



Royal College of
General Practitioners



The parkrun practice initiative

A Toolkit

Join the growing movement supporting our
community's health one step at a time



Setting the scene

parkrun is a health and wellbeing charity which delivers weekly parkrun events on Saturday morning and junior parkrun events for 4 to 14 year olds on a Sunday morning, at over 1000 locations across UK.* These events are:

- Free to take part in!
- Organised by local volunteer teams
- Social, welcoming, fun and friendly
- Open to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities - participants can **walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate**
- Easy to take part in: register once on the **parkrun website** and download your personal barcode

You can find your local parkrun event [here](#).

In 2018, **parkrun UK** and the **Royal College of General Practitioners** launched the parkrun practice initiative. This innovative, exciting and **award winning** project encourages GP practices of all sizes to develop close links with their local parkrun events to become 'parkrun practices'. The website is [here](#) and the live map is [here](#).

Over 1,800 (20% of all UK practices) have now signed up! Being a parkrun practice initiative will help:

- ✓ Improve staff health and wellbeing and morale
- ✓ Foster strong relationships between staff inside and outside of work
- ✓ Reduce waiting lists
- ✓ Improve the health and wellbeing of patients and carers, reducing the need for lifelong medication
- ✓ Raise awareness amongst the local community of the wonderful range of services that your practice provides
- ✓ Achieve high CQC ratings and improved patient satisfaction scores, as well as being great for appraisals and PDPs

*Whilst parkrun events have defibrillators, they cannot take responsibility for providing specialist care.



Becoming a parkrun practice



- Being a parkrun practice is simple! It is all about encouraging as many people as possible to take part in parkrun. It isn't time consuming and will benefit everyone involved!
- Remember that the relationship between practice and parkrun must be **consensual and collaborative**. The events are delivered by volunteers and we request that practice staff speak to the local event team **before registering**. Event details can be found [here](#). If you don't have a parkrun event nearby, you could emulate [Sloan Medical Centre](#) and start one!
- Before signing up it would be great if you could head down to your local event and meet the event team face to face.
- Many practices are lucky to have more than one parkrun nearby so it's fine to link with more than one.
- It does help to have one or two designated champions within the practice. All staff can get involved - from practice managers, social prescribers, nurses, receptionists, GPs and more! GPs don't have to be a RCGP member to take part.
- It is totally self-declared, so it's up to you to decide how much or little you do!
- We would love for as many practice staff as possible to participate in parkrun, but there is no obligation to do so. You don't need to accompany your patients, but many practice staff join patients at parkrun and find it incredibly beneficial.
- You can sign up via the link [here](#) - it only takes a few minutes. You'll then receive an email with more information and your downloadable certificate.
- You can signpost to junior parkrun events, but we ask that you only register to link with a parkrun event/s

Some ideas for activities

There are many ways to bring this initiative to life. We have included ideas below, but please be creative!

- ✓ Take part in parkrun yourselves, and encourage your colleagues, family, friends, dogs to do so!
- ✓ Display the [parkrun flyers, posters](#) and [videos](#) in your practice. You could circulate these to patients, upload to your surgery website or create a parkrun noticeboard in communal areas. There are also parkrun practice flyers [here](#).
- ✓ Use text based messaging software to let patients know about your local parkrun event; maybe even encouraging them to take part on a certain weekend. Some suggested text can be found [here](#).
- ✓ Bang the drum with colleagues. Put a poster up in the staff room, share news via your internal comms channels or even deliver a presentation on parkrun. Maybe you could go to parkrun for a team away-day!
- ✓ Mention parkrun in any formal or informal interactions with patients. GPs can use the SNOMED code 1083201000000102 (signposting to community exercise group). You could give your patients a parkrun card [here](#).
- ✓ Encourage other practices in your PCN/cluster to sign-up. You could organise a friendly competition between practices based on the number of staff participating in parkrun or between clusters/PCNs!
- ✓ Organise a Saturday morning group walk or run from the doors of the practice to the parkrun.
- ✓ Invite your local parkrun event team to come into the surgery to talk about parkrun.
- ✓ Organise a practice (or even a whole network/cluster) volunteer takeover – filling the volunteer roster with practice staff is great for morale, team bonding and is a good news story for your comms channels.
- ✓ Produce some t-shirts for staff to wear using the [parkrun practice graphic](#).
- ✓ Share inspirational stories with the media, on [social media](#) (use #parkrunpractice) and [parkrun HQ](#) and [RCGP](#).



Promoting parkrun: some resources

Here are some of the resources that you can use. These are also available from the [parkrun practice website](#).

- 📣 [parkrun flyers and posters](#) can be downloaded, printed or used electronically (in colour or black and white)
- 📣 A [patient card](#) to print, fill out and give to patients
- 📣 [parkrun practice flyer/poster](#) for your surgery wall or noticeboard, and a [social media asset](#) for you to share
- 📣 [This incredible video](#) captures the varied, wonderful benefits of the parkrun practice initiative
- 📣 The [digital screen graphic](#) or [parkrun slideshow](#) can be uploaded to practice television screens (*Please download the document from this link and then edit that version, rather than ask to edit the master copy*).
- 📣 The [parkrun image library](#) contains freely available and downloadable images for you to use
- 📣 Ideas for [SMS wording](#) (*Please download the document from this link and then edit that version, rather than ask to edit the master copy*).
- 📣 The parkrun practice graphics are downloadable [here](#), and can be used to create branded t-shirts, caps, flags etc
- 📣 We don't have a specific prescription pad, but practice staff can suggest parkrun in a written note, including the parkrun website link or name of the local event, or email/SMS patients with the details
- 📣 [Moving Medicine](#) offers practical guidance on how to initiate conversations around physical activity with patients





Some practice staff testimonials



“Almost every day I invite my patients to come to parkrun. I’ve had successes with people with anxiety, depression, diabetes and heart disease, 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)

“I remember the first parkrun I attended. My initial thought was ‘gosh this would be fantastic for my patients!’. I later found out that there was already an initiative just for that... Some of my most rewarding consultations have including signposting to parkrun. Seeing them at the event and being part of the community on a Saturday morning reminds me why I love this job!” (Dr Shahnaz Hassan)



Some Patient Testimonials

“I was first introduced to parkrun by my GP, Dr Hussain, after we discussed my type 2 diabetes. He reassured me that parkrun was a welcoming event.

We attend the first event together and I was impressed by how lovely and friendly it was. Since then, I have been to over 32 parkruns and volunteered at a few as well! It has changed my perspective of running from competition to community.” (Paul)

“parkrun is like a warm blanket for me. When the week has been rough, I know I have it to start the weekend on the right foot. There is always a smile and a kind word to be had at my local event. I always leave more positive than when I started.” (Duane)





Some other inspiring stories

Weekly doses of inspiration can be found on the parkrun blog. These stories provide flavour of how parkrun changes lives:

[Prescribing parkrun](#)

[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 Elisabeth Marris. Elisabeth lives in a care home opposite Bushy Park in London, and every weekend comes down to support the 1000+ walkers, joggers and runners 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.

For more information ...

Research

GP staff and patients up and down the country have spoken about the positive benefits of being a parkrun practice and participating in parkrun.

This has been substantiated by research, with academic papers being published about the parkrun practice initiative in the [British Journal of General Practitioners \(BJGP\)](#) and in [Health and Social Care in the Community](#). Please do have a read to find out more about how the initiative has been implemented by practices and event teams.

Please see the [parkrun Research Board](#) website to access all the research outputs related to parkrun, including on the varied health and wellbeing impacts of parkrun.

Contact

For questions about the parkrun practice initiative please contact: activepractice@rcgp.org.uk

For questions regarding parkrun events please email support@parkrun.com or Dr Simon Tobin, parkrun's volunteer Health and Wellbeing Ambassador, GP and GP Trainer on simon.tobin@parkrun.com





**Join the growing parkrun practice movement today
and demonstrate your support for proactive health creation!**

FINISH



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