



Interested in volunteering? Then walk this way!

Volunteers keen to help others walk their way to better health have been urged to step forward to lead a series of new health walks taking place in 2010.

During the New Year, the "Stepping out in Suffolk" walks, which take place in partnership with *Healthy Ambitions Suffolk*, will be rolled out across the county. Organisers are now keen to hear from local people in Babergh who have a few hours to spare and would be interested in signing up for full training as a walk leader.

The health walks are the ideal exercise for everyone, regardless of their age or fitness level, and give people the perfect opportunity to socialise, enjoy their surroundings and get more active. All last between thirty and ninety minutes and are graded according to their difficulty.

"The Stepping out in Suffolk walks are perfect for anyone who has not been active for a long time or who is recovering from illness or surgery," said Olive Quinton, health improvement manager with Suffolk Coastal District Council and NHS Suffolk. "They're an ideal way to build confidence and increase your activity levels gradually, and also provide the opportunity to socialise and meet new friends.

"We are now keen to hear from anyone who may be interested in volunteering as a walk leader. The role is perfect for people who enjoy getting out and about in the fresh air and want to pass on that enthusiasm to others.

"You don't need to have previous experience or be extremely fit – all you need is a few hours free and a willingness to share your passion for the great outdoors. In return, you'll be given full training and the opportunity to take up an extremely worthwhile volunteering opportunity."

Sally Hogg, head of health improvement partnerships for NHS Suffolk, said: "This is a great opportunity for people in Babergh to increase their levels of activity while helping others to improve their health.

"Walking is the ideal exercise for so many different reasons. Not only is it free, but it's an easy way to increase your levels of activity gradually and absolutely anyone can do it – regardless of their level of fitness.

"It's also the perfect excuse to get out and about and enjoy some of Suffolk's beautiful countryside and coastlines which, in turn, can have a positive effect on mental health." Anyone who is interested in receiving free training to become a walk leader should contact **The Health Walks Team on 01394 444501 or e-mail walks@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk**

For more information about the Healthy Ambitions Suffolk initiative, which aims to make Suffolk the healthiest county in England by 2028, visit www.healthyambitionssuffolk.nhs.uk