



Physical Activity and Active Travel

A toolkit for Swindon employers

Introduction

Employees that engage in physical activity typically have healthier Immune systems, are more productive and focused, have a happier outlook, and can handle stressful situations better. In England, one in five men and one in four women are classified as being Inactive, meaning they engage in fewer than 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise per week. In addition to having an effect on workers' health and well-being, this may result in greater costs for your business.

Compared to other South West local authorities and the average for the region, which is 71%, Swindon has a comparatively lower percentage of physically active adults, at 69%.

Physical activity is essential for the good health and wellbeing of employees within your business. Increasing physical activity can help reduce your chances of developing chronic and acute illnesses such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, osteoarthritis, colorectal cancer and anxiety.

Active travel is a non-motorised way of making your journey. It involves being more physically active by walking, cycling, scooting and wheeling (using a wheelchair or mobility aid) to your destination. These are easy, inclusive and affordable ways for employees to travel sustainably and lead more healthier lives.

Already more than 4% of commutes to work are made by cycling in Swindon. That is double the national average! Join other responsible commuters in Swindon and start actively travelling.

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist you in encouraging your staff to remain active in the upcoming days, weeks, and months. It offers guidance and advice on how to help you empower your staff to incorporate more exercise into their workdays.

Benefits of physical activity and active travel in the workplace

Actively travelling to work via cycling or walking is a great way to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. There are so many benefits to taking an active approach to your commute or taking up regular exercise for your workplace and community. Some of these benefits include:



- **Less absenteeism** – Employees that take part in regular exercise report less illness and tend to recover from illnesses more quickly. Physical activity also helps prevent the development of musculoskeletal disorders (including back pain).



- **Work satisfaction** - Employees who exercise report feeling more satisfied with their jobs, having better focus and mental alertness, and having better cooperation and relationships with co-workers.



- **Productivity** – Increased physical activity among staff members has shown to improve production, cause greater ingenuity and creativity, and produce higher-quality goods and services.



- **Mental health** – Physical activity enables staff members to manage their stress and mental health conditions thus improving motivation and creating a better working atmosphere.



- **Cost efficient** - Given the rising cost of living, travel actively for your commute and save on expensive fuel and car parking costs.



- **Environmentally friendly** - Sustainable forms of transport help lower your carbon footprint. This helps reduce your contribution to global warming and keeps the air clean.



- **Healthy lifestyle** - Exercise does not have to be intense. Active travel can improve your cardiovascular health and your fitness even if you parking further away from your workplace or cycling with your kids to work.



- **Congestion** - Help keep the air in Swindon clean by limiting your car use. This will prevent unnecessary air and noise pollution as well as improve the health of the residents of Swindon.

What can be done to increase physical activity?

Employers have a responsibility to create safe and healthy working environments. Physical activity is not limited to a sport or formal exercise. The workplace can also be a physically active environment without needing gym equipment. Employers could promote the following activities that can increase the physical activity of staff:



- Taking the stairs instead of the lift.



- Parking cars further from the workplace to encourage walking into work.



- Encourage staff to participate in face-to-face meetings so that they move away from their desks.



- Organise company sports teams for activities such as football or netball to play against other local businesses to create motivation.



- Develop an active travel plan that encourages staff to walk or cycle into work.



- Organise events and challenges which staff members can take part in such as Bike to Work day, local fun runs or a workplace pedometer challenge.



- Schedule weekly wellbeing walks for staff.



- Encourage regular breaks and recommend that staff use that opportunity to be physically active (i.e go for a walk, go to the gym, yoga sessions, gardening workshops).

What can be done to encourage active travel?

Our partner organisation “Swindon Travel Choices” have a fantastic range of initiatives and resources that can help your employees and residents of Swindon to commute more actively. We want to help you find ways to travel that save you time and money, improve your wellbeing and local environment.

Plan Your Commute

Plan your journey to work with Swindon Travel Choices to find the best routes available for sustainable or active transport.

Change Your Drive

Reduce your personal emissions by sharing your commute with others using Car Share Swindon. Only use a car when you need it by joining Swindon Car Club!

Cycle Training

Encourage employees to attend free cycle training, so that they can confidently commute to work by bike. Check the Swindon Travel Choices website for more information.

Travel Planning

Use the resources available on Swindon Travel Choices or network with other employers on SWIFT to create your own company travel plan & encourage employees to use alternatives to cars.

Stay Active Whilst Working at Home

As more people are working remotely, try and encourage employees to use their usual commute time to instead be active and go for a short walk. This can benefit your workforce as this will help improve employee’s mental health, keep them healthy and also maintain concentration.

Incentives and Prizes

It is a great idea to incentivize active travel by offering awards to colleagues that participate and support active travel initiatives in the workplace. This will help create a very supportive atmosphere where employees feel acknowledged for their efforts. Even creating healthy competition through active travel challenges will encourage employees to participate in active travel.

What information can employers provide?

By providing the appropriate resources and information, you can enable your staff and colleagues to be more physically active. The information and resources that you can provide around physical activity opportunities include:



Local sports facilities, sports clubs, weekly events and workplace challenges.



The Swindon Travel Choices interactive cycling and walking maps to help plan your active commute.



Cycle parking facilities, changing rooms and shower facilities.



Cycling safety equipment (e.g. Helmet, Reflective jackets, Bike lights, repair kits and bike locks).



Cycle to work schemes such as Cyclescheme is an employee benefit that saves you 23-39% on a bike and accessories. You pay nothing upfront and the payments are taken tax efficiently from your salary by your employer.



A relaxed dress code for those walking or cycling into work.

Which organisations can support us?



Bike2Work Scheme is a free employee benefit approved by the government, designed to get more people cycling to work and living healthier lives. Employees save up to 48.25% on the cost of bikes and equipment.



Swindon Travel Choices offer personalised travel plans and have developed a free online travel plan training course, so any individual within any organisation can learn more about travel plan elements. The training is split into short bitesize modules, with the aim they can be dipped into at a time to suit the employee.



Wesport offer workshops and training opportunities for staff members to become physical activity champions within their workplace. This organisation delivers an interactive course suitable for all staff members, providing information, advice and guidance on physical activity in the workplace.



Modeshift STARS empowers organisations by providing a centre of excellence for developing, delivering, and monitoring travel plans. Modeshift STARS offers a national accreditation standard for business, education, and community organisations that have demonstrated excellence in supporting walking, cycling, and other forms of sustainable travel by developing and implementing an effective travel plan.



Sustrans works with hundreds of employers across the UK to support them in reducing single-occupancy car journeys commutes to and from work, and business travel. On their website they have resources that can help you understand the needs of your workplace and what initiatives to implement.

Self-Evaluation Tool

For each element of the framework you will need to find appropriate evidence, answer a number of questions and, rate your organisation. The ratings are:

>> **Red - High risk** – Your organisation has started to look at required interventions and may have introduced a small number. There are low levels of data on the impact, and your organisation needs to build on interventions further to become more effective.

>> **Orange - Medium risk** – The organisation has a number of successful interventions in place, supported by strong data to suggest provision is working for employees in the organisation. There is more that can be done to support employees.

>> **Green - Low risk** – The organisation exceeds in this area, there are many successful preventative interventions in place and data identifies that employees are well supported.

It's up to you to identify the most appropriate sources of evidence and data when rating each element. Often, employee engagement provides the best source of evidence. There is no requirement to enter any data, but it is best practice to comment on your sources of evidence and what they are telling you, to support your rating and any subsequent actions. You can also record current strengths, areas for improvement and actions as you progress to help you plan your next steps.

Self-Evaluation Tool

Line Of Enquiry	What does this look like?	RAG & Evidence	Action and Action Owner	Review Date
Does your organisation conduct an annual staff wellbeing survey?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organisation and leaders agree that an annual wellbeing survey takes place. - The survey is conducted with a clear start and finish date. - The survey is promoted on the staff intranet. - The survey is promoted by staff directorate heads. - The survey is promoted by team managers. - There are clear referral pathways in place within the surveys. 			
Is your workplace currently developing a travel plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term policies and strategies implemented to encourage more sustainable travel to the workplace. - Cooperating with "Swindon Travel Choices" so they can help develop a travel plan for your business. 			
Have you surveyed your workplace?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build up a picture of how easy it is for staff to participate in physical activity either by active travel, fitting exercise into their working day or participating in sports outside of working hours. Identify areas of improvement by creating a staff survey. 			
Have you created opportunities to be part of a wider movement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals find it easier to modify their personal behaviours when they are part of a group, so take part in national initiatives such as Bike Week, National walking month or national fitness day. 			

Self-Evaluation Tool

Line of enquiry	What does this look like?	RAG & Evidence	Action and action owner	Review date
Have you created a route map to your workplace?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To encourage new employees and visitors to travel more actively, provide travel directions to your business in the healthiest order possible.- Make sure to offer the option of car sharing.			
Have you encouraged car-sharing and bike buddying for new cyclists?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Find out more about the potential for car-sharing or investigate car club membership options in your area.- You can also help staff set up a bike buddy scheme where experienced commuter who cycle to work can show new cyclists the most efficient and safest way to cycle to work.			
Have you appointed any staff exercise champions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Employees that enjoy walking or cycling to work are a great asset to your business.- Make an investment into these colleagues and motivate them to inform their peers.- Remember to use payslip messaging, articles in your company's newsletter or e-news, and posters in the workplace to inform staff about the benefits of active travel and regular exercise.- These champions can help organise events and activities encouraging active travel and physical exercise.			

Self-Evaluation Tool

Line of enquiry	What does this look like?	RAG & Evidence	Action and action owner	Review date
<p>Have you audited the facilities for active travel or physical exercise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does your workplace have the appropriate storage and security for cyclists? - Is there an on-site shower for staff members? - Are their changing rooms available for employees? - Are there electric charging points for electric cars or electric bikes? 			
<p>Have you considered financial and practical support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To assist your workforce in spreading the expenses of a new bike over 12 tax-free instalments, sign up for the Cycle to Work program. - You could think about providing monthly loans for public transport season tickets. - You may buy a pool of bikes as well as purchase security equipment and tools for bike maintenance to keep in the workplace. - On rainy days, you could supply supply umbrellas to those that wish to walk. 			