

**WALK IT. RIDE IT.**



# Gayle's story Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill (BHR)

**Gayle goes on a walk every week with Susan in Middleton. Gayle also organises walks for groups and individuals, and these are open to everyone in the Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill area. Her favourite parts of the walks are meeting the public, seeing how walking helps their everyday lives, and putting the world to rights.**

I've worked at Health for All (Leeds) for over 20 years in a variety of roles, one of my current roles is as a Walking Engagement Worker. I have led a weekly walking group in Middleton for 10 years. It's a charity that provides a wide range of health-related activities, for people unable to access mainstream services. It's open to everyone in South Leeds, from all walks of life, to improve the quality of life for all generations.

I run both group walks and individual walks, and a newly formed women's walk and talk session where women can share details around their health in a safe and trusted environment. I receive referrals for people who come to me through different avenues. In Susan's case, her GP referred her to Ryan from Linking Leeds (an integrated, free city-wide Social Prescribing service for people in Leeds). Ryan then got in touch with Nick, (Walk It Ride It Development Officer), who asked me to contact Susan directly, to tell her more about my walking activities in her area.

I texted Susan before calling as I know that can sometimes put people off (if they don't know whose number it is). I introduced myself and asked via text if it would be okay to call for a quick chat, when it was convenient for her. Susan agreed, which was great! On the phone I found out more about her health conditions, which were many, and I thought to myself 'this person really has a lot going on both physically and mentally' and wouldn't it be great to get to know her better, and have a walk together, to see if she enjoys it.

Because of her mobility issues, Susan didn't feel comfortable enough to join the walking group right away, so I suggested we try a one on one walk instead - just the two of us. Although the group walks aren't fast, and everyone is lovely and waits for one another, they do go a further distance than a one on one walk. It also meant that I can also tailor the walk to Susan's needs, which makes it really invaluable.

Every week I meet Susan at her house in Middleton and we usually do a few laps around where she lives. Depending on how Susan is feeling we might do a shorter walk, at a slower pace or make it a bit longer. It's lovely to just take our time, and enjoy chatting as we go. Susan's been doing the weekly walks now for 18 weeks and her confidence has really started to grow. I'm so proud of how far she has come, and the extra things she's now able to do.



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I'm so proud of how far she has come, and the extra things she's now able to do. She's even started to go to a group exercise class and tried a sound therapy session that I introduced her to. One week she walked to the exercise class, did the class, and then walked back home. She's a really inspiring person and she inspires me to do more, even though walking is a large part of my job.

When we met, we just clicked. And I find that walking whilst chatting definitely takes your mind off the fact that you are walking, especially if you have chronic pain conditions, like Susan's, that need constant care and monitoring.

I always say to people, just give it a try. It really is a win-win situation with walking. It has so many health benefits and is so simple and enjoyable. People always feel better once they've done it.

But it's also got to come from that person too - to want to do it and feel motivated to do it. I think that having somebody to push you a little bit (someone like me) in the right way, at the right time really helps with that motivation. I know if I arrange our one on one walk on a specific day and time, then it will give Susan focus and complement her routine and the rest of her week.

There really is nothing better than a walk and talk!

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To find out more about my walking activities please contact me on [gayle.graham@healthforall.org.uk](mailto:gayle.graham@healthforall.org.uk)

**“When you're with somebody else just walking, it takes your mind off things, and that can be a huge relief and a feeling of comfort.”**



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