents.

'Would you like to get active and get fitter, so you can keep up with the grandkids? Join us for a gentle, friendly, weekly walks in your local area. Walks are in small groups with other people looking to get active again, led by a trained leader. We stay for tea and a chat afterwards. We'd love you to join us!'

While being able to stay active with the grandchildren may be a relevant message because we were advertising to a broader audience it may have meant people who don't have grandchildren, switched off and didn't pay attention to the advert.

What we learned about running a digital marketing campaign

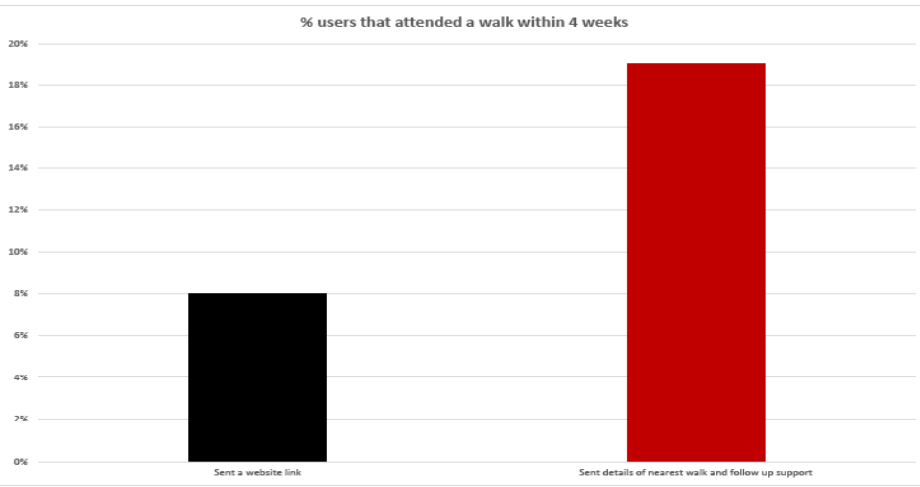
Conversation is key

We tested two approaches to matching someone with their nearest walk.

One group received a link to the Walking for Health website, whilst we sent the other group details of their nearest walk and followed up with prompts and reminders.

Our hypothesis was that proactively matching people would be a more effective approach.

We found that the group who we initiated the conversation with were significantly more likely to go on and attend a walk, compared to those who we just sent a website link to.



User group	% users that attended a walk within 4 weeks
Only sent walk finder link	8%
Sent details of their nearest walk and weekly reminders	19%





What we learned about recruiting people for walking groups

The campaign involved directly engaging with thousands of potential new walkers in London. This generated several useful insights into the demand from this audience.

When do they want to join an activity?

We found that on average **1/3 of our audience** were only interested in joining an activity session on a weekend. This may be reflective of the fact that a significant proportion of a 55+ audience will still be working during the week.

However, this was an issue for our campaign as **90% of the walks** we were promoting took place during the day on a weekday.

What might stop them starting?

The top reason for not joining a walk was not being able to find a walk which was at an **appropriate time or location** to fit with their existing schedule.

Similarly, many people who had managed to find a walk they wanted to attend, found that **life got in the way**. Looking after grandchildren, doctors' appointments and holidays were all factors that were given as reasons for not being able to attend.

As you might expect for this age group, **health concerns, injuries and disability** had an influence on the likelihood of attending. Nearly **1/5th of people** who didn't attend a walk suggested this was an issue.

Meeting points

We provided everyone who signed up with some details about the meeting point for the walk. However, a significant number of people either had further questions about this location or contacted us to say they had arrived on time and couldn't find the group.

For future campaigns we'd recommend providing very specific meeting point directions as well as considering what else could be done on the day of a walk to make a meeting point more obvious (such as high-vis jackets or signage that a leader could carry or display).

Summary

The approach that we took to delivering this campaign was relatively straightforward as far as digital marketing campaigns go.

- We used paid, targeted advertising to register the contact details of people who were interested in joining a walking group.
- We provided them support to help them overcome real and perceived barriers that may have been holding them back from attending.
- We followed up with prompts and reminders to encourage them to attend a walk.

We were able to use Facebook to engage with our target audience and supported around 360 older less active adults to join a local health walk.

These basic tactics may be transferable to other physical activity (or health and wellbeing) campaigns and interventions.

We will be running a further three campaigns during January – March 2019 and will provide an updated report once the pilot has been completed.

Sharing learning

Throughout the campaign we collaborated with the ten pilot boroughs to share the exact process we went through to deliver the campaign. Providing behind the scenes videos and briefing notes as we set up and optimised the campaigns.

This learning is now being shared with the wider sector through a series of blog posts on the London Sport website over the next few months.

To view the latest blog posts about our digital marketing pilots, visit www.londonsport.org/blog.

"Hi I started my walk from today. Friendly people walked the places I never been. I thoroughly enjoyed it!"

Sue, 70

"Thank you. I am a live-in carer so getting out with active people in the fresh air is important to me."

Maria, 58

"I did my first walk today at Wandsworth Common. Met some wonderful people, looking forward to next week."

Yvonne, 65

"The walk was wonderful, met lovely friendly people. Looking forward to my walk next Sunday already."

Mary ,60

Top tips for Facebook advertising campaigns



- ✓ Try to find a good match between the activity that you are promoting and the audience you are targeting
- ✓ Make sure that the activities you are promoting are taking place at times that you audience can attend
- ✓ Test imagery and messaging to find what works
- ✓ Collect contact details so that you can initiate a conversation with prospective participants
- ✓ Follow them up regularly with useful information, prompts and reminders.



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