

PHRD PLEDGES

Health at work pledges

1. H01. Chronic Conditions Guide

Pledge

"We will embed the principles of the chronic conditions guides (developed through the Responsibility Deal's health at work network) within HR procedures to ensure that those with chronic conditions at work are managed in the best way possible with reasonable flexibilities and workplace adjustments."

Purpose

This pledge sets out to improve the workplace support employers provide for people with long-term/chronic conditions (such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease), which may help them stay in work or return to work following sickness absence. It asks employers to embed some basic principles for managing these conditions within their HR procedures.

Benefits to public health

Increasingly, evidence supports the view that work can be good for people's health and wellbeing. Working can reverse the harmful effects of prolonged sickness absence and long-term unemployment. Keeping people in work and getting those on long-term sickness absence back into work can improve the health of the working age population.

Benefits to employers/employees

In difficult economic times, safeguarding the health of the working age population becomes even more critical. Feeling well supported and valued in work can improve employees' health and the quality of their work. And good management of long-term/chronic conditions has benefits for the employer as well as the employee - with improvements in productivity and attendance.

2. H02. Occupational Health Standards

Pledge

"We will use only occupational health services which meet the new occupational health standards and which aim to be accredited by 2013/14."

Purpose

This pledge will raise the standard of care provided by occupational health services in England. This pledge asks employers to use occupational health service providers that meet the occupational health standards developed by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, and that are accredited or are in the process of being accredited.

Benefits to public health

Traditionally, occupational health has largely been restricted to helping and supporting those who become ill whilst in employment. But, occupational health should aim to reach much further and make occupational health more preventative - helping to prevent employees from becoming ill in the first place. Increasingly, evidence supports the view that work can be good for people's health and wellbeing. Working can also reverse the harmful effects of prolonged sickness. Keeping people in work and getting those on long-term sickness absence back into work can improve the health of the working age population.

Benefit to employers/employees

Presenteeism rates are often higher than sickness absence rates. Occupational health shouldn't just be about supporting staff who have health issues, it should be about promoting the health and well-being of all staff - helping to keep people engaged and productive. In difficult economic times, safeguarding the health of the working age population becomes even more critical. From a purely business perspective, there's actually a great deal of sense in investing in your employees' health and well being. A fitter, healthier, happier workforce can impact positively on productivity and prosperity.

3. H03. Health & Wellbeing Report

Pledge

"We will include a section on the health and wellbeing of employees within annual reports and/or on our website. We will record our sickness absence rate and actively manage this as an organisation."

Purpose

This pledge will raise the profile of employee health and wellbeing and ensure this issue is integral to all organisations. This pledge asks employers to publicly report on the health and wellbeing of their staff. In a large company, this activity ensures accountability at senior management level for staff health and wellbeing, and also at a local level it signals a culture where staff health and wellbeing is taken seriously.

Benefits to public health

Evidence shows that, in general, being in work is good for health, and worklessness leads to poorer health. Common health problems now account for about two-thirds of sickness absence, long-term incapacity and early retirement. By identifying trends and addressing areas of concern employers can take action to support their staff to remain in work.

Benefits to employers/employees

By reporting on employee health and wellbeing, and taking action when problems arise you can demonstrate to your employees that the issue matters to the organisation. An employee's health influences their performance at work. Proactively managing your employees' physical and mental health brings important business benefits including a reduction of sickness absence; increased productivity; reduction in lost time due to accidents and associated costs; greater staff engagement; reduced staff turnover; and increased profitability.

Employees are more likely to take increased responsibility for their own health and wellbeing if they see a genuine commitment at the most senior level of the organisation to safeguarding and improving workplace health. For employees, keeping well and in work protects against financial hardship, promotes a better quality of life and allows people to make the most of their potential.

Public reporting also allows investors, potential employees and other external organisations to gain an insight into the workplace culture and how the Council manages its staff. Potential future employees are increasingly looking to work for companies with progressive employee practices.

4. H04. Healthier Staff Restaurants

Pledge

"We will implement some basic measures for encouraging healthier staff restaurants/ vending outlets/buffets for staff, including:

- **Ensuring the availability of healthier foods and beverages in all available channels to employees**

- **Working with caterers to reformulate recipes to provide meals which are lower in fat, salt, and energy and which do not contain artificial trans fats**
- **Provision of responsibly sized portions of foods**
- **Provision and promotion of the consumption of fruit and vegetables through availability and price promotion**
- **Provision of calories and/or Guideline Daily Amounts on menus per portion as a minimum (further nutrients optional)**
- **Ensure that water is visible and freely available.”**

This pledge will make it easier for people to choose and maintain a healthier diet while at work.

Benefits to public health

The provision and promotion of healthy options in the workplace can help people make healthier choices more easily. It also helps to influence and instil healthier eating outside the workplace and at home with the wider family - extending the benefits. Eating a balanced diet, with lots of fruit and vegetables, and maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Evidence suggests that calorie labelling at point of choice does make customers more aware of energy content. Recent research from New York City published in the British Medical Journal reported that calorie labelling influenced the choices of one in six customers. Some foods and drinks can contain more calories than people think, and providing calorie labelling enables people to make informed choices to reduce their energy intake.

Benefit to employers

Signing up to this pledge clearly demonstrates employers' commitment to their 'duty of care' for their employees. In the long term, employers will benefit from a healthier, fitter, more engaged workforce with less sickness absence rates - and this has a positive impact on efficiency and productivity.

It also reflects well on the organisation's public profile - helping to attract good candidates, retaining valued staff as well as sending positive messages to its customers, clients and the wider community. Roll out will benefit the staff restaurant and vending machines in the civic office, High House Production Park cafe, Thameside and South Essex College campus.

5. H05. Smoking Cessation/Respiratory Health

Pledge

“We will encourage staff to stop smoking, by facilitating onsite stop smoking support services or by encouraging them to attend local stop smoking services during working time without loss of pay. We will also take action to reduce other risks to respiratory health arising in the workplace.”

Purpose

This pledge will help tobacco users to quit smoking and reduce the risk to all employees of developing other respiratory health problems. The workplace is recognised as an important setting in which stop smoking services can be linked, accessed and promoted.

Benefit to public health

Smoking causes a wide range of diseases and chronic conditions including cancers, respiratory disease, coronary heart and other circulatory diseases, stomach/duodenal ulcer, impotence and infertility, complications in pregnancy and low birthweight. Following surgery, it contributes to lower survival rates, post-operative respiratory complications and poor healing.

By helping tobacco users to quit smoking not only will their personal health and that of their family improve, but there will be a positive impact on the associated costs to the economy and NHS. Over

6 in 10 smokers say they want to quit but less than half make an attempt in any one year. By successfully stopping smoking people can live longer, whatever their age - people stopping smoking by age 30 gain 10 years of life than if they had continued smoking.

In the last 10 years since local Stop Smoking Services have been helping users to quit, they have supported over 2.5 million people to stop in the short term and 625,000 to stop in the long term saving over 70,000 lives.

Benefit to employers/employees

The Enterprise LSE Report (2008) estimated the total direct cost of smoking borne by employers in 2008 was £2.1 billion. £1.1 billion from smoking related illness absence, £914 million from smoking related breaks and £133 million in fire damage.

Three 15 minute smoking breaks cost employers 195 working hours a year for each employee. Encouraging staff to quit smoking and reducing the risk of other respiratory health problems in the workplace can have many benefits for the health and wellbeing of your staff and the success of your organisation.

Many NHS stop smoking services run stop smoking groups or Quit Clubs in the workplace. The cost, employee time, of running quit clubs can be offset against the cost borne by employers of employees' smoking.

- For example, a company in Dartford, who participated in the Smoke Free Kent Business Award, had 203 smokers (35 per cent) out of a total workforce of 579 routine and manual workers. The costs and savings to the company were estimated:
- Cost of excess sickness: £75,902
- Smoking breaks (10 mins): £92,003
- Total cost to organisation: £167,905
- The company was already working with the local stop smoking service and had 26 quitters making a saving of £21,505

6. H06. Staff Health Checks

Pledge

"We will offer staff health checks, e.g. the NHS Lifecheck, with appropriate follow up and audit. We will also encourage eligible employees to participate in the NHS Health Check for vascular disease, and other NHS screening programmes (for example for breast or bowel cancer)."

Purpose

This pledge sets out to increase the number of staff participating in appropriate health check programmes run in-house or by the NHS, as a means of preventing and detecting health conditions. Encouraging people aged over 40 to take up their 5 yearly NHS Health Check when invited can help to reduce their risk of vascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke. We will build on current initiatives already in place with a focus on carrying out health checks for field staff who work in satellite buildings away from the civic office e.g. Curzon drive.

Benefits to public health

Encouraging employees to undertake appropriate health checks will help in the prevention and early detection of health conditions - having a positive impact on public health.

The UK has an ageing workforce. Evidence shows that working can be beneficial for health and wellbeing, as well as fitness. Keeping employees in work can have a beneficial effect on their own and their family's health. Online tools such as LifeCheck will offer advice and help employees to set goals and targets to change their behaviour which will help improve their physical and emotional well-being.

Benefits to employers/employees

Common health problems now account for about two-thirds of sickness absence, long-term incapacity and early retirement.

Encouraging your employees to participate in health and well being programmes (such as

NHS screening programmes) when invited can benefit the Council by reducing both absenteeism and presenteeism at no added cost to the Council as an employer.

People's health and wellbeing can impact greatly on their work performance, as well as whether they are off work temporarily or permanently. This will clearly affect an organisation's productivity and businesses' profitability.

7. H07. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Pledge

“We will create an environment where anyone with past or present experience of mental health issues is valued, respected and able to flourish. This will involve providing all staff with the environment, knowledge and tools to develop and maintain emotional resilience and mental wellbeing, while raising awareness of, and providing support for, mental health in the workplace. This will include at least one of the following:

- **Encouraging all members of staff to consider the impact of their behaviours and decisions on the wellbeing of themselves and those they work with, manage and have a duty of care for. This will include creating and sustaining an organisational culture where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.**
- **Provide specific training for line managers to promote mental wellbeing and resilience. Identify early opportunities to support staff with mental health needs. This will include raising awareness amongst staff, e.g. materials promoting self-awareness, guidance on disclosure of mental ill health, how to identify early signs and symptoms and practical issues such as positive recruitment practices and managing disclosure.**
- **Providing opportunities for employees to support and develop their overall wellbeing by taking a holistic approach to a healthier life, covering nutritional awareness, physical activity and social engagement.**
- **Taking a demonstrable and positive stand against mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace, for example by supporting the ‘Time to Change’ movement.**
- **Embedding the principles of the Mental Health Workplace Adjustments Guide (developed through the Responsibility Deal’s health at work network) within HR procedures to ensure that people experiencing mental ill health are managed at work in the best way possible with reasonable flexibilities and workplace adjustments.”**

Purpose

This pledge sets out to promote workplace wellbeing for all staff and improve the provision of work related support for people with experience of mental health issues. It asks employers to promote wellbeing and resilience; support managers to recognise and respond to stress or mental health conditions; and apply practical guidance on making reasonable workplace adjustments for employees with mental illness.

Effective action on workplace wellbeing is good for organisations - facilitating delivery of core business and enhancing reputations - and good for staff - enhancing their productivity and ability to contribute and be valued. Workplace interventions to support the employment and retention of people with experience of mental illness are important elements of ensuring employers deliver their duty of care to staff and their legal responsibilities for health and safety and equalities. One in six working-age adults will experience mental health problems each year, yet over 70% of employers do not have a formal policy stress management or mental health policy.

Benefits to public health

There is an increasing body of evidence which demonstrates that good jobs promote health and wellbeing and can actively contribute to recovery from periods of illness. Employment reduces the combined costs of mental illness and unemployment to individuals and families, and to public services and local economies. Conversely unemployment has a negative impact on wellbeing and is a threat to the broader determinants of health, such as a living income and secure housing. People living with mental illness are more likely to experience poorer physical health. Both unemployment and mental illness have been shown to increase use of primary health care, social care, medication, and hospital care.

Many people with mental health conditions want to work, but attitudes to mental illness can create significant barriers to gaining or retaining work. Employment rates for people living with mental illness vary between just 16 and 35%, significantly lower than the 59% rate for people with long-term physical health problems. Mental health conditions are the most prevalent reason for people being dependent on health-related benefits. Around 75% of people on sick leave because of mental health conditions do return to work but after 20 weeks of sickness absence, the majority will eventually fall onto benefits.

Benefits to employers/employees

Healthy, motivated staff are more likely to be fully engaged and there is increasing evidence to demonstrate that good employee engagement reduces sickness absence, enhances productivity, and contributes to organisations' competitiveness. Employers have a duty of care to all staff, as well as statutory health and safety and equalities duties, and positive action on workplace wellbeing can assist with meeting these responsibilities to the benefit of both staff and the organisation.

Employers who recognise and respond supportively to employees experiencing stress or mental illness benefit by reducing the costs of presenteeism, absence, staff turnover or early retirement. Reasonable adjustments can make the difference between staff being able to remain gainfully employed and falling into unemployment with its range of health, social and economic consequences. Organisations stand to gain by retaining skill and experience and by demonstrating their credentials as a good employer, in turn generating staff loyalty and enhancing the organisation's reputation.

8. H10. Construction and Civil Engineering Industries (Housing)

Pledge

"As organisations working in the construction / civil engineering industries, we pledge to manage the causes of occupational disease and take action to improve the health and wellbeing of people working across offices and sites large and small. We recognise that prevention and early intervention is the key to success and will take on-going action on at least one of the following:

- 1. Annual reporting of the health and wellbeing of employees**
- 2. The provision of clinical occupational health services (OHS) that work in accordance with the relevant standards e.g. SEQOHS**
- 3. Arrangements to develop a programme to actively promote health and wellbeing and the effective management of health.**

Where relevant, we also pledge to encourage our subcontractors and supply chains to endorse at least one of the actions above to implement good health and wellbeing activities."

What this pledge sets out to achieve, and why it is important

Construction workers nationally have a higher overall mortality rate, independent of social class. The industry is itinerant and male-dominated and, therefore, hard to reach. The construction and civil engineering sector has an opportunity to make an impact on their health and wellbeing both in their own organisations and, in many cases, through their supply chains.

Benefits to public health

Evidence shows that, in general, being in work is good for health, and worklessness leads to poorer health. Common health problems now account for about two-thirds of sickness absence, long-term incapacity and early retirement. This pledge takes a proactive approach to addressing a range of health and wellbeing issues, which can help to improve public health.

Benefits to employers/employees

Proactively managing employees' physical and mental health brings important business benefits including a reduction of sickness absence; increased productivity; reduction in lost time due to accidents and associated costs; greater staff engagement; reduced staff turnover; and increased profitability.

Employees are more likely to take increased responsibility for their own health and wellbeing if they see a genuine commitment at the most senior level of the organisation to safeguarding and improving workplace health. For employees, keeping well and in work protects against financial hardship, promotes a better quality of life and allows people to make the most of their potential.

Alcohol Pledge:

9. A4. Tackling Under-Age Alcohol Sales

Pledge

"We commit to ensuring effective action is taken in all premises to reduce and prevent under-age sales of alcohol (primarily through rigorous application of Challenge 25)."

Purpose

This pledge will help to reduce the number of under-age purchases of alcohol in both on- and off-trade environments. It commits alcohol retailers (in both the on and off-trade) to promote and encourage the use of Challenge 25 when selling alcohol. It is generally illegal for under 18s to purchase alcohol. However, surveys show that up to 18 per cent of children aged 11-16 have purchased alcohol directly from a store or bar.

Benefits to public health

In 2009 the Chief Medical Officer for England published guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people. This advised that the consumption of alcohol during any stage of childhood can have a harmful effect on a child's development. Alcohol use during teenage years is related to a wide range of health and social problems, and young people who begin drinking before age 15 are more likely to experience problems related to alcohol.

Parents and young people should be aware that drinking, even at age 15 or over, can be harmful to health and young people's access to alcohol should be restricted. Restricting children's access to alcohol will help contribute to lowering the range and severity of health harms and behavioural problems associated with young people drinking. Although we know that most young people obtain alcohol through friends and family there is still a significant number who illegally obtain alcohol from on and off-trade premises. This is especially true of those who drink the most and are at greatest risk of harm.

The benefit to employers and employees

Having staff that are aware of the age verification rules and are trained in how to apply the schemes means it is less likely that premises will breach the rules, the penalties for which are becoming increasingly severe.

Local authorities carry out test purchasing schemes to monitor compliance, and follow up on customer complaints. Being able to demonstrate that age verification procedures have been followed and that staff are adequately trained will help make businesses less likely to fail these inspections.

Physical Activity Pledge:

10. P3. Active Travel

Pledge

"We will promote and support more active travel (walking and cycling). We will set measurable targets for this health enhancing behaviour."

Purpose

This pledge asks the Council to support and promote active travel opportunities to employees, customers, and local communities and to measure the impacts of their actions.

Two-thirds of the journeys people make are less than five miles - a distance which many people could cycle in half an hour. More than half of these trips are currently taken by car. A fifth of the journeys people make are under one mile – a distance which most people can walk in around 20 minutes. Walking and cycling are simple, low cost and effective ways for people to build physical activity into their daily routines and to achieve the Chief Medical Officer's recommendations for physical activity. They can play a role in delivering cost savings for businesses.

Benefits to public health

Regular physical activity helps reduce the risks of developing long-term/chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis and some cancers. People who are physically active reduce the risk of developing stroke and type-2 diabetes by up to 50 per cent and the risk of premature death by up to 30 per cent. The wider benefits include helping people maintain a healthy weight, contributing to better mental health - helping to combat depression and lead to an improved sense of wellbeing.

Benefits to employers/employees

Increasing active travel can reduce congestion and lower carbon emissions. It can also bring clear business benefits. In many congested towns and cities walking and cycling can provide better journey time reliability for staff and a more productive workforce.

Promoting active travel as part of a wider health and wellbeing programme for employees can reduce absenteeism, keep people economically active for longer, and increase productivity and prosperity. Research has shown, that in terms of health alone, the benefits of promoting active travel are about £2.50 for every £1 spent.

By promoting physical activity opportunities you send a clear signal that the Council takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously. Employees are also more likely to take increased responsibility for their own health and wellbeing if they see a genuine commitment at senior management level.

11. P4. Physical Activity in the Workplace

Pledge

"We will increase physical activity in the workplace, for example through modifying the environment, promoting workplace champions and removing barriers to participation during the working day."

Purpose

This pledge asks the Council to create a work environment, that encourages employees to be physically active and removes barriers in the workplace that may affect employees' ability to be more physically active. There are a number of programmes currently being delivered such as Swimming and Cycling.

Benefits to public health

Regular physical activity helps reduce the risks of developing long-term/chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis and some cancers. People who are physically active reduce the risk of developing stroke and type- 2 diabetes by up to 50 per cent and the risk of premature death by up to 30 per cent.

Benefit to employers/employees

A healthy, active population is good for business and the economy as a whole. Promoting physical activity as part of a wider health and wellbeing programme for your employees can reduce absenteeism, keep people economically active for longer, and increase your productivity and prosperity.

It sends a clear signal that your organisation takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously. Employees are more likely to take more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing if they see a genuine commitment to this at senior management level.

General

12. S1. Local engagement on the Responsibility Deal agenda

Pledge

"Guided by the Public Health Responsibility Deal Toolkit, we will encourage and support small and medium sized organisations in our area to help their employees and/or their customers to improve their health and wellbeing."

This pledge is for local authorities who wish to engage with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in their local area on the public health agenda.

SMEs employ fourteen million people (59% of private sector employment) and the out-of-home food market is dominated by small businesses.

Benefits to public health

- The main benefits are mentioned under the headings of each individual pledge.
- By taking some of the actions set out in the toolkit, local businesses will make it easier for customers and staff to make healthier choices: to eat a healthier diet and maintain a healthy weight; to drink within guidelines, to be physically active and not smoke.
- The pledge encapsulates the Government's priorities of supporting sustainable and responsible economic growth. It sees the health and growth objectives as intertwined and mutually reinforcing.
- The [2013 Budget](#) announced that employers could claim tax relief on expenditure up to £500 on health-related interventions recommended by the service. The Treasury has published a [consultation on the implementation of this health-related interventions tax relief](#) (21 June to 16 August 2013).

End