



North East

Better Health at Work Award

Benefits for Business



North East Better Health at Work Award



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Introduction

The *Better Health, Fairer Health* strategy¹ aims to make people living in the North East the healthiest in the country within a generation. The region is putting in place the foundations necessary to transform health and wellbeing and overcome the economic, social and structural consequences of its past dependence on traditional industries.

Improving the health of our workforce will be critical to achieving this ambitious aim, particularly in those areas of significant deprivation and long-standing poor health. With an ageing population, there is also a need to consider policies to encourage older people back into the workforce and help those already in work to remain in work.

We know that work itself can have positive physical and mental health benefits. The workplace is also an ideal setting for promoting a healthy lifestyle and taking part in health improving activities has been found to boost morale and team working.



¹*Better Health, Fairer Health. A Strategy for 21st Century Health and Well-being in the North East of England (February 2008) www.phne.org.uk*

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The Business Case

Promoting a healthy workplace has considerable benefits for employers and can lead to decreased absenteeism, enhanced productivity and improved performance as well as enhancing an organisation's reputation and standing in the community.

The financial cost to local business of ill health should not be underestimated. According to the 2008 Annual Absence survey carried out by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development, workplace absence is costing the average employer £666 per employee every year. Employee absence costs employers 8 working days for every member of staff per year; representing 3.5% of working time.

Stress and other mental health conditions are now among the main causes of employee absence and the increase in obesity is also a major issue. It is estimated that 60% of the population do not participate in levels of physical activity that will promote good health. Sickness absence costs the UK economy an estimated £12.7 billion each year and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that stress alone costs business £3.8 billion per year.

Taking part in the [Better Health at Work Award](#) will support you in addressing these issues – and will provide recognition for your achievements in improving the health of your staff, your business, and the wider community.

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The Award Scheme

The [Better Health at Work Award](#) recognises the efforts of local employers in addressing health issues within the workplace setting. The award scheme is flexible and is not reliant on size, location or type of business.

Many organisations already promote healthy lifestyles and consider the health of their employees. This award will recognise the achievements of these organisations and help them move forward in a structured and supported way.

For those organisations who have not considered promoting health at work, taking part in this award will help you to reap the rewards of encouraging a healthy workforce.

There are three levels to this award, Bronze, Silver and Gold with appropriate criteria at each stage. A Continuous Excellence standard has also been developed to encourage organisations to sustain their achievements and support others.

If you decide to participate in the award scheme you will be supported by health improvement/public health specialists who will guide you and your employees towards better health.



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Benefits



Participating in the [Better Health at Work Award](#) will help you work towards:

- A healthier workforce
- Less sickness absence
- Lower employee turnover
- A reduction in insurance premiums
- Greater employee motivation
- An enhanced company image

Your employees will see:

- Improved working conditions
- Health information at work
- Practical help to improve their own and their families' health
- Improved morale and motivation

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Achieving an Award

The award is designed to be completed over a three year period – one year for each level – but there is flexibility for those organisations who need it. This gives organisations time to plan the strategy they wish to adopt and also not to infringe too much on the day to day work activity. This award may change the culture of your organisation and therefore needs time to be accepted.

Employers will be required to devote time to the award and appoint health advocates who will be the key contact between the organisation and the award co-ordinator, organise events and activities in the workplace and collect the required information for the award portfolio. Although this task should not be too onerous, time should be allocated and support provided to the individuals concerned.

Taking part in the award scheme does not affect the participant's obligation to comply with the law, including health and safety and employment law. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure they are legally compliant in these matters and, therefore the awarding body cannot be held accountable for any shortfalls in legislative compliance as a result of participation in the scheme.

The local award co-ordinator will be responsible for assessing if the workplace is meeting the criteria and, for those companies meeting the required standards, will arrange for the appropriate certificate to be awarded.

Many employers wishing to participate in the award scheme will already have achieved some of the criteria and with a little effort will easily qualify and be able to move onto the next level.

Further information on improving health in the workplace and details of those areas participating in the scheme can be found at www.phne.org.uk by clicking on [What's going on](#) and then [workplace health](#).

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Award Criteria - Bronze Level

The **Bronze Level** will raise basic awareness of workplace health and will include, but not be restricted to:



- A health needs assessment
- Management commitment to health improvement in the workplace
- Promoting health issues in a simple format eg. using leaflets, posters and displays
- Mechanisms for consulting staff on health issues
- Promoting healthy eating options
- General awareness of how health can be affected by the work activity
- Support for positive mental health and well-being in the workplace

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Award Criteria - Silver Level

This builds upon the Bronze Level and will include additional health promotion activities, including the introduction of a number of policies.

The Silver Level will include but not be restricted to:

- Policy documents eg. on drug and alcohol issues, mental health and wellbeing
- Participation in local, regional or national campaigns
- Promoting physical activity
- Evidence of health risk reduction for identified significant risks
- Equality and diversity issues



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Award Criteria - Gold Level

This level will require companies to look outside their own organisation and promote health in the wider community.



The **Gold Level** will include but not be restricted to:

- Health to be promoted in the wider community and to families of the workforce
- Employees should be encouraged to have annual health check
- A minimum 3 year health strategy and one-year action plan for health improvement activities
- Environmental management systems to be in place eg. recycling schemes and travel plans



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The [Better Health at Work Award](#) is a scheme that rewards an organisation for its efforts and achievements in building a healthy workforce.

An award scheme of this nature only works with commitment, not only from management but also from the workforce.

Taking part will not only help to improve your health but will give you the chance to enjoy a range of activities, build better working relationships with colleagues across the organisation and encourage a good working atmosphere.



Council staff in Northumberland taking part in a Stair Challenge

"The workplace can be the location for a real catalyst for changing behaviours and practices. We know that safety and risk management has a real impact on people's health, these awards go way beyond that, seeing the workplace, through good partnership activity between employers, employees and key agencies, as a key driver of better health and improved wellbeing throughout the region."

Kevin Rowan, Regional Secretary of the TUC, Northern Region



Business Card



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