

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENDA

CONTRIBUTION MADE BY ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION

HEALTH AND SAFETY / WORK AND WELLBEING

INTRODUCTION

Activity in this directorate has been lead by the Health and Safety Manager together with the directorate Work and Wellbeing Group for the past 4 years.

The activity within the directorate has been directed by reference to two key documents, *Choosing Health* (DoH) and *Revitalising Health and Safety* (HSE). Both these documents contain recommendations on how local authorities are able to contribute to the public health agenda targets.

The main target groups for activity in this directorate have been those who perceive they have a weight problem, those who wish to improve their lifestyles to achieve better fitness levels and those who feel the need to build in 'de-stress' time to their life and those who might benefit in 'back to work' activity after prolonged absences. Walking activity lead by the directorate has also been offered to a growing number of members of the public in Country Parks and on the footpath network.

As an employer the activities offered demonstrate a positive approach to our 'duty of care' to employees as well as recognising the productivity benefits in having a fit, healthy and happy workforce.

ACTIVITY

A) Obesity targets

Weight loss challenges have been run for the past 2 years. These encourage workplace teams to participate in sociable weight loss projects over a 6 month period with regular weigh ins and newsletters to participants. Participants are provided with help and advice on weight loss through the 'social circle' which develops. The current project involves 50 staff members at Invicta House with a cumulative weight loss of 15 stone since mid January. This activity has been run at minimal cost for the provision of digital scales for the participating groups to use in the workplace.

B) Fitness and lifestyle targets

Dance is a popular activity at lunchtimes and after work. The directorate has run salsa, line dance sessions and more recently belly dance sessions for staff. These prove popular for short term programmes and so tend to be run in 10 week rotas and change according to popularity. Participants all achieve and report improved fitness as well as weight loss not to mention improved motivation.

In the past 6 months participation has been approximately

Salsa – 30 participants registered

Line Dance – 28 participants registered

Belly dance – 30 participants registered.

Walking is organised on an ad hoc basis or as part of a programmed range of activity. The Country Parks Service and Public Rights of Way teams regularly publish self-guided walks information and offer led walks in different parts of Kent for the general public. These have led to the establishment of local walking groups around the county and have assisted in the success of the ActivMobs programme. Links have been made with GP surgeries for referrals for health and mobility improvement when the service has provided leaders to facilitate local groups.

Nordic Walking has been spearheaded by E&R in Kent. A project was started 4 years ago and has taken some while to become established. The directorate has 6 trained instructors who can lead sessions for:

Staff groups for team teambuilding or general fitness sessions.

Public participation at taster sessions run monthly from country parks during the summer or Sunday morning led walks from different venues.

Two self-sustaining groups now walk on a weekly basis using Nordic walking poles as a result of E&R facilitation. ActivMobs Kent have Nordic walking as one of their registered activities.

This activity involved the purchase of poles (Approx £500 total) but revenue is made from the taster sessions and the sale of poles through country parks.

Approximately 250 plus people have signed up to Nordic walking programmes over the last 2 years including taster activity, one off events and group activities.

Walking Challenges. Two walking challenges have been sponsored in the past 2 years – Walk the Equator and the Pole to Pole Walk. These are specifically staff based and have engaged approximately 30 – 40 people each time with a challenge to complete a specified cumulative distance in a set time. Minimal costs for pedometers issued to staff. Substantial outcomes from fitness levels and lost weight have been achieved.

Sports / team activities. The directorate contributed to the refurbishment of the Invicta squash court which is now seeing extensive usage. Additionally the directorate has ‘ sponsored’ 5 a side football, netball and rounders teams by buying equipment and shirts (approx £300 total).

C) Relaxation / Mental health

Stress Audits. The directorate carried out a stress audit 2 years ago and action plans were drawn up to assist in correcting failures at that time. A new stress management programme is due to start as part of this year’s health and safety business plan to introduce the concept on ‘Management Standards’, a rolling

programme using a nationally based HSE benchmarking tool which should assist managers in building good stress control strategies.

Yoga / Neck & Shoulder Massage / Reflexology / Chiropody A monthly visit to a number of offices round the county by a trained masseuse has been very popular for the past 3 years. This is run by professional masseuses who charge for the service but are subsidised by the directorate H&S and WWB funds. Room hire charges are also incurred for HQ activity. Yoga runs twice a week at HQ. Reflexology, Indian head massage and chiropody sessions run once a month at HQ, are run by professional therapists who charge for the service but are subsidised by the directorate H&S and WWB funds. The yoga sessions attract a core group of attendees each week whilst the therapies are usually fully booked each month (18 persons per therapy per day).

Positive Health Day. An annual event which identifies new activity / therapy which might be offered. People can try the therapies for free on the day and are then asked to complete a questionnaire on lifestyle and therapies or activities they may wish to see offered in future. This is reported back to H&S and WWB management groups who then decide whether to expand on provision the following year.

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