Setting the Scene

parkrun: the impact on health and wellbeing

If you are 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

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.
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
Setting the Scene

The parkrun practice initiative

parkrun UK has launched a new ‘parkun practice’ initiative with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Clinical Innovation and Research (CIRC) Physical Activity & Lifestyle clinical priority team. Under this initiative, GP practices across the UK are encouraged to develop close links with their local parkrun to become ‘parkrun practices’. The parkrun practice website is here.

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.

- The collaboration between a practice and a local parkrun event must be consensual, and the practice must get the agreement of the local event before registering.

- 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

- Either a) the practice contacts their local parkrun event team or b) event teams approach their local practice. Event team contact details can be found [here](#). Note that events are delivered by volunteers and participation in the initiative is at their discretion.

- We recommend that **GP practice staff attend their local parkrun event before registering**, to meet the event team and experience parkrun and its benefits first hand.

- 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](http://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.

- If there is not yet a parkrun event nearby, you could do what Graves Medical Centre did in 2012 (see p14 below), and start one! More information can be found [here](#).
Activities: being a parkrun practice

Possible ways to promote parkrun

There are many ways that practices and parkruns can get involved. 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 (for GP practices only).
- 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.

This is guidance only and GP practices and parkrun events should decide what will work best for them and feel free to be creative.
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 benefits 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 freely available images *(please credit the photographer)*
- **This video of Stanley Park junior parkrun** is a great example of a junior parkrun in action
- parkrun presentation templates are available, for practices and event teams, on request
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:

- Overcoming the odds
- A toast to the tail walkers
- Transformations are possible
- Autism and parkrun
- A genuine transformation
- An enormous sense of satisfaction
- High five a hero

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


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