

# WALK 500 MILES

## ULTIMATE STEP COUNT CHALLENGE

130,000 miles of steps logged throughout the Outer Hebrides Summer 2017

The Outer Hebrides are an island chain off the west coast of Scotland with major islands Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Barra. 100 islands, 15 inhabited, joined by causeway and ferries.

### Background

In recent research and reports, the Outer Hebrides was shown to have the highest incidence of adult obesity in Scotland and a lower percentage of people meeting the national physical activity guidelines compared to the Scottish average.

### Aim

The aim of the initiative was to:

- encourage people across the Outer Hebrides to increase their physical activity through a step count challenge
- use the Florence (Flo) Telehealth text messaging system as a tool to increase physical activity
- increase awareness of the benefits of being physically active.

### Methods

- Formed a steering group across islands and agencies
- Set-up a step count challenge where individuals or teams of 3, aged 18 years and over, aimed to walk 500 miles over set periods of time
- Participants selected 1 of 3 levels:
  - Gold - 12,500 steps per day (highly active) = 80 days
  - Silver - 10,000 steps per day (active) = 100 days
  - Bronze - 7,500 steps per day (moderately active) = 134 days
- Promoted the challenge through social media, local press, local authority, NHS, workplaces and recovery services
- Piloted Flo as a daily steps log for participants with protocols and motivational messages issued via Flo; tailored by locality
- Created a Facebook event page to encourage peer support
- Offered free walking resources to the first 50 registered and free pedometers to all participants
- Altered guidelines for people with special requirements e.g. low mobility, poor mobile signal
- Allowed the conversion of activities (e.g. swimming) into steps to be inclusive of all abilities
- Communicated with participants, providing updates and useful information via a Walk 500 Miles email, Facebook event page, Flo system and by phone
- Promoted local walking routes and events with participants.
- Measured participant activity levels before, during and after the challenge via both Survey Monkey and the Flo system
- Issued certificates of achievement.

"I can only really do steps in the water as I'm disabled... It's great that other things count too."

"I'm enjoying the challenge a lot and I am going for a 10k walk on Saturday – something I would not have thought about were it not for this challenge."

"I have nerve damage and other ailments. I have really enjoyed the challenge ... It has been a great motivator and provided a real boost to my self esteem."

"I am enjoying it since it started. I have been out every day, feeling a bit healthier, walking much faster, feeling a little trimmer ... loving it and making me more motivated."

### Results

- 364 registered, 300 started, 221 completed Walk 500 Miles
- 94% of those who started used the Florence system
- 130,000 miles of steps logged – more than 500 miles per successful participant!
- A range of recovery services supported participants and individuals with low mobility were supported in teams
- Successful engagement with agencies across the Outer Hebrides
- Work places encouraged staff to participate
- The most inclusive physical activity initiative by NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Dept.

### Post challenge survey results:

- 90% of respondents met the national physical activity guidelines
- 93% felt the benefits of additional physical activity
- 85% increased physical activity levels
- 87% improved general health and wellbeing
- 70% increased awareness on the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle
- 80% will now choose walking more as a preferred option
- 4 walkers expressed interest in becoming Walk Leaders in their local areas.



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