

Tameside Walking and Wheeling Strategy

2024-2028



Foreword

Walking is one of the most accessible and beneficial activities for people of all ages and abilities, playing a crucial role in promoting health, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing overall quality of life. Whether as a mode of transport, a means of recreation, or part of a daily routine, walking has the power to improve lives by reducing the risk of chronic diseases, improving cardiovascular fitness, and boosting mood and wellbeing. Walking also contributes to reducing carbon emissions, easing traffic congestion, and creating healthier, more sustainable communities.

Promoting walking and wheeling in Tameside is essential to achieving a healthier population that is more connected with the environment. Wheeling is the use of wheelchairs, mobility aids, or other wheeled devices for personal movement, as well as people who use prams, buggies and wheelchairs with others. By prioritizing pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, encouraging active travel, and supporting accessible routes for all, we can reduce the reliance on car journeys, reduce pollution, and create vibrant neighbourhoods where walking is a practical and enjoyable way to get around. This strategy aims to empower residents, our workforce, and visitors to Tameside to embrace walking and wheeling as an integral part of everyday life, helping to shape a future where Tameside is healthier, greener, and more inclusive.

Personally, I find walking to be one of the most grounding and restorative activities in my day. Whether I'm walking alone to gather my thoughts and find a moment of calm, or enjoying a stroll with my family, it gives me a chance to reconnect—with nature, with others, and with myself. These moments remind me of the simple yet profound value walking brings to our lives, reinforcing why it's so important that we create a borough where walking plays a key role in supporting healthier lives and communities.



Councillor Tafheen Sharif
First Deputy (Population Health and Wellbeing)

Accessibility and Inclusion

Inclusive practices and policies are crucial to ensure that people with disabilities, long term conditions, or sensory impairments have equitable opportunities to participate in walking and wheeling activities. This means removing, or designing out unnecessary physical barriers in our natural and urban environments. For example, walking trails could be designed with accessibility in mind, avoiding obstacles like A-frame gates, kissing gates, and chicanes that can prevent people using mobility aids from accessing them. In the built environment, it's essential to advocate for infrastructure that accommodates all users, such as streets with smooth, wide pavements, lowered kerbs, and minimal street furniture that could obstruct movement. Policies also need to tackle temporary barriers like pavement parking and bins creating obstructions on collection days.

When thinking of accessibility of walking, we must also consider our youngest residents taking their first steps. Maintaining clean and safe pavement environments where parents can allow toddlers to learn to walk outdoors safely, walking to parks and nursery settings for example, laying the foundations for Active Travel to school, and a creating a positive relationship with active travel for life¹.

Fostering an inclusive environment means convening spaces for meaningful and sustained dialogue between those with lived experience, and those who design and maintain our public spaces to ensure accessibility is prioritized at every stage. By removing these barriers and promoting Streets for All² design principles, we can create a borough where everyone, regardless of ability can enjoy and benefit from walking and wheeling.

¹ www.sportengland.org

² Streets for All | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM



Resident Testimonial

Tony has been using a wheelchair for 20 years, since a spinal injury resulted in paralysis from the chest down. Tony knows the streets of Tameside well, and has navigated them both on foot before his injury, and in a manual wheelchair since. In his spare time he plays para-ice hockey where agility, balance, and fitness are required, yet navigating local spaces and places can be a physically and mentally draining experience.

Tony shared his insight into what true accessibility means

“Good places foster a sense of inclusion, freedom and belonging. When routes to and from car parking and public transport are done properly, I feel valued, happy to visit, and want to spend time to explore. It’s a weight lifted off an already anxious expectation from past experiences.

When things are good, I feel welcome and considered. Spaces without unnecessary obstacles are more enjoyable and make me feel like I want to return. I don’t have to miss out on local culture, unique businesses, and social interactions. It means I can stroll and enjoy a relaxed shopping experience like other people, instead of having to concentrate hard to avoid everyday hazards.

Poor accessibility immediately sets a negative tone for an experience. I get an instant bad feeling if the route from parking doesn’t suit my

wheelchair. It affects my expectations and raises my anxiety. Town centres for mobility challenged people should feel inviting and safe. There are risks when travelling over uneven walkways, raised flags, bulging tree roots, raised roadside curbs and inconsistent heights of dropped curbs can all detract from feelings of safety. Add to those pedestrian traffic, shop A board advertising, street cafe chairs and tables, and pavement encroaching products, utility works and scaffolding and it becomes a real challenge. These are the everyday hazards I experience when visiting established towns.

When the simple act of navigating a street or entering a shop is a struggle, it creates stress, frustration, and exclusion. Better access to shops could be possible through innovation and consultation. It would benefit not just wheelchair users but parents with strollers, older people, and anyone who faces mobility challenges, as well as the shops themselves. Making these changes isn’t just about physical access—it’s about creating a more connected, vibrant, and welcoming town for all.”

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Tony Naylor



Enablers of Walking and Wheeling

Clean and safe routes are essential to encourage walking and wheeling. Dog fouling, broken glass, and litter from takeaway packaging, drinks cans, and confectionery wrappers make routes look unpleasant and feel unsafe. Ensuring our streets and trails are clean and well-maintained is vital to creating welcoming, accessible spaces for all. As a borough, we must alleviate pressures on street cleansing and greenspace teams, and community litter picks to tackle the problem. The responsibility for clean and safe spaces is shared between the local authority, the businesses that operate here, and our residents. Preventative initiatives that encourage considerate behaviours and respect of our local assets are needed to stem the flow of unsightly mess.

Walking should be accessible for everyone, regardless of their personal characteristics, culture, or preferences, yet some people feel more vulnerable walking than others. Personal safety is a key concern, with fear of bullying, harassment and hate crime being a consideration and deterrent for many people. Having a solid understanding of cultural and societal attitudes to walking, combined with listening to those with lived experience to understand the psychological barriers to walking, whether real or perceived, is important with regards to activating under-served communities. Working with such communities to ensure they are heard, seen, and represented in decision making is vital for the success of an equitable approach to walking activation.

Increasing the number of people walking regularly can improve safety through natural surveillance, as more pedestrians on the streets deter anti-social behaviour and make public spaces feel safer. Our ambition is to increase the visibility of outdoor movement of all kinds, starting with walking, so that people feel the benefit of safety in numbers.



Local Needs and Opportunities

1. Enhance Walking Infrastructure

Improving the quality of walking routes is fundamental to encouraging more people to walk and wheel. Incorporating better signage, wayfinding, and lighting, as well as maintaining surfaces and hedgerows can also increase confidence in walking as a viable mode of transport. Improving the appeal of walking in more deprived neighbourhoods has the potential to address transport poverty and the health inequalities it can create. Where car ownership is low, public transport connections are poor or unaffordable, and reaching greenspace and play is hard, walking through clean and safe routes is a means of accessing amenities and saving money.

This strategy recognises that built infrastructure for walking is primarily determined through Local Plans and Town Planning approaches, and through ongoing maintenance with Engineering teams. As such, our role is to work in consultation with those who lead on physical infrastructure development, to advocate for the walking needs of local people and communities, and to connect them with local walking communities when the need to engage arises.

2. Promote Walking as a Healthy and Sustainable Travel Choice

Targeted campaigns should aim to raise awareness about walking as an effective way to improve physical and mental health, reduce carbon footprints, and connect with the community. This includes initiatives like walking challenges, awareness programs in schools, workplaces, and local groups, and collaborations with local health and transport partners to encourage walking as part of daily routines. Education on the benefits of walking, combined with local events or programs, can motivate people to choose walking for shorter journeys using the COM-B approach to behaviour change.

This strategy recognises that partners in travel and transport have the most significant leverage in the system to affect change. At a local level, our role is to work with regional powers to assist in the implementation of regional strategies, with partners in health supporting the ‘people and community’ behaviour change approaches that compliment tangible developments to the transport system.

²² The COM-B Model for Behavior Change - The Decision Lab



3. Foster Community Engagement

Building a walking culture in Tameside requires creating opportunities for people to walk together. Leveraging digital tools, social media, and community networks can help connect walkers with each other, and create a sense of community. By increasing walking-related events and activities, and supporting local walking clubs or charity walks, we can help integrate walking into the social fabric of the borough, encouraging more people to get out and walk regularly with like-minded people.

This strategy recognises that much of the strength of the local walking culture sits within the voluntary and community sector. Growing community capacity for walking means the value of their contribution must be recognised. Walking partners can support the walking community by signposting to funding, where available, and offering in kind support where applicable, for example by promoting walking events through networks, and signposting to groups via physical activity pathways. Where walking is informal, we can support through volunteer workforce development, enabling people to find ways to connect and support each other to participate.



Social Capital

A significant number of formal and informal walking groups, walk leaders, and people who advocate for increasing walking are already playing a role in walking in Tameside. Convening spaces for these like-minded people to meet, share ideas, and collaborate around walking has the potential to grow community capacity for walking, and support the realisation of a strong walking culture in the borough. As professionals, our role is to serve and support this community to lead, linking them into resources, information, and development, to strengthen their resilience and secure their ongoing existence.



GM Live Well Principles

Walking has a role to play in tackling health inequalities. Understanding that communities themselves are best placed to grow walking requires that professionals 'in the system' reconsider the role we can play. Traditional approaches of commissioning for communities, or delivering walking programmes and activities to communities with finite resources cannot create the long term change required for walking culture to shift. Instead, we must work with communities, offering practical support that enables community-led approaches to flourish. This strategy seeks to nurture strengths within the walking community by valuing and listening to people and their lived experience, creating opportunities for them to lead and own the work, investing differently, and involving local people in decision making. We intend to align this strategy to the GM Live Well Principles which can be found here;

[Live Well | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership](#)



Context

National Strategies (Past 5 Years):

- Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) (2017)
- Department for Transport: Gear Change – A Bold Vision for Walking and Cycling (2020)
- Active Travel England - Delivery Plan (2023)

Regional Strategies (Greater Manchester, Past 5 Years):

- GM Moving in Action 2021-2031
- Walking and Cycling Index – Sustrans 2023
- Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) (2020)
- Greater Manchester's Clean Air Plan (2020)
- Greater Manchester Green Strategy (2021)
- Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) 2024

Local Strategies

- Tameside Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2024-25)
- Tameside Local Plan (2020)
- Tameside Healthy Places Strategic Framework (2024-2029)
- Tameside Moving Strategic Framework (2024-2028)



Walking Activation

The capability, opportunity and motivation for people to walk regularly is largely determined by the type of walking someone would like to do, as well as a range of personal factors. Walking for health for example, to recover from illness or an acute incident such as a heart attack or stroke, or prepare for surgery or treatment, is a different set of motivation for someone who wants to hike through local greenspace for leisure, or walk to school or work. By recognising these different motivations, we may also understand the support networks, necessary engagement and information required to support individuals, families, and friendship or community groups to walk more often.

In Tameside, our strategic objectives are broken down into three themes;

1. **Walking for Health**
2. **Walking for Utility**
3. **Walking for Leisure**



1. Walking for Health

Walking for Health plays a fourfold role. Walking can contribute to the prevention of various health conditions by helping maintain a healthy weight, improving cardiovascular fitness, and strengthening bones and muscles. It can reduce stress and tension, and improve balance and co-ordination. It plays a crucial role in recovery and rehabilitation from acute events such as a stroke or heart attack, offering a low impact and easily accessible activity that can be taken at a comfortable pace. It also aids the management of long-term conditions such as diabetes, and can help in preparation for treatment including surgery and a range of cancer therapies.

For individuals preparing for treatment, walking helps maintain overall fitness, boost circulation, and manage stress, all of which can contribute to better outcomes and faster recovery. It supports muscle strength, flexibility, and endurance, helping the body cope with the physical demands of recovery. Post-surgery or post-treatment, walking is often one of the most effective ways to regain mobility, improve cardiovascular health, and reduce the risk of complications such as blood clots or muscle atrophy. In stroke recovery, regular walking can help restore balance, improve coordination, and rebuild strength, while also promoting mental well-being by enhancing mood and reducing anxiety. For people facing health challenges, walking is a gentle, low-impact exercise that can be tailored to individual needs, providing a sense of empowerment and progress in their recovery journey.

Objective

“To promote walking as the starting point for health-based conversations on physical activity. To offer practical advice and signposting to self-led walking resources, local groups, and to advocate for peer-led walking. To increase the likelihood of people with long term health conditions using walking as a means of conditions management, those recovering from acute incidents to use walking as a means of recuperation, and for those who have planned procedures or treatment ahead of them to use walking as a means of building strength and resilience beforehand.”



Key Priorities

1. Equip professionals working with people with a physical or mental health need or condition to hold personalised and positive conversations about walking. To discover their patient or client's motivation to start using short journeys with a purpose as the prime opportunity to 'start small'.
2. To support those who would like to walk for health to build their confidence to feel safe when walking, understanding the level of their own abilities, the dynamic nature of conditions, and when and how to listen to their bodies' needs, and what aides might help.
3. To support people who would like to walk for health to plan activities that cater for their needs, especially when external factors may exacerbate conditions, and when the built environment can support, e.g. with benches and pause points.
4. To encourage the adoption of a set of standard descriptors on level of ability and effort required to participate that enables people to accurately judge the suitability of the walk for themselves, e.g. detailing terrain, steps, styles, barriers, length, distance and elevation.



2. Walking for Utility

Walking for utility (Active Travel) offers benefits for physical, mental and financial health. Regularly engaging in active travel helps improve cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles, and enhances overall fitness, reducing the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It also boosts stamina, flexibility, and balance, promoting long-term mobility. Mentally, active travel can reduce stress and anxiety by releasing endorphins, the body's natural mood elevators, and where commuting is involved, active travel can help avoid the stress and frustration experienced in traffic, and help people arrive at their place of work or education in more conducive mindset to learn or work. The act of walking, particularly in nature or green spaces, has been shown to improve mental clarity. Active travel offers the opportunity to disconnect from the pressures of daily life, providing time for reflection and mindfulness.

Objective

“To increase the number of people making journeys that incorporate walking as a full or partial mode of transport, and to increase the regularity of people choosing to walk for journeys under 1km”

Key Priorities

1. To offer practical support and guidance to local businesses to promote walking initiatives amongst their staff, to encourage flexible policies that accommodate those who would like to walk all or some of the way to work.
2. To work in partnership with schools and colleges to engage with parents, students, and staff to support mutually agreeable walking opportunities that can be incorporated into travel plans and families' lives when it is reasonable and realistic to do so.
3. To uplift seasonal walking campaigns and awareness days that promote the benefits of modal shift on personal health and the environment.
4. To work in partnership with Transport to advocate for walking as part of a multi-modal system using walking as the first or last mile of any journey on public transport.

3. Walking for Leisure

Walking for Leisure offers an opportunity to connect with people and nature, providing mental, emotional, and physical benefits. In Tameside, with its challenging climbs and scenic views, walking becomes not just an activity but a way to explore the beauty of the local landscape while improving well-being. Whether walking solo, or with friends and family for social interaction, leisure walks promote relaxation, reduce stress, and foster a sense of community. The borough's natural spaces, including the Pennine Hills, countryside trails, and miles of waterside routes allow walkers to escape into nature, which has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Walking in nature helps to improve cognitive function and enhance creativity. Walking for leisure is not only an enjoyable way to explore the outdoors but also a pathway to stronger social connections and a deeper sense of well-being.

Thematic walks, on nature, foraging and bushcraft, local history, conservation, arts and culture, photography, storytelling, geology, orienteering and so on, can all become a motivating factor for those who may not see the appeal of a walk for walking's sake. Tameside has many assets to support such walks, and with effective strategies to promote them, can also serve to attract people from out of borough to spend quality time here.

For informal group walks, creating social spaces to meet like-minded individuals is key, while for those looking to walk with trained leaders, targeted programs and guided walk schedules are essential.

Leveraging technology can play a role in connecting people and encouraging participation. Social media platforms, and walking and wayfinding apps can help people find walking groups or trails, share experiences, and build a sense of community. By fostering these connections, we can make walking for leisure in nature more accessible and appealing to a wider range of people in Tameside.

As one of the 10 GM Boroughs, Tameside is also able to draw on the strengths of the GM Walking network. We intend to align with the emerging GM Leisure Walking Strategy as part of the Mayoral Manifesto, ensuring we are connected with key partners at a regional level. This strategy will be refreshed and informed by relevant developments.



Objective

“To encourage more people to explore walking in Tameside for fun, enjoyment and social connection, engaging with local natural and built assets, history and culture.”

Key Priorities

1. Support the co-creation and self-led walking resources with communities, drawing on areas of thematic interest and celebrating local people and places, promoting the discovery of local ‘on your doorstep’ assets.
2. Promote peer-led walking initiatives and support communities to convene around walking, to share local knowledge and provide opportunities to connect with other people who wish to walk more, or who wish to meet people with similar interests who may become walking companions.
3. Have an awareness of, and signpost people to local walking groups, and signpost local walking groups to support to help them grow their capacity to accommodate more people or run more walking events.
4. Support initiatives aimed at diversifying the appeal of walking in greenspace and in and around neighbourhoods amongst people from under-represented communities.



Governance and Measuring Success

The Tameside Walking and Wheeling Strategy sits under the Tameside Moving Strategy for Physical Activity, which is accountable to the Active Alliance, Healthy Places Sub-Group, and Health and Wellbeing Board.

Walking and Wheeling Governance Priorities

- To develop a strong collaborative partnership which supports a distributed leadership approach with relevant organisations and VCFSE groups that support walking and wheeling.
- To develop and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders across the walking system, in particular recognising and valuing the contribution of VCFSE groups and individual volunteers
- Provide regular updates to the Healthy Places Sub-Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board • To deliver against walking and wheeling aspects of GM Place Partner work
- Oversee the delivery of funded walking and wheeling activation work (TfGM)
- Support the GM Walking Ambition, and annual walking festival

How will we know when we have been successful?

- More people in Tameside will be more active, more often. The Active Lives Survey will help us understand trends in inactivity that indicate whether the Active Alliance is creating the right conditions for change to support walking
- More colleagues in client facing health roles will report increased confidence in talking about walking with service users, and will make more referrals to local groups
- Local walking groups will report greater diversity in membership
- Walking will feature in transport plans for more schools and businesses
- More people and organisations will subscribe to initiatives that encourage walking
- Community groups will secure more support for walking activities
- More self-led resources will be downloaded
- More case studies and community stories from real people will show incorporating walking into their routine has delivered tangible benefits to physical, mental, and social health

**Not designing out young people scooting, skating and skateboarding.