Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This Practitioner Guide is the result of an evaluation of Sport Wales’ two year Workplace Physical Activity programme. This has been running in dozens of workplaces throughout Wales and covering the private and public sector, including employers as diverse as Kellogg’s in Wrexham and Cardiff City Council. A full list of employers – as well as details on the workplaces we worked with as case studies and the research methods is available in our evaluation report on the Sport Wales website.

The activities that have been on offer at these workplaces are equally diverse. They range from setting up new gyms to bike hire and storage; from yoga at lunchtime to six week tennis courses. The evaluation of the Workplace Physical Activity programme has looked at how these activities have made a difference – to employees through better health and fitness – and to employers through reduced sickness absence and a more motivated workforce.

We have also been finding out ‘what works’ when promoting physical activity in the workplace – so how can you get managers behind the scheme and employees to take part? And we have been learning about some of the things that don’t work so well – potential bear traps – so that new schemes can learn from Sport Wales’ programme and avoid making mistakes.

This guide is designed for practitioners – employers, managers or groups of employees - looking to set up a workplace physical activity scheme. It might be one modest activity or a full programme but whatever your idea is this should be useful to help you get support for the activity, get people taking part and feeling better for it, and finding out what difference it is making – to employers and employees.

The guide is divided into sections about four different aspects of setting up and sustaining a workplace physical activity scheme – all illustrated with real examples from the case studies and other findings from the evaluation.

These are:

- Making the business case
- Designing your workplace physical activity intervention
- Making it happen
- Sustaining and growing the programme
- You can also find the complete set of good practice case studies on the Sport Wales website: www........

BEST WISHES FOR YOUR WORKPLACE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME
If you are thinking about introducing a workplace physical activity programme, you’ll need good business reasons for doing it. Not all employers will see the health and fitness of employees as their responsibility. To convince senior managers, you’ll need to explain the benefits to the organisation. You’ll also need to explain to staff what they’ll get from it. The business case will depend on what matters to your organisation. It won’t just be about staff welfare. For some it’s about the bottom line – saving money and reducing costs. Others want to improve the organisation’s image. Your business case needs to tap into these concerns and help managers see how physical activity will help the business as well as employees.
The evidence is mounting that workplace health and wellbeing projects (including physical activity programmes) make a difference to the bottom line. National research by Business in the Community and PWC both found companies that invest in health and wellbeing of their staff enjoy reduced sickness absence and reduced staff turnover and improved staff retention.

This can make a big difference to the bottom line. The World Health Organisation’s research shows that, over three years, employers benefit from, on average:

- 27% reduction in sickness absence
- 26% reduction in sick leave costs
- 32% reduction in compensation and disability claims

PWC also found that for every £1 an employer invests in staff health and wellbeing they get an average of £4.10 back.

Some of the other benefits that employers in Wales are expecting to get from their physical activity programmes include:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced stress and improved mental health, which are big causes of sickness absence
- Improved corporate image
- Reputation as a caring, responsible employer and an ‘employer of choice’

An employer of choice
As a nuclear power station, Magnox North has obligations to protect the health and safety of staff. But it wants to go beyond its legal, protection requirements to genuinely promote and improve the wellbeing of staff. The recent investment in a gym is part of the company’s commitment to caring for its workforce and showing local people that it is a good employer.

Healthy products, healthy factory
Kellogg’s make a range of foods including breakfast cereals and cereal bars. They actively promote healthy eating for customers through campaigns such as the Special K Challenge. Kellogg’s wants its workforce to reflect this healthy brand image and see workplace physical activity as a way to encourage staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Walking the talk
Lots of local authorities in our research were keen to ‘walk the talk’ in public health and sustainable travel. Now that local authorities are in the process of taking over responsibility for public health, encouraging their own workforce to be healthy will be

CASE STUDY

i - Business in the Community. 2009. Healthy People = Healthy Profits
ii - Price Waterhouse Coopers for the DWP. 2008. Building the Case for Wellness
As well as demonstrating the bottom line benefits, your business case needs to explain how a physical activity programme will contribute to your organisation’s unique goals and ambitions.

Think about what your organisation is trying to achieve, its values and its priorities. Have a look at the corporate strategy or business plan if you need to find out more. Then work out what and how a physical activity programme would contribute towards these.

Check whether your organisation is already working towards the Welsh Corporate Health Standard – the workplace quality initiative that recognises practices to promote the health and wellbeing of employees. A physical activity programme can help meet the objectives of the Standard and so should make sense to senior managers.

More information on the Welsh Corporate Health Standard is available online: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/improvement/work/corporate/?lang=en

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Aligning with corporate objectives
North Wales Fire and Rescue and North Wales Police mapped out the organisational objectives and goals and identified how a physical activity programme would help deliver these. These weren’t necessarily financial or ‘hard’ results, but were really important to the organisation.

Seeing the bigger picture
Local authorities often see the business case in a wider context. For example, a healthier workforce will use fewer health services. This represents a saving to the NHS, not the local authority, but is still important to the local authority because it makes a difference to the public purse more generally.
1 - Making the business case

Challenges to prepare for

Demonstrating impact
With so many things going on in the organisation at any one time, it will be difficult to show for certain the exact amount of money a physical activity programme has saved.

Be pragmatic and think about what a physical activity programme contributes, rather than trying to come up with an absolutely accurate financial value. Use a mixture of evidence to show how it contributes – if you can demonstrate that the programme makes a difference, then that will be convincing enough.

Building on the evidence base by working together
North Wales Fire and Rescue and North Wales Police services have worked together for the past two years on workplace physical activity, co-funding a co-ordinator to lead the work.

With two years evidence under their belts, the organisations have been able to demonstrate clear alignment and contribution to organisational objectives, and realistically predict the impact of continuing the co-ordinator post. Based on this evidence, the organisations have committed funds to continue employing the workplace physical activity co-ordinator.

Building on the evidence base to get continuation funding
Aberystwyth University is currently using the evidence from its Active Workplace Challenge project to create a case for continuing the workplace physical co-ordinator role.

This is against a backdrop of significant uncertainty in the organisation, as senior managers need to make significant cuts across the University’s budgets.
1 - Making the business case

Risk aversion
Some public sector employers are understandably concerned about how an investment in physical activity might look, especially during times of job cuts and budget reductions.

Physical activity could help downsized, hard-pressed organisations to maintain their performance, but it needs to be positioned very carefully. Senior managers in our research often found it easier to support a project if they didn’t need to use their own funding for it.

If you are just starting out, think about starting small and low-cost until you build up the evidence that it makes a difference. This will allow you to build a compelling business case for more investment in future.

"We are trying to sell active workplace as an investment – it’s not just having a swim! But when times are tough, it’s a difficult thing to fund."
(Workplace Gym Manager)

Making a compelling business case
Both Kellogg’s and Magnox North have been able to make a financial case for continued investment in their physical activity programmes. They’ve used a combination of quantitative and qualitative information, including reductions in sickness absence. Whilst they can’t say for certain that their physical activity programmes have been the only factor, they’ve used feedback from their workers as evidence to show that it is making a significant contribution to these reductions.
1. Be clear about what you’re trying to achieve.
You must be able to convince senior managers of the benefits to the organisation, and you must be able to sell the idea to staff too. You can’t do that unless you are crystal clear about the purpose of introducing physical activity to the workplace.

2. Get the message across
Many people will need to be convinced of the benefits of workplace physical activity. Obviously senior managers are the ones who can approve or reject your plan, so you have to persuade them. However, they are not the only people you need to get on side. Line managers are crucial. They are the ones who decide whether staff can take time out for physical activity. If they don’t see the benefits, they can act as a powerful blockage.

And last but not least, the employees. They are your ‘target market’ – without their buy in, there will be no physical activity programme, because nobody will participate. They need to see a benefit for themselves, so make sure you can explain all the benefits that they might get and why the organisation is doing it.

You might also want to think about talking to the press. They are always interested in good news stories about employers improving productivity and caring for their workforce at the same time. If you are a public sector employer, the press need to understand the facts about why you’re investing in physical activity at a time of spending cuts. Better they get a straight story from you than a biased picture that leaks out.

Using technology
To sell the benefits and communicate the messages of the physical activity programme the health and wellbeing co-ordinator at North Wales Fire and Rescue and North Wales Police used a ‘podcast’ style approach. This involved him videoing himself speaking about various aspect of the programme, why the organisation was doing it and what people could get out of their involvement. This was an effective way of reaching and communicating with staff at all levels in the organisation whilst doing it in a fun and upbeat way.

Look at the bottom line
This useful ‘Workplace Wellbeing Tool’ can help you estimate the savings that a physical activity scheme could help your workplace make. This will add a strength to your business case. You can find the tool here: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/health-work-and-well-being
So, you’ve persuaded your senior managers to support a physical activity programme in the workplace. What next? It’s time to design your programme. This takes a lot of thought and talking to people.

“When you think you’ve thought about it enough, go away and think about it some more”

(Workplace Physical Activity Co-ordinator)
2 - Designing your physical activity programme

Consulting with employees

The first thing you need to do is find out what employees are interested in doing. Some of the organisations in our research had introduced activities that didn’t interest people, who then voted with their feet. If employees feel that they have been involved, and have had a say in the programme’s design, they are much more likely to take part in the activities you organise. A consultation with your workforce will help you understand:

• What activities and/or facilities they would like and why
• What will make it easier for people to take part e.g. timings, locations
• What might get in the way of people taking part

You can consult in lots of different ways:

• Talking to people informally
• Notice boards
• Team meetings
• Intranet page
• Staff survey

“ Our organisation has a culture of tea and toast every morning at 10. I’ve tapped into that and I make sure I’m in the canteen so I can chat to people about physical activity. ”
(Workplace Physical Activity Co-ordinator)

Of course, you need to manage people’s expectations. If the programme has little or no funding, then tell staff – this allows them to respond appropriately to what you’re asking them.

You also need to show that you have listened. Provide feedback to employees about what you found out from your consultation and how this has informed the design of the programme. You could do this through a newsletter, the intranet or talking to people at team meetings and break times.

Designing your programme:

Tips from Physical Activity Co-ordinators

• Talk to people – know what your customer wants
• Don’t reinvent the wheel – use existing products, such as Cyber Coach or local facilities, if they meet your needs.
• Stay motivated – don’t worry if you try things and they don’t work. Find out why, and then try something else
• Simple ideas are usually the best
People are making a trade off between £3.50 for a class versus £3.50 for a pint. (Workplace physical activity co-ordinator)

I know people don’t think that a few pound is a lot of money but I really would have to think hard about whether I could justify spending that on myself – I’d maybe need to stop doing it if the subsidy ended. (Physical activity participant)

You need to think about whether you will charge staff for taking part in activities that you organise in the workplace. Some employers in our research provided activities free of charge, because of the funding they received from Sport Wales. When the funding came to an end, some had difficulties persuading people to pay for the activities.

Others charged from the very beginning to cover the costs of an activity – e.g. the instructor’s fees, transport – and found people were willing to pay. Our research and lots of other studies have shown that people are often more attracted to the convenience of workplace-based exercise than to subsidised costs. It’s hard to fit exercise into a busy day, especially if life outside of work involves family commitments. Therefore lots of people like the option of fitting their exercise into their working day, and a small fee probably won’t put them off.

Be aware that, if you make the activities free at the beginning, staff might get the wrong message if they have to pay for them later. They might interpret it as a signal that the management no longer values physical activity.

**Charging for activities**

Conwy Council ran a 10-week ‘More Active Health’ programme that gave participants a personal workbook. The council and North Wales Police and Fire and Rescue clubbed together to buy the books, as there was a minimum order. They then charged staff at cost for the workbook, which people were happy to pay.

**Free Taster sessions**

Aberystwyth University charges a small fee to participants to cover the costs of their exercise classes. However, they also run a subsidised ‘Fit & Well’ promotion each year including free taster sessions that encourage staff to see what activities are available and might want to try.
2 - Designing your physical activity programme

What type of activity?

There are lots of different types of activities that you can organise, depending on what employees tell you they want. All have their pros and cons, and the organisations in our research have learned a lot about what works and what doesn’t.

Importantly, don’t assume you need to invent a programme from scratch. There are resources out there that you can tap into. Whether it’s local instructors, underused facilities, or Cyber Coach, there are lots of things already available that you can use.

In section 5 of this guide you can find an overview of the most common types of workplace exercise, and some things to think about before putting them in place in your organisation. As well as specific impacts outlined there, all of these activities have the potential to help members of staff and their families lose weight; improve their wellbeing and reduce stress levels and increase their fitness, confidence and energy at work. For the business, they can all contribute to improved motivation and morale amongst staff as well as fewer sickdays being taken.
2 - Designing your physical activity programme

Who Will Drive It?

"It just wouldn’t happen without him (physical activity co-ordinator) – he is the one that drives it forward on a day-to-day basis and has the time to commit to it – it would be very difficult to sustain without him."

(Line manager of physical activity co-ordinator)

Some of the most successful programmes in our research had a dedicated co-ordinator, whose job it was to develop the activities, encourage people to take part and keep the momentum going. It’s very difficult to set up and maintain a successful physical activity programme without the time to focus on it and the expertise to do it well.

All the co-ordinators we met were very different. The job title maybe implies a very fit, energetic and outgoing character – Tigger in a tracksuit! – But that couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, a ‘Tigger’ style could be downright off-putting for those who are a bit nervous about doing some exercise. We met all sorts of co-ordinators, and they all did a fantastic job in their own way.

Whilst they were all very different, they did have some characteristics in common. If you decide to recruit a dedicated co-ordinator, or nominate someone already in the organisation, make sure you look out for these:

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<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>What do we mean by this?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Influential</td>
<td>Can communicate effectively and persuasively with people at all levels of an organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listener</td>
<td>Genuine desire to listen to staff ideas about activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Can take these ideas and turn them into appealing activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committed to other</td>
<td>Motivated by seeing and helping other people realise their potential</td>
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<td>people’s development</td>
<td>Optimistic outlook - Can persevere and bounce back when things are difficult or take longer than expected. Can work in an isolated role without losing energy and focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilient</td>
<td>Willingness to try new approaches and ideas. Ability to solve problems creatively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resourceful</td>
<td>Credible and accessible - A role model for all types of people, especially those who are not already physically active</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspires others</td>
<td>A networker - Builds relationships with people within and outside the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible</td>
<td>Can present a compelling business case for workplace physical activity</td>
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Think carefully about where the physical activity programme is housed in the organisation. If it is located in a department where colleagues don’t understand or buy in to the idea, the programme staff may feel isolated. It may also send a message about how seriously the organisation is taking physical activity.

Putting physical activity at the heart of the organisation

Conwy Council’s physical activity co-ordinator has been housed in several different departments since the programme began, often alongside staff that didn’t understand the point of the programme. It felt like the programme didn’t have a proper home. Recently it was moved to its new location in the Corporate Office, and this has given physical activity a much higher profile. It’s now at the heart of the council rather than on the periphery.

If possible, house the programme staff in a central, high profile department such as the Corporate or Chief Executive’s Office. If this is not possible, choose a department with a natural alignment to physical activity.

The most important consideration is for the Co-ordinator to work with a team who value workplace health. In some organisations, HR or Occupational Health and Safety would be a good ‘home’ - but only if your HR department is one with strategic responsibilities for workforce development or if Occupational Health has an equal focus on health as well as the safety aspects.

Managing the Co-ordinator role: Considerations

This is not a desk-based role – the co-ordinator will only be successful if they get out and about the organisation and get to know people. Their manager needs to recognise that this is a valid use of their time – it’s not idle chit-chat.

It can be an isolated role, so make sure that the co-ordinator’s line manager really understands the role and provides the right kind of support.

The co-ordinator needs to network with people in similar roles in other organisations too, and their manager needs to support this.

The co-ordinator may have responsibility for driving the physical activity programme, but it can’t be just one person’s job. All managers need to have responsibility for supporting the programme and encouraging staff to take part.
3 - Making it happen

“This is about culture change – we’re trying to change people’s attitudes and behaviours. It takes time.”
(Workplace Physical Activity Co-ordinator)

Planning

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail”
(Benjamin Franklin)

“In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless but Planning is indispensable”
(Dwight D Eisenhower)

Planning is the foundation of success for a workplace physical activity programme. But you need your plans to be flexible – things change once you start to implement your programme. The employers in our research told us that these are the things you need to plan from the very beginning:

• Whether or not you will have a dedicated co-ordinator
• Where in the organisational structure the programme will be “housed”?
• How it will be funded?
• Whether or not staff will pay for activities
• What roles senior managers will take in supporting/promoting the programme?
• What the organisation can commit in terms of: Time, Space, Money, Support
• What organisational systems and processes are needed to accommodate the programme (e.g. flexi-time, shift patterns)?
• How this will be built into management processes such as appraisals and staff one-to-ones?
• How will the programme be monitored and evaluated?

Effective planning

Wylfa power station approached the development and implementation of this physical activity initiative as they would any other project in the organisation. A project lead was identified to oversee the project with the required support resource identified to form a project team. Through the detailed business case for the project the organisation identified the financial and other input that would be required of them and secured this through their standard approval process, as well as approval for where their on-site gym would be located. Because the project had a robust planning structure to follow it resulted...
“So much of this job is about marketing.”
(Workplace physical activity co-ordinator)

Marketing is about knowing what your customer wants, designing a programme to suit them, and letting them know how they can take part.

It’s all about reaching people – either to find out what they want or to let them know what’s happening. Try tapping into the routines and culture of your organisation rather than fighting against it: the example of the co-ordinator who makes sure he’s around for tea and toast at 10 am is a great one.

Are there people who have a lot of influence in your organisation? Not the managers necessarily, but those people who’ve been around a long time and know absolutely everybody and everything that’s going on? Think about how you can get them on board with the physical activity programme. If they’re up for it, they’ll bring lots of people along with them.

Where do people congregate at break times? That’s the place the co-ordinator needs to be if they want to get on people’s radar.

Of course, there are also the more conventional ways to reach people, such as flyers, posters, notice boards, your intranet and staff newsletters.

These can all reach a lot of staff if they are in the right places – bathrooms and canteens are the places that everyone uses. Newsletters with lots of stories and pictures about staff tend to get read.

Our research shows that these advertising techniques are very effective for people who are already interested in physical activity. However, they don’t always persuade the people who are more apprehensive about taking part. They need the personal touch; an encouraging chat with the co-ordinator, a bit of encouragement from their friends. That’s why it’s so important for the co-ordinator to be visible; they need to walk the floor and be around to chat with those who might otherwise not take part.

Using different communication methods
Kellogg’s used a number of methods to tell staff about the physical activity available to them and to find out what employees would like in the future. They have dedicated noticeboards by the canteen where everyone is likely to see them, an annual health check event advertised and promoted in their foyer and really importantly, the co-ordinator made it part of his job to talk to and get to know office staff and shop floor workers alike. This personal touch helped reach the people who might not respond to the information boards and health checks.
Leadership is essential for the success of the physical activity programme. The Physical Activity Co-ordinator is only one person, and cannot change the culture of the organisation all by themselves. They need the support of senior management and line managers.

**Senior Management**
You need senior managers to support the physical activity programme. As one director of a workplace gym told us “Senior management support gets things off the ground”. However, you also need them to carry on being active supporters and promoters of the programme for others in the organisation to take it seriously.

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**Senior Managers leading by example**
Council leaders at Denbighshire County Council demonstrated their commitment to the workplace physical activity programme by getting involved in some desk based exercises led by the physical activity co-ordinator. Photographs taken at the session were used to promote the programme amongst staff whilst demonstrating the support the initiative had from senior council members.

**Providing the right leadership**
Senior managers may not always be the most appropriate ‘champions’ for physical activities. At Kellogg’s industrial relations meant that the physical activity programme was originally seen as a management-led initiative, leading to resistance from some factory employees to participating. It was only when the leadership was clearly passed to the (non-management) physical activity co-ordinator that the programme began to receive a higher take up. In contrast this was not an issue with office staff who happily undertook activities alongside their managers and supervisors.
There are a number of things you will need from senior managers:

1 - Visible support for the programme
   - announcing its launch
   - explaining why it’s important to the organisation
   - encouraging staff to take part

2 - Making it a priority for the organisation’s managers
   - encouraging managers to promote the programme to employees
   - including health and wellbeing in staff appraisals so that managers must discuss it with their staff

3 - Leading by example
   - taking part in activities
   - being willing to be photographed taking part
   - talking openly about their health, and the challenges of physical activity

**Line Managers and Supervisors**

The support of line managers and supervisors is essential, as they have the power to allow or prevent their staff from taking part. If they are not on board, they can block staff from getting the time away from their work to take part.

Line managers are under a lot of pressure. They are the ones who are held accountable for the performance of their teams, so they might be worried about people going off to do exercise in work time. They may have created a culture where people don’t take breaks, and eat lunch at their desks, in the interests of getting the job done.

To get their support, you need to show them what a positive impact physical activity can have on their team. Show them the evidence about improving productivity, attendance and retention, and explain that encouraging employees to take some exercise could make their team perform even better.
So, you’ve got your programme off the ground. The work doesn’t stop here – our research found that employers need to keep working at their physical activity programme if they want to be a lasting success.

Keep talking about it!

Communication is not a one-off activity, as one co-ordinator advises “keep knocking on the door!” Once the programme has started to deliver benefits, it’s then time to start telling people about what it’s achieving; both the results you hoped for and the surprise results that you didn’t expect. Again, make sure the message is tailored to the audience:

- People like to hear good news stories about colleagues’ successes as well as how the programme is helping the organisation
- Managers want to know whether and how its helping the organisation be more effective and efficient
- The press are interested in stories about real people and about local organisations becoming more successful at what they do

Communicating with multiple sites
Cardiff City Council is one of the largest employers in Wales with staff spread out across a range of sites. This adds an additional challenge to communicating with staff about physical activity. The Council’s physical activity programme was run by the Active Travel team, and so they were able to link into the department’s established ‘Green Teams’ who represent staff across the all council’s premises. In particular this helps channel feedback and suggestions from employees who don’t have email access at work to the programme team.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

The employers in our research found that a small group of enthusiastic people signed up for the activities straight away. The next step was to get more people interested, especially those who might be nervous about exercising.

Here are some of the things that have worked for other employers:

1. Linking with health campaigns
   Many people are motivated to exercise because they want to be healthier. A good way to tap into this is to tie up physical activity adverts with health campaigns. Here are some examples:
   - Men’s health week (usually in June) – think about offering male staff a health MOT (blood pressure check, cholesterol level, height and weight) and running some taster exercise sessions for them to try.
   - World mental health day (usually in October) – promote the benefits of exercise for mental health and stress relief, and think about offering a mix of classes on the day for people to try: yoga for those who want something more meditative, and boxercise for those who want to let it all out.
   - Bike Week (June) – promote cycling to work or recreational cycling in lunchtimes with guided rides, and offer ‘Dr Bike’ surgeries or small bicycle freebies.

Linking into a national health campaign
Denbighshire County Council has used national health campaigns to provide a focus on the initiative and also as a means of encouraging participation in physical activity. During men’s health week, all male workers were given the opportunity to have a health check carried out, with all those who did eligible to free gym induction at a local leisure centre. They also hosted their own healthy living week in which 160 staff accessed health checks.

Linking into a local campaign
Aberystwyth University Sport Centre joins in a campus-wide campaign for wellbeing and linked in with recreational activities “we link with the arts centre, the café—e.g. with free cinema tickets, discounts on meal— we make it about relaxing and having good quality of life”
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

2. Walking the floor
‘Walking the floor’ and taking the time to have one-to-one chats with people (or casually chatting with a small group of staff) can often be the best way of getting new people to sign up to physical activity. They can discuss their worries about taking part and find out more before they come along to an activity.

This is also how the co-ordinator will find out about other activities that people want; if he or she is always around and approachable, people will chat to them about what they’d like to do.

3. Video tasters
Lots of people assume that an activity is more intense or advanced than they could cope with, so they don’t take the risk of going along. Think about filming video clips of the activities, so that you can show them on screens or on the intranet. Then people can look at the clips and get a truer picture of what the activity is like.

A note of caution: if you’re going to video the activities, make sure you get consent from the people being videoed. You need their permission for filming them in the first place and for how you use the footage.

Using the personal touch
As well as using the more traditional routes such as poster and the company intranet to promote the physical activity programme, the health and wellbeing co-ordinator has been very active in ‘walking the floor’ and speaking to staff on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. This, he believes, is the most effective way of engaging those that are least likely to get involved in physical activity.

Minimising misconceptions
The physical activity co-ordinator at Flintshire Council had found through discussion with staff that many had been put off participating in exercise classes because they felt that it would be too hard or intense for their level of ability. To help combat this Flintshire County Council shot some video footage of the classes and showed the footage on telly screens in the building. This helped people to see that the classes were attended by and accommodated a broad range of individual ability.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

4. ‘Live’ tasters
Another option is to give people the chance to try out an activity for a short time before they sign up for the real thing. Think about running a day of tasters, with different activities running for 10 minute slots throughout the day. People can drop in during the day and try a few different activities.

5. Lots of variety
The best way to ensure that lots of different people take part is to make sure there’s plenty of variety. We’ve found that different activities appeal to different people, so don’t assume that one or two activities will be enough. Also, people might want different timings: some like to do something at the start or end of the day; others want to fit it into their lunch break. Shift patterns will be a factor too.

Dipping your toe in
Denbighshire County Council organised a taster day event, linked to a wider health and wellbeing event. This gave staff the opportunity to ‘drop in’ through the day for a health check and also to try out taster sessions of some of the activities provided through the programme.

Offering a wide variety
Kellogg’s provided an enormous range of one-off activities that reflected the suggestions made by their office and factory workforce. These included skiing lessons, tennis matches, gorge walking, ice skating and personal training. The co-ordinator took suggestions, and as long as at least half a dozen people wanted to attend the one-off sessions or short courses would be held. They were able to offer this because the co-ordinator built relationships with local facilities and instructors, as well as making the most of an existing fitness scheme which offered Kellogg’s employees access to some sports for free.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

6. ‘Stealth’ fitness
Lots of people think physical activity is all about sports. If they weren’t ‘sporty’ at school or don’t enjoy sports they might avoid taking part in a physical activity programme. Employers in our research offered all sorts of activities that people didn’t think of as sporty, such as:

- Lunch time walking clubs
- Low intensity (‘non-sweaty’) toning classes
- Horse riding
- Weekend hill walking trips

People happily signed up for these, because they were interested in the activity and didn’t find it intimidating.

Something Different
Recognising that different things would appeal to different people, Anglesey County Council provided staff with the opportunity to try something a little bit different. This included things like horse riding and rock climbing, where staff could access a few sessions for free to have a taster and see if it was something they would like to continue in their own time. Although this type of activity was too expensive to be subsidised by the Council over the longer term it gave staff a chance to try something new in the hope they would continue with it themselves or that it would give them the confidence to try other new things.

Aberystwyth University took the approach of focusing on making the gym fun rather than about serious fitness: “we had a 8 week programme that was just do whatever you want, we didn’t monitor anything”
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

7. Knocking down the barriers
If you want more people to take part in physical activity, you need to understand what’s stopping them. Then you need to remove those barriers. The co-ordinator will learn more about this as he or she gets to know staff by walking the floor.

Recognising the barriers
Aberystwyth University responded to needs of staff by removing the administrative barriers to participating in physical activity that staff encountered. An electronic system sends an email invite to all staff to attend sports or fitness sessions, and all participants have to do is accept the invite to register as attending.

But the co-ordinator also recognised that sometimes you couldn’t knock down the barriers, and so they needed to offer alternatives. They built up a wide offer of physical activity to encourage people to think ‘I’ve missed my class, I’ll go for a walk instead’

8. A bit of healthy competition
Staff will sometimes get involved in physical activity because their friends or colleagues are doing it. The social aspect of physical activity is also an important factor for many people.

Think about whether you can organise some gentle competition between people, or encourage teams to take up a challenge like rowing the channel on the rowing machine or cycling from Lands End to John O’Groats on the stationary bike.

Departmental Challenges
Using their new on-site gym, Wylfa power station encouraged their workforce to take part in departmental challenges. This involved shift teams each having to row, cycle and run a set distance on the gym equipment. This resulted in healthy positive peer pressure with staff encouraging each other to get involved and ‘join the shift team’. The teams involved included a broad cross section of staff and included those who had not done any physical activity exercise in years to those who were regular participants.

Peer pressure
At Cardiff City Council, members of staff talked about the affect of seeing other people going out for bike rides or runs in their lunch hour, and thinking ‘maybe I should be doing that…’
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for Getting more people on board

9. Success stories and ambassadors
During our research we met people with great stories to tell; they had got fitter or were simply enjoying their physical activity so much they wanted to tell others about it. Some had lost weight and inspired their colleagues to do the same.

The more that people hear that physical activity is making a difference for their colleagues, the more likely they are to sign up themselves. Think about whether you can make more of these success stories: Can you feature them in the staff newsletter? Can you encourage them to recruit new people to the programme?

10. Keep it fresh
Even the most enthusiastic exercisers will get bored if nothing ever changes. If the programme stays the same for too long, attendance can tail off and people lose their motivation. It’s essential to keep talking to staff about what they want to do and how they’d like things to evolve. Don’t be afraid to try something a little bit different. It can grab people’s interest and encourage them to try something they hadn’t thought of.

Doing the ‘out of the ordinary’
To reach and interest those people who were not interested in the more traditional types of physical activity Anglesey County Council provided the opportunity for staff to try something a little bit different. This included things like horse riding and rock climbing, where staff could access a few sessions for free to have a taster and see if it was something they would like to continue.

Thinking differently
At Aberystwyth University the Sport Centre find innovative ways of attracting people to their classes; one example is the surprising Coffee and Cake Work Out – do a work out and you can trade it in for coffee and a piece of cake at the end.

Real stories
Flintshire County Council used real individual case studies to sell the benefits of participating in workplace physical activity and encourage more people to get involved. The case studies were in the words of people who had been participating in the programme and told their stories in terms of the benefits to them through participation.
Once you’ve got the programme up and running, you need to know whether it’s making a difference. This is where monitoring and evaluation comes in, so you can:

• Find out what difference the programme is making, and to whom
• Feed back to managers and staff about the results of the programme
• Identify successes and things that need to improve
• Get ideas for new developments
• Build the business case for continuing (and funding) the programme

What to collect
Your monitoring should be tailored towards supporting your business case and developing your programme.

To really understand how your programme has performed you’ll need to collect both hard and soft data. These kinds of information tell you different things, which is why it’s important to collect both.

Hard data (number and statistics - for example, the number of gym memberships taken out) tells you how popular your activities are, and who is using them. Hard data can also tell you how big an impact your programme has had - such as a reduction in the number of sick days taken or total weight lost.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Proving it makes a difference

Use hard data to say things like: ‘20% of employees have attended classes this year, with half of these being new to the programme’ or ‘average weight loss in the gym group is 9 lbs per person’

Soft data (views, anecdotes and opinions) shows you the experiences of employees in more depth and whether it’s really made a difference to them. 20% of your workforce might have attended classes, but that doesn’t tell you whether they feel better for doing it. Ask participants to tell you what benefits your programme has brought to them, and what difference it’s made. It’s also really useful to get this information because quotes and stories from individuals will bring your hard data to life.

Add this to your hard data, and you can now say much more about whom the programme has reached and what difference it has made: ‘20% of employees have attended classes this year, with half of these being new to the programme. A number of participants reported more energy after coming to a class, amongst other benefits: A typical comment was “I feel livelier in the afternoons now, and my back ache is even getting better – it used to be really bad from sitting at my desk”’

But be careful here – you shouldn’t assume that improvements in an employee’s health are just be because of the programme – and a change in sickness absence may be due to a combination of things – so you have to interpret all your data carefully and having several different types of monitoring information helps with this.

How to collect and when

You may have to set up some systems to collect data, but some might exist already. So for example, sickness absence will already be monitored by your HR department; you should just need to ask to get hold of the data – in an anonymised form. You will need to set up some systems – such as an attendance ‘register’ for the different activities/facilities. Once this is set up, you just need to make sure it is being used. But you will need to do some more active research for soft data – a good example of this is organising an annual staff survey or going to speak to participants after an activity to get their feedback.

However you get your data, you should bring all your information together at least every six months to take stock and see how your programme is doing. Doing this means you can tell people about what you’ve achieved – perhaps in a workplace newsletter - and develop or improve your programme to help attract more participants.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for useful monitoring

As a process, it’s easy to go through the motions of monitoring without really thinking about how you can get the best value and the most useful information from it. These are some things to consider when putting together your plan for monitoring.

1. Get a baseline
Collect some monitoring data before your programme starts e.g. the health and fitness of participants such as amount of exercise they already do. You now have a ‘baseline’ level of physical activity in your workplace so that when you look at your monitoring further down the line you can see exactly what how dramatic the changes have been.

2. Tie it into your corporate objectives
When you put together a business case you made an argument for how your programme can help your organisation – your monitoring needs to prove it! Make sure you measure the changes you said you make. For example, if your business case is about reducing employee stress levels, then get hard data on incidents of stress reported to occupational health, and ask members of staff directly about their stress levels in an annual survey.

Evidencing the business case
The occupational health team Kelloggs in Wrexham applied for part-funding from Kellogg’s for their Physical Activity Motivator, and argued that increasing physical activity would reduce sickness absences by 0.5%.

By monitoring sickness absences, they have been able to show how their programme has reduced sickness absence and this has meant they’ve been able to get full funding for their Physical Activity Motivator to continue in post for a further 12 months.
4 - Sustaining and growing your programme

Tips for useful monitoring

3. Plan your resources
You might be so busy delivering your programme that collecting monitoring data becomes really difficult. Remember your monitoring is really important! All the work you do in your programme might count for nothing if you can’t show the purse-holders in your organisations what you’ve done. However, also think about what time and resources you can set aside, and don’t plan a huge amount of monitoring if you know you won’t have the time to see it through.

It might help to find out what monitoring is already done by your organisation. For example, there is probably already a regular staff survey which you could ask to add questions into, and HR and Occupational Health departments will already collect useful data about workforce health (but check first what they are able to share – some of this data will be confidential!)

Using existing data
Aberystwyth University used their record of gym membership as an indicator of the success of their physical activity programme. This is data that they already collected and monitored and didn’t require extra work.

4. Be realistic about what you demonstrate
We spoke to lots of sites in our research that did great monitoring, still none were able to evidence that their programmes had led to specific changes in their organisation - it’s unlikely that this would be possible, even with generous time and resources! Remember there will always be a number of factors that influence people, and your monitoring should aim to identify whether or not your programme is one of those many factors, not whether it is the only one.

“ It’s difficult to quantify how far you’ve come – but on a scale of 0 – 10 in commitment to healthy active lifestyle we probably went from 2 up to 5 or 6 ”
(Workplace Gym Director)
5. Think beyond monitoring

Monitoring information doesn’t just tell you and your manager how your programme is going – there might be others who would find it interesting too! So:

• Feed it back to employees to recognise their achievements and share good news stories like weight loss, successful fitness challenges or team/shift achievements
• Talk to the press and get staff stories into your local paper and websites
• Build a business case for continuing your programme or for developing new areas of physical activity. Showing what you’ve achieved and what can be improved will strengthen your argument for getting money and resources to do more.
• Share what you’ve learnt with other organisations in the area. They might want to set up a similar programme and could use your advice about what worked and what didn’t. They might have some good ideas to share with you as well.
Bike schemes

Bike schemes can take different forms but the most common ones (and usually a combination of these provides the best support and encouragement to new and current cyclists) are:

- Salary sacrifice scheme – where staff can purchase a bicycle through an established scheme which enables the member of staff to pay for a bike in instalments directly from their salary
- Bike lockers – installing bike lockers at the workplace which gives people a secure place to store their bicycle and equipment/clothing
- Pool bikes – where the workplace buys a certain number of bicycles that can then be ‘booked’ out by employees
- Bike clubs’ – organised group cycling activities, which can take place during or out of work time
- Cycle training – offering staff basic training and confidence building to use a bike on roads around the workplace
- Other facilities – installing changing rooms, a drying room or a shower makes cycling easier and more feasible for people to do in the workplace

Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages:
- Salary sacrifice schemes are a good incentive for people to buy a bike who would not normally have considered it and can often lead to more physical activity being undertaken outside of work
- Having a salary sacrifice scheme can then lead to more people getting involved in any potential bike club that is started
- Pool bikes give people an opportunity to ‘try out’ cycling or use bikes for work purposes during the day even if they don’t wish to commute by bike
- Encouraging bike travel links to the sustainable travel agenda

Disadvantages
- Bike schemes will only have a limited reach on their own
- Cycling tends to be more appealing at certain times of the year (e.g. spring/summer)
- Insurance for pool bikes might require a proficiency test before employees can participate, which might put people off.
5 - Guides to setting up…

**Considerations – making it work**

**Promoting the scheme** – Salary sacrifice schemes need to be explained well to staff, and steps taken to make it as simple and straightforward to access. In designing the scheme, think about how it will be promoted in the workplace and who staff can go to for extra information.

**Booking system** – If pool bikes have been purchased, you’ll need a booking system to manage them. An automated ‘e-booking’ system that is simple and straightforward for people to access and use which will minimise the resources needed. However, some workplaces do their bookings manually.

**Engaging other departments** – Think which of your colleagues in other areas of the business you will need the support of. For example, with the salary sacrifice scheme you will need the support of your accounts/payroll department to organise the payments direct from the employee’s salary. Also, if you are purchasing pool bikes you may find that you need the support of your IT team to develop an online booking system.

**Enablers** – Having access to bikes will likely not be enough on its own – identify what other facilities could be provided (e.g. lockers, changing rooms, showers) to incentivise bike use.

**Maintenance and servicing** - If buying pool bikes you should understand what your responsibilities are to your employees to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose. At the very least a maintenance and servicing schedule will be required for each bike and you might be able to deliver this ‘in-house’ or through an external company. Remember this adds to your on-going costs!

**Health and safety** – What other health and safety requirements you will have to meet if offering staff access to pool bikes? Think about how you can manage this without creating a barrier to use. What other safety equipment will you need to provide? Will staff be required to demonstrate their cycling proficiency prior to use?

**Storage** – If purchasing pool bikes, where will they be stored when not in use? Do you have the funding and physical space to have bike lockers? Is there an accessible and suitable storage space within the building?
Where does this activity work best?
Workplaces located on or near cycle routes, or cycle-friendly roads, are certainly best placed to make this type of activity work and most appealing to people. It can also work well where a company has multiple sites and bikes can be used to travel between them.

However, regardless of location and availability of cycle routes, to make it work workplaces need to be able to make material changes to their building (e.g. to install showers and changing facilities if not already available) and have enough space to store bikes (either bike lockers or sheds).

Salary sacrifice bike schemes have the greatest potential to work across a broad range of organisations and locations compared to the other cycle activities discussed. The members of staff own their bikes and can use them in their free time rather than be restricted by the constraints pool bikes, or workplace facilities. However, although you can monitor how many staff have opted into the scheme it will be difficult to also monitor the individual usage. This makes it hard for you to see how the scheme has contributed to any changes in physical activity levels amongst staff.

What type of people will this activity attract?
If the workplace can provide showers and changing rooms (with things like a hairdryer, mirrors etc) then bike schemes can be as attractive to both males and females, often in the 25-45 age range. However, our evaluation showed that salary sacrifice schemes and pool bikes are generally accessed by a higher proportion of males.

Staff who already ride a bike will be more likely to get involved with a workplace ‘bike club’, whereas pool bikes and salary sacrifice schemes will attract new riders as well.

Cycling activities will also be attractive to employees who are more interested in participating in outdoor activities.

What is the potential impact of this activity
Over and above the common impacts already discussed at the start of this section, bike schemes can result in an increase in sustainable transport being used to, from and around the workplace. This obviously has strong links with the sustainable transport agenda.
There are two options here: firstly the development of an ‘on-site’ gym, which requires dedicated space and equipment; alternatively you can subsidise the cost of gym membership of a local leisure/fitness centres.

Advantages and disadvantages – On-site Gym

Advantages:
- Available at all times through the day
- Provides a focal point for the initiative
- Is very sustainable after the initial investment (on-going maintenance only)
- Can be used to run group sessions and also as a resource that staff can ‘drop in’ when they want
- Can be used by other areas of the organisation e.g. occupational health and physiotherapy/rehabilitation

Disadvantages
- Can become a victim of its own success if there are more people wanting to use it than equipment available
- Limits the range of the offering, unless the gym is also big enough to accommodate exercise/activity classes as well
- A ‘gym’ in itself can often be a barrier through misconception – buff men and lycra clad ladies is often the perception that people have of a gym.

Advantages and disadvantages – Subsidised gym membership

Advantages:
- Subsidy can act as enabler by removing a cost barrier for employees
- Allows people to access physical activity at a time and venue that suits them
- Allows people to access the types of activities that interest/appeal to them most
- A good alternative arrangement if there is limited space in the workplace

Disadvantages
- Can be hard to monitor the success – how will you know how many people are accessing the gyms and on what frequency?
- If there is a lot of uptake it can become expensive
- Subsidised gym membership can still leave staff with a very common barrier to participating in physical activity – not having the time before or after work use a gym/leisure centre >
Considerations – making it work

**Onsite Gym:**

**Supplementing activity** - Is there a way of supplementing the gym with a suite of other opportunities/activities (e.g. outdoor activities or exercise/activity classes)? This will widen the appeal of a workplace physical activity programme and will enable you to provide opportunities for those not interested in accessing a gym.

**Maintenance** – You’ll need to maintain your gym equipment and so make sure you budget for this. You may have someone in the company who could carry do this, but if you do check that it will not invalidate any warranty you have on the equipment.

**Managing demand** – Think carefully about how you will manage demand should the gym really ‘take off’. Monitoring attendance at peak times will help you understand when people want to use the gym, and manage it.

**Insurance/health and safety** – Consult with health and safety representatives in your organisation to fully understand what are your insurance and health and safety requirements are – what challenges or barriers could this create and how will they be overcome? Will the gym need to be supervised while being used?

**Induction** – Induction sessions help remove staff fears or misconceptions about gyms, but also make sure that every member of staff using the gym knows how to do so safely. Plan out who will manage and deliver induction sessions for staff and how it can be used to engage the more apprehensive staff.

**Location of the gym** – The gym should be located in an area of the building that is accessible and private – and as near as possible to supporting facilities (e.g. showers and changing rooms).
Subsidised gym membership:

Sustainability – You will have to keep paying for subsidised gym membership for staff, and the more successful it is, the greater the financial input will be. Think about whether this is sustainable for your organisation and your budget!

Monitoring – In planning how the subsidy scheme will operate you should always be asking ‘and how would we monitor that’? Developing a scheme which cannot be monitored will make it very difficult to evidence the success and impact of the scheme.

Where does this activity work best?

It can require significant investment to install and maintain a workplace gym. So workplaces with sufficient budget and space to accommodate a gym are most suited to this. On-site gyms tend to work well for organisations with shift workers – it provides a resource that can be used day or night.

Where staff consultation has shown that access to a gym is something people would like, subsidised gym membership provides an alternative for companies without much space. Workplaces with small workforces and limited physical space may find it easier to manage a subsidised gym scheme. Small workplaces may also find it difficult to provide some of the other activities discussed in this section which also makes subsidised gym schemes attractive.

This means that workplace gyms and subsidised gym membership will suit different organisations, sizes of workforce and the physical space they have available.

What type of people will this activity attract?

A gym allows an individual to work at their own pace and intensity – so it can attract employees of all ages and ability. However, there can be negative perceptions of gyms as only for the ‘super-fit’ - only by removing these perceptions are you likely to get a wide cross section of staff using the gym. A varied audience will also be brought in by different types of equipment available in the gym.

It will also appeal to those who want a flexible exercise option – you can fit in a gym visit when it suits you, and chose how long you stay.

Subsidised gym membership can also include access to exercise classes so this can often widen the appeal as there is a greater range of options that will be attractive to different people.

Finally, it is common for staff who already use gyms in their own time to be attracted to both an on-site gym and subsidised gym membership – enabling them to do more.
5 - Guides to setting up…

Cyber Coach

Cyber Coach is an interactive multimedia ‘virtual coach’. The system has a range of pre-set classes and activities that are displayed over a TV/projector screen. The virtual coach provides instructions to the people in the class. The idea of Cyber Coach is that it removes the need to have a variety of different instructors coming in to run the exercise classes.

Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages:
- Highly sustainable – no need to be regularly paying for instructors/coaches to run classes
- A broad range of exercise/activity classes available in the ‘package’
- Can be set for a variety of abilities
- If the organisation is spread across multiple sites it is a resource that can be ‘moved around’ easily

Disadvantages
- Lack of personal touch – some people enjoy the interaction with a coach/instructor as a means of motivation. You can’t ask a virtual coach if you are doing something wrong or to show you something again
- Although it can be set for a variety of abilities, the whole ‘class’ would need to be at a similar level of ability to ensure it was relevant to all, whereas a ‘real’ coach can cater for mixed ability classes
- There may still be a need, for health and safety or insurance purposes to have an appropriately skilled/qualified individual present to run a Cyber Coach session – which may reduce the cost benefits of Cyber Coach.

Considerations – making it work

Appeal - Will employees ‘take to’ a virtual coaching system or do they want a ‘real person’? If exercise classes come out strongly in the staff consultation it would be wise to test the idea of Cyber Coach before committing to it.

Barriers - Does it overcome more barriers (like logistics and costs) than it creates (people wanting a real person to take the classes)? You might want to supplement Cyber Coach with other classes led by an instructor – this should help meet everyone’s needs.

Booking system – A strength of Cyber Coach is the ease in which it can be moved from one location to another, which can appeal to organisations with multiple sites. You might need to develop a booking system, and you’ll need to make sure all the sites have appropriate spaces for the classes to be held in.
Health and safety – Speak to a health and safety representative in the organisation to understand whether Cyber Coach presents any issues. Our research found one example where an organisation had to have a qualified coach present during the Cyber Coach sessions for health and safety reasons – and if the organisation was having to pay a qualified coach to supervise the session it is hard to see any benefit in having Cyber Coach!

Where does this activity work best?
Cyber Coach tends to work best for organisations that have multiple sites, and the Cyber Coach system can be easily moved between them to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to attend classes.

It will work best at workplaces where health and safety requirements do not negate the benefits associated with Cyber Coach (by requiring a qualified instructor in the room to supervise the sessions!)

The workplace will need to have access to clean, appropriate and private space to run the activities, and if running high intensity classes it helps a lot if suitable changing and showering facilities are also available for staff.

Most importantly it will work best where staff have been consulted on whether they like the idea of Cyber Coach, and where the feedback supports this.

What type of people will this activity attract?
Because Cyber Coach has an extensive range of class types and caters for all abilities from beginner through to advanced it can be attractive to a wide cross section of people.

It will appeal to those staff who are more comfortable in a class environment and enjoy having others around them to motivate and encourage them.

However, the preference between a virtual coach and a ‘real’ coach is a highly personal thing – some people will be comfortable with a Cyber Coach whilst others prefer to be able to communicate with the coach and ask questions.

What is the potential impact of this activity
Because Cyber Coach be moved easily between sites and locations for some organisations it can contribute to their wider health and wellbeing agenda and priorities. For example local authorities can make it available to schools (engaging staff, students and parents) or the wider community in a community centre setting.
Cyber Coach is an interactive multimedia ‘virtual coach’. The system has a range of pre-set classes and activities that are displayed over a TV/projector screen. The virtual coach provides instructions to the people in the class. The idea of Cyber Coach is that it removes the need to have a variety of different instructors coming in to run the exercise classes.

Advantages and disadvantages

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- A broad range of exercise/activity classes available in the ‘package’
- Can be set for a variety of abilities
- If the organisation is spread across multiple sites it is a resource that can be ‘moved around’ easily

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- Lack of personal touch – some people enjoy the interaction with a coach/instructor as a means of motivation. You can’t ask a virtual coach if you are doing something wrong or to show you something again
- Although it can be set for a variety of abilities, the whole ‘class’ would need to be at a similar level of ability to ensure it was relevant to all, whereas a ‘real’ coach can cater for mixed ability classes
- There may still be a need, for health and safety or insurance purposes to have an appropriately skilled/qualified individual present during a Cyber Coach session – which may reduce the cost benefits of Cyber Coach.

Considerations – making it work

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Barriers - Does it overcome more barriers (like logistics and costs) than it creates (people wanting a real person to take the classes)? You might want to supplement Cyber Coach with other classes led by an instructor – this should help meet everyone’s needs.

Booking system – A strength of Cyber Coach is the ease in which it can be moved from one location to another, which can appeal to organisations with multiple sites. You might need to develop a booking system, and you’ll need to make sure all the sites have appropriate spaces for the classes to be held in.
**Health and safety** – Speak to a health and safety representative in the organisation to understand whether Cyber Coach presents any issues. Our research found one example where an organisation had to have a qualified coach present during the Cyber Coach sessions for health and safety reasons – and if the organisation was having to pay a qualified coach to supervise the session it is hard to see any benefit in having Cyber Coach!

**Where does this activity work best?**
Cyber Coach tends to work best for organisations that have multiple sites, and the Cyber Coach system can be easily moved between them to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to attend classes.

It will work best at workplaces where health and safety requirements do not negate the benefits associated with Cyber Coach (by requiring a qualified instructor in the room to supervise the sessions!)

The workplace will need to have access to clean, appropriate and private space to run the activities, and if running high intensity classes it helps a lot if suitable changing and showering facilities are also available for staff.

Most importantly it will work best where staff have been consulted on whether they like the idea of Cyber Coach, and where the feedback supports this.

**What type of people will this activity attract?**
Because Cyber Coach has an extensive range of class types and caters for all abilities from beginner through to advanced it can be attractive to a wide cross section of people.

It will appeal to those staff who are more comfortable in a class environment and enjoy having others around them to motivate and encourage them.

However, the preference between a virtual coach and a ‘real’ coach is a highly personal thing – some people will be comfortable with a Cyber Coach whilst others prefer to be able to communicate with the coach and ask questions.

**What is the potential impact of this activity**
Because Cyber Coach can be moved easily between sites and locations for some organisations it can contribute to their wider health and wellbeing agenda and priorities. For example local authorities can make it available to schools (engaging staff, students and parents) or the wider community in a community centre setting.
Outdoor activities can range from sports such as football and basketball, through to activities that many people don’t think of as exercise, such as walking, horse riding or canyoning. Similar to cycling, outdoor activities appeal to people as a fun activity, rather than just a way of improve their fitness or health.

Advantages and disadvantages

**Advantages:**
- Can be an effective way of providing opportunities to staff that let them involve the whole family
- Outdoor activities can often add an appealing social dimension, especially team sports
- Opens the door to a huge range of alternative activities that are not feasible indoors

**Disadvantages:**
- Will often require the dedication and commitment of ‘an individual’ to maintain if operating outside ‘working hours’
- Although we mention that some of the activities cost nothing or very little, some of the activities (e.g. horse riding, rock climbing) can be expensive.
- Is an effective way of engaging those who are not interested in more ‘sporty’ activities
- Can cost very little or even nothing at all – for the organisation and those participating
- Team activities can lead to positive peer pressure, with staff encouraging other colleagues to get involved and join their team – an effective way of getting new people involved
- Transport to and from where the activities can take place – if a way from the workplace - can also be costly
- Outdoor activities can be restricted by the time of year – weather conditions and daylight hours will potentially create a barrier at certain times of the year

Considerations – making it work

**Skills and expertise** - What expertise, if any, is required to lead these activities and who has it?

**Involving staff** - A specific consultation focussed on outdoor activity is a good way of identifying the types of things staff would engage with.

**Time of year** – Outdoor activities tend to be more attractive during the warmer months, so think ahead to find activities for the trickier, harsher seasons.
Health and safety – You need to understand the health and safety requirements for taking employees to do outdoor activities, especially those that do have a higher element of risk, such as horse riding. Find out: are risk assessments required and who is responsible for conducting them?

Families – Where possible open these activities up to families of staff as well – this can be an effective way of getting people involved if the activity is taking place outside of work hours and adds to the social experience.

Where does this activity work best?
Workplaces within easy reach of the countryside have it easier, but it’s not a requirement! In urban areas you could consider local sports clubs, indoor climbing walls and local woods or lakes as walking destinations. Trips at the weekend can open up options in more far flung places. Making use of local playing fields and facilities for team sports also provides added options.

What type of people will this activity attract?
This type of activity can appeal to those staff who aren’t interested in ‘traditional’ physical activity but want to do something new. It also attracts people who don’t consider themselves ‘sporty’ and might have lower fitness levels or abilities. It will also appeal to those who are more interested in outdoor pursuits and prefer to be outdoors than cooped up inside. Where the activities are planned so that staff can bring along family, this will often appeal to those who have children, particularly when run outside of work hours.

What is the potential impact of this activity
Done in the right way, the impact of these activities can be widened to reach family and even friends of employees. Not only can it make it more appealing for people to get involved if they know they can bring their children along, it also means that the activity and impact is reaching into the wider community.
6 - Top tips from physical activity co-ordinators

• **Listen to your colleagues** – Get out there and talk to your colleagues. They are your customers and you need to know what it is they want, what their motivations and apprehensions are and what you can do to make it as easy as possible for them to participate if you are then to take steps to encourage and enable this

• **Keep it visible** – Don’t ever think that awareness raising and promotion of the programme is something that will stop. If you want to keep people interested and draw new people in, you will need to keep promoting your activities and facilities, and developing new ones

• **Lead by example** – This is certainly one role where you will need to practice what you preach. Be a role model and inspire other people.

• **Paving the way** – Appreciate that you can’t remove all the barriers to doing exercise for all people, but your aim should be to make it as hassle-free and accessible as possible

• **Don’t fear failure** – Don’t worry if you try things and they don’t work, this is valuable learning that can be applied to future plans. Likewise, don’t be defensive or down hearted when people have a rant about the programme - it shouldn’t be taken personally.

• **Networking** – Make the time to develop relationships with other companies and organisations to share knowledge, expertise, ideas and experiences. You might find there is even scope to collaborate on things or share resource or facilities

• **Don’t reinvent the wheel** – Don’t feel that everything you do needs to be thought up from scratch or be something different or new. Use existing ideas and access resources that are already available – and remember, simple ideas are often the best

• **Involve other colleagues** – Keep an eye out for keen colleagues who could be ‘physical activity champions’, especially if you have a very large workforce or a workplace with more than one site. An enthusiast on a different site will help reach more staff, as well as being an extra pair of hands for practical support.

• **Document what you do** – Keep a record of every event, activity, and piece of promotion that you carry out. This will be useful reference and source of information when providing updates to line mangers and others. In one workplace the co-ordinator used a PowerPoint slide for each piece of work he had done (and could easily adapt it to be a presentation for any occasion!)

• **Walking the line** – You should try to strike a balance between not taking yourself too seriously but at the same time you must be a professional too! Also appreciate that you’ve got to get along with most people, even if they don’t like what you’re doing.