

Business in the

Community

Business Action  
on Health



# It's not just about fruit...

**An employer's guide to achieving corporate wellbeing**





## Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Where are we in 2010?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What are we dealing with?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>What's it got to do with me?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>How can employers respond?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Seven Key Principles for Success</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Steps 1&amp;2 – Business Case and Management Buy-in</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Step 3 – Take ACTION</b>	
○ <b>Assess</b>	<b>12</b>
○ <b>Commit</b>	<b>13</b>
○ <b>Tell</b>	<b>14</b>
○ <b>Integrate</b>	<b>14</b>
○ <b>Organise</b>	<b>15</b>
○ <b>Nurture</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Step 4 – Monitor and Report</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1 Health and Wellbeing models</b>	<b>17</b>

## References

Towers Perrin Healthy Action Pack, Towers Perrin/BITC  
 Healthy Work Challenges and Opportunities to 2030, The Work Foundation





## Introduction

As the economy changes, the workforce of the future alters, the working age population increases, the nature of illness alters and lifestyle choices adapt, interventions in the workplace become increasingly important for the workplace, society and the economy.

In her report, *Working for a Healthier Tomorrow*, Dame Carol Black estimated the annual costs of sickness absence and worklessness associated with working age ill-health to be over £100 billion, equivalent to the entire GDP of Portugal. So improved workplace health has the potential to make a significant contribution to the UK economy, to public finances and to reducing levels of disease and illness in the UK

**The way in which we work and the nature of illness is changing creating both challenges and opportunities for employers and employees. The workplace is an effective setting to address these challenges.**

The average person spends over a third of their waking hours for up to 40 years of their life at work, so employers are well placed to support UK workers to exercise more, smoke less and eat more healthily. They can make the kind of physical changes to the working environment that help people sustain behavioural change and integrate it into their daily life.

**The workplace offers a unique and under-exploited setting for preventative healthcare. It provides the obvious setting to effectively invest in its greatest asset, a decisive competitive factor - employee health and wellbeing.**

The three risk factors that are largely responsible for an escalating epidemic of chronic disease – poor diet, smoking and lack of physical activity – can all be easily and effectively tackled in the workplace. By encouraging and facilitating small changes in the environment at work, employers can begin to address the long-term health of their employees and, by extension, the health of their own companies.

**By investing in workplace health, employers can play a fundamental role in supporting people in poor health, preventing future ill-health and promoting good health through high quality work.**



## Where are we in 2010?

Despite a number of economic, social and cultural barriers that can act as a deterrent, it appears to be becoming more socially acceptable for employers to take a keen interest in the health of their employees, for a number of very pragmatic, as well as ethical, reasons.

As workplace interventions effectively change people's lifestyle choices, the workplace potentially offers an opportunity to target 'hard to reach' groups of people and some of those most at risk of illness in society – including our ageing population.

Likewise, as our society becomes older, the workforce will have the added responsibility of supporting a growing retired population, therefore the health of UK workers becomes increasingly important.

Workplace interventions can effectively improve employee health and wellbeing in the short-term and reduce long-term risk of illness as levels of ill-health increase due to people engaging in unhealthy lifestyle choices such as drinking and smoking to help cope with mounting pressures. So, even employers with high levels of employee turnover are likely to see improved employee productivity and reduced levels of absence.

Although the current downturn might restrict available resources for employers to invest in workplace health, by continuing to support employee health, employers can continue to give themselves a competitive edge as healthy employees can be up to three times more productive than those in poor health.

As we shape our future, the type of work that most people undertake is more likely to affect psychological health than physical health. Whilst the economy becomes more focused on the use of knowledge, new ideas, software development and relationship building there is likely to be an increasing urgency to consider job design and working practices such as agile and flexible working.

As these changes emerge, the increasing demand for highly skilled workers, skills mismatch is more likely to occur, ultimately leading to increased levels of ill-health as employees in jobs that do not match their level of skill tend to report lower levels of job satisfaction and general wellbeing.

**The workplace as a setting for health improvement is more relevant now than ever.**



## What are we dealing with?

Over the next 20 years the type of workplace interventions that employers should be thinking about need to respond to our changing environment and demographics. The 2009 report, ***Healthy Work Challenges and Opportunities to 2030***, suggests the following -

- Musculoskeletal disorders and mental illness continue to be amongst the largest causes of short and long-term absence and remain the most prevalent of the major diseases in the UK.
- Coronary heart disease may be one of the most expensive diseases costing employers nearly £4 billion a year, yet there is a prevalence of information available to employers
- In future an even larger portion of the burden of disease in the UK will be linked to lifestyle choices, such as levels of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity.
- Nearly a third of the total burden of disease and disability in the UK is linked to cancer, coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes - all closely linked to obesity.
- Ageing is linked to many common diseases so the amount of ill-health in the UK workforce will rise as the average age of the workforce rises from 39 to 43 by 2030
- There will be a rise in the number of employees with long-term conditions that require ongoing management over a period of years.
- The costs of 'presenteeism' (employees who are in work but not working productively due to ill-health) could be up to 1.5 times the cost of absence, yet few employers measure the hidden or indirect costs of either absence or presenteeism.



## What's it got to do with me?

'Good quality work' optimises the positive impact of work on health. It is associated with higher levels of wellbeing among employees and lower incidence of physical or mental illness and has a number of features including less monotonous jobs that offer employees autonomy, control and task discretion.

Reducing levels of absence and promoting wellness at work needs to be multi dimensional ranging from traditional occupational health measures and insurance based products to more bespoke approaches identified through baseline assessment and employee consultation. Solutions should incorporate less obvious approaches such as job design, working practice and organisational culture – all directly impact employee wellness.

As the nature of work changes, so too does the nature of the workplace and the range of workplace settings. Workplace solutions need to be as relevant to the building site or home setting as they do to more traditional settings such as office and factory floor.

Furthermore, solutions and interventions need to adapt to changing trends in the way that work is organised and the role that it plays in people's day to day lives. Employers need to consider aspects of organisational culture, working practices and job design as well as more obvious approaches such as workplace screening and health and wellbeing events.

The workplace of the future is likely to play an increasingly important role in people's lives. As people seek to define themselves more by the kind of work they do it will play an increasingly important role in helping individuals connect with other people. It is likely to become increasingly important to Government as a locus for delivering public health messages and as a way of encouraging large numbers of people to lead healthier and more productive lives



## How can employers respond?

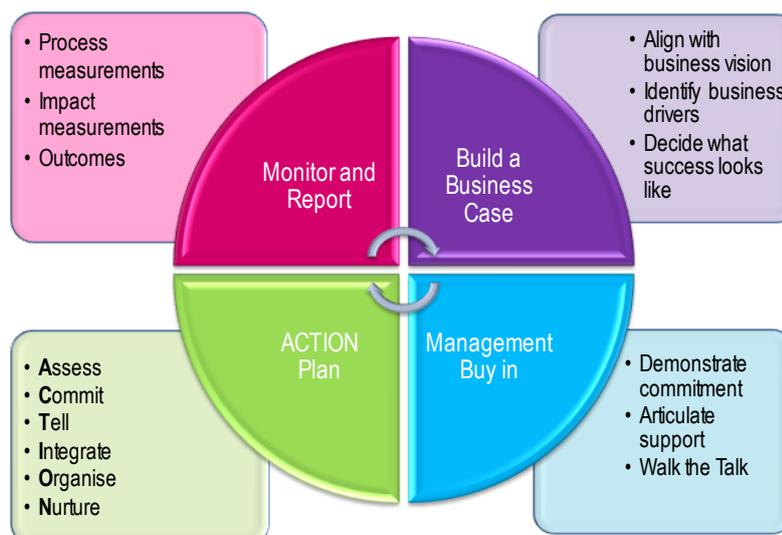
There are many published guidance documents and business models to support employers who are keen to implement Health and Wellbeing Solutions strategically. Appendix 1 lists a number of models and approaches that you may find helpful.

Regardless of which approach you take, workplace health and related issues are generally discussed in the context of three key guiding principles –

- **Individual health** - to include primary prevention, behaviour modification, attitudes and lifestyle choice, health education, health promotion, and how to motivate people
- **Workplace culture** - to include management policies and procedures, communication systems, training opportunities, and work-life balance, and the effect this has on morale and well-being
- **Physical work issues** - including ergonomics, health and safety legislation and occupational health, effective policies and levels of compliance

Any approach to these principles implemented using the '*plan, do, review*' approach, is likely to succeed.

In order to simplify this approach, Business in the Community NI have developed the following model –





## 7 Key Principles for Success

There are 7 underlying key principles underpinning this model which need to be observed in order to succeed. Without these, your programme is unlikely to achieve your goals and deliver a return on investment.



This toolkit aims to offer a straightforward process that can be applied to any workplace, helping to identify the health and wellbeing needs of your workforce, along with some suggestions as to how you might address these through a holistic, cohesive programme that can achieve wide buy in across your business.

It sets out a simple 4 step approach to creating a healthy workplace and is supplemented by a number of tools including an employer pledge, annual workplace health planner, on line employee survey, wellbeing hub and a series of 'how to' guides.



## Steps 1&2 Business Case & Management Buy-in

The introduction to this toolkit states clearly the broad business case for investment in a workplace wellbeing programme.

However, a successful programme must work within your organisation's management structure, business strategy and key activities. It should involve all key stakeholders and should consider the current climate or context. If your senior management has not been involved from the outset and hasn't 'bought in' to the concept, let alone been made aware of it, it is unlikely to get very far or last very long. Therefore consider –

- **Who are the key stakeholders in the business, who has control, who has influence and who should be involved?**
- **What existing and future strategies/business activities will impact the programme?**

You may already have an evidence base through staff survey, attendance data and insurance records. For example –

• <b>Absence patterns/attrition</b>	• <b>Low morale</b>
• <b>Physical activity, diet and nutrition</b>	• <b>Costs of health-related employee benefits</b>
• <b>High stress levels</b>	• <b>Low uptake of services available</b>

It may be that you are not aware of any specific issues, but simply want to focus on employee health because it is the right thing to do and/or you know that such an investment is likely to give you competitive edge through enhanced reputation and productivity.

Based on these initial discussions and available supporting evidence, you will be in a position to define health and wellbeing in the context of your own organisation, and make some decisions about what success will look like for your organisation. Ask yourself these questions –

- **Why have you decided to introduce a health and wellbeing programme?**
- **What are you already doing to support employee health and wellbeing?**
- **What issues are you currently aware of?**
- **What would you like to achieve/change?**
- **What are the challenges and barriers likely to be?**
- **What current resources are available?**
- **Who will champion the initiative?**



## Step 3 Take ACTION (Assess, Commit, Tell, Integrate, Organise, Nurture)

### 1. Assess

There are 3 aspects to consider during the assessment stage –

- **What is already available to you that might fit within your programme?**
- **What is your employee profile?**
- **What is the current health of your organisation?**

What you can or should measure will depend on your existing structure and provision. **The greater the level of detail you are able to include, the more valuable the information you will obtain from it helping you to develop your programme and track its progress.**

Most organisations will already have some elements of a workplace health programme in place including **health related benefits, attendance management, learning and development opportunities, performance management systems, core values, sports/social committees.**

These may simply require re-positioning and/or re-communication to make them fit perfectly. Equally, don't let your programme be bogged down by things that do not fit within your new strategy.

The content and style of your programme will depend on the demographic of your organisation both across the company as a whole and within specific sites or business units. There will be common themes and attitudes, however some variance is likely to emerge. **Consider the potential opportunities and challenges that these factors will add to your programme.**

Your needs analysis of current health will benefit from undertaking a survey and/or establishing focus groups to ascertain employee issues and key concerns. Undertaking a computer-based health risk assessment at the outset of the launch will provide employees with tailored reporting based on their own profile. It also offer tools to manage and track process whilst providing the company with anonymous information to identify trends and key risk areas to target accordingly. This survey could be launched as an early programme 'event' and if incentivised (eg prize draw) is likely to achieve greater participation giving you a better understanding of your employees.

**Your needs analysis should be repeated on a regular basis throughout the programme and include questions and measurements that will be repeated each time to track progress.**



## 2. Commit

### Commit to Action

Once your initial needs assessment is complete, you will be in a position to clarify your objectives and commit to action. What are the key areas of potential risk for employees in terms of their health and as a business. These might include –

- **High turnover in specific areas of the business**
- **High incidence of short term absence in specific locations**
- **High incidence of specific conditions eg stress, backpain, Monday/Friday-itis**
- **Numbers of smokers**
- **Inconsistent policies/practice**
- **Lack of accurate absence data/use of absence reports**
- **Unhealthy lifestyle practices**
- **Expressed interest in certain areas**

It is unlikely that you will be able to address all issues identified at once. Based on the feedback you must prioritise and **commit to objectives that you would like to address in the first 12 months**. Some may be relatively straightforward, whilst others may require a short-term awareness campaign or long term programme to achieve sustained change.

### Commit to a programme

Your programme should be designed and based on an annual cycle and is likely to include –

- **Regular stakeholder meetings**
- **Ongoing communication**
- **Targetted interventions**

It should include monthly and quarterly stepping stones and key dates and aim to achieve your objectives and include regular repetition of needs analysis to ensure continued relevance.

**Remember that once you have committed to deliver a programme, failure to do so will be detrimental to your employees and your business.** It may be better to start small and escalate than start big and fizzle out.



### 3. Tell and Integrate

#### Internal ownership

It is vital to have a central programme manager, programme co-ordinator and project team to drive and communicate the programme and achieve cohesion. The project team should include internal stakeholders such as business leaders, employee champions (preferably with an interest in healthy lifestyles and the ability to motivate colleagues) and relevant corporate stakeholders. Later you will develop an external stakeholder team and find ways for both to interact.

#### Branding

The branding of your programme will set the tone of your programme and engage and energise your employees. **Think of names that reflect what your programme is trying to achieve and try linking it to your company name.** Consider how the logo and style of any documents or website might look and create a shortlist for feedback from your project team. **It is crucial to get your brand right to maximise your investment.**

#### Launching

When you launch your programme, consider the expectations you will be raising to ensure that the programme will meet them and show that you have taken on board feedback from employees. There are many different ways to launch your programme including health fairs, events or promotions, 'freebies', health assessments, health packs and a personal letter from MD/CEO.

#### Central Communication

You need to consider the best way of communicating programme information to employees so they **know where and how to access it.** Depending on the size and nature of your business, this might be prominent notice boards, as a regular feature of established staff meetings, via an intranet and/or through a web-based intervention that can be accessed at home and work. **It is vital that communication is regular and relevant and will be of enormous value in your longer term programme development.**

#### Ongoing Communication

**The communication of your events is key to their success – it should be via as many channels as possible to achieve maximum reach.** If employees do not participate or are not aware of them, they have failed. Interventions including posters, branded canteen menu options, payslip notices re lifestyle choices, e-mail bulletins, competitions, training and fairs.



### 3. Organise and Nurture

Interventions will incorporate three main elements –

- Events
- Communication
- Feedback

Once you have identified the areas that you are going to address, think about how best to do so. This is the time to be imaginative and make issues fun and interesting. To ensure that initiatives are relevant and inclusive, develop some overriding themes, for example changing habits, nutrition, activity and stress.

Some employees will be more interested in the social opportunity than the actual health benefit. Some will want to have information to take up activities on their own or with families whilst others may be motivated by incentives or opportunities to achieve tangible results. Consider whether initiatives require a one off change of policy or process, a single awareness event or mid – long term programmes.

By incorporating annual events, seasonal activities, national campaigns, charity days and volunteering activities, you will bring together an engaging and successful programme. Where you are trying to attract those harder to reach parts of your workforce, identification of champions who are representative of these groups to share stories and experiences can often be successful.

Most importantly, a successful programme should be able to deliver a return on your investment if spend is targeted. The return on investment might ultimately be greater by purchasing a service that is more relevant and focussed than by using a free service.

When considering whether to ask employees to contribute to the cost of an initiative, bear in mind it may discourage some. On the other hand, 'free' services are sometimes taken for granted.

To achieve a successful and integrated programme, nurture partnerships with external service providers. This is a growing market place which has been further developed by the use of the internet and there are numerous suppliers out there who will be keen to support you. Work with those who are flexible and will be keen to establish new ways of achieving success with you.



## Step 4 Monitor and Report

Identifying Key Performance Indicators at the outset of your programme is crucial – some suggestions are offered on Page 5 of this document. Here are some ideas of the type of information that can be captured to measure results –

### **Health related indicators**

Absence data; uptake of employee assistance programme; health screening and risk assessment information.

### **Lifestyle indicators**

Take up or healthy canteen/vending options, Gym membership/attendance; bikes being kept; information from employee survey.

### **Take up**

'Hits' to your website; requests for information; attendance and satisfaction levels of interventions and events and 6 month follow ups; one day absence (numbers and cost); productivity/performance; turnover.

### **Policy and process indicators**

Number of OH referrals; understanding of policies/process; actual case examples.

### **Workplace culture indicators**

Trend changes on key indicators from employee wellbeing or engagement surveys.

### **Absence**

Incidences; absentees and average duration of absence of 1 day, under 1 week, 1 month, 1 year, 5 years; causes by category; direct cost number of referrals to OH and GP per 100 employees.

### **Cost**

Total direct cost of absence; average claim cost per incident/employee/claimant; total and per employee cost of health related benefits.



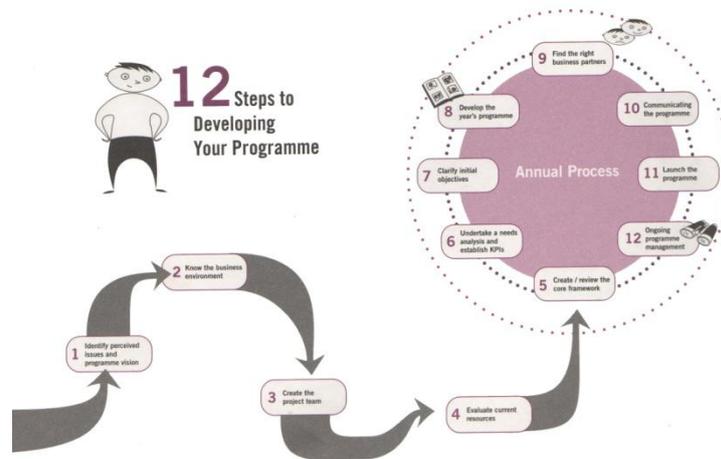
Once you have identified your KPIs, aim to build in a combination of **process** (numbers participating/uptake etc), **impact** (indicators and improvements) and **outcome** (changes that you wished to achieve) measurements.

## Appendix 1

### Health and Well-being Models

#### Towers Perrin Healthy Workplace Action Pack

The Towers Perrin Healthy Workplace Action Pack offers a straightforward, 12 step approach suitable for any employer wishing to optimise the health of its employees.



[http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/publications/towers\\_perrin\\_action.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/publications/towers_perrin_action.html)

#### Workwell Healthy Workplace Guide

A step-by-step guide to support organisations to develop as a healthy workplace. It is aimed at employers, those responsible for human resources or health and safety, occupational health staff and anybody working in the field of workplace health. It includes quality criteria tested and developed in Northern Ireland.

The Work Well process





<http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Resources/workwell>

## Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Guide

'Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Guide' reveals the strategies of the most successful organisations - those who have adopted a co-ordinated approach towards health and well being and are now reaping the rewards.

The emphasis is on practical solutions that can be easily adopted and efficiently implemented in organisations of all sizes and sectors. Quick reference 'top-tips' and 'Solutions' text boxes provide step-by-step guidance on many aspects of people management including; work/life balance, absence management, occupational health, evaluation and physical health.



<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?FO=1192574&DI=625135>