



Royal College of
General Practitioners



parkrun practice Toolkit



Setting the Scene



parkrun: the impact on health and wellbeing

Are you interested in:

- improving health and wellbeing through physical activity, including volunteering?
- opportunities to socialise, make friends and be part of a welcoming, supportive community?
- activities that are free, outdoors and accessible to all?

If so, parkrun could be the answer.

- Free, weekly 5k events for all ages from 4+, every Saturday morning, in areas of open space
- 2k junior parkruns for 4-14 year olds and their families on Sunday mornings
- Over 750 locations in UK
- Organised by local volunteer teams
- Not races: walk, run, jog, volunteer or spectate
- Taking part is easy: register once on the [parkrun website](#), print off your personal barcode and head down to your [local event](#)
- **parkrun is open to all, including those who are inactive or have health conditions or disabilities**

Whether people want to improve their fitness, make new friends, cope with health problems, learn new skills or simply be outside with others, parkrun has a **positive impact on health and wellbeing** and changes lives.



Setting the Scene

parkrun: the impact on health and wellbeing

What if there was one prescription that could prevent and treat dozens of diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity? Would you prescribe it to your patients?"

Robert E. Sallis, M.D., FACSM, Exercise is Medicine Advisory Board Chairman

parkrun benefits health and wellbeing through increased physical activity, skill development, friendships and socialisation, mutual support and personal empowerment.

The [UK CMO's advice](#) is for ALL adults to get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of high intensity activity per week – and just 10 additional minutes can make a clinical difference, reducing the impact of the chronic health conditions GPs and their teams see every day

One third of men and half of all women do not achieve this target, and one fifth of men and a quarter of women are physically inactive – achieving less than 30 minutes of moderate activity per week

And there's good evidence that [volunteering itself offers health benefits](#) – studies have shown that it decreases rates of depression, reduces social isolation and improves self esteem

Primary healthcare teams can play a key role in empowering patients to make positive behaviour changes – educating them to recognise the link between their chronic health conditions and lifestyle



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Almost every day I invite my patients to come to parkrun. I've had successes with people with anxiety, depression, diabetes and heart disease as well as those who want to improve their blood pressure or get fitter. It's a win-win situation for my patients and the NHS. My patients are healthier, happier and on fewer medications, and the NHS saves a fortune on unnecessary drugs and dealing with their side effects.

Dr Simon Tobin

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Setting the Scene

The parkrun practice initiative

[parkrun UK](#) has launched a new 'parkrun practice' initiative with the [Royal College of General Practitioners](#) (RCGP). Under this initiative, GP practices across the UK are encouraged to develop close links with their local parkrun to become 'parkrun practices'.

Involvement in this initiative will help practices:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of practice staff
- Improve the health and wellbeing of patients, reducing the need for lifelong medication
- Raise awareness amongst the parkrun community of services that practices provide
- Help develop a local community and environment centred around wellness generation
- Support the UK-wide movement to scale up social prescribing activities



Setting the Scene

The purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit is for:

- GP practices who want to become parkrun practices
- parkrun event teams who become linked to these practices

It provides practical guidance for becoming a parkrun practice. In addition to the suggested activities that a GP practice can undertake, in collaboration with their local parkrun event, the Toolkit contains a number of promotional resources and links that can be personalised, printed or digitally shared.



Eligibility and Process

Criteria and self-certification

- A parkrun practice is one that makes a commitment to promoting parkrun through the appropriate channels (suggested actions below).
- Adherence to the suggested criteria will be **self-declared** rather than independently adjudicated.
- It requires mutual agreement by GP practice and the local parkrun.
- The practice GPs **do not** have to be a member of RCGP to take part in this initiative.
- Note that, whilst most 5k parkrun events have defibrillators, parkrun events cannot take responsibility for providing specialist care and that no patient data will or should be shared with any parkrun event.

Eligibility and Process



Process for becoming a parkrun practice

- Practices contact their local parkrun event team and discuss the possibility of becoming a parkrun practice. Event team contact details can be found [here](#).
- At least one designated person should be chosen as the principal contact within the practice.
- The practice and the parkrun team should liaise and agree how to implement the partnership..
- Practices should fill out the form at www.rcgp.org.uk/parkrun to register their interest in becoming a parkrun practice. A follow-up email will include a link to the certificate. It is hoped that this certificate will be prominently displayed in the practice waiting room.
- Undertake some/all of the activities suggested below. **The list is for guidance only, and GP practices and parkrun events should feel empowered to decide what will work best for them.**

Activities: being a parkrun practice



Possible ways to promote parkrun

There are many ways that a practices can get involved and it's up to individual practices to decide what activities they want to undertake. Some suggestions include:

- Display parkrun flyers/posters in waiting rooms. The flyers can be found [here](#)
- Display information about parkrun on television screens
- Deliver a parkrun presentation to staff and/or patients, with the support of parkrun where possible
- Share parkrun flyers with patients and staff (electronically or hard copy)
- Include a parkrun page or a link to the parkrun website on the practice website
- Mention parkrun in practice communications, for example newsletters and social media
- Co-facilitate local PHE Physical Activity Champions' teaching sessions
- Encourage all staff to register for parkrun and give it a go
- Encourage patients and carers to register and take part in parkrun
- Undertake a volunteer takeover (practice staff/patients fill all volunteer roles at a parkrun event)
- Share inspirational stories with parkrun HQ and RCGP

Activities: being a parkrun practice



Promoting parkrun practices

- **Media (newspapers, radio, television):** Contact local media to explain the initiative and its benefits
- **Social media:** Highlight the great work you are doing using the hashtags #parkrunpractice, #parkrunRCGP and #parkrunprescription
- **Case studies:** Collate inspiring case studies to exemplify the benefits of an association with parkrun. These can be shared within the practice and with parkrun (for publication in the weekly [parkrun Newsletter](#)), RCGP and the local media. Case studies of existing parkrun practices are below.

Promoting parkrun



Resources

- [parkrun and junior parkrun flyers/posters](#) can be used electronically, or printed off and displayed in waiting rooms or handed to patients
- [Accessibility guidance](#) to support participation by those with long term conditions, produced as part of the Department of Health funded [PROVE project](#).
- [parkrun YouTube Channel](#) contains inspirational videos about parkrun, including [this video which highlights the health and wellbeing benefits of parkrun](#) to patients and the health sector, including the value of being a parkrun practice
- [loveparkrun.com](#) is a microsite which has been created to help present the benefits that parkrun can provide to communities and individuals.
- [parkrun image library](#) contains a bank of freely available images (*please credit the photographer*)
- [This video of Stanley Park junior parkrun](#) is a great example of a junior parkrun in action.



Promoting parkrun

Some inspiring stories

Weekly doses of inspiration can be found on the parkrun blog. See the following stories for a flavour of how parkrun changes lives:

<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2018/01/24/overcoming-the-odds/>
<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2017/04/24/a-toast-to-the-tail-runners/>
<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2018/01/17/6374/>
<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2018/01/15/autism-and-parkrun/>
<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2017/10/29/a-genuine-transformation/>
<http://blog.parkrun.com/uk/2017/02/19/an-enormous-sense-of-satisfaction/>

You may also be interested in this [fantastic story](#) about 89-year-old Elisabeth Marris. Elisabeth lives in a care home opposite Bushy Park in London, and every weekend comes down to support the 1,300 participants at Bushy Park parkrun. She is a valued member of the parkrun family, has made new friends and found a new lease of life through parkrun. Elisabeth has been given the title of honorary marshal in recognition of her contribution to the parkrun community.



Promoting parkrun

Existing case studies

Norwood surgery, Southport

Dr Simon Tobin has been a GP at Norwood Surgery in Southport for 23 years. Over the past few years he has become increasingly passionate about the benefits of 'lifestyle medicine'. In 2016 a friend from his running club was involved in setting up Southport parkrun. The start line is 800 metres from Simon's home and right in the middle of the area covered by his medical practice. As a parkrunner Dr Tobin was keen to be involved, and started volunteering. Three of the GPs and their spouses are now regular parkrunners as well as the Practice Manager, Practice Nurse, Palliative Care Nurse and several members of the reception staff. Dr Tobin and other practice staff actively and regularly encourage their patients to attend parkrun, even meeting them at the event and accompanying them as they walk or run around the course. Dr Tobin has a bank of inspirational stories about patients, and their families, whose lives have been changed through parkrun, and Norwood surgery is proud to be associated with the event.



Promoting parkrun

Existing case studies

Sloan Medical Centre, Sheffield

Sloan Medical Centre helped set up Graves parkrun in Sheffield six years ago. The staff and patients raised the initial event start-up costs with a sponsored run in the park and it was matched by the local council to reach the total. The original volunteers were mostly from the practice. Dr Ollie Hart was Event Director, but stepped down after a couple of years. One of the Centre's receptionists took over and has blossomed in the role. She was initially quite nervous about getting involved, but she has grown in confidence and now holds court over 300 people each week. She went on to take a promotion at a neighbouring practice as her career developed. Through the association many of the Centre's staff and patients are regular runners/walkers or volunteers at Graves parkrun. Dr Hart knows people with multiple sclerosis, diabetes, airway disease, mental health issues, to name but a few conditions, who have all benefited hugely from a 'life changing' association with parkrun. Dr Hart says that, as an intervention, helping to start Graves parkrun and having a close association with the event has had the biggest health impact of anything he has done in his career so far.



Promoting parkrun

Research papers: parkrun and health and wellbeing

C. Stevinson, M. Hickson; Exploring the public health potential of a mass community participation event, *Journal of Public Health*, Volume 36, Issue 2, 1 June 2014, Pages 268–274, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdt082>

Stevinson, C., Wiltshire, G. And Hickson, M., 2015. Facilitating participation in health-enhancing physical activity: a qualitative study of parkrun. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 22(2), pp.170-177

Wiltshire, G., Fullagar, S., & Stevinson, C. (2018). Exploring parkrun as a social context for collective health practices: Running with and against the moral imperatives of health responsibilisation. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 40(1), 3-17. DOI: [10.1111/1467-9566.12622](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12622)

Gareth Wiltshire & Clare Stevinson (2017) Exploring the role of social capital in community-based physical activity: qualitative insights from *parkrun*, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10:1, 47-62, DOI: [10.1080/2159676X.2017.1376347](https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1376347)



Help & Support

Key contacts

If you have any questions about being a parkrun practice please contact:

Dr Simon Tobin, parkrun's volunteer Health and Wellbeing Ambassador, GP and GP Trainer on simon.tobin@parkrun.com

Alice Smith, RCGP's Membership Events Coordinator on Alice.Smith@rcgp.org.uk





FINISH



www.parkrun.com



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