



FIND

YOUR
ACTIVE

WORKPLACE
EDITION

A Guide to an Active Workplace

For Essex Employers,
Businesses and Team Leaders

Now more than ever, movement is vital for the health of both employees and businesses. This document will help you support employee wellbeing as we deal with the impacts of the pandemic and beyond.

Employers have an important role in permitting their staff time to pause during the working day and promote movement opportunities to help practice positive mental wellbeing. We're hoping this guide will help you provide a framework and policy to implement in your workplace with employees.

Find Your Active: Workplace Edition

Active Essex, in partnership with the Essex Working Well Scheme and the Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership are providing an initiative to get workplaces across Essex, Southend and Thurrock move more. By providing regular support, offering ideas, and setting up challenges and competitions throughout 2022, it is their hope that workplaces can ensure their employees can get more active whilst at work, whether that is in an office, at home or within the community.

You can expect to see a variety of challenges to take part in as a team, training that could help upskill your employees and some valuable resources and toolkits, such as this, to help you make a lasting change in your workplace.

To provide you with regular support, offer ideas, challenges and competitions, alongside valuable resources

Why is it important for Essex workplaces to move more?

We all know getting active is essential for good health and contributes to positive mental wellbeing.

However, only 59% of our Essex population are reaching the weekly recommended 150 minutes of movement.

With many working adults spending the majority of the week at work and more time sitting down, their workplaces play a vital role in helping improve this statistic.

There are clear benefits for organisations who have employees that move regularly. These include:

	Helping to reduce employee health risks		Enhancing employee's personal effectiveness and motivation		Providing greater energy levels among staff
	Improving quality of life for your team members		Improving mental wellbeing among staff		Reducing staff absenteeism and helping with staff retention
	Helping to improve concentration levels		Improving productivity, creativity and innovation		Positively effecting the organisation's bottom line through fostering teamwork

By implementing small changes, your workplace will see the benefits long-term for both your employees and your business. Any organisation and business, large or small, can take action to promote many variations of movement and gain the benefits listed. As an employer, you can make the healthier choice an easier choice.

What could you help implement?

Movement can be introduced through simple initiatives and small changes. They don't have to cost a fortune, and some nothing at all!

When we talk about movement, it isn't just about sport or formal exercise, workplaces can be active places without having to include a gym.

So, what can you do?

By changing your **work culture** and making small implementations, it can help employees feel supported to make positive choices for their mental and physical wellbeing. These may include:

- ★ Making sure your employees know it is ok to take regular breaks from their desk, to ensure regular movement and valuable time away from the screen
- ★ Create an atmosphere with flexible working arrangements to facilitate activity; whether that be attending a gym class and working later or starting work earlier for a midday walk in addition to their lunch break
- ★ Encourage employees to use the stairs rather than the lift, if appropriate
- ★ The ability to use standing desks, as well as seated ones
- ★ Encourage walking meetings, whether that is whilst in the office, or virtually if staff are working from home
- ★ Ensure you encourage employees to participate in regular physical activity and sport outside of work and talk about your experiences in team meetings.
- ★ Ensure employee wellbeing is spoken about at every opportunity, in weekly meetings is a good start



Make the healthier choice an easier choice



Many businesses have been urged to work from home over the past few years and that still may be the case, but for those who are still travelling to work, this is the perfect opportunity to encourage **active travel** to and from the workplace. But if you're an employer who has staff working from home, you could always adopt the 'fake commute' to encourage walking, cycling or running in the time they would have otherwise travelled to work.

Ways to encourage active travel, could be:

- ★ Motivate employees to park at the far end of the car park or in a car park further away to increase their step count on the way into work
- ★ Encouraging walking, cycling or running to work if possible
- ★ Use *Bike to Work Month* or other walking challenges to encourage staff to make changes to the way they travel, hopefully making more sustainable choices.



Provide activity sessions

Sometimes being able to offer before or after work, or lunchtime activity sessions are a great way to make it even easier for staff to get moving. Whether that is bringing in a local instructor to deliver yoga or finding a local football league to join weekly, it helps to bring your workforce together socially, whilst creating a healthier lifestyle.

One way Active Essex implemented this whilst working from home, was by holding virtual Zoom activity sessions with local instructors before work and during lunchtime once a week. These were bitesize sessions and only 10-15 minutes long, but enough time to get staff energised and moving, and stimulated for the workday ahead.

If this is something you would like to implement, but not sure how to, do get in touch using the emails at the end of this guide.



Incentivise & challenge

With all of the above ideas, it is vital you create an atmosphere where employees feel safe and supported. **Incentivisation** is a great way to encourage participation, with prizes and rewards, alongside competitions and regular **challenges** that make everyone feel involved. Walking challenges and team away days are not only a great way to bring the team together but helps give focus to the ways they can get moving. If you need some additional resource around this, let Active Essex know by filling in this **form**.

The Find Your Active: Workplace Edition will be holding a number of these throughout the year, so make sure you are signed up to receive regular updates and resources, by clicking **here**.



Baker Labels Active Workplace of the Year 2021

Baker Labels emphasises to their staff the importance of wellbeing. Pre-pandemic they held a weekly walking club to help boost staff motivation, whilst encouraging staff to sign up and run/walk, as part of Team Bakers, at their local fun run, and to join Bakers FC as they compete in their local 5-a-side football league.

When working from home staff completed a virtual walking challenge to walk from Brentwood to Barcelona and then on to Tokyo ahead of the Olympics. This gave each individual a focus and goal to work towards.

More recently, the team are training together for the Three-Peaks challenge. Their staff have praised the efforts of the employer for encouraging such a range of physical activity opportunities and in turn the impact it has had on their wellbeing.

Adopting and communicating an active workplace policy

As part of this guide, the Find Your Active: Workplace Edition team are asking you to adopt *Move your Workplace Policy* which will help you implement initiatives and schemes within your workplace to support staff in getting active whilst at work or working from home.

We invite you to download the document [here](#), complete your goals and aspirations, detail how you will do it and then share this with your employees. This will become the first step in showcasing to them the importance of supporting their physical and mental health, and your business will then begin to reap the benefits.

Active Essex would love to hear how you are going to implement this, and how you get on. We would love to share your stories and learnings to help inspire other workplaces to follow in your footsteps, so fill in this **short form** and let us know if you need any additional support from Active Essex.

Together we can create an active Essex, to improve everyone's health and wellbeing.

Key resources, links and further support available



The Find Your Active YouTube channel, allows access to almost 300 free activity sessions and workouts to direct staff to. From breathing techniques and Tai Chi, to Swing Dance and Yoga. Visit the channel [here](#).



It's so important to simply get outside in the fresh air. Read about the benefits and what can be done, via the Active Essex webpage, [here](#).



The Working Well scheme are offering a free health and wellbeing programme for your organisations to support your staff with their health and wellbeing issues. Explore what they have to offer, as well as their Working Well Accreditation, [here](#).

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Get in touch with our Find Your Active: Workplace Edition team by emailing:
Courtenay.Mosley@activeessex.org for workplace initiatives and support
Holly.Adams@activeessex.org for any communications surrounding the initiative