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**Residents encouraged to step into summer with HeartSmart Walks**

Residents across Chichester District are being encouraged to ‘step into summer’ with the latest programme of HeartSmart walks being offered by Chichester Wellbeing.

The walks are completely free and range from 30-minute walks of 1 mile, to all day walks of 10 miles. The walks take place at different locations across the Chichester District and have been running for over 23 years.

These walks are led by Volunteer Walk Leaders and are designed to cater for all ages and abilities, and new walkers are always welcome. The walks offer opportunities to exercise and meet new people in a safe and friendly environment.

Regular exercise and time outside have been shown to have positive benefits on a person’s wellbeing, and the HeartSmart walks can provide the opportunity for people to start exercising more regularly, but at a pace that suits them.

Walks are available to book one week in advance, up until midnight the evening before the walk takes place.  Comfortable and appropriate footwear and clothing is advised.

People can look at the latest HeartSmart Walk programme and book onto a walk online at [**www.chichester.gov.uk/heartsmart**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/heartsmart) or by calling 01243 521041.

“I really enjoy volunteering with Heartsmart,” says walk leader, Ian Macauley. “It is a friendly organisation, and the walks are planned out by the walk leaders, so there is always variation in length, ability, and destinations. It has something for everyone!

Ian adds, “I like the walks because I usually learn something new each time, either from the walk itself or from chatting with the other walkers.”

Walk leader Jane says, “Walking is a wonderful way of exercising at the same time as enjoying and exploring the beautiful Sussex countryside. Leading walks means I can share this enjoyment with other people.”

Councillor Tracie Bangert, Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing at Chichester District Council, explains: “The HeartSmart walks are very popular among residents, and we want to encourage even more people to make the most of an activity that’s so good for their heart, health, and state of mind. They’re a lovely way for residents to meet new people and tackle loneliness, which brings further benefits to peoples wellbeing.”

Tracie adds: “The majority of walks start at 10.30am, allowing walkers over 66 years of age to use their free bus passes to get to the start point. Regular exercise like this can help to improve emotional wellbeing, manage weight, reduce blood pressure, stress, and risk of diabetes. It costs nothing and yet can have such a positive impact on wellbeing and health.”

For a copy of the latest programme, or to find out more about training as a Volunteer Walk Leader, people can contact our Wellbeing Team on **01243 521041** or email **wellbeing@chichester.gov.uk**

**For further information, please contact Thomas Carr, Communications Assistant at Chichester District Council on 01243 521297**

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