

# How much could tackling poor health save your business?

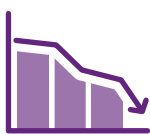
Our flexible lunch break manifesto



# Our Manifesto encourages all employers large and small to:

1. Seriously examine the real bottom line benefits to be gained from encouraging an active workforce.
2. Ensure management and board reporting includes employee wellbeing and activity measures.
3. Recruit and support workplace physical activity champions to harness the power of peer influence.
4. Ask employees what would encourage them to become more active.
5. Encourage employees to be active in and around the working day including active travel.
6. Challenge the 'having to be at your desk' culture that prevents people taking an active lunch break.
7. Encourage employees to 'move and work' such as walking meetings and standing telephone calls to challenge the growing prevalence of sedentary working days.
8. Make use of expert advice to create an active workforce such as support available from our locally based County Sports Partnerships.
9. Allow employees time off to volunteer in grassroots sport as part of staff development and CSR strategy.
10. Introduce activity initiatives such as Workplace Challenge!

## Unlocking the bottom line benefits



1. Reduce the average of 5.31 sick days currently taken per employee, by one day per year.



2. Contribute to a saving of £2.8 billion per annum in sickness absence costs linked to lost working days.



3. Reduce presenteeism to create more engaged and productive workforces.

## How you can help?



Read our report.



Lead by example.



Sign up to Workplace Challenge.



Speak to your local County Sports Partnership.

# Foreword

*By Lee Mason, Chief Executive of the  
County Sports Partnership Network*

**In 2016 we're asking for your support to grasp the opportunity to change the way we work in the UK by introducing flexibility into the working day. This isn't about creating new rules and formal policies. Instead, we're urging employers to simply allow their employees more time and opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity during the working week. We have evidence to demonstrate that this shift in culture could not only improve the wellbeing of the working population but also save businesses across England an estimated £2.8 billion.**

Work is a big part of our lives. 73.6% of the adult population aged 16-64 are in employment<sup>1</sup> and spend around 60% of their waking hours in the workplace<sup>2</sup>. We spend so much time at work that it has become increasingly important that the culture and environment of our occupation supports rather than hinders a healthy lifestyle. This means tackling sedentary behaviour (in other words, reducing the amount of time we spend sitting still, expending minimal energy) by proactively finding ways to use the workplace to engage those that are physically inactive. That, in a nutshell, is what Workplace Challenge has set out to achieve by encouraging employers across England to 'revolutionise the lunch break' in 2016.

Workplace Challenge is a national workplace health programme established by the County Sports Partnership Network and funded by Sport England. Our mission is to support the growing requirement for employers to take a more active role in caring for the health and wellbeing of their people and wider communities, focusing specifically on tackling inactivity during the working week. It's our mission to enlighten employers on the benefits of active workforces, creating work environments that encourage exercise and promote active breaks.

We don't believe that employees should have to choose, or lose out on socialising with their colleagues or risk facing any negative consequences of leaving their desk over lunch breaks. Quite the contra!

We believe that by adopting a more flexible approach to the lunch break, employers will inspire their employees to get active, support the development of more sociable and stimulating environments while they keep themselves fit and healthy for work, as well as getting outdoors and accessing more sunlight, reducing the risk and impact of mental health issues such as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). All good for driving the morale and wellbeing of the workforce as well as increasing the productivity to drive the bottom line.



<sup>[1]</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2015.

<sup>[2]</sup> Peersman et al., 1998.



From October 2013 to October 2015, the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC) at Loughborough University conducted an evaluation of the first two years of the Workplace Challenge programme<sup>3</sup>. This involved analysis of registration and activity data collected on users of the Workplace Challenge online activity log as well as surveys and interviews with participants. The findings of this survey present compelling evidence of the benefits of an active workforce and this new bank of knowledge supports and shapes our 'revolutionise the lunch break' manifesto.

Physical inactivity is widely regarded as the most important contributor to the rise of chronic diseases. It's also a habit most of us could change. Yet, Public Health England estimate that more than four in 10 people do not do enough physical activity to achieve good health. As a result, an average of 5.31 sick days are taken per person per year<sup>4</sup>, costing businesses a total of £14.9 billion in lost working days<sup>5</sup>. By allowing and encouraging employees to lead an active lunch break, businesses could cut one sickness day per person per year, saving businesses across England an estimated £2.8 billion.

The BHFNC's evaluation of the Workplace Challenge programme showed physical

activity not only improves mental wellbeing and relationships between co-workers, it also significantly reduces sickness absenteeism (people taking time off work due to illness) and presenteeism (people coming into work whilst ill). But health and wellbeing are still not making it onto the business agenda in a large proportion of workplaces. Only half of respondents in the Workplace Challenge research reported that they take employee wellbeing into consideration in business decisions.

By proactively encouraging their staff to take an active lunch break employers could give their people the invaluable opportunity to exercise without fear of missed pay-rises and being frowned upon by colleagues for leaving their desks. With your help, this shift in culture and attitude will allow the positive effects of physical activity on mental health, wellbeing, sickness absence and presenteeism to have a more enduring influence on inactive workers and the businesses they work for.

We hope the findings of this report will inspire you to think differently about the working day and inspire you to join us in urging more employers to adopt a workplace culture that supports and prioritises physical activity as a key driver for improving productivity and profitability.



<sup>[3]</sup> County Sport Partnership Network Workplace Challenge Summary Evaluation Report. Adams, E.J., Twumasi, R., & Musson, H. (2016) BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health, National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK.

<sup>[4]</sup> Calculated using data reported in a Nomis Labour Market Profile for England measuring economic inactivity between July 2014 and June 2015.

<sup>[5]</sup> This figure is based on the calculation of time lost at work, not the cost of productivity from staff while at work.

# First, let us tell you what we know

## 1. Time is the biggest barrier to exercise

With many workers spending eight or nine hours each day at work and two hours travelling to and from their workplace<sup>6</sup>, often in sedentary positions, lack of time is frequently cited as a reason for not participating in sport and physical activity. Then, during winter, reduced daylight hours make exercising outside of work hours even more challenging. Add to this the prevalence of the 'having to be at your desk' culture and it's easy to see why most workers are failing to meet the government target of taking

part in moderate exercise for at least 150 minutes every week.

Whilst our campaign focuses on enabling an active lunch break, it may not be the right solution for everyone. But by embracing flexible work options, perhaps allowing employees to start work a little earlier, or finish work a little later, encouraging them to make more of their lunch breaks and daylight, could help all of your employees build activity into their daily routine.

Here's a snapshot of what participants in Workplace Challenge told the BHFNC researchers:



*I have a long commute to work so I leave home at seven o'clock in the morning and I don't get home until after seven o'clock in the evening. By the time I walk through the door my husband has prepared the evening meal and he wants to eat.*



*You get in from work and by the time you have dinner and settle down, in the winter especially, it's so dark. It's then having to get up and go back out again.*



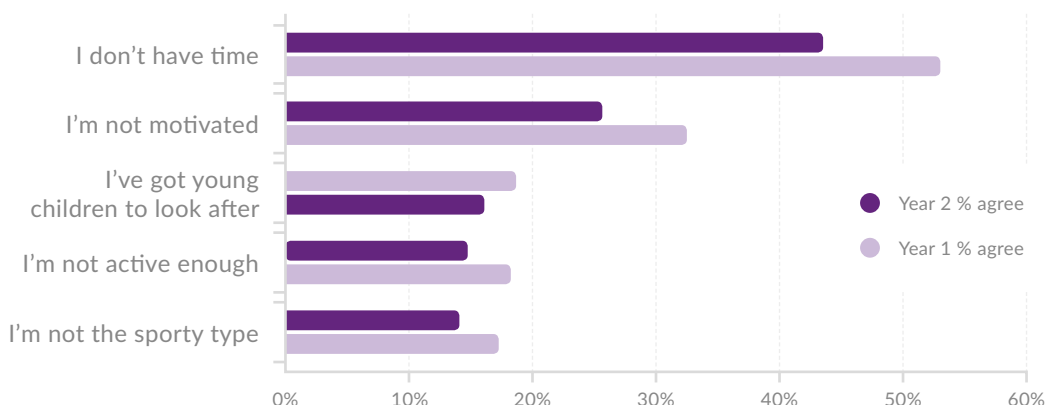
*You always kick yourself, oh I should have done something today and then the next day rolls over...*



*I've always commuted a lot and I think it takes quite a lot of your energy. You leave work with a bit of enthusiasm thinking, 'I'm going for a run,' but forty minutes later you've got home and you think, 'you know what, the sofa's quite appealing'.*



The top five barriers to participating in sport and physical activity:



<sup>[6]</sup> The number of people spending more than two hours travelling to and from work every day has increased to more than 3 million, according to research released by the TUC in 2015.

## 2. Flexibility is fundamental to an exercise-friendly culture

In its new sport strategy (Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation), the government includes a clear call to action for employers to provide opportunities for employees to be active and to provide employee volunteering opportunities. It highlighted the pivotal role employers are expected to play in reducing sedentary behaviour, as well as highlighting the support Workplace Challenge offers the employer community.

But how exactly can employers help drive participation in physical activity? The freedom to work flexibly was one of the most important

facilitators of keeping active at work within organisational culture according to our survey results.

Workplace Challenge participants told us that in addition to childcare and family demands at home, occupation-related factors such as work patterns, insufficient breaks and a general lack of flexibility all amplify the time pressure that's stopping them from being more active. So it was no surprise that flexible working practices topped the wish list of organisational policies that could support participation in sport and physical activity in their organisation.

### Top policies that participants indicated would support participation in sport and physical activity in their organisation:

Flexible working practices



Incentive schemes  
e.g. bike purchase scheme



Reduced price gym memberships



Sustainable travel/active travel policies



Opportunities to be physically active  
tailored to meet specific needs e.g. shift workers



Dissemination of (written) information  
on how to be more physically active



Encouraging breaks from  
prolonged sitting



Walking / cycling routes / maps



Signs to take the stairs instead of the lifts



### BRIGHT IDEA



#### Encouraging volunteering

Sporting Future, the government's new sports strategy, for the first time recognises volunteering as an effective way to engage people in sport. To support this, there are plans in place to introduce a workplace entitlement to three days a year volunteering leave, on full pay, for employees in large companies and the public sector.

Why not embrace the spirit of volunteering by giving employees enough flexibility in their working day to donate time to helping colleagues get involved in the sports they love? They could become a Workplace Challenge Champion, share their passion for exercise by setting up an office 'bootcamp in the boardroom' or simply offer their time as an organiser at workplace and community sports events.

### 3. A healthy workforce is better for your bottom line

When employees are active they feel better. The health benefits of being physically active are already widely reported and our research definitely supports this trend with Workplace Challenge participants showing encouraging improvements in mental health and wellbeing scores<sup>7</sup>.

However, perhaps more interesting was the impact being more active has on attendance at work. The BHFNC researchers asked survey participants to share how many days in the last three months they had taken off work due to sickness, injury or stress. They asked this at the outset of the research and then again at three

month intervals. Significant reductions in sickness absenteeism were observed at each of the three, six and nine month follow-ups. At six and nine months, the mean number of days absent from work reduced by 0.6 days overall.

A substantial decrease in presenteeism was also found. For example, respondents reported on average between 1.4 and 1.7 days less presenteeism at the six month follow-up in year two of the Workplace Challenge programme. This allows us to conclude that active employees are not only healthier, but also more engaged and productive when at work.

“ I think employers should recognise what's in it for them in terms of improving the general health and wellbeing of their workforce. I'm fully aware of the benefits of physical activity on mental health so I think employers should take that on board, take it seriously and see it as a way of reducing sickness absence, increasing productivity and generally having a more healthy, motivated workforce. ”

Survey respondent and Workplace Challenge participant

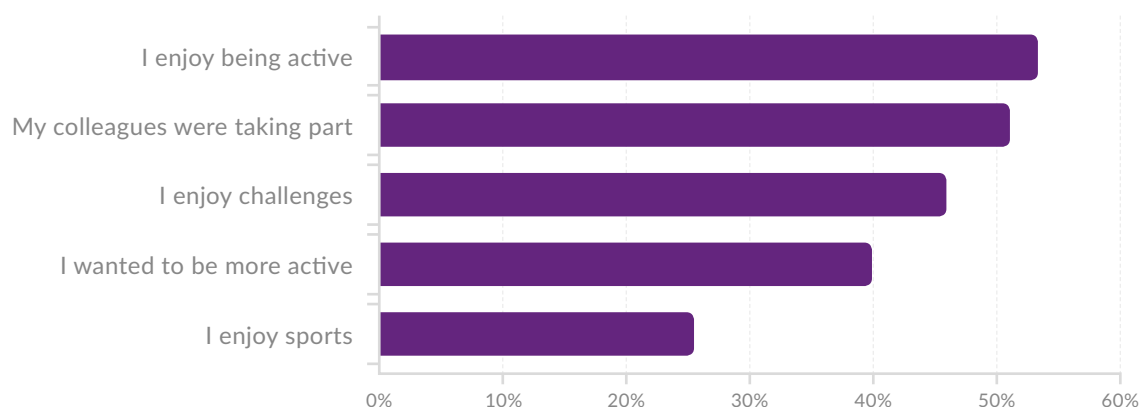
### 4. A supportive network helps

Lack of motivation was one of the most frequently reported barriers to participating in physical activity by our survey participants. Finding that get up and go can be a struggle but the increased activity levels reported on Workplace Challenge during competitions demonstrates that the peer support created by these events massively boosts participation.

Our research shows that competition, when combined with appropriate incentives and

friendly peer pressure, offers an effective way to engage people in activity whether they are naturally sporty or have previously lacked the inclination to exercise. Just over half of the respondents to our survey admitted that it was the influence of other colleagues taking part that inspired them to get involved in Workplace Challenge, with a significant proportion also rating the competitive element of challenges as a powerful motivator.

#### Top 5 reasons for taking part in Workplace Challenge:



<sup>[7]</sup> Assessed using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.



Workplace Challenge participants can record their sport, physical activities and active travel on the Workplace Challenge website using either the desktop interface or the mobile app for extra convenience. Activities are converted to points, which are then used to place the participant on leaderboards facilitating competition within organisations and between workplaces.

During the period 1st October 2014 and 30th September 2015, a total of 618,448 activities were logged on the Workplace Challenge website. Analysis of the patterns of participant

behaviour revealed distinct peaks in activity during periods when Workplace Challenge was running specific competitions. For example, 287,634 activities were logged equating to 289,322 hours of activity during an eight week challenge in January and 63,090 activities equating to 64,056 hours during a month long Shake-Up September initiative later in the year. These spikes in participation demonstrate how the opportunity to compete for fun can inspire people to get involved in physical activity and ultimately sustain a more active lifestyle.



*I think everybody likes to be coaxed. They like to be encouraged into doing something and if they can get a good team together it's always easier to exercise when you've got people that have got a common interest.*



**Survey respondent and Workplace Challenge participant**



*If you've agreed to do something as a team, you feel less enticed to decide, 'I'm not going to do it this week', because you're letting a few other people down. There's that sense of camaraderie.*



**Survey respondent and Workplace Challenge participant**





# Now, it's time to talk action



## Let's revolutionise the lunch break

Employers have a pivotal role to play in creating an organisational culture that overcomes some of the most common barriers to exercise and enables participation in sport and physical activity.

We believe the 'lunch hour' is an out-dated concept. So in 2016, Workplace Challenge will be supporting employers to create a more flexible work environment, that not only allows but positively encourages employees to lead

an active lunch break, making the most of the opportunity to access daylight hours, for simple activities such as walking and running, combined with peer support. By enabling lunchtime activity, we estimate one sickness day per person per year could be cut, saving businesses across England around £2.8 billion.

So let's turn this great idea into bottom line business benefits in 2016. **Starting now...**

### 1. Set a sickness savings target

Here's how employers can work out the cost savings for their business...

**Step 1:** Calculate the number of people in your company *e.g. 100 people.*

**Step 2:** Calculate the average wage per day per employee *e.g. £107 per person per day.*

**Step 3:** Calculate the average number of sick days currently taken per year in your business *e.g. 5.31 days (national average) taken as sick leave.*

**Step 4:** Multiply step 1 by step 2 by step 3 to calculate the total cost of sickness absence in your business *e.g. 100 people x £107 x 5.31 = £56,817 is the cost of time lost at work due to sickness absence.*

**Step 5:** Take the total cost to your business (step 4) and divide by the total number of sick days (step 3) to find out how much your business could save by reducing one sickness day per employee per day *e.g. £56,817 ÷ 5.31 = £10,700 saving!*



### 2. Kick-start your lunch break campaign with a challenge



We're encouraging employers to introduce the Middy Mile goal as part of their flexible lunchtime incentive. Walking, running and road cycling were the most popular activities logged by Workplace Challenge participants both in year one and year two of the programme, but there are lots of other ways to clock up a Middy Mile. Install a rowing machine in meeting room, clock up some lengths at the local pool, work up a sweat on a static bike during a spin class – the idea of the Middy Mile is that it provokes the support of team camaraderie whilst allowing the individual to exercise according to their preferences.

### 3. Make it fun

Although our research shows in practice those classified as inactive found competition and the incentive of prizes one of their top motivators, it can initially be off-putting for those who are new to exercise or don't consider themselves sporty. Fun is top of the list for people in moving from 'trial' to a more regular habit of activity and should be top of the agenda. Workplaces

can reflect their culture and personality through activity, with sports notice boards and social media support used to demonstrate just how fun an activity can be for newcomers, with access to equipment such as table tennis tables or if not enough space, park equipment such as fitness stations and rounders bats 'n' balls for more informal and spontaneous fun.



### 4. Get going

Here are five active lunch ideas to get you started:

1. Take inspiration from Loop at Work and host a table tennis 'pingathon'.
2. Set up a 'treadmill relay' challenge in a meeting room. Could your team clock up a marathon in a week?
3. Sign up to a lunch time netball league.
4. Make the Midday Mile a daily team goal.
5. Set up an office walking group and make getting active a sociable occasion.



# What support can Workplace Challenge offer?

In 2016, Workplace Challenge will be putting even more energy than before into helping employers achieve the productivity and bottom line benefits of an active workforce. We're passionate about changing working practices to make exercise part of the working week and provide employers with the tools and support they need to make this shift in culture happen.

Workplace Challenge provides a unique mix of technology and on the ground support through the network of County Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of Sport operating in England.



## Activity log and smartphone app

Join the 7,000 plus workplaces (that's more than 45,000 employees) already using the Workplace Challenge activity log and app to record their sport, physical activities and active travel.



## Close links with national governing bodies of sport (NGBs)

Our relationship with NGBs means we can provide expert support and instruction from local coaches across a wide variety of sporting disciplines.



## National activity log challenges

Inter-workplace sporting competitions are scheduled throughout the year. Online leaderboards have proven to be a successful way to add some friendly competitive spirit to company health and wellbeing incentives.



## Workplace Challenge champions

There are currently more than 600 trained Workplace Challenge champions across the country, each playing a vital role in making physical activity a sustainable part of their workplace's culture. A whole variety of support, training and resources are available through Workplace Challenge to support your champion and help your business achieve its health and wellbeing goals.



## Local activities and challenges

Our County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) organise competitions for businesses in their area. These events not only provide an opportunity to try a new physical activity but also demonstrate how exercise can be both fun and accessible to all, regardless of ability.



## Expert guidance for your business

Every business and workplace is different and a free workplace health consultation from your local CSP will provide suggestions and advice needed to get your workforce moving more.

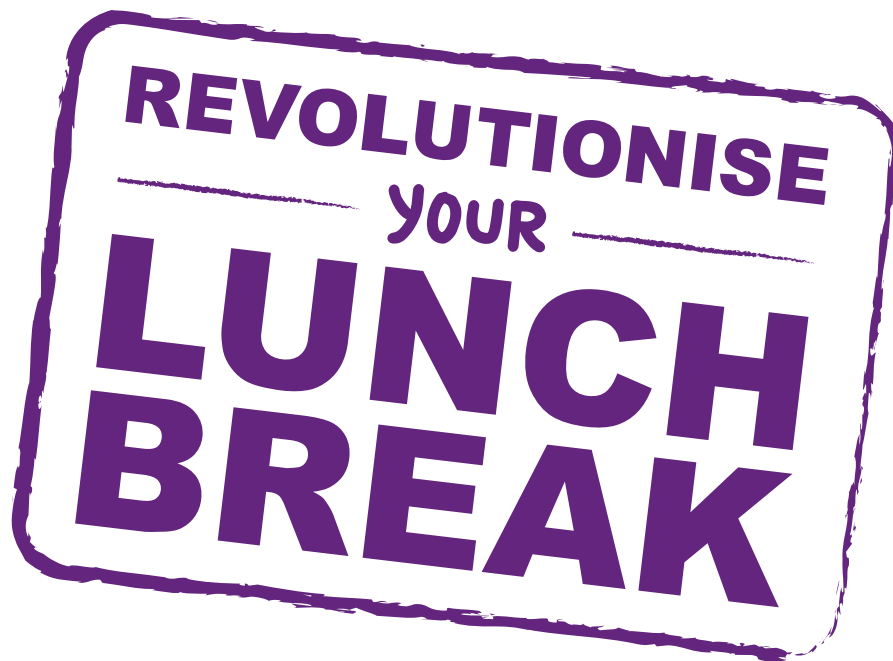
## Book a workplace health consultation today

### How can we help?

Your local CSP representative is a great source of knowledge, inspiration and ideas for integrating healthy ideas into the working day. Find out how Workplace Challenge can help your business by contacting your CSP.

Find your local CSP by visiting: [cspnetwork.org](http://cspnetwork.org)





**WORKPLACE  
CHALLENGE**

Contact us:

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[info@workplacechallenge.org.uk](mailto:info@workplacechallenge.org.uk)

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