Employer schemes to encourage walking to work: feasibility study incorporating an exploratory randomised controlled trial

Suzanne Audrey,¹* Sunita Procter,¹ Ashley Cooper,² Nanette Mutrie,³ William Hollingworth,¹ Adrian Davis,⁴ Ruth Kipping,¹ Philip Insall,⁵ Kirsty Garfield¹ and Rona Campbell¹

¹School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
²Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
³Sport, Physical Education and Health Sciences, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
⁴Transport Department, Bristol City Council, Bristol, UK
⁵Sustrans, Bristol, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

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Physical inactivity increases the risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers, but many people do not do enough physical activity. One way for working adults to get more exercise is to walk to work. Researchers for the Walk to Work study wanted to see if it was possible to train Walk to Work promoters in workplaces to encourage people to walk to work by giving them information about the benefits of walking and how to change their travel behaviour. The study took place in 17 workplaces in the Bristol area (eight small, five medium-sized and four large). Walk to Work promoters were trained in seven workplaces, and 10 workplaces carried on as usual. Those who took part in the study (187 people) were asked to wear monitors to measure their activity, and to complete travel diaries and questionnaires. Some people were interviewed about their views and experiences of the Walk to Work study and their journeys to work. The results of the study showed that employers and employees were willing to try to increase walking to work and to let the researchers measure their activity. The study was not big enough to show whether or not there was really an increase in walking in the workplaces where Walk to Work promoters were trained, but it did look promising. The researchers believe that there should now be a much bigger study to give stronger evidence about whether or not the Walk to Work scheme can increase adults’ physical activity.
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