



**The value of an
active workplace**



The Business Case

Investing in the health of your employees can bring numerous financial and productivity benefits for your organisation as well as your people.

By supporting your employees to be active and healthy in an active workplace, your organisation can see many benefits. When employees suffer from poor physical and mental health, they are not the only ones that feel the impact. Physical inactivity is costing UK businesses an estimated £6.6 billion a year¹.

Employers see significant financial costs from poor employee health, through things like sickness absence, working when unwell, and poor productivity.

Workplaces that invest in their employee wellbeing are happier, healthier and more productive.

Reduced sickness absence

Mental ill-health, stress and musculoskeletal conditions account for the majority of days lost due to work-related ill health².

Physical activity can help to reduce the risks of these illnesses³ and also reduce the symptoms of existing long-term health conditions, resulting in 27% fewer sick days⁴.



Improved morale

Active employees have more energy and better stress management than less active colleagues. Physical activity initiatives also provide opportunities to improve workplace relationships, improved teamwork and communication, enhanced team cohesion, and boost morale.



Improved productivity

Incorporating physical activity into your daily routine can improve focus and concentration, sharpen memory, enhance creativity, and build prolonged mental stamina.



Reduced staff turnover

Active workplaces can enhance the reputation and profile of your organisation. Providing an attractive workplace health offer demonstrates that you value staff wellbeing and can make you more appealing to future employees.



The potential economic return on investment for a UK business that invests in workplace health initiatives is £4.17 for every £1 spent⁵





Benefits of Moving More⁶



- Improves focus, concentration and alertness
- Improves memory and cognitive function
- Reduces risk of accidents at work



- Prevents pain and stiffness
- Reduces risk of musculoskeletal conditions



- Helps fight off viruses and cancers
- Reduces risk of developing long-term health conditions like diabetes or heart disease



- Helps to manage stress
- Reduces risk of depression and anxiety



- Improves self-esteem
- Makes you feel good





Risks of a Sedentary Workforce

As a nation, we are 24% less active today than we were fifty years ago. British people sit for an average of 8-9 hours each day.

It is important to remember that people can enjoy regular physical activity while also being at risk of ill-health as a result of sitting still for long periods.

Spending prolonged periods sitting slows our metabolism, affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, blood pressure and break down body fat.

Sitting for more than 4 hours a day can increase our risk of long-term health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. It also significantly raises the risk of developing musculoskeletal problems, such as back, shoulder and knee pain, the single biggest cause of absence from work.

It is more important than ever before, to ensure that people consider how to purposefully incorporate activity into their working day.

Break up sitting time with regular movement⁷

Experts advise breaking up long periods of sitting time with 1 to 2 minutes of activity, ideally every 30 minutes.

Short, frequent breaks are better than less frequent longer breaks. e.g. 5 minute break each hour is better than 20 minutes every 3 hours.

5mins should be spent away from a computer screen each hour. It's also important to change posture and refocus your eyes regularly.

Ideas for an active work day⁸

1

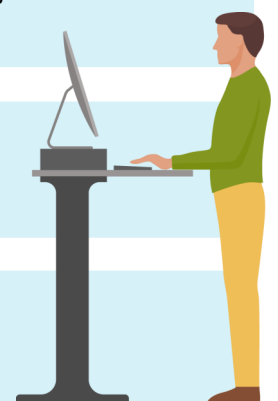
Do some simple stretches while sitting at your desk to relieve tension and stiffness from not moving. Even while on a video call, you can stretch your legs and core muscles without anyone knowing!

2

Identify any tasks you can do while standing on your feet or moving around. Set up a standing desk area to stimulate blood flow and engage idle muscles while you work.

3

Walking and standing meetings are an efficient way to increase your movement at work without taking extra time. If you don't need a screen or lots of notes consider walking while you talk.





Building an Active Working Culture

Creating a work environment that truly encourages and enables activity is a fundamental step to building an active working culture. Managers and senior leaders can play an important role in making this a reality.

Employees who feel they have permission from, and are enabled by, leadership to be active during the working day is hugely important. It can encourage a workplace culture that supports more movement, and are committed to developing healthier, happier staff.

Review your progress

Adding a physical activity goal to your work programmes will encourage regular chats about movement and self-care with your team. Dedicate some time in annual appraisals to check in

Give permission

Employees are more likely to take time to move if they feel genuinely encouraged to, so let them know you actively support it.

Provide ideas and resources

Share some of the tools and ideas we have pulled together in this document.

Offer flexible working hours

Allowing staff to flex their hours to build in activity before, after or during the day can make a real difference, especially during the darker winter months.

Involve and empower your team

Ask your team what they want and need through a staff survey or informal conversation. Find out what their barriers are and what would help. You may even consider training staff members as Physical Activity Champions. This can provide a valuable development opportunity for the individual and generate a sustainable model of peer-to-peer support and employee-driven activity.

Be a role model

Normalise active working by showing your teams this is something that senior leaders genuinely embrace and practice themselves. Wear trainers to work and show people that it's OK. Go for lunchtime walks, lead walking meetings, and tell people how these things impact your work and your wellbeing.

Creating a Movement for Movement

A Movement for Movement is the physical activity strategy for Dorset.

It sets out the strategic approach to increasing movement and reducing physical inactivity across Dorset including why we need to make change, what we need to focus on, and how we can do it.

The aim is to support everyone to move a little more every day, in ways that work for them. To achieve this we need to work as a system to build a narrative around movement that inspires and empowers everyone to move more and sit less.

Read more and become part of the movement at:

www.movementformovement.co.uk



Area of focus	Opportunity	Example actions	
Create a social environment that encourages movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise existing organisations, networks and promote a culture for daily movement Organise inclusion of movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in walking or cycling to work Embed physical activity information and resources to your intranet, newsletters and social media Create screeners that display desk based stretches and physical activity prompts 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide facilities that support active travel Provide an active travel plan Encourage staff to walk or cycle to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joining up of shared communications between organisations to present consistent messaging on moving more Follow LiveWell Dorset and Active Dorset on social media and share content across your own channels Sign up to the LiveWell Dorset and Active Dorset newsletters and share content in your own newsletters 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a physical environment that supports daily movement during the working day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design workspaces that encourage people to move Display physical activity information Provide a safe and healthy environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add wellbeing question and signposting to LiveWell Dorset lifestyle service into digital documents Include wellbeing check-in as a recurring item in all one-to-ones and team meetings 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion role models with active working behaviours Lead by example Discourage working practices that involve prolonged sitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide CPTD opportunities that include physical activity awareness Promote LiveWell Dorset walking offer for all staff Promote Living Well in your Retirement' workshops into pre-retirement support Provide wellbeing support awareness sessions for new line managers Include staff wellbeing as a measure in workplaces for all team leads 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Embed active working into the organisation culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed active working into policy and procedures Embed wellbeing support and interventions into policy and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include physical activity information and signposting into maternity policy, risk assessments and checks Ensure physical activity support is in place for staff on or at risk of going on long term sickness leave Ensure any Employee Assistance Programme includes physical activity information and support Carry out an annual staff wellbeing survey Set uniform policy that allows people to wear clothes and footwear that supports movement Support flexible working procedures that allow staff to include physical activity in working day 	<input type="checkbox"/>

Active Dorset have produced the Active Workplaces checklist, inspired by the A Movement for Movement strategy. Contact us to request a copy.



Case study: Dorset HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust

At Dorset HealthCare the wellbeing of our staff is a foundation of all the work that we do. Implementing the recommended changes within the Movement for Movement' strategy will help us to help our staff to move more and to help improve their wellbeing. This aligns with the work we are already undertaking within our wider Workforce Wellbeing delivery plans.

We run regular health campaigns to encourage people to move more and we will embrace the language of 'daily movement' in our wellbeing communications. We will offer Active Dorset training to our network of Wellbeing Champions and our managers to help them to support and encourage our workforce to move more and to share information with others. We work with LiveWell Dorset to provide onsite NHS health checks for staff who meet the national criteria and promote their healthy lifestyle support to all. We will also encourage our staff to lead by example and to share information with their colleagues, patients, families, and friends.





Campaigns and Resources

Active Soles

Active Dorset are supporting the #ActiveSoles movement.

We are calling for organisations across our county to make wearing comfortable shoes in the workplace the norm, to help people to be active during the working day.

We want senior leaders to show their support for the campaign by setting an example by wearing their active soles, celebrating the benefits of adding movement into their working day, and encouraging others to join in.

Show your support by sharing photos of you, your colleagues and teams getting involved. Tag Active Dorset on social media and use #ActiveSoles



National Campaign Events



RED January

Kickstart the year in a positive way and challenge yourself to do something active every day during January.



On Your Feet Day

On your feet Britain encourages workers across Britain to participate in a variety of fun and simple activities to #SitLess and #MoveMore at work.



National Walking Month

National Walking Month encourages people to walk more throughout May. Initiatives include, Walk to Work Week and Walk to School Week.



Mental Health Awareness Week

An opportunity to share information and ideas for how physical activity during the working week can support positive mental health.



National Bike Week

Bike Week is a national event that aims to promote cycling and to show how it can easily become part of everyday life, including active travel.

These are just a few campaigns that could be supported in your workplace. Contact Active Dorset for more ideas, campaigns, challenges, and resources to support an active workforce.

Find out more about Active Workplaces

If you are interested in learning more about how to improve the health, wellbeing, and productivity of your workforce using physical activity:



- Contact Active Dorset to request the Active Workplaces toolkit.
- Read the Movement for Movement physical activity strategy for Dorset and sign up as a strategy partner.
- Contact Active Dorset to discuss opportunities for support for you or your organisation.

Contact: Katie Davies kdavies@activedorset.org

1	AXA PPP Healthcare The economics of exercise	https://reba.global/resource/report-the-economics-of-exercise.html
2	Public Health England Health Matters: Health and Work	www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-health-and-work/health-matters-health-and-work
3	GOV.UK Physical Activity: Applying All Our Health	www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health
4	PrinceWaterhouseCoopers Building the Case for Wellness	www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-health-and-wellbeing-building-the-case-for-wellness
5	British Heart Foundation Economic Evidence Report for Workplace Health	www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/publications/health-at-work/health-at-work---economic-evidence-report
6	GOV.UK UK CMO Physical Activity Guidelines	www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report
7	HSE Work Routine and Breaks	www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/work-routine.htm
8	Active Dorset Active Workplaces Toolkit	www.activedorset.org/active-at-work

