



# Active Workplaces Guide



active  
norfolk



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# Introduction



## Over the last 10 years, Active Norfolk - through our Active Workplaces programme - has been working hard to help local employers enable their staff to become more active.

We've helped hundreds of organisations across the county to understand the benefits to business of having a healthy and active workforce, as well as provided training, support and activity opportunities. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the mental and physical health benefits of being active have never been so clear. In addition, employees returning to their workplace are being encouraged to take up more active means of commuting, with government investing large sums in supporting a new walking and cycling culture.

Whether temporarily or permanently, the traditional workplace as we knew it has changed for a lot of employees, and for businesses the foreseeable future is likely to be a challenging time.

*But what remains true is that the 'workplace', whatever that looks like, will remain a key setting to support people with their mental and physical health. And for businesses, now more than ever, healthy staff will be vital to helping them to stay resilient and secure their long-term success.*

We are committed to supporting Norfolk workplaces moving forward, and have created this guide with the following aims:

### To inform:

We will provide you with information on the business case for an active workforce, look at the benefits to employers and employees of physical activity and active travel, as well as explore some of the main barriers and motivations to people being active.

### To inspire:

It's important to know why being active is beneficial for you and your organisation but we also understand that providing ideas and inspiration to get you started is essential too.

### To guide:

We will share our knowledge and ideas on good practice to help you develop and implement your own workplace physical activity and active travel programme, and signpost you to organisations who can provide additional support.

We understand that workplaces can vary enormously in terms of size, employee demographics, and budgets to support wellbeing initiatives, but we hope you will find some useful information and tips within this guide to enable you and your colleagues to make some positive changes for a more active future.

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Note: The suggestions and information supplied in this guide should be adapted as necessary to ensure compliance with current government guidance for Covid-19.

Why will this help  
my organisation?





## Good health is good for business

As a nation, we are 24% less active today than we were fifty years ago<sup>1</sup>, and this inactivity is contributing to a rise in the number of people suffering from avoidable health problems and an increase in the diagnosis of long-term health conditions.

When employees suffer from poor physical and mental health, they are not the only ones that feel the impact. Employers incur significant financial costs from poor employee health, through sickness absence, presenteeism and poor productivity.



**Absence costs businesses over  
£14bn per annum<sup>2</sup>**



**Over 15.4m days were lost to stress,  
depression and anxiety in 2017/18 –  
an increase of 27% since 2009<sup>3</sup>**



**33% of English long-term sickness absence is  
attributed to musculoskeletal conditions<sup>4</sup>**



**Costs of presenteeism (attending work while  
unwell) are estimated to be £30bn annually<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Everybody active, every day - Public Health England Oct 2014

<sup>2</sup>Confederation of British Industry/Pfizer 2013 Fit for purpose. Absence and workplace health survey 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Labour Force Survey, various years

<sup>4</sup>Labour Force Survey, various years

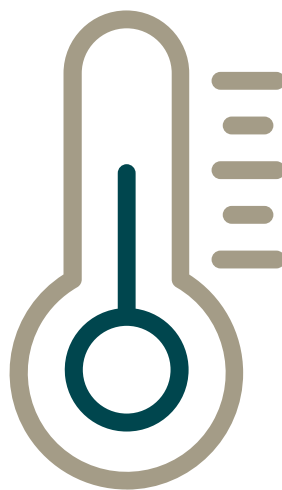
<sup>5</sup>Labour Force Survey, various years

Economic and technological developments in recent decades, and the arrival of Covid-19 in 2020, has impacted on our working environments. Employers, faced with the reality of ever-increasing demands to be competitive, are seeing an increase in the number of their staff struggling with mental health issues with stress in the workplace reaching record levels.

Scientific evidence on the ill-effects of sedentary working is growing fast, which is bad news for the large number of employees spending their days in predominately sedentary roles.

By supporting your employees to be active and healthy your organisation can see many benefits including:

- ✓ **Reduction in staff absence from work**
- ✓ **Increase in staff productivity**
- ✓ **Increase in staff retention and lower staff turnover rate**
- ✓ **Reduction in staff stress levels**
- ✓ **Help to mitigate some of the problems associated with an ageing workforce**
- ✓ **Reduction in workplace injuries**
- ✓ **The ability to enhance the reputation and profile of the employer as one who is seen to value staff health and wellbeing**
- ✓ **Improved morale of the workforce**
- ✓ **Opportunity to make a contribution to the health of the wider community**



**Physically active workers take 27% fewer sick days.<sup>6</sup>**

**This could offer substantial cost savings to your organisation.**

## Crunching the numbers

Potential savings per year based on an organisation of...

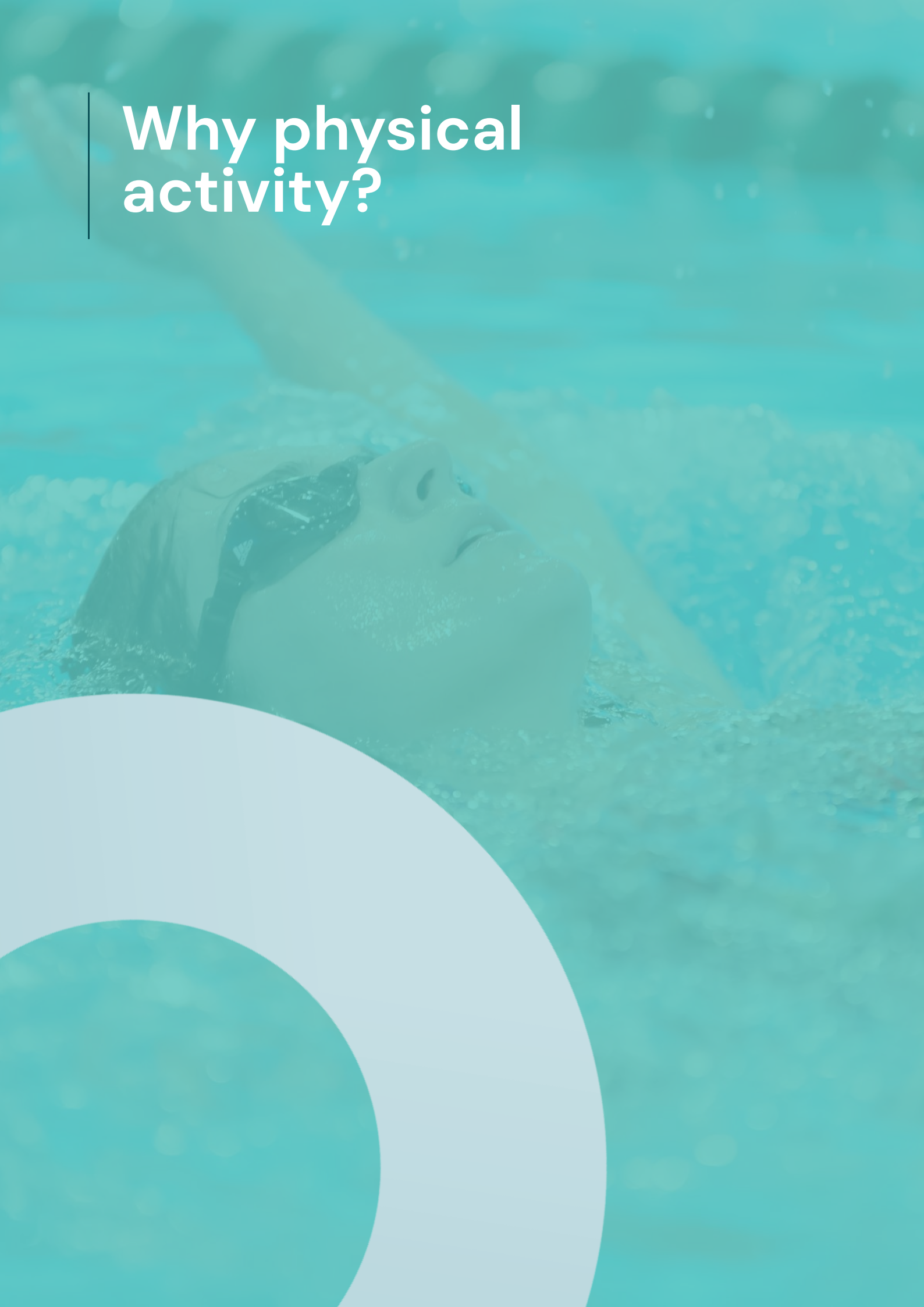


### Top tip

*Access free resources from the British Heart Foundation to build the business case and secure buy in from senior management.*

*See Additional Information and Resources section.*

# Why physical activity?



The benefits to business of having an active and healthy workforce are numerous and varied. As well as improvements to the physical and mental health of employees, being active also provides opportunities for staff to benefit from improved social skills and relationships.

## Reduced risk of diseases

It's medically proven that people who do regular physical activity have:

- ✓ up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- ✓ up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- ✓ up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- ✓ up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- ✓ a 30% lower risk of early death
- ✓ up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- ✓ up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture
- ✓ a 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults)
- ✓ up to a 30% lower risk of depression
- ✓ up to a 30% lower risk of dementia

(Source: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))



## Improved mental health

In recent years, the area of mental health in the workplace has increasingly become a priority for many organisations. Demand is high for courses in Mental Health First Aid and there is a growing interest in and desire to promote practices – such as mindfulness and meditation – that can support employees with their mental wellbeing.

These are all positive changes to be welcomed. However, something less widely understood by employers and employees alike is the link between physical activity and mental health and how exercise can be a more effective treatment than medication for people suffering with a mild to moderate depression.

Employers can help play a key role in raising awareness of the link between being active and improved mental wellbeing. By providing information, advice and ideas, and offering employees the opportunities and flexibility to be active within the workday, organisations can support their employees to manage and improve their mental health.



### Top tip:

*When you're promoting mental health awareness events in the workplace (e.g. Mental Health Awareness Week & World Mental Health Day), remember to highlight the link between being active and good mental health. Also, be sure to include or promote some fun, inclusive activity sessions/ideas for employees to enjoy – whether working remotely or in the workplace.*



## Mental health benefits associated with being physically active include:

- ✓ *Reduced anxiety and happier moods – When you exercise, your brain chemistry changes through the release of endorphins, which can calm anxiety and lift your mood.*
- ✓ *Reduced feelings of stress – You may experience reductions in feelings of stress and tension as your body is better able to control cortisol levels.*
- ✓ *Clearer thinking – Some people find that exercise helps to break up racing thoughts. As your body tires so does your mind, leaving you calmer and better able to think clearly.*
- ✓ *A greater sense of calm – Simply taking time out to exercise can give you space to think things over and help your mind feel calmer.*
- ✓ *Increased self-esteem – When you start to see and feel your fitness levels increase it can give your self-esteem a big boost. The sense of achievement you get from learning new skills and achieving your goals can also help you feel better about yourself and lift your mood.*
- ✓ *Reduced risk of depression – If you're more active there's good evidence to suggest that at most ages, for both men and women, there's a trend towards lower rates of depression. In fact, one study has found that by increasing your activity levels from doing nothing to exercising at least three times a week, you can reduce your risk of depression by almost 20%.*

(Source: Mind - How to improve your wellbeing through physical activity and sport)

## Support for an ageing workforce

The UK population is steadily getting older and this trend is projected to continue in the future. By 2041 in Norfolk, 54% of the population will fall within working age of 16-64, and 30% will be 65+. <sup>7</sup> People living and working for longer has implications for employers, providing both challenges and opportunities.

With people staying in work longer, it is increasingly important for workers to remain physically and mentally healthy. In general, older workers are less likely to take time off through ill health than younger workers, particularly short-term absence. However, for those older workers who do have health problems, the length of absence is likely to be longer. <sup>8</sup> By supporting your staff to be active you can help them to maintain their physical and mental health as they age and improve symptoms associated with some age associated conditions like arthritis, osteoporosis and high blood pressure- benefitting both your employees and your organisation.

<sup>7</sup>Norfolk Insight, Source ONS

<sup>8</sup>Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (2011).

## Sedentary behaviour (sitting)

Office workers now spend 75% of their day sitting at their desks on average, and a third of that sitting time is done for a prolonged period.<sup>9</sup>

In response to the pandemic and enabled by technology, employees no longer need to leave their seats to attend meetings, conferences, visit customers, or socialise with colleagues. And then once the working day is over, many people relax by spending their evenings sitting down to read, watch television, and eat.

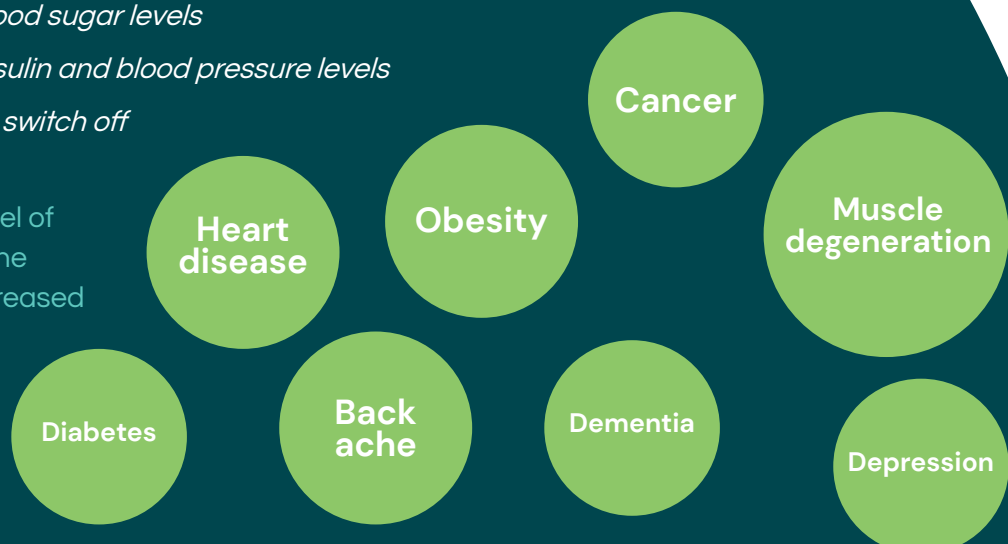
This type of sedentary lifestyle has some damaging repercussions for our health, leading to an increased risk of several diseases and physical complaints. It is crucial to raise awareness of the risks of being sedentary and encourage staff to take regular breaks to move and stretch throughout the day.

**British people  
sit for 8.9 hours  
each day (on average).**

In recent years several major international studies have produced compelling evidence that sitting for more than 4 hours each day leads to:

- ✓ *Enzymes responsible for burning harmful blood fats shutting down*
- ✓ *Reduced calorie burning (Metabolic rate)*
- ✓ *Disrupted blood sugar levels*
- ✓ *Increased insulin and blood pressure levels*
- ✓ *Leg muscles switch off*

Whatever your level of physical activity, the result leads to increased risks of:



## Other benefits of being active

- ✓ maintain or increase fitness levels (physical stamina)
- ✓ reaching/maintaining a healthy weight
- ✓ improve the quality and quantity of sleep
- ✓ higher levels of energy to enjoy life
- ✓ help improve some menopausal symptoms
- ✓ opportunities to maintain or build our social networks
- ✓ improve concentration and mental alertness
- ✓ opportunities for new learning experiences
- ✓ helps build resilience to illnesses, including Covid-19

### Summary

The evidence is clear that being active brings a range of benefits to both employees and employers. With an ageing workforce, it is going to be even more important in the coming years that staff are supported and encouraged to be active to help them maintain their physical and mental health throughout their working life- especially in the years leading up to retirement.

By supporting all staff to be active, employers have the potential to make substantial gains with improved mental health, higher productivity, and a reduction in sickness absence.



# Additional Information and Resources

## Business case

**British Heart Foundation** – Access free resources including a business case template, infographics and a business case guide. [www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications) (click Workplace Health under 'Subject')

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## Mental Health

**Mental Health Foundation** – A range of free downloadable guides including 'How to look after your mental health using exercise', 'How to sleep better' and 'How to look after your mental health in later life'. Why not print some copies to display in your workplace or promote the website links in online communications to your staff?

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications)

**Mind** – Find information about how physical activity can help your mental health, and tips for choosing an activity that works for you, and how to overcome anything that might stop you from becoming more active.

[About physical activity | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

**Thriving With Nature** – A guide for everyone, from the Mental Health Foundation, on making the most of the UK's natural spaces for our mental health and wellbeing.

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/thriving-with-nature/guide](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/thriving-with-nature/guide)

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## Sedentary Behaviour

**Get Britain Standing** – 'A campaign to increase awareness and education of the dangers of sedentary working and prolonged sitting time. On Your Feet Britain Day is their annual awareness day to encourage workers across Britain to sit less and move more!

[www.getbritainstanding.org](http://www.getbritainstanding.org)



What should  
we be doing?




In Norfolk, 28% of adults are classified as inactive.<sup>10</sup> This is the percentage of people 16+ who do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week.


When it comes to how much physical activity we should be doing, the message is that 'some activity is good and more is better'. The World Health Organisation's recently updated physical activity recommendations reflect this, with key messages including "Move more, every day" and "Some activity is better than nothing at all."<sup>11</sup>

Below are the UK's physical activity guidelines for adults and older adults.

**Be active**  **at least 150 minutes** moderate intensity per week **or** a combination of both **at least 75 minutes** vigorous intensity per week

**Build strength** to keep muscles, bones and joints strong  **on at least 2 days a week**

**Minimise sedentary time** Break up periods of inactivity 

 **Improve balance** for older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls **on at least 2 days a week**



### Top tip

*For some individuals who are looking to make a change to become active, 150 minutes per week can seem quite overwhelming. Encourage your colleagues by communicating the fact that just making some small changes to build physical activity into their daily lives can have a noticeable and positive impact on their physical health and mental wellbeing. It's just important to make a start!*

<sup>10</sup> Active Lives Survey.

<sup>11</sup> <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/54/24/1451>

# What motivates people to be active?



When it comes to our motivations for doing things - or not - it is important to understand that we are all very different. What drives you to be active may be completely different to your colleagues. Having an appreciation of the wide variety of factors that motivate people to be active can be valuable in helping you to make choices in the way you communicate and promote physical activity in your workplace, as well as the types of physical activity initiatives you offer to staff.

## What are the motivations?

We've consulted with hundreds of organisations, employees and physical activity champions through our Active Workplaces programme. Some of the main motivators that we've identified through these consultations include:



### **Improve fitness**

Frequently the most popular option chosen by employees in workplace consultations. Essentially, we're all fairly keen on being healthy and able enough to enjoy life's opportunities.

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### **Improve/manage mental health issues**

For many people who struggle with their mental health, physical activity plays a key role in helping them to manage or improve their levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

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### **Enjoyment**

Finding the right activities for you and your lifestyle can be a lot of fun and a hugely rewarding part of your life.

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### **Social aspect**

Team sports, conservation groups, exercise classes, and more. By taking part in physical activity and sport, there are lots of opportunities to develop our social networks.

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### **Weight loss**

Achieving or maintaining a healthy weight is a big motivator for people to be active.

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### **Opportunity for solitude**

We love to be together – except when we don't. Sometimes we can all benefit from a bit of time alone. Our daily or weekly time for exercise could be a vital ingredient to helping us to maintain our mental wellbeing.

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### **Spend time in nature**

Increasingly acknowledged for its benefits to mental health, many people are recognising the importance of having some time away from technology and built up environments to slow down and reconnect with the natural world around them.

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### **Reduce environmental impact**

Concerns over global warming are causing many people to make changes to the way they live their lives. One step many people are making is to adjust the way they travel for some, or all, of their journeys by walking, cycling and/or utilising public transport.

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### **Financial savings**

Cars cost money. Whether through necessity or as a deliberate choice, travelling actively can provide individuals with the opportunity to make substantial financial savings.

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### **Health scares**

Unfortunately, our motivation to lead a more active life can sometimes be the result of a personal or family health scare that can make us reassess our lifestyle choices and look to make changes.

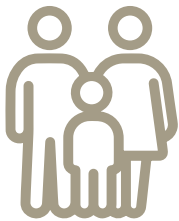
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### **Raise money for charity**

Whether it's for an issue close to your heart or you like the idea of a personal challenge, there are lots of reasons to link a physical activity challenge with a charity fundraising opportunity.

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### **Family time**

For many parents, taking part in sport and physical activity with their children can provide some low cost, uninterrupted, quality time together with their children. As well as helping them develop good physical activity habits for the future, it is also a chance to teach new skills and help their children connect with the outdoors.

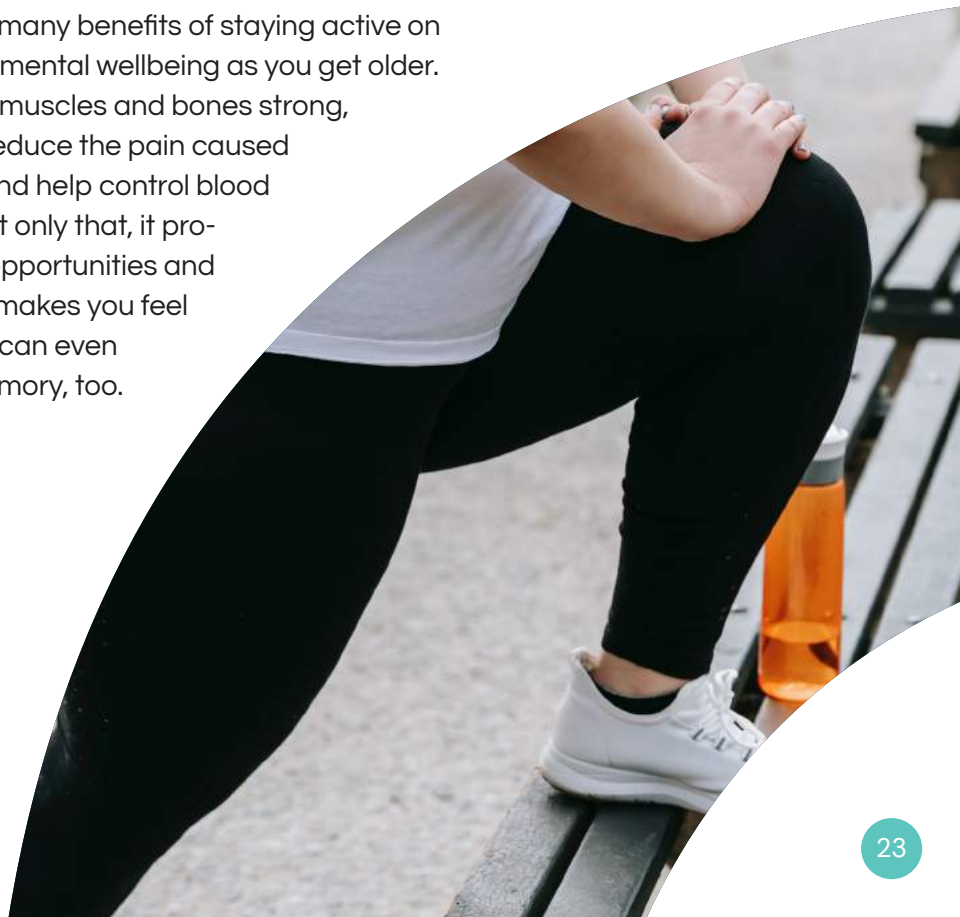
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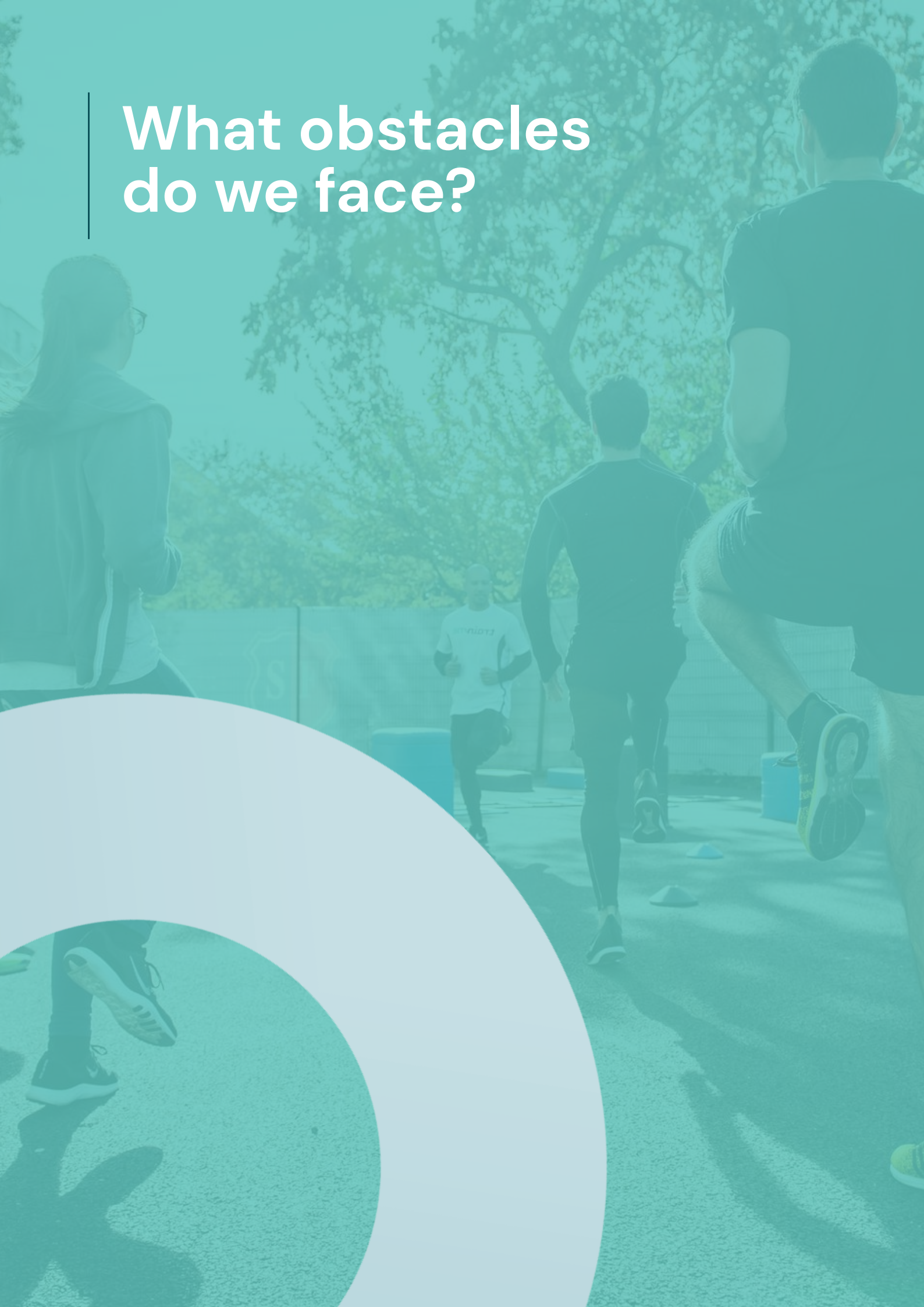
### **Maintain independence**

There are so many benefits of staying active on physical and mental wellbeing as you get older. It keeps your muscles and bones strong, can help to reduce the pain caused by arthritis, and help control blood pressure. Not only that, it provides social opportunities and is enjoyable, makes you feel happier, and can even help your memory, too.

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# What obstacles do we face?



With so many reasons to be active, what is stopping us? This section looks at the main barriers to being active that have been identified by employees through Active Workplaces consultations, with suggestions on how you can support your colleagues to overcome them.

## Personal barriers

### Lack of motivation

We may recognise that being active is good for us. We may even remember how much we enjoyed our last dance class, run, walk or gym session. But the sofa and television can still be very appealing after a hard day's work!

What drives people to be active can vary widely, but if you or your colleagues are struggling for motivation here are a few top tips you can use and share:



#### **Start small to avoid being discouraged.**

For anybody new to physical activity, it's always a good idea to start small and gradually build up your effort. Too much too soon can lead some to feeling demoralised and quitting early on. Doing too much at the start also increases your risk of injury and can keep you from being active.



#### **Pick an activity that appeals to you.**

If you like the social side of physical activity a team sport might be right up your street. If you'd rather use it as an opportunity to have some 'me time', maybe a walk, run or a bit of gardening is more suitable. If you try something and you don't like it, or you get bored, don't be afraid to make a change.



#### **Set a time for physical activity and try to stick to it.**

You're more likely to find time to be active if you do it at the same time and on the same days each week.



#### **Two's company and three can be even better!**

Making the commitment to be active with friends or family can help motivate you on days when you might otherwise give exercise a miss. Nobody wants to be the one to cancel!



#### **Set a (realistic) goal**

For some people, personal goal setting can be highly motivational. Whether it's running a distance in a certain time, using physical activity to hit a target weight, or aiming to raise a certain amount of money for charity, a goal can really help to focus the mind when you might otherwise be tempted to spend the night on the couch. If you're new to physical activity, you might prefer to set goals around the number of sessions to complete per week. Whatever your goals, make sure they are challenging, so you can enjoy the sense of achievement, but also realistic.



### **Bit of friendly competition anyone?**

In addition to personal challenges, workplaces might consider running a team challenge as a way of motivating staff and creating some friendly office/virtual banter.



### **Reward yourself**

Met your daily, weekly, monthly target? Little rewards can give you something to aim for and help keep you motivated.

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## Cost

Cost can be a barrier for some types of activity, such as membership fees for gyms and sports which require an upfront investment in equipment. But there are many other enjoyable ways to be active which have no, or very little, cost attached to them.

Here are just a few ideas of free or low-cost activities you can promote:



### **Walking**

One of the easiest ways to get active. Walking is a great way to travel for shorter journeys and is a wonderful way to explore the local area and spend some time reconnecting with nature.



### **Running / Couch to 5K**

Running or jogging are good options as you can walk out the door and do it wherever, whenever. There are now lots of free Couch to 5K apps available to download, providing guidance and encouragement to new runners. Running is free but a decent pair of trainers is always a worthwhile investment for new runners.



### **Home exercises / online workout videos**

There is a lot of free and inclusive content available online to support exercising at home. From stretching and sitting exercises to more intensive routines, there are workouts to suit people of all abilities.



### **Dancing**

Time to stick some tunes on and have a good boogie! Whether doing it alone, with a partner, friend, or with the kids, dancing can be a great way to lift your mood and raise your heartbeat at the same time.



### **Gardening**

In addition to helping to create a lovely outdoor space, a few hours spent occupied in the garden is a great way for individuals to enjoy a real workout.



### **Skipping**

Just a small upfront investment required in a skipping rope and you're good to go. Skipping can be quite an intensive workout so it's a good idea to start slowly at first and gradually build up.



### **Football**

A kick about in your garden or local park with colleagues, friends or family can be a fun opportunity to get active whilst showing off some skills (or attempting to acquire some!)

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## Lack of confidence / not the sporty type

Trying something new can be intimidating and this can often be the case for people starting to become more active. This might be due to several reasons, which may include bad memories of past experiences in sport, a current lack of fitness, low self-esteem, weight concerns, or mental health issues.

Here are a few ideas to help get you started:



### **Take it one step at a time**

If you need to start small, start small. The important thing is just to start. Little changes can be key and can help build your confidence to take on new challenges over time.



### **Being active shouldn't be a horrible experience.**

If you find an activity or sport isn't for you, then make a change and try something else.



### **Use your support network**

The encouragement and support of colleagues, friends and family members can be beneficial. Signing up with a friend to do a Couch to 5K plan, organising regular walking dates, or agreeing to try a new class with a colleague, friend or family member can help provide some reassurance and motivation when starting out.

## Managing a long-term health condition

One in four people in England live with a long-term health condition (LTC). Despite evidence that being active can help manage the impact and severity of some symptoms, people in this group are still twice as likely to be inactive.

Examples of LTCs may include: Arthritis, some long-term limiting mobility conditions, Alzheimer's, Asthma, Back pain, Cancer, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease/Lung Condition, Dementia, Heart Disease, Stroke, Hypertension (or other heart related condition), Long-term depression or anxiety, MS, Parkinson's, and Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes.

- ✓ If you are managing a LTC, finding the appropriate physical activity for you and your own personal circumstance is key. There are many organisations who provide specialist support for individuals managing specific LTCs that can share information and advice on how you can be active with your condition.
- ✓ We Are Undefeatable is a movement supporting people with a range of LTCs that was developed by 15 leading health and social care charities. It provides support and encouragement to find ways to be active that work with each person's conditions, not against them.





## Tips for making activity inclusive.

*Physical activity is for everyone. Making sure any activity or access to activity is as inclusive as possible is key. Small changes can have a large impact.*

***Here are a few tips.***

- *When promoting activities, use clear and appropriate text or pictures.*
- *Have alternative versions of key publications available – e.g. easy read, larger font*
- *Consider what's appropriate for your target audience and promote a range of online and offline activities to suit all abilities, e.g. sitting exercises for people with limited mobility*
- *Signpost to local opportunities that cater for inclusive activities*
- *Where possible, offer both competitive and social opportunities for participation*
- *If you are putting on an activity, we recommend using the STEP principle which provides advice on suggested adaptations regarding **S**pace, **T**ask, **E**quipment and **P**eople.*

***Visit the Active Norfolk and Activity Alliance websites for further information and advice on inclusivity***



## Time

Time is the factor consistently listed by employees in workplace consultations as the major barrier to being active. Let's face it, life can get very busy and people can sometimes find it hard to make time to be active in between juggling work, childcare and other responsibilities. We can't create more hours in the day, so what can we do?



### **Get active at work.**

For some, the time spent in the workplace can provide one of the few opportunities to be active, away from children and other commitments. That's why workplaces can be such a key setting to promote and provide opportunities to be active. We'll give you some activity ideas later in the guide.



### **Build it into your day.**

Encourage people to get creative and look for opportunities every day to be active and minimise long spells of sitting without moving. This might mean taking the stairs instead of the lift at work or in shops, getting off the bus a stop or two earlier, or setting a timer to encourage you to get up from your desk every 30 minutes to have a stretch or make a drink.



### **Start travelling actively**

See the next section for information on the benefits, potential barriers, and how to overcome them.



### **Replace your regular commute with exercise time**

For people working from home, using the time usually spent commuting to be active can be a great way to help provide some structure to your new routine and will get your day off to a positive start (and finish).



### **Include the children**

If childcare commitments mean that you or your colleagues lack time alone to be active then why not get the children involved too. There are lots of fun and inexpensive ways to be active with children in and outside the home.



### **Exercise in short bursts**

For people struggling to find time for a long workout session, suggest splitting up activity throughout the day into bouts of 10 minutes or more.



### **Choose activities that provide the flexibility you need**

Only got ten minutes or half an hour to spare? Certain types of activities like walking, yoga and short online workouts may be good options for people with limited amounts of time.



### Top tip:

*Some people – especially those who find time to be active – can struggle to accept that time is a barrier. The reality is that we never know what is going on in other people's lives and whether time is an actual or perceived barrier for a person. However, being judgemental is never going to be helpful and, instead, is likely to be the quickest way to alienate people that would benefit from help. Listening and offering suggestions and support is a far better approach!*

A great way to help your employees and colleagues build physical activity into their day is to support them to travel actively - by walking, jogging or cycling - when they can. The next section of the guide will expand on this area, looking at both the benefits for businesses and employees as well as identifying some of the personal barriers that exist around active travel and how they can be overcome.



# Active Travel





## What is Active Travel?

**//** A form of transport of people and sometimes goods, that only uses the physical activity of the human being for the locomotion. **//**

Every week, most of us will undertake several journeys, whether it be to visit friends and family, the local shops, or commute to our workplace. For the majority of us completing these trips the car has been, and continues to be, the automatic transport method of choice.

But with advice and guidance, there are opportunities to support individuals to ditch the car for at least some of these journeys and instead choose to travel actively by walking, running or cycling – providing numerous benefits to our health and our environment.



## What are the benefits to employers?

- ✓ **Improved staff health and wellbeing**  
Facilitating and supporting staff to travel actively is a great way to help improve the physical and mental health of your employees.
- ✓ **Reduced pressure on your car park**  
For workplaces that provide parking but struggle with capacity, encouraging staff to choose more active means of transport could be the answer.
- ✓ **Reduced business travel costs**  
As well as helping to improve the health and wellbeing of their staff, employers have the potential to make cost savings when employees choose to travel actively for work.
- ✓ **A more active and productive workforce**  
Active employees have been shown to be more productive. By supporting your staff to travel actively, as part of their commute or for other journeys, you'll be helping employees identify more opportunities to build physical activity into their day.
- ✓ **Positive impact on local economy**  
Employees who commute actively are more likely to frequent local shops and cafes, helping to support local businesses.
- ✓ **Demonstrate you're a responsible employer**  
Make yourself a more attractive choice to potential employees by showing your commitment to employee wellbeing and corporate social responsibility.
- ✓ **Reduce risk of infection for staff commuting to work**  
When appropriate, employers that can support members of their team to walk or cycle to work instead of using public transport can help to reduce their risk of Covid-19 infection.



### Top tip:

*Switch a trip! Encourage your colleagues to try switching one of the journeys they usually make by car with either walking or cycling. It's normally a lot quicker and easier than they might think and could encourage them to leave the car at home more often.*

## What are the benefits to employees?

As well as providing an opportunity to build physical activity into your day, choosing to ditch the car for more active means of transport can provide lots of benefits, including:



### Improve health and wellbeing

Replace the car with walking and cycling and gain the physical and mental health benefits associated with being active.



### Improve fitness

Making the choice to travel actively can help you maintain or improve your physical stamina. As your fitness and confidence grows, so can the distances and journeys you cover.



### Save money

Travelling actively can help you make some big savings by reducing your parking, fuel or public transport costs. Looking to make a bigger change? Go from a two to one car home or get rid of your car altogether and the opportunities to save money increase dramatically by removing MOT, servicing, breakdown and tax costs.



### Reduce your carbon footprint

By choosing to reduce our car journeys, we can all do our bit to improve the air quality where we live and reduce the impact of climate change on our planet.



### Enjoyment!

Riding a bike and walking can be really enjoyable and positive for our wellbeing.



### More travel options

Having the knowledge and confidence that you can travel actively should your vehicle, public transport or car share buddy fail you can offer peace of mind.



### Remove stress of rush hour commute

Avoid the queues and road rage to start and finish your day in a much calmer state of mind.



### Weight loss / management benefits

Travelling actively can be a great way to help shift the pounds or maintain a healthy weight.



### Explore your local surroundings

Getting to know and use some of the cycle paths and quieter roads to complete your journeys can increase your knowledge about your local environment and community.



### Reduce risk of illness

Especially during the pandemic, finding ways to travel that minimise your contact with others will help reduce your risk of illness.



### Arrive quickly and more reliably

Traffic, roadworks and accidents can all contribute to unwelcome and unforeseen delays when travelling by car. Walking and cycling provide us with more flexibility to avoid or adapt to these situations, offering a more reliable way of getting from A to B.








## What are the personal barriers and potential solutions?

There may be several reasons why your employees or colleagues may think active travel isn't for them. Here are some of the common responses we've found for why people aren't willing or able to travel actively, and some alternatives and solutions you can suggest.

### No bike / can't afford a bike

If you're looking to start cycling to work but don't have a bicycle, there are a few options to consider:

-  **Cycle to Work Scheme**  
If your workplace offers a Cycle to Work Scheme, you could get access to a brand new bike, make substantial cost savings and benefit from the ability to spread your payments interest free over an agreed period (normally 12 months).
-  **Second-hand bikes**  
If your workplace doesn't have a Cycle to Work Scheme and you can't afford to buy brand-new, then maybe opt for a preloved option through a local bike shop or by searching online.
-  **Borrow a bike**  
Speak to friends and family to see if anybody has a suitable bike gathering dust in their shed or garage. Even if you only use it for a short time to trial cycling before investing in your own bike, it can be a good way to get you started.
-  **Cycle Loan Scheme (Norwich only)**  
Try before you buy with the Cycle Loan Scheme from Pushing Ahead. The scheme gives you access to a FREE bike for up to 4 weeks. It comes complete with a lock, light, helmet and child seat (if you need one), all for just a £50 deposit. A limited number of electric bikes are also available for a £100 deposit.
-  **Beryl Bikes (Norwich only)**  
Pay as your ride bikes are located in bays in and around Norwich City Centre. Buy minute bundles or day passes to access these bikes through the app.

## I'm not fit enough / the distance to my workplace is too far

Lack of confidence in our fitness levels can stop many of us before we begin. If you are put off travelling actively due to concerns over stamina or the distances involved, why not try one of more of the following:



### **Take it easy on the speed**

Give yourself enough time to walk or cycle at a reasonable speed. If you're not sure how long you need to allow to travel to your workplace, you could undertake a trial run at the weekend, when you're not under any time pressure.



### **Build up to it**

If you don't feel confident that you can cover the entire commute straight away then consider some weekend walking/cycling to start off with, or park halfway and walk/cycle the rest of the journey to build up your stamina. You might also want to begin by travelling actively one day a week and then build up gradually. If the distance is too great, another option might be to combine active travel with public transport.



### **Plan the flattest route you can**

The most direct route might not always be the easiest. You might want to consider a slightly longer route for a more enjoyable, flatter ride.



### **Know your gears**

It's easy to fall into the habit of leaving your gears in the same setup. Utilising your gears effectively, especially if there are hills to tackle, can help make the ride a lot easier and enjoyable.



### **Amplify your pedalling effort**

Using an electric bike isn't cheating. If you need a bit of extra help to complete your journeys or to cycle longer distances, then an electric bike could be a great investment.



### **Travel actively for other journeys**

An active commute might not be possible for everyone. If you fall into this category then have a look at some of the other journeys that you regularly undertake and consider which you could swap for walking, running or cycling.

## Not confident / roads scare me

Lack of confidence on or around traffic is frequently listed as a factor that stops people from travelling actively, especially in relation to cycling. Below are some suggestions to help individuals overcome this barrier:



### **Plan your route to avoid busy roads**

If you want to get away from the worst of the traffic, consider walking or cycling on quieter backstreets or foot/cycle paths for a more relaxing and enjoyable journey. There are many online journey planners that can support you to do this. For example, CycleStreets' Journey Planner allows you to choose from the quietest, fastest or a balanced route type.



### **Get some cycle confidence tips**

When cycling, road positioning and communication to other road users is key. Get tips through online videos and websites, including British Cycling & Sustrans.



### **Join a club**

Consider linking up with a community cycling club, who can help build your confidence and explore new routes.



### **Buddy up**

If you work with somebody who is a keen cyclist and regularly cycles to work, they may be able to provide you with some helpful tips as well as route ideas. You may even find they are willing to accompany you on your first commute or on a trial run to help get you started. Walking buddies can be great company too!



## Bad weather

We all fear getting a drenching, but the reality is that heavy rain is relatively rare and can usually be predicted by checking the weather forecast daily. To help overcome the fear of bad weather, you might also want to consider:



### **Waterproofs**

To quote Alfred Wainwright; 'There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.' For days when the weather isn't your friend, a decent waterproof jacket and overtrousers should do the job nicely.



### **Bringing some spare clothing**

On days where it looks a little risky, bring some spare clothing in a waterproof bag to avoid getting caught out.







### **Be a fair-weather commuter**

If bad weather is a real deal breaker for you then it's okay to be a fair-weather walker/cyclist. Just remember to get back out there when things improve!





## I need to carry too much stuff

If you regularly need to transport a laptop and files or you require smart clothing for work, then you might want to consider the following:

-  **Invest in a luggage rack and panniers**  
Carrying your load on the bike instead of your back is easier on your body. If you opt for two small panniers, your bike will be better balanced and you can divide the load.
  -  **Be prepared**  
If you plan to change from cycling clothes to work clothes when you commute, bring your clothes to work the day before your ride or at the start of each week.
  -  **Only carry the essentials**  
Leave anything you don't need at work to keep your load as light as possible.
  -  **On the days it's not feasible, take the car**  
it doesn't have to be all or nothing!
- 

## No shower / lack of facilities

If you would like to commute actively but are put off by the lack of facilities provided by your workplace to freshen up or a place to store your bike, here are some tips:

-  **It's transport, not sport**  
Active commuting need not involve getting sweaty – you can slow down! Whether walking or cycling, go at a pace that is comfortable for you.
-  **Invest in an electric bike**  
If finances allow, consider getting some assistance to cover distances quicker and more comfortably by using an electric bike.
-  **Wet wipes are your friend**  
Leave some cleansing wipes, a small towel and deodorant at work so you can freshen up and change when you arrive.
-  **Identify a safe place to leave your bike in advance**  
If you haven't got a bike lock-up at work then find somewhere safe to store or lock your bike on a practice run.

## Bike maintenance concerns / confidence

Giving your bike a bit of TLC regularly and acquiring some basic skills can help you head out on the roads with increased confidence.

- ✓ **Acquire some new skills**  
Get tips through online videos and websites or sign up to a course to learn the basics of maintaining your bike
- ✓ **Do the 'M Check'**  
Before you head out do a basic safety check of all the main working parts of a bike, moving from the front hub backwards.
- ✓ **Call in a professional**  
In the same way you would with your car, it is always worthwhile to get a mechanic to look over your bike occasionally to ensure there are no major issues.
- ✓ **The 'dreaded' puncture**  
Learn and practice how to repair a puncture at a time when you're not under pressure by the side of the road so you know what to do if the time comes.



## Bike maintenance – The “M’ check

The M-check is a simple safety check that should be done before you undertake your journey. It is particularly important if you have not used your bike for a while, or if you are using a bike you don't normally use.



### Wheels

Check the wheels run freely and straight by lifting the bike and spinning the wheels. Make sure the tyres are inflated to the recommended pressure. Check the tyre tread isn't worn and there is no damage or bulges. Inspect the wheel rims for wear & damage. Ensure spokes are free of defects. Is the quick release lever or wheel nut firmly tightened.



### Handlebars & Brakes

Hold the front wheel between your knees and turn gently to check the bars do not move from side to side. Check the handlebars are aligned correctly and secured by the stem.

Ensure the handlebars are secured and not raised above the height limit mark. Check the brake blocks/pads are correctly positioned and not worn beyond the wear indicator.

Ensure the brake blocks/pads do not scrape the rubber of the tyre, instead they should line up with the metal of the wheel rim. Check the cables are not eroded or frayed.

Apply the front brake and rock the bike forward. Apply the back brake and rock the bike backwards. If the wheels still roll when the brakes are applied you will need to have the brakes adjusted.

#### A basic toolkit

✓ Screwdriver

✓ A pump

✓ Tyre levers

✓ Spare Inner Tube

✓ Puncture repair kit

✓ Hex or Allen keys

✓ Spanners



## Pedals & Chain

Check the pedals are stable on the cranks. Move the cranks back and forth from the bike in order to let you know if your bottom bracket is loose.

Check for wear on the chain and ensure the sprockets and cogs are free from dirt and rust.



## Saddle

Ensure your seat height is correct. Your legs should be able to extend when pedalling but your hips shouldn't be stretching to reach the pedals.

Make sure the seat is firmly secured. If the seat wiggles it will need tightening. Check you can reach the handlebars comfortably. If not, you can adjust your saddle position to make it easier to reach the handlebars. Alternatively the handlebars can be adjusted until you can reach them whilst remaining safe in the saddle.

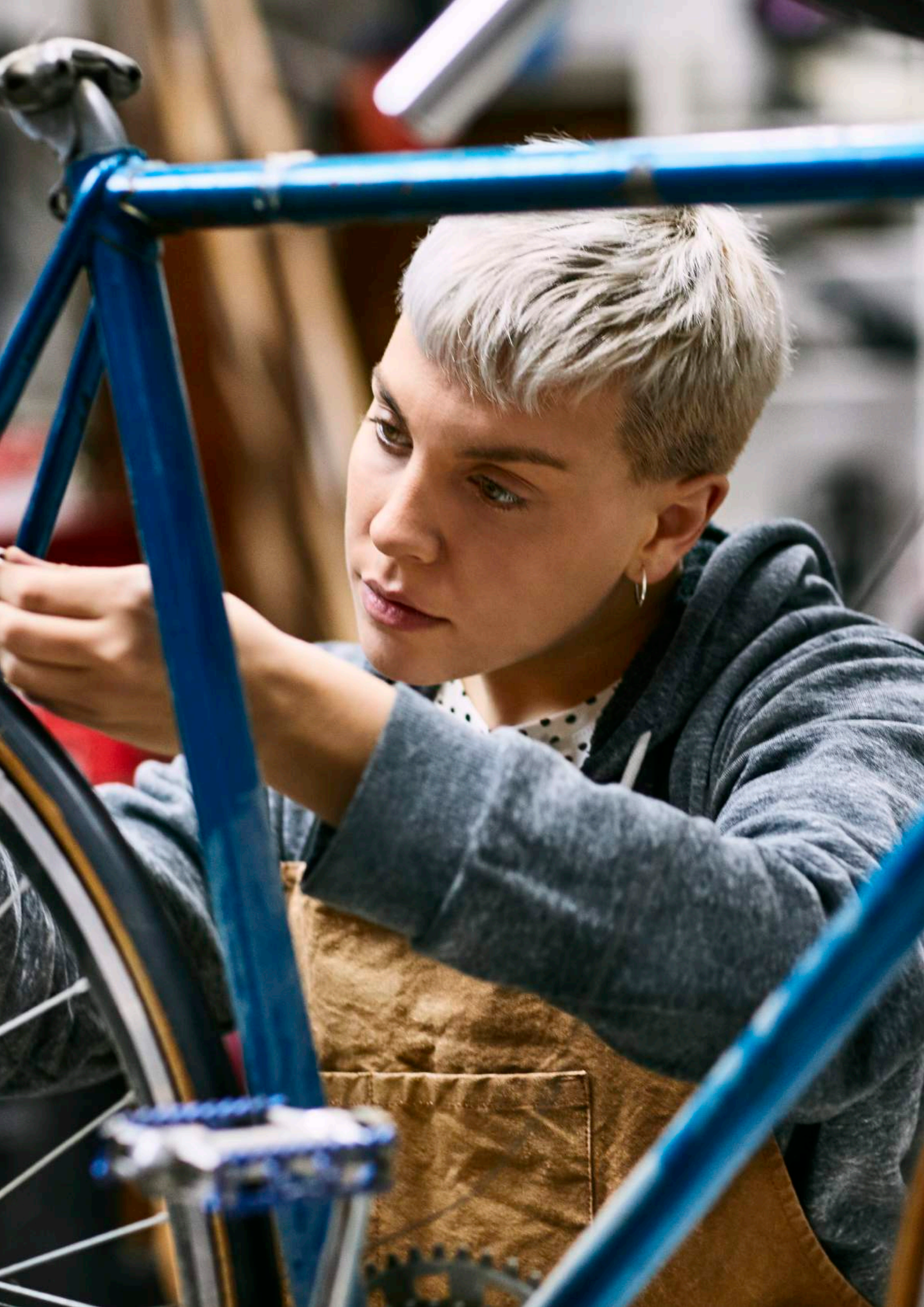


## Gears, Drive & Chain

Check the chain is lubricated, not heavily rusted and does not easily come off. Have a short test ride and ensure each gear can be selected and the process is smooth. Push the pedals around and ensure that they rotate freely. Additionally check all accessories are securely attached to your bike.



**ABC  
Check**

Check your Air, Brakes and Chain  
on a weekly basis.








## Need to drop children at childcare/school

Having to do the school run doesn't necessarily need to be a barrier to travelling actively. Consider whether you can make it part of your active commute by using the following tips:

-  **Adapt your bike**  
Use a child seat or cargo trike depending on their age of your child and bring them along for the ride.
  -  **Encourage good habits**  
If your child is old enough to cycle independently, cycle along with them and help build their confidence to travel actively.
- 

## Commuting in winter / the dark

With a little bit of thought and preparation, there is no reason to stop travelling actively during the winter months:

-  **Dress appropriately**  
Wearing suitable clothing to keep you warm and dry will make a big difference when it comes to winter walking or cycling. If you're cycling, wear layers that you can remove as you warm up throughout your journey.
-  **Be bright**  
Being visible to others road users is vital at night. Wear brightly coloured reflective clothing and consider purchasing some of the many accessories available for you and your bike, including reflective belts, wheel lights and reflective strips. There are lots of options available to suit all budget and you can find lots of advice and recommendations online.
-  **Don't forget your lights**  
Having a good set of bicycle lights for both nights and dark days is essential. There are lots of options available, including USB chargeable lights that you can charge at your desk.
-  **Keep your bike in good shape**  
Maintain your bike to ensure it is in the best working order during winter to greatly reduce your chances of breaking down while on the road.
-  **Check out advice online**  
There is lots of information and advice online to support people to walk and cycle during the winter months, including tips on clothing, lights, bike maintenance and cycling in poor conditions. (See the Additional Information and Resources section for details of some recommended websites to get you started.)

## Motivation

It might feel hard to summon the motivation to travel actively when jumping in the car seems a much easier option. But, as we've touched upon there are numerous benefits to be gained by making a change so if you're struggling to take that first step, here are some ideas to help:

- ✓ **Try it once**  
Given a trial run, you might be surprised to realise that walking, running or cycling is an option for your commute, so why not consider giving it a go? A good idea is to trial your commute on a non-workday so that you are not under any time pressure.
- ✓ **Start once or twice a week**  
If you're new to walking or cycling, then building up your distance and/or the number of journeys you do per week might be a good idea. As you see and feel positive changes in your fitness and confidence levels you can look to gradually increase the amount you are doing.
- ✓ **It doesn't have to be all or nothing**  
If you can't or don't want to walk or cycle to work every day, that's okay! Swapping just some of the car journeys you regularly make for more active forms of travel is a really positive step.
- ✓ **Buddy up**  
Enjoy the social side of being active by arranging an active commute with a friend, colleague or relative for some, or all, of the journey.
- ✓ **Feel the benefits**  
As you start to see and enjoy all the benefits from travelling actively, we're confident you'll want to do more!

## Summary

Our personal motivations for being active and the barriers that get in the way are varied and complex and are likely to change throughout the different stages of our lives. By recognising this and providing information, advice and support that covers a wide range of areas, you'll will have the best chance of meeting the needs of your staff and colleagues.



# Additional Information and Resources

## Physical activity guidelines

FREE downloadable infographics explaining the physical activity needed for general health benefits for all age groups, disabled adults, pregnant women and women after childbirth are available on the UK Government website.

[Physical activity guidelines: infographics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

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## Support for women and girls to be active

**This Girl Can** – Sport England’s campaign to inspire women and girls to be active has got tons of inspirational videos and workout ideas for ladies. No matter your age or ability, check out the available resources

[www.thisgirlcan.co.uk](http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk)

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## Being active with a Long Term Health Conditions

**We Are Undefeatable** – Sport England’s campaign supports people living with long term health conditions to build physical activity into their lives. Find resources for a variety of conditions on their website.

[www.weareundefeatable.co.uk](http://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk)

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## Disability and physical activity

**Active Norfolk** – A comprehensive resource for people with disabilities, carers, and interested parties to support individuals to access and improve physical activity in Norfolk.

[www.activenorfolk.org/disability-and-physical-activity](http://www.activenorfolk.org/disability-and-physical-activity)

**Activity Alliance** – A charity which works to make active lives possible by enabling organisations to support individual disabled people to be active and stay active for life.

[www.activityalliance.org.uk](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk)

## Active Travel

The websites below provide information for both employers and employees to support active travel including videos, articles and information on local and national initiatives.

**Sustrans** – UK sustainable transport charity and custodians of the National Cycle Network.  
[www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/workplaces](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/workplaces)

**British Cycling** – The nation's largest cycling organisation and the national governing body for cyclesport. Commute Smart is a series of videos covering all aspects of commuting.  
[www.britishcycling.org.uk/commuting](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/commuting)

**Pushing Ahead Norfolk** – An active travel scheme to support communities in Greater Norwich and Great Yarmouth.  
[www.pushingaheadnorfolk.co.uk](http://www.pushingaheadnorfolk.co.uk)

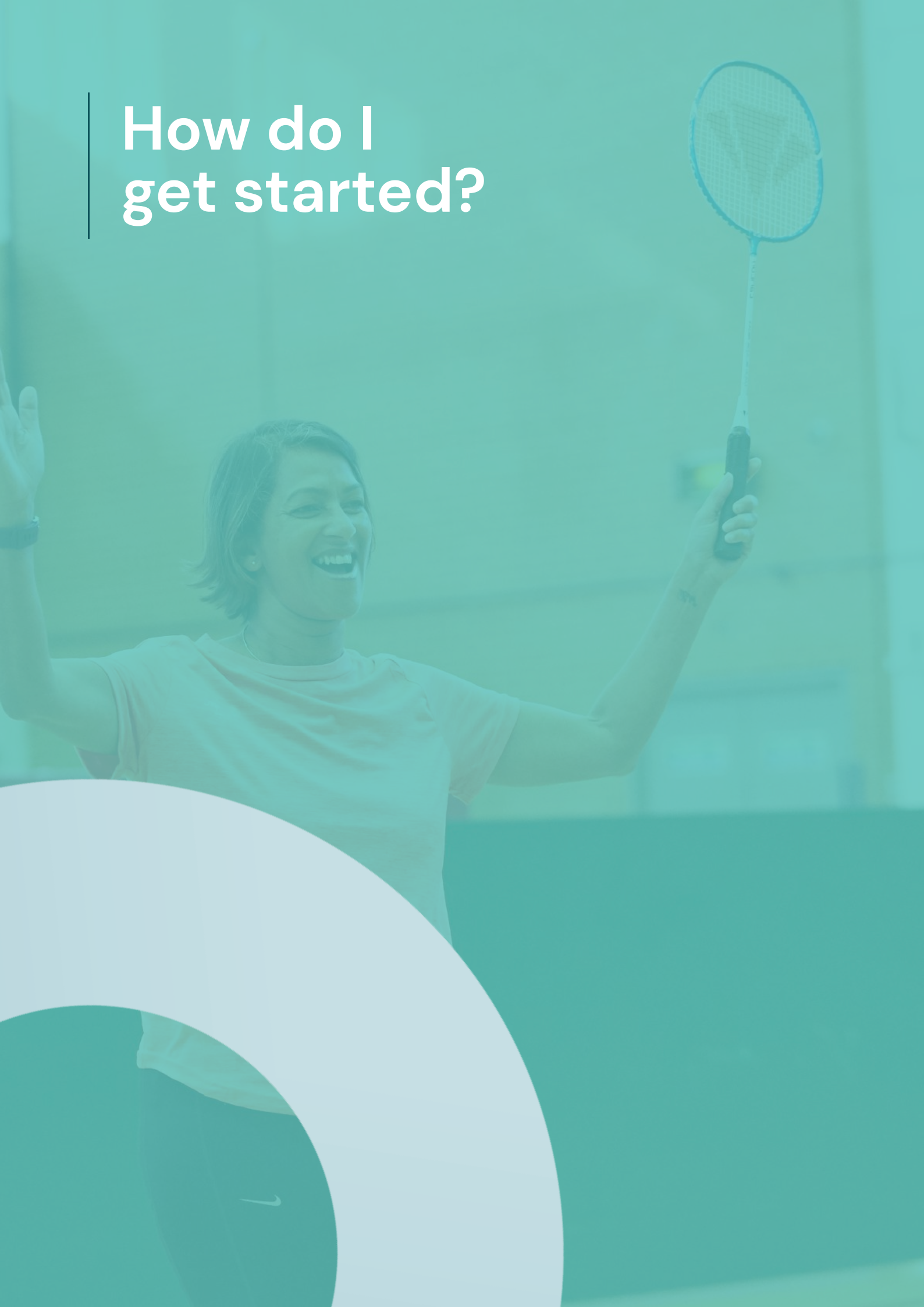
**Cycling UK** – A national organisation that supports cyclists and promotes bicycle use and offers a Cycle Friendly Employer accreditation  
[www.cyclinguk.org](http://www.cyclinguk.org)

**Cycle Streets** – A not-for-profit United Kingdom organisation that provides a free-to-use national cycle journey planner for the United Kingdom.  
[www.cyclinguk.org](http://www.cyclinguk.org)

**Department for Transport** – Cycle to work scheme implementation guidance for employers  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-to-work-scheme-implementation-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-to-work-scheme-implementation-guidance)



How do I  
get started?



Understanding how being more active benefits both employees and employers is the first step. In this section we'll cover how you can translate this understanding into an action plan for your workplace.

## Assemble a team

To successfully develop and implement a physical activity programme for your workplace, you will need a team of people to make it happen. This team should include representation from all internal stakeholders, from senior management to employees.

An interest in health is essential, but employees do not need to be highly athletic or sporty to get involved.

### Team members should be:

- **Enthusiastic**
- **Approachable**
- **Motivational**
- **Organised and determined**
- **Good listeners and communicators**

Their role will be to advocate, influence and gather views from other employees regarding physical activity. Their tasks will include inputting ideas, and sharing the workload associated with the delivery and promotion of initiatives and agreed actions. Depending on the size of your organisation you may wish to recruit an additional number of champions spread throughout your workplace who can assist your team to promote the workplace initiatives you are looking to deliver.

## Consult with your employees

NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines recommend that the planning, design and ongoing monitoring of any workplace physical activity plan or policy should be based on consultation with employees. This consultation could include employee surveys, focus groups, and/or one-to-one conversations.

### By consulting with your staff, you can:

- **Tailor your physical activity and active travel programme to suit the interests and needs of your workforce**
- **Understand current activity levels and behaviours**
- **Identify any barriers and motivators specific to your employees**
- **Measure awareness levels of any existing provision/support available**
- **Obtain ideas and feedback for future/past initiatives**

# Assess what you're already doing and identify any areas for improvement

Spend some time exploring your organisation's current strengths and weaknesses in relation to supporting physical activity and active travel before you begin developing your workplace programme to ensure you're starting out on the right foot.

Below are some areas and questions you may want to consider:

## Workplace culture

Creating a culture that encourages and enables employees to be active is crucial to making any physical activity programme a success.

- **Are senior management fostering a culture that places value on being active by supporting, promoting and role modelling physical activity in your workplace?**
- **Does or can your organisation offer flexible working options to enable employees to fit in exercise and active commuting around their working day?**
- **Does your organisation invest in facilities or equipment to support active travel or workplace physical activity?**
- **What dedicated resource is available to support the development of your physical activity programme?**

## Infrastructure

Making some improvements, additions or simply highlighting to staff some existing but underused facilities and equipment can help support your staff to be active. (e.g. stairs, cycle racks, changing rooms, showers, lockers, standing desks, sports equipment, meeting rooms, outdoor space)

- **What facilities and equipment can your staff access in your workplace that supports physical activity and active travel?**
- **What condition are they in?**
- **Do you have enough to meet the demand of your staff?**
- **What are you missing?**
- **If not available in your workplace, are there any facilities or equipment available nearby that you could promote to your colleagues?**

## Existing workplace health schemes

There are various initiatives and benefits that workplaces can offer to support and encourage employees to be active. (e.g. Cycle to Work scheme, corporate gym memberships, private health insurance (including health checks), subsidised travel and workplace cycle maintenance checks.)

- What workplace benefits does your organisation already provide?
- How well and how often are these benefits promoted?
- How high is employee awareness of these benefits?
- How often are these benefits utilised by employees?
- Are employees consulted regarding decisions over workplace benefits?
- What additional benefits could be offered to support staff to be active?

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## Employee skills

Utilising the skills, experience and personal interests of your employees can be immensely beneficial when developing your workplace offer.

- What skills and experience do you already have within your workforce that you could utilise to support and promote physical activity and active travel?
- Do you have any employees who hold coaching qualifications or have volunteer experience in sport or physical activity outside of work?
- Do you have any employees who regularly cycle to work who would be happy to act as cycling advocates/buddies to new cyclists?

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## Success of previous interventions

If you have already tried to deliver some workplace physical activity initiatives, it can be useful to review their level of success.

- What has worked well in the past and what hasn't?
- Why was this?
- What was the feedback from staff? (e.g. day, time, activity not appropriate/enjoyable)

## Know your employees

Developing a greater understanding of your workforce can help inform the design of your workplace physical activity offer to ensure it is relevant and effective.

- What are the demographics of your workforce and what influence might this have on the types and range of activities you promote?
- What health (physical or mental) or mobility issues will you need to consider to ensure activities are inclusive for everyone?
- What percentage of staff live within a commutable distance from their workplace?
- What consultation has been undertaken or should be undertaken with staff to understand specific barriers, motivation and interests?

## Internal communications

Being able to communicate key messages and ideas to support physical activity will be vital if you are going to be able to make a success of your workplace programme.

- What communication methods do you already use to communicate messages with staff?
- What other options do you have available to you that you could utilise?
- Consider allocating communications tasks to members of your working group to help spread the number of communications channels.



## Develop a physical activity policy for your workplace

Use the information you've gathered from your staff consultation and assessment of physical activity and active travel in your organisation to build a physical activity policy. Through your research you will have identified some key strengths you can build on, or areas that you can prioritise for improvement.

Creating a physical activity policy offers the opportunity for management to demonstrate a formal commitment to the health of their employees.

A policy is a written document which outlines an organisation's aims, objectives and scope for physical activity and provides clear direction and methods for achieving these goals.

### Recommended areas to be covered in your policy are:

- Physical activity;
- Active travel;
- Reducing sedentary behaviour; and
- Support for employees to be active in the lead up and transition to retirement.

Depending on the size, scope and ambitions of your organisation, it may be useful to create a separate workplace policy specifically for active travel.

[Thriving Workplaces](#) have created a template physical activity policy which you can use as a guide to create your own.

[View the Thriving Workplaces template policy](#)

# How do I create an action plan?



Now that you've assembled your team, consulted with employees, and assessed your existing strengths and weaknesses, it's time to respond to the key areas that were identified and addressed within your workplace policy.

The next step is to create a list of agreed actions that you and your team will focus on during a chosen period. It may be helpful to consider actions under each of the following areas:

## Promote the benefits

A key role for workplaces is to communicate the many benefits that physical activity can bring to individuals and highlight the importance of building it into their lives.



### **Utilise and promote existing resources, tools and websites**

There is a wide variety of content, tools and resources online to help workplaces promote the benefits of physical activity and active travel to their employees and support them in these new behaviours. A selection of these are provided in the Resources and Information section below.



### **Link with national awareness days**

Each year, a variety of national awareness events - including Cycle to Work Day, National Fitness Day and On Your Feet Britain Day - are run by organisations and charities in the UK.

By linking with these awareness days, businesses can benefit from being involved in events that often receive local and/or national media attention as well as the opportunity for champions to access a ready supply of free resources that organisers design for workplaces to support such events.





## National Awareness Days – Dates for your diary

### Physical Activity & Active Travel

#### April

- Walk to Work Day
- On Your Feet Britain Day

#### May

- National Walking Month

#### June

- Bike Week

#### August

- Cycle to Work Day

#### September

- National Fitness Day
- World Car Free Day

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Use the below awareness days to raise awareness of the wider benefits of physical activity:

#### February

- World Cancer Day

#### March

- World Sleep Day

#### April

- Stress Awareness Month

#### May

- Mental Health Awareness Week

#### June

- Men's Health Week

#### September

- Blood Pressure UK, Know Your Numbers Week

#### November

- Stress Awareness Week
- World Diabetes Day



### Top tip:

*Choose a manageable amount of national awareness days to focus on each year. It's always better to do a few well, as too many can cause employees to switch off.*

## Share staff inspiration

Hearing or reading somebody's personal account of how and why they have made a positive change in their life can have a powerful and inspirational impact on people. Can you identify a few people from within your organisation or the local community, who would be happy to share their experiences?

This might include:

- ✓ A person whose physical or mental health has benefitted from becoming active
- ✓ Somebody who is in training for a charity challenge
- ✓ A colleague who regularly cycles to work or has recently started
- ✓ A group of colleagues who regularly exercise together
- ✓ A colleague who volunteers in sport or physical activity

### Internal communications

Being able to communicate key messages and ideas to support and encourage your staff to be active is key.

- Intranet – create a section dedicated to being active
- Newsletters / e-newsletters
- Blogs / management updates
- Emails
- Noticeboards
- Posters
- Screensavers
- 'Loos news' – Posters/newsletters on the back of toilet doors
- Internal television screens
- Messages on payslips

## Promote local opportunities to be active

In Norfolk, we are lucky to have a range of beautiful natural environments that support being physically active, including the Norfolk Broads, forests and the Norfolk coast. In addition, residents have access to some of the best sporting facilities in the country including swimming pools, climbing walls, tennis courts and ski slopes.



### **Active Norfolk's Activity Finder 'EveryMove'**

EveryMove is a new web-based system that individuals can use to discover exercise opportunities which are convenient to them. Users can benefit from reviews, rich activity description including images and video content, and contact and location details. From walking trails to yoga classes to football clubs, the new activity finder is becoming the central hub for ways to get active in Norfolk.

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### **Link with national events**

The buzz created by sporting events such as Wimbledon, The Football World Cup, and The London Marathon can often act as a catalyst to people wanting to become more active. These events are a great opportunity for workplaces to capitalise on the interest and offer themed workplace activities. Providing information and signposting to local providers and infrastructure can support employees to convert this enthusiasm into action.

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### **Highlight local active volunteering opportunities**

There are lots of local volunteer roles that provide individuals with the opportunity to be active including conservation work, marshalling at local running events, litter picking, as well as assisting in the delivery of sport and physical activity sessions.

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### **Charity challenges**

The satisfaction that comes from raising money for a good cause can be a substantial motivator to get active. In Norfolk there are lots of organised events run by local and national charities for individuals to take part in. Many will also offer training support and encouragement to their fundraisers in the build up to the events.

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### **Norfolk Trails**

Norfolk Trails brings together over 1,200 miles of walks, cycle and bridle routes throughout the county. The Norfolk trails website has an interactive map and downloadable OS maps so it is easy to find a walk to suit you – whether it's long, short or circular.

# Improve workplace facilitates and equipment

Having the infrastructure to support your staff to be active can make a big difference. What you can provide is likely to be influenced by factors such as the number of your employees, size of your workplace site, and available budget. However, there are lots of options available to suit all types of organisations.

Below are some suggestions with a guide to provide some idea of indicative costs.

## General

- Essential resources e.g. local maps, umbrellas, bicycle seat covers - £
- Refurbishment of stairwell to encourage use - £-££
- Pedometers - £
- Table Tennis Table - ££
- Basic equipment to support physical activity- £-££  
(e.g. resistance bands, yoga mats, exercise balls, hand weights, Kwik Cricket set, football)
- Standing desks - ££-£££
- Desk mounts / desk risers ££

## Active Travel

- Cycle racks / Secure bike storage for staff and visitors - ££-£££
- Secure lockers - ££
- Showers - £££
- Changing rooms with hair dryers, mirrors etc - ££-£££
- Bicycle maintenance kit (pump, spare tubes, tire levers, repair patches) - £
- Pool bikes / e-bikes - ££-£££

## Summary

It's important to emphasise that committing some time upfront to planning and developing your workplace physical activity programme will help to ensure its long-term success.

Going through the stages outlined above will enable you to develop a policy and action plan that is tailored to your organisation's and employees' specific needs, and will give your team of champions the best chance to have the biggest impact in the most efficient way. The final section of this guide will provide you with some ideas of physical activity initiatives to get you started as well as some further signposting links to help you moving forward.



**Activity ideas,  
inspiration, and  
support**



## Walking / Running / Cycling

- ✓ Start a workplace walking group
- ✓ For remote workers, start a virtual walking community where employees can share suggested routes and photos from their walks
- ✓ Run virtual walking or cycling challenges where teams or workplaces come together to complete a specific distance that has a target destination (e.g. Lands End to John O’Groats). If an organisation has multiple offices, you could challenge employees to cover the distance between the different workplace sites in the UK, Europe or worldwide!
- ✓ Promote a ‘Walk of the Week/Month’
- ✓ Provide maps showing walking routes from your workplace (outline walking time required, rather than distance, so employees can fit activity into the gaps in their working day e.g. 10 minutes, 20 mins, 30 mins).
- ✓ Make the midday mile a daily team / workplace goal
- ✓ Start a Couch to 5K beginners running group
- ✓ Promote free apps to support walking, running and cycling, such as the Active 10 app, or Pace Up
- ✓ Encourage staff to aim for 10,000 steps per day





## Sedentary Behaviour

- ✓ Introduce walking 1:1's
  - ✓ Hold standing meetings
  - ✓ Encourage employees to stand during phone calls
  - ✓ Encourage employees to set a timer to remind them to stand and take a break from their computer every 30 minutes
  - ✓ Create a No-Internal-Phone Day for office-based workers
  - ✓ Create a slide deck of desk-based exercises that teams can do together during designated activity times
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## General

- ✓ Sign up your workplace for a day of active volunteering
- ✓ Register a team from your workplace to take part in an active charity challenge
- ✓ Display signs by the lifts in your building to encourage employees to use the stairs
- ✓ [Run a stair climb challenge](#) in your workplace and challenge your employees to scale enough flights of stair to climb the equivalent of Ben Nevis (Challenge guide available through British Heart Foundation website)
- ✓ Hire a smoothie bike for the day
- ✓ Borrow a treadmill or static bike from your local gym or leisure centre and run a relay challenge to raise money for charity
- ✓ Offer workplace health checks
- ✓ Bring in qualified instructors to offer on-site classes / taster sessions
- ✓ Promote an online 'Workout of the Week'
- ✓ Sign up your organisation to a corporate gym membership – linking up with local leisure centres to offer discounts for employees
- ✓ Run health awareness days in your workplace and invite local health services / providers to attend



## Active Travel

- ✓ Register your workplace with a Cycle to Work Scheme
- ✓ Introduce a bike buddy scheme within your workplace
- ✓ Appoint active travel champions who can provide practical advice and support to new walkers / cyclists
- ✓ Promote the Pushing Ahead Cycle Loan Scheme and Beryl Bikes (Norwich only)
- ✓ Provide rewards to employees who travel actively on designated days e.g. breakfast bars, bike lights, fresh fruit.
- ✓ Promote FREE online personal journey planning tools e.g. Google Maps, Cycle Streets and HERE WeGo
- ✓ Offer cycle maintenance sessions in your workplace
- ✓ Arrange for a mobile mechanic to come to your workplace to service bicycles
- ✓ Consider changes to your dress code to support cyclists
- ✓ Promote online cycle maintenance / confidence videos
- ✓ Become a Cycle Friendly Employer with Cycling UK
- ✓ Run a lunchtime event in your workplace to promote active travel



# Additional Resources

## Promoting the benefits of physical activity

### Videos on YouTube

[23 and ½ hours](#): What is the single best thing we can do for our health? – short film (9 mins 18 secs)

[Get active, feel good – Sujan’s story](#) - Mind, the mental health charity (1 min 58 secs)

[5 ways to get moving and feel better](#) - Mind, the mental health charity (1 min)

[Let’s be active for health for all](#) - World Health Organization (1 min 34 secs)

[How are you?](#) - One You campaign (1 min 17 secs)

[What happens inside your body when you exercise?](#) – British Heart Foundation (2 mins 33 secs)

[Benefits of exercise](#) - Bupa Health UK (2 mins 56 secs)

### Websites / Resources

**One You** - Free tips, tools and support including the One You Quiz and Couch to 5K and Active 10 apps. [www.nhs.uk/oneyou](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou)

**NHS Website** - [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits)

**Health Information Leaflet Service (HILS)** - Download a wide range of free, high quality health promotion materials to display in your workplace.

[www.brochure.norfolklivingwell.org.uk/leaflets-and-posters](http://www.brochure.norfolklivingwell.org.uk/leaflets-and-posters)

## Workplace Wellbeing / Physical Activity

**Thriving Workplaces** – Norfolk’s free healthy workplace provider. Supporting workplace wellbeing through training, workshops, organisational reports, action plans and cultural diagnostics tools.  
[www.thrivingworkplaces.org.uk](http://www.thrivingworkplaces.org.uk)

**National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)** – Guidance covering how to encourage employees to be physically active. [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph13](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph13)

**Sport England** – This Active Employee Toolkit is a great resource full of tips and tools employers can use to support the health and wellbeing of employees through physical activity.  
[Active Employee Toolkit | Sport England](#)

**BITC Toolkit: Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Healthier Weight** – This toolkit shows how working in partnership with employees, employers can take a positive, proactive, preventative approach to support weight management and encourage greater physical activity.  
[Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Healthier Weight: A Toolkit For Employers \(bitc.org.uk\)](http://bitc.org.uk)

**British Heart Foundation** – Access a range of free downloadable resources including a guide for running a Stair Climb Challenge, Business Case infographics and templates.  
[www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications) (click Workplace Health under ‘Subject’)

**Loop** – Created by Table Tennis England, Loop brings social table tennis into your workplace.  
[www.keepintheloop.uk/work](http://www.keepintheloop.uk/work)



## Walking

**Norfolk Trails** – Information for a range of walking opportunities in Norfolk including short, long and circular walks. [www.norfolktrails.co.uk](http://www.norfolktrails.co.uk)

**Active Outdoors** - Active Norfolk's pulled together lots of information on Norfolk's trails, woodlands, cycle paths, and access-tested paths to help you make the most of Norfolk's beautiful landscape whatever your ability. [www.activenorfolk.org/active-outdoors](http://www.activenorfolk.org/active-outdoors)

**Rambler's Wellbeing Walks** - Run by the Ramblers, with support from Sport England, Wellbeing Walks are developed to be accessible to people who have done little or no exercise before, or who need more support to stay active than they have in the past.

<https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub>

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## Running

**RunTogether** - Provides fun, friendly, supportive and inclusive running opportunities for everyone: whatever your ability or time availability. [www.runtogether.co.uk](http://www.runtogether.co.uk)

**parkrun** - Free, weekly, community events all around the world, organised by local volunteers. [www.parkrun.org.uk](http://www.parkrun.org.uk)

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## Cycling

**Norwich Pedalways** - Norwich has seven colour-coded cycle routes – totalling 58 miles – known as pedalways. You can download a pdf version of the Norwich cycle map which shows the seven pedalways across the city. [www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20396/cycling\\_and\\_walking](http://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20396/cycling_and_walking)

**Great Yarmouth Cycle Map** - Find out about cycling opportunities in the Borough.

[www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/2107/Are-there-any-cycle-routes-in-the-Borough](http://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/2107/Are-there-any-cycle-routes-in-the-Borough)

**Norfolk Trails** - The Norfolk Trails website provides information for a range of cycling opportunities in Norfolk. [Cycle routes - Norfolk County Council](#)

## Online workouts

**Active at Home** - Active Norfolk's Active at Home hub has loads of workout videos and activities you can do at home to get your heart pumping and the blood flowing! Find resources for all abilities, kids, and those living with disabilities or health conditions.

[www.activenorfolk.org/active-at-home](http://www.activenorfolk.org/active-at-home)

**NHS fitness studio** – Take your pick from 24 instructor-led videos across aerobics exercise, strength and resistance, and pilates and yoga categories. These workouts have been created by fitness experts and range from 10 to 45 minutes. [www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio)

**British Heart Foundation** – Choose from several exercise guides and videos to help keep you active at home. [www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity)

**Joe Wicks / The Body Coach** – Find over 250 free home workouts on Joe Wicks' YouTube channel, including chair workouts for people with limited mobility.

**Yoga with Adriene** - This YouTube channel has over 500 videos. There are plenty of yoga practices to choose from, varying in length and ability level, so it doesn't matter if you're a complete beginner, or only have time for a 10-minute workout.

**Fitness Blender** – provides free workout videos and exercise programmes you can follow at home. There's a range of videos of different lengths, including a 40-minute upper-body strength workout, a 15-minute cardio workout and an 8-minute breathing 'workout' to help with stress.

[www.fitnessblender.com](http://www.fitnessblender.com)

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## Inclusive online workouts

**Activity Alliance** - Exercise advice, workouts, videos and activity guides to support disabled people to move more while at home. [www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/at-home](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/at-home)

**Active Norfolk** - Home exercises for people with a disability, older people and those with long-term health conditions. [www.activenorfolk.org/active-at-home-disability](http://www.activenorfolk.org/active-at-home-disability)

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## Volunteering

**Voluntary Norfolk** - improves the health, wellbeing, connections, skills and employability of thousands of people in Norfolk each year, by supporting volunteers, voluntary organisations and through the delivery of commissioned services. [www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk](http://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk)

## Free fitness apps

(Please note: apps may have additional features that are chargeable)

**EXi** – A free, evidence-based app which analyses your health, current fitness level, disease status and resting heart rate, and produces a personalised 12-week physical activity plan that is tailored to your needs. [www.exi.life/](http://www.exi.life/)

**Active 10** – This Active 10 app records every minute of walking you do (anonymously). The app tracks your steps, helps you set goals, shows you your achievements and gives you tips to boost your activity. [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/active10/home](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/active10/home)

**MapMyWalk / Run** – Allows you to see time, distance, pace, speed, elevation, and calories burned. [www.mapmywalk.com](http://www.mapmywalk.com) [www.mapmyrun.com](http://www.mapmyrun.com)

**Strava** - A fitness-tracking and social media app. Record your different workout activities, such as cycling, swimming, or running, and analyse your training stats. [www.strava.com](http://www.strava.com)

**Couch to 5K** - A running programme for absolute beginners. The app has a choice of 5 trainers to motivate you, works with your music player, tracks your runs and connects you with other Couch to 5K runners. Encouragement is given throughout each workout by your choice of celebrity voiceover. Popular personalities including Jo Whiley, Sarah Millican or Michael Johnson to cheer you on! [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week)

**Zombies, Run!** – A running app that functions as more of a game. It pitches you as one of the few survivors of a zombie epidemic, who is a runner en route to one of humanity's last remaining outposts, and whose help is needed to gather supplies, rescue survivors and defend homes. [www.zombiesrungame.com/](http://www.zombiesrungame.com/)

**Nike Training Club** - Over 185 workouts, focused on different muscle groups, workout types and ability. [www.nike.com/gb/ntc-app](http://www.nike.com/gb/ntc-app)





[www.activenorfolk.org](http://www.activenorfolk.org)