

## Ramblers Wellbeing Walks Report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

Ramblers continue to provide insurance cover, training guidelines, some resources such as hi vis vests, and 'light-touch' administrative support. For this they have been charging £1,000 per year. This arrangement has been under review, and, on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Ramblers announced that all Wellbeing walks schemes that provide a quarterly report with the number of walkers attending all walks, the £1,000 subscription fee is to be waived without any compromise to the level of support that they previously provided.

Social prescribers are gradually reaching out to enquire about our walks on behalf of their clients and, as a result, the number of NHS referrals is rising. Ideally, we'd like all NHS workers to think of Step Out Sheffield as the 'go-to' service when they recommend gentle exercise for their patients. However, whilst social prescribers are now getting the message, we still need GPs to think about health promotion as opposed to disease management. An increasing number of new walkers found out about our walks from either the Ramblers website or the Step Out Sheffield website although word of mouth continues to be the main way that people find out about our walks and come along to try.

In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 we lost 8 volunteer walk leaders. Eight retired as volunteers due to ill health and very sadly four died. They were Diz Feeley (Pitsmoor), Peter Griffin (Grenoside), Alan Broadhead (Stocksbridge) and Jill Cheatle (Dore). Each of them had volunteered as a walk leader for at least 20 years and they are all very much missed. On the plus side, four walk assistants completed their training to become fully fledged walk leaders during the year and a further six are part way through their training. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to overcome the challenge of recruiting volunteers for the North and East side of Sheffield where support is very much needed.

During the period of this report two walks (Firth Park and Pitsmoor) quietly celebrated 25 years of walking and Graves Park celebrated 20 years of walking rather less quietly with a bun-fight for walkers both past and present. As a matter of record, 33 of our currently active volunteer walk leaders have now completed at least 10 years of service, 8 of them have completed 20 years of service and Jim Swift, from the Grenoside walk, has now been volunteering for 25 years.

There have been some downsides across the year. Two walks (Hillsborough and Lowedges) lost their venues and had to change their meeting points. Gleadless walk had to move to a temporary location while their venue is refurbished. Also, in September 2025 the Handsworth walk closed at short notice leaving a large residential area of the city without a weekly safe led-walk.

As the volunteer who looks after the volunteers, and acts as the channel of communication between Ramblers and Step Out Sheffield, I'd like to formally record my thanks to all the SOS volunteers for their continued support. Without such a big team of dedicated volunteers, Ramblers would not have a Wellbeing Walks scheme here in Sheffield at all.

*Sue Lee*