



# Creating an **Active** Workplace

## Health & care professionals

Building movement into the working day to create healthier, happier workplaces.



# The joy of creating an active workplace

There are over 1.5 million people <sup>(1)</sup> working in the NHS, dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of the population.

Being the largest employer in the country, NHS teams play a crucial role in supporting their staff by fostering an active workplace culture.

This toolkit has been designed to provide NHS teams with practical tips and ideas on incorporating more activity and movement into the working day.

**Creating an active workplace starts with small changes that make a big difference...**



1. NHS Workforce Statistics – December 2025, NHS Digital, published February 2026.

# Why movement is important in your workplace

**Active employees** are happier, healthier, and more productive.

Research indicates that higher levels of physical activity among employees enhances concentration, reduces stress, boosts mood, and improves overall cognitive function, leading to better decision-making and problem-solving.

Essentially... **a more active employee is often a more productive employee** <sup>(1)</sup>

Having an active workforce relates directly to the priorities set out in the **NHS 10 Year Plan** that highlights prevention and community-led care as central to improved health outcomes. <sup>(2)</sup>

Supporting the health and care workforce be more active and empowering staff to be advocates for physical activity would result in **2.9 million less inactive adults** in England, harnessing the full potential of physical activity in helping people live longer, healthier, and happier lives. <sup>(3)</sup>

**Small shifts create the momentum for large-scale change.**

1. Rampisheh Z, Ramezani M, Khalili N, Massahikhaloghi P, Hoveidamanesh S, Darroudi S, SoleimanvandiAzar N, Tayefi B. Physical Activity and Well-being Status among Employees of University of Medical Sciences. Med J Islam Repub Iran. 2022 Aug 27;36:97. doi: 10.47176/mjiri.36.97. PMID: 36408338; PMCID: PMC9587180.

2. Fit for the Future: NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England, July 2025.

3. Harnessing the benefits of physical activity, NHS England



# For your team...



**Lower staff turnover**



**Improved productivity**

teamwork and communication



**Team unity**

builds a stronger team together



**Prevents isolation.**

Great way to integrate new team members



Absenteeism reduced by

**20%**



**Demonstrates teamwork and communication**



On average

**28%**

fewer sick days taken by active staff

# For your employees...



**More**

energy, better stress management



**Improved**

mood & mental health



**Social**

opportunities and chances to meet new people



**Reduced**

risk of chronic illnesses EG. heart disease, strokes, diabetes & cancer



**Improved**

self-confidence & self-esteem



**Reduced**

the likelihood of developing serious MSK conditions



**Improved**

sleep



**Reduced**

the risk of depression





# Embedding physical activity in your workplace

## Before you start...

An **active workplace culture** and **leading by example** are two of the best ways to get your employees moving more. Leaders set the tone. Employees are more likely to incorporate activity into the day if they see managers modelling this behaviour too.

**Language is important.** Many people are put off by words like 'exercise' and 'sport' and may have negative views stemming from bad experiences or perceptions.

## Creating an active workplace is about moving more in the day...

...which could be walking, standing, stretching, using the stairs etc. These are all examples of everyday moving.

**Individuals know best!** Instead of telling people what to do, empower them to make adjustments that suit their lifestyles and routines. Encourage connection through an active workplace culture while being mindful that people have different ways of moving that make them feel good.

# Small changes could be...



**Active Soles:** Give permission for staff to wear active footwear at work or have a pair under their desk



**Lunchtime movement:** Encourage people to get up and out their seats at lunchtime eg staff walks.



**Calendar reminders:** Set up alerts for dedicated movement breaks during the day.



**Physical spaces:** Ensure buildings and staff rooms encourage movement through good storage, equipment, and messages.



**Walking meetings:** When you don't need laptops, go for a walk and talk instead!



**Standing desks:** Encourage standing breaks and/or use of standing desks to break up long periods of sitting.



**Themed days:** Schedule regular active days during the week eg Moving Mondays or Strength Training Tuesdays



**Active Champions:** Celebrate staff achievements relating to physical activity or movement.



**Staff challenges:** Set up weekly/monthly challenges to do individually or together eg step count.



**Promote activities:** Spotlight local opportunities in staff rooms and newsletters eg parkrun, walking groups, leisure centre discounts etc.



# Committing to Change

## Some things may take longer to implement but make real strides in creating an Active Workplace culture

- **RCGP Active Practice Charter:** Support practice staff through purposeful initiatives that focus on improving health and wellbeing, and get recognized for it through an accreditation.
- **Physical activity training:** Offer free training for health and care teams to improve confidence and knowledge about physical activity eg Physical Activity Clinical Champions (PACC) training or a [strength training seminar](#).
- **Active travel:** Encourage and even incentivise cycling or walking/wheeling to work with flexibility or prizes. Ensure there is secure bike parking and facilities, offer shared company bikes or [cycle to work schemes](#).
- **Workplace policy:** Add health and wellbeing conversations into monthly/annual reviews. Create an Active Workplace policy, require staff to have a wellbeing plan that includes movement.
- **Activity classes:** Offer activity classes based on feedback from employees and what they want. Wellbeing activities could be incorporated into team meetings or team building.
- **Office movement:** Encourage exercises like walking while on the phone or stretches while waiting for printing. Provide a screensaver with seated exercises, or implement reminders in calendars to stand or move.
- **Promote campaigns:** Support initiatives like GM Walking Festival and RED January, and other local offers.
- **Connect locally:** Build relationships with local leisure providers and parkruns eg organise a [parkrun takeover event](#).

# Evaluation

## How do we know it's working?

Providing evidence of success will display the return on investment you've gained, with a healthier, active, and less-absent team.

Measure impact through:

- **Staff surveys:** Assess employee morale and health improvements within the staff survey.
- **Patient surveys:** 1 in 4 people are more likely to be active if recommended by a health and care worker <sup>(1)</sup> so if staff are healthy and happier it's likely that patients will be too!
- **1-2-1s:** Let individuals set goals if they want to, take time to review them in regular 1-2-1s. Discuss how they feel being active is supporting their work. There is training available to support having these conversations eg PACC.
- **Productivity:** Track productivity changes related to increased activity.
- **Absenteeism:** Monitor changes in absence rates after implementing activity plans.
- **Share stories:** Use newsletters or social media to share success stories of improved employee health, wellbeing and staff morale.
- **Incentivised initiatives:** Record outcomes of initiatives that have been rewarded eg active travel; staff challenges.
- **Let us know!** Read case stories [here](#) or [submit your own](#).

1. Harnessing the benefits of physical activity, NHS England



# Useful Resources

Click the images to view...



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET  
**STRONGERatHOME**



England



RCGP Active Practice



Moving Medicine

GM ACTIVE



Transport for  
Greater Manchester



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
CLINICAL CHAMPIONS



Greater Manchester

**Walking**

Greater Manchester  
Moving > ^ < v

## Physical activity for adults and older adults

Benefits health	Type II Diabetes	-40%
ZZ Improves sleep	Cardiovascular disease	-35%
Maintains healthy weight	Falls, depression etc.	-30%
Manages stress	Joint and back pain	-25%
Improves quality of life	Cancers (colon and breast)	-20%

Reduce your chance of

Some is good, more is better	Make a start today: it's never too late	Every minute counts
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## Looking after your team's health and wellbeing guide

A facilitator's guide  
March 2023

People Promise





**Get in touch!**

For more information about creating an active workplace contact Julia Skelly at [julia@gmmoving.co.uk](mailto:julia@gmmoving.co.uk)

For more ideas on how to embed movement into health & care contact Imogen Halls at [imogen@gmmoving.co.uk](mailto:imogen@gmmoving.co.uk)