

# Striding Forward: 'Walking in Our Shoes' Gets Dads' Approval

*Walking in Our Shoes: This short film provides an introduction to our new and exciting project for dads and male carers who support children in the heart community*

Earlier this year ECHO was excited to announce the 'Walking in Our Shoes' initiative—a walking group support network for dads and other male relatives of heart children.

We wanted to offer a space in which conversation could develop organically but would not be the focus, which gave us the idea of a walking group. As this would be a fantastic way to help relieve stress and get some exercise, members of the group would not feel pressure to talk if it felt unnatural, but would have the chance to connect with the wider heart community.

One of our volunteers had the great idea of putting together a short film to outline the initiative. We thought this would be an excellent way to showcase some of the ECHO community Dads' experiences as well as to summarise the reasons behind our decision to launch this project.

On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June around 15 people attended the launch event for Walking in Our Shoes. We premiered the film and also marked the occasion with an inaugural walk along the Southbank. We are really pleased that already a handful of dads have been inspired by this event and are now keen and ready to start walking groups in their local areas. The first walking group is likely to be in Eastbourne where John, who appears in the Walking in Our Shoes film, lives. ECHO supports families from all across London and South East England, and we hope that we can encourage communities from all corners of ECHO's reach to start their own walking groups. We believe that this will make it more feasible to become involved for anyone who would like to.

If you would like to stay updated with future walks/events near you, you can do so by following the link below. Watch this space for a Facebook group for everyone involved in the initiative. This will allow you to easily connect with others in your area who would also like to be part of a walking group.

If you are interested in [starting your own local walking group](#), or would like to find out more about the [benefits of walking](#), professional walker Heather Waring has kindly put together these useful resources.

We would like to make it clear that this group isn't exclusively for dads as this would exclude some really important members of each individual family's support network. Grandads, uncles, other male relatives and members of medical support teams are also more than welcome to join.

Happy walking!