

How to develop a workplace health scheme

Where do I start?

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to improving staff wellbeing evidence base on the most effective initiatives and approaches is constantly evolving and can provide a useful basis for reviewing your approach and making decisions.

1. Decide Objectives

Be it to support staff recruitment and retention, drive integration in your team or reduce staff absence, the development of your workplace wellbeing scheme must stem from your business objectives. How could a programme help your organisation to become more productive or promote a more positive environment for staff? Start by asking colleagues what potential health issues they perceive in the workplace and how they think a workplace wellbeing programme could help them personally.

Consider the range of jobs you offer and the diversity of your employees. Jobs can differ greatly in their physical requirements and a workplace health scheme should seek to include everyone, whether be it an active manual factory worker or a sedentary job such as a long-haul HGV driver.

2. Establish resources

Workplace wellbeing schemes don't need to be expensive, but they do need to be cost effective. Find out what resources you can make use of, be it a temporary meeting room / Pilates 'studio', or local sports facilities. As in business, in the development of your programme people will be your best resource; collectively they will know the local area and have the creativity needed to develop and roll out an engaging programme.

3. Create a project team

To launch and maintain a successful campaign in the long-term, you will need a committed team of 'champions' to undertake the programme development, activity planning and communication of any events. A mix of departmental representation, seniority and personalities will encourage diversity and will also help you spread the word. Empowering colleagues to take ownership of their programme will encourage staff interaction.

4. Develop a programme

With an eye on your overall objectives and identified staff needs, plot out what achievable activity can take place throughout the year (while bearing in mind that ad hoc staff activities are also important and effective at boosting staff morale). Encourage your project team to assign activities to individual team members to ensure that this work, which will be in addition to their existing work responsibilities, is fairly distributed.

5. Launch the programme

When launching a new programme or when starting a new phase of your existing programme, make sure that all staff are aware of the programme's aims and are encouraged to feed in ideas and comments. This programme should be designed to empower all members of staff and improve their workplace experience.

Make the most of every communication method available to you (eg meetings, intranet, bulletin boards or email). If employees don't know about events or initiatives, they will not make use of them. A specially designed intranet page or notice board will keep colleagues up to date and can also encourage honest feedback and suggestions. Equally, a regular confidential staff questionnaire can provide useful inspiration or guidance.

Take a series of steps rather than making lots of changes at once. This way, you can see what does / doesn't work well.

6. Evaluate

It is essential that you review the success of your workplace wellbeing programme regularly, through staff surveys and through consistent evaluation of activity – what worked or didn't work and why?

