



**Fieldwork on the promotion of physical activity in
the workplace**

Final Report

**Report to the National Institute for Health and
Clinical Excellence**

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Final Report

Report to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

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Abstract

This final report summarises a fieldwork evaluation of the statements developed to promote physical activity in the workplace. The report summarises findings from a series of workshops and interviews with key stakeholders and interviews with employers. It draws out key findings for the statements as a whole and for each individual statement. Conclusions reached included the need for advice and support for employers, clarification of the business case, integration with existing health policies and other suggestions for further development.

E. Executive Summary

E.1 Introduction

The DH ‘at least five a week’¹ report detailed a comprehensive list of action areas to help, support and encourage the general public to choose a more active lifestyle. It included encouraging active travel, providing provisions to support an active lifestyle (showers, cycle storage etc.), encouraging more activity at work (use of the stairs, activity breaks etc.) and also the role of businesses within the community. The Department of Health’s (2005)² “Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan” listed two goals relating to promoting increased levels of physical activity at work.

The Department of Health requested that NICE,

‘produce intervention guidance on workplace health promotion with reference to physical activity and what works in motivating and changing employee’s health behaviour.’

NICE drafted 4 statements (they were defined as statements at this time as they had not been approved by PHIAC) covering:

1. Devising an organisation-wide policy or plan to encourage employees to be physically active.
2. Introducing and monitoring an organisation-wide, multi-component programme to encourage employees to be physically active.
3. Putting up signs at strategic points and distributing written information to encourage employees to use the stairs rather than taking a lift where possible.
4. Encouraging employees to increase the distance walked during the working day.

The NICE guidance has been developed through a six phased process, this included:

1. Drafting of a scope to identify the remit of the work.
2. Consultation to ensure relevance and usefulness of the scope.
3. Reviews of the relevant literature.
4. Consultation on the review to identify any missing evidence.
5. Public Health Interventions Advisory Committee (PHIAC) review of the evidence and drafting of the statements.
6. Stakeholder consultation to evaluate the relevance, usefulness and implementability of the statements.

This fieldwork formed part of section 6, covering the relevance, utility and implementability of the statements within workplaces.

¹ Department of Health (2004) At least five a week. Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health. A report from the Chief Medical Officer. Department of Health. London.

² Department of Health (2005) Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan. London: Department of Health.

E.2 Method

The fieldwork comprised of three main activities:

1. Four workshops with representatives from stakeholder organisations that included employers, workers, health professionals and providers of health promotion;
2. Telephone interviews with 20 representatives from stakeholder organisations similar to those that attended the workshops;
3. Telephone interviews with 35 employers, covering small, medium and large organisations.

All respondents received briefing materials and questions prior to the sessions, and were provided with summaries of their sessions for approval. A content analysis of summaries was completed to identify and summarise key themes of feedback.

E.3 Findings

E3.1 Key findings for the statements as a whole included:

1. Feedback from stakeholders and employers suggested that the statements should be able to be implemented. However there could be difficulties due to:
 - The size of the organization, specifically small organizations lacking resources,
 - Geographical location, in areas where active travel is constrained,
 - Time available, and cost implications and
 - Dispersion of the organisation (e.g. multiple offices).
2. The statements would not be standalone physical activity policies but instead integrated into current health and wellbeing policies, as well as into health and safety within the organisation. However, smaller organisations did not tend to have an existing health or wellbeing policy and would be faced with formulating a completely new policy.
3. Stakeholders felt that engaging with the local community was important and therefore also linking in with local initiatives.
4. The respondents indicated that there is a need to sell the benefits to employers. Financial assistance or incentives (such as tax breaks, funding) and the benefits and improvements that they could bring was mentioned by numerous employers.
5. Employers within the public sector in particular felt that unless it could be justified by cost benefit criteria they may struggle to implement the statements.
6. A large number of employers and stakeholders felt that resistance from staff would be a significant barrier. They were also concerned that the statements may be perceived by employees as a top down approach. Employers felt that they would need more advice and guidance on how to secure employee support.
7. All stakeholders and most employees felt that the statements are not inclusive of all members of the workforce (for example, disinterested, disabled, obese, shift workers, South Asian women, lower social class and certain types of jobs) and may therefore inadvertently increase the health inequalities between employees.

8. The implementation of the statements may give rise to some risks for organisations. These included:
 - Concern about litigation;
 - Employee resistance;
 - Competence to perform health check and handle identified health issues.

E3.2 Key statement specific feedback included:

9. Stakeholders queried the lack of integration with other NICE recommendations, such as the recommendations on changes to the physical environment.
10. Questions were raised regarding Statements 1 and 2 being broad and overarching statements whereas statements 3 and 4 were very specific.
11. For Statement 1 the larger organisations felt they would be able to implement the statements into their current policy however, smaller organisations felt that they would have to completely develop a policy.
12. For statement 1 they were unsure what multiple approaches meant, how organisations would set targets and whether indeed this would be the right approach to take.
13. With statement 2, employers raised concerns about health checks including:
 - What was meant by a health check;
 - Who would be qualified to perform the health check;
 - How would the follow up to the health check be managed;
 - Confidentiality of the results of the health check;
 - Whether employees would be happy with this coming from employers;
 - The cost and resource implications of introducing health checks.
14. Feedback suggested that in order to make statements 3 and 4 inclusive of all members of the workforce they needed to include more example initiatives so that employers could tailor the activities to all members of their workforce.
15. Although statement 3 would be relatively easy to implement, there were concerns regarding its sustainability.
16. Statement 4 was regarded as a low cost option however there were significant barriers identified to its successful integration within all industry sectors, such as availability of safe routes and employee's knowledge of the local area.

E.4 Conclusions

E4.1 Practicality and relevance – the need for advice and support

The feedback indicated that the statements were considered to be practical and relevant to organisations. Stakeholders and employers cited a range of factors that could limit implementation of the statements and whether activities would be sustained. These points indicated a need for further advice and support for employers, particularly with regard to:

- How to engage employees in physical activity;
- How to engage all sections of the workforce, including disabled, shift workers etc;
- Advice on how to assess and plan activities.

This could include providing more practical examples and case studies. Small organisations in particular require simple advice and support.

It is also clear that organisations felt they would have required a business case to commit time and resource to the implementation of these statements. In the case of small firms, reference to sources of grants may have helped address concerns over cost.

E4.2 Integration into wider wellbeing and health policies

Respondents indicated that a holistic approach to workplace health should have been adopted rather than separating approaches to physical and mental health. This indicated that:

- These statements would form part of wider health and wellbeing policies (as well as environmental policies) rather than standalone policies.
- Consideration needs to be focused on integrating the implementation advice for NICE recommendations on workplace health promotion.

E4.3 Further development of the specific statements

The feedback indicated a number of areas where the specific statements could be further developed:

- Statements 3 and 4 were viewed as examples of physical activity only. An option is to revise the wording so as to advise that organisations identify physical activities and that the cited activities (using stairs and walking to work) are cited as examples only. Respondents would also welcome examples of activities that may apply to all sections of the workforce, such as disabled and obese people.
- Statements 1 and 2 contained some points, such as target setting and health checks, that were queried and may benefit from re-wording or clarification.
- It was also indicated that certain aspects of the statements wording could be further developed such as including objectives and clarifying if the statements are aimed at workplace physical activity or including out of work physical activity too.



Fieldwork on the promotion of physical activity in the workplace

Draft Report

Report to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the work

There are numerous studies and guidance documents that highlight the benefits of physical activity³; however the uptake of the recommended level of physical activity among UK adults is still low. Just 37% of men and 24% of women are reaching the current guidance of performing at least moderate activity for 30 minutes, 5 times per week⁴.

The DH 'at least five a week' report detailed a comprehensive list of action areas to help, support and encourage the general public to choose a more active lifestyle, this included employers and the workplace. It also included encouraging active travel, providing provisions to support an active lifestyle (showers, cycle storage etc.), encouraging more activity at work (use of the stairs, activity breaks etc.) and also the role of businesses within the community to set a standard. The Department of Health's (2005)⁵ "Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan" listed two goals relating to promoting the increased levels of physical activity at work. These included encouraging employers (both public and private sector) to engage and motivate employees to be more active and the provision of support for employers such as practical advice and best practice guidance.

1.2 A request for guidance from the Department of Health

The Department of Health requested that NICE,

'produce intervention guidance on workplace health promotion with reference to physical activity and what works in motivating and changing employee's health behaviour.'

NICE guidance is developed using the expertise of the NHS and the wider healthcare community including NHS staff, healthcare professionals, patients and carers, industry and the academic world. Once NICE publishes clinical guidance, health professionals and the organisations that employ them are expected to take it fully into account.

The NICE guidance on the promotion of physical activity in the workplace has been developed through a six phased process, this included:

1. Drafting of a scope to identify the remit of the work.
2. Consultation to ensure relevance and usefulness of the scope.
3. Reviews of the relevant literature to identify:

³ Dugdill et al. A review of the effectiveness of workplace health promotion interventions on physical activity and what works in motivating and changing employees health behaviour (2007) Report produced for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=download&o=36393>

⁴ Department Of Health (2003). Health Survey for England. Summary of key findings. London: Department of Health. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_4098712

⁵ Department of Health (2005) Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan. London: Department of Health.

- Which types of workplace PA intervention were effective in changing behaviour for different workforce sectors and types;
- What aspects of design and delivery contributed to effective workplace PA interventions;
- What the motivators, barriers and facilitators were for employers and employees;
- What interventions were cost-effective?

The evidence review⁶ used strict inclusion criteria, which stipulated that:

- The primary aim had to be to increase physical activity;
 - Must be targeted at employed adults;
 - Must be initiated or endorsed by employers;
 - Outcome measure included a measure of PA and a pre-post measure (behaviour change);
 - Published 1996 or later.
4. Consultation on the review to identify any missing evidence.
 5. Public Health Interventions Advisory Committee (PHIAC) review of the evidence and drafting of the statements.
 6. Stakeholder consultation to evaluate the relevance, usefulness and implementability of the statements.

This fieldwork formed part of section 6. The findings from this fieldwork act as a source of evidence on the relevance, utility and implementability of the recommendations within workplaces.

1.3 Target audience for the statements

The statements are aimed at employers, occupational health and other professionals working in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors that have a direct or indirect role in – and/or interest in the promotion of physical activity in the workplace.

⁶ Dugdill et al. A review of the effectiveness of workplace health promotion interventions on physical activity and what works in motivating and changing employees health behaviour (2007) Report produced for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=download&o=36393>

1.4 The statements

Please note at the time of commencement of the fieldwork the recommendations were termed as 'statements' as they had not yet been approved by the PHAC committee. They are therefore referred to as statements throughout this report. The statements have been slightly modified to form the draft recommendations that were released for public consultation in the draft guidance document (<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=folder&o=38692>).

Workplace health promotion: how to encourage employees to be physically active

Statement 1

Those who should take action

- Employers, HR directors, senior managers, public and occupational health professionals, workplace health promoters, trades unions and other employee representatives and employees.

The action they should take

Develop an organisation-wide policy or plan to encourage employees to be more physically active. This should:

- Include multiple approaches;
- Be based on a staff consultation;
- Link to other internal HR policies (for example, on alcohol and smoking or flexible working) and to national health policies;
- Set organisational targets; and
- Be sustainable.

Statement 2

Those who should take action

- Employers, HR directors, senior managers, public and occupational health professionals, workplace health promoters, trades unions and other employee representatives and employees.

The action they should take

- Introduce and monitor an organisation-wide, multi-component programme to encourage employees to be physically active. This could be part of a broader programme to improve health. It could include:
 - Provision of a health check;
 - Dissemination of information on how to be more physically active and the health benefits of such activity (this should be tailored to meet individual needs) along with written information about activities;

- Advice and support to help individuals plan how they are going to increase their levels of physical activity;
 - Flexible working policies and incentive schemes to encourage employees to be physically active.
- Ensure employees are involved in planning and designing activities.

Statement 3

Those who should take action

- HR and occupational health departments.
- Building managers.

The action they should take

Put up signs at strategic points and distribute written information to encourage employees to use the stairs rather than taking a lift where possible. The signs could point out that climbing stairs burns calories, may be quicker than waiting for the lift and is a good form of exercise.

Statement 4

Those who should take action

- Employers, HR directors, senior managers, occupational health staff, trades unions and other employee representatives.

What action should they

Encourage employees to increase the distance they walk during the working day. For example, encourage them to walk part or all of the way to and from work, provide information about walking routes and encourage them to set goals and monitor the distances they walk.

1.5 Scope of work

The focus of this fieldwork was to provide an evaluation of the draft guidance that NICE have developed for the promotion of physical activity within the workplace. This included examining the relevance, utility and implementability of the recommendations with commissioners and practitioners. Some key issues that were explored include:

- Would the recommendations work? (in specific settings)
- How might the recommendations impact health inequalities, e.g. across the workforce?
- If the recommendations would not work, why not and what should be done?

2 METHOD

2.1 Overview

The fieldwork comprised of three main activities:

1. Four workshops with representatives from stakeholder organisations that included employers, workers, health professionals and providers of health promotion;
2. Telephone interviews with 20 representatives from stakeholder organisations similar to those attending the workshops;
3. Telephone interviews with 35 employers, covering small, medium large and major organisations.

The telephone interviews with stakeholder organisations were completed in lieu of 4 workshops cancelled due to insufficient response.

All respondents received briefing materials and questions prior to the sessions, and were provided with summaries of their sessions for approval.

A content analysis of summaries was completed to identify and summarise key themes of feedback. Section 3 of this report provides a synthesis of feedback from all parts of the fieldwork. The summaries of each session are provided as Appendices.

All workshops were scheduled for December 2007 in order to meet the project schedule. Telephone interviews with employers and stakeholders were conducted in the first three weeks of December 2007 and first two weeks of January 2008, again to comply with the project schedule.

2.2 Development of workshop topic guide, telephone interview pro-forma's and briefings

The workshop topic guide was developed through close liaison with the team at NICE, to ensure that the key research questions were addressed. In development of the questions for the topic guide and telephone interview pro-forma continual reference and adherence was made to '*Methods for development of NICE public health guidance*' (2006).

The topic guide (Appendix E) was structured to ensure that stakeholders had a comprehensive understanding of the background, aims and outcomes of the fieldwork. The topic guide was split into two main sections, the first section raised questions on the statements as a whole, and included questions in five main categories pre-agreed with the research team at NICE:

1. Impact of the guidance;
2. Relevance to the organisation;
3. Inclusion of the complete workforce;
4. Differential impact on different groups;
5. Implementing the guidance.

Each question under these main categories included prompts to give the facilitator the means to explore the subject in more detail.

The second section raised questions to be addressed to each statement in turn. This included questions on the effectiveness, implementability, facilitators, barriers, gaps and more for each of the statements.

The employer telephone interview pro-forma was developed using the workshop topic guide as a basis. It used an identical structure but the questions were rephrased to address employers from all industry sectors.

The stakeholder telephone interviews used a variation of the workshop topic guide.

2.3 Recruitment of workshop delegates

All recruitment for the workshops' was performed in house. Key stakeholders were identified from NICE's stakeholder list (Public Health Intervention – Workplace Physical Activity, List of Registered Stakeholders as of 1st October 2007) as well as Greenstreet Berman's own list of stakeholders. They were contacted via letter (Appendix D) to request the attendance of a representative of their organisation at one of the eight scheduled workshops (4 in London, 2 in Newcastle, 2 in Manchester). Around 250 organisations were identified within the following four sectors:

1. Employer representative organisations;
2. Trade Unions;
3. Public and private service providers;
4. Occupational health and human resources associations.

All individuals that booked onto a workshop were sent a copy of the draft statements and a copy of the delegate's topic guide (this was the same as the facilitators topic guide, minus any prompts) in advance of the workshops.

Due to unexpectedly low responses for both of the Newcastle and Manchester workshops (only 5 delegates for the 4 workshops), these workshops were cancelled and a series of 20 additional telephone interviews were scheduled with stakeholders, focusing on a national sample frame. A separate delegate's version of the telephone pro-forma was developed to address the questions related to this group effectively (see section 2.4).

2.4 Conducting the workshops

The four workshops held in London ran for 3 hours each. There was one main facilitator running the workshop with a second facilitator that acted as a scribe and facilitator in the statement specific review. All workshops sessions were recorded and consent for recording was obtained from all delegates at the beginning of the workshop. The session consisted of:

- Introduction and housekeeping – 10 minutes;
- General review of the guidance as a whole - 1 hour;
- Tea break – 15 minutes;

- Statement specific review⁷ (in which the workshop broke into 2 smaller groups with one facilitator running each group. Each group discussed two statements in detail, one group discussing statements 1 and 3, and the second group discussing statements 2 and 4) – 1 hour 15 minutes;
- Plenary appraisal and discussion of findings – 15 minutes;
- Evaluation of the workshop – 5 minutes.

Despite high responses for each workshop, the recorded attendance at each workshop was lower than expected as noted below. It is uncertain why there was an unusually high rate of ‘no shows’, however, we do not normally conduct fieldwork in the month of December.

Workshop	Number of delegates that agreed to attend	Number of delegates that attended
1	10	8
2	13	10
3	11	9
4	12	7

The number of delegates that attended the workshops totalled 34 delegates.

On completion of the workshops a summary was written up by the facilitators. This summary (Appendix A) was then forwarded to the delegates for any additional comments and approval.

Listed below is a summary of the evaluation worksheets that were received on completion of the four workshops. Delegates were asked to answer each question on a 10 point scale (1 = not at all/poor, 10 = definitely/excellent).

Questions posed to the delegates included:	Average score (max score 10)
Were the key points covered?	8
Did the workshop satisfy its objectives?	7
Was the length of the workshop adequate?	8
Rate the standard of facilitation?	8
Rate the quality of written materials/visual aids?	7

⁷ Within the statement specific review section each delegate was given an appraisal form for each recommendation. They were encouraged to write feedback on these during discussions and these findings were included in the final workshop summaries.

2.5 Additional Stakeholder interviews

Additional stakeholder interviews were completed to replace the cancelled workshops in Newcastle and Manchester. A total of 20 interviews were completed with stakeholders sampled from the Northern Regions of England. Four of the five stakeholders that were already booked into the Newcastle and Manchester workshops completed a stakeholder telephone interview instead.

The employer telephone interview pro-forma was adapted and a stakeholder telephone interview pro-forma was developed. An identical interview structure was used but the questions were re-phrased to address this group.

Before each stakeholder interview, each interviewee was sent the interview pro-forma and a copy of the statements to read prior to the interview.

Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and 50 minutes. On completion of the interviews a summary was written up by the interviewer. These summaries (appended) were then forwarded to the interviewees for any additional comments and approval.

2.6 Recruitment and sampling of employer telephone interviews

Greenstreet Berman's in-house database of employer contacts was used to recruit participants for the employer telephone interview. A cross sectional sample was recruited from across England and included employers from a variety of industry sectors⁸ and small (1 to 50 employees), medium (51 to 250), large (250 to 500) and major (>500) organisations (see sample frame below).

The criteria for individuals interviewed within organisations included, a commissioner or decision maker regarding how to promote physical activity inside and outside the workplace, such as:

- Human Resource managers and directors;
- Occupational Health managers and directors;
- Operations Directors and Managing Directors in small firms.

The respondents were primarily HR managers and Directors.

The qualitative employer sample included:

Number of employees			
Small (<50 employees)	Medium (51 to 250)	Large (250 to 500)	Major (>500)
7	9	10	9

⁸ Categorisations for small, medium and large size organisations are taken from the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform criterion. The 'major' categorisation was an additional category added to distinguish between myriad of large organisations.

2.7 Conducting the telephone interviews

Employers were sent the interview pro-forma and a copy of the statements to read prior to the interview.

Each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. Employers were required to comment on two of the four statements.

On completion of the interviews a summary was written up by the interviewer and forwarded to the interviewees for any additional comments and approval.

2.8 Analysis and reporting of results

The fieldwork reports were analysed 'by hand' using thematic and content analysis techniques.

A set of repeatable rules were used for the content analysis which included:

- The categories of themes of feedback, such as inclusion, integrating with other policies, conveying the business group ;
- The group that cited the theme and any other sub-categorisation, such as the size of business or public/private sector organisations;
- The importance attached to each theme;
- Summary of feedback in each theme;
- Examples to illustrate themes when provided.

Responses were compared from the workshops with the employer and stakeholder interviews.

3 MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 FEEDBACK ON STATEMENTS AS A COMPLETE DOCUMENT

3.1.1 Overall

There was mixed feedback on the statements from both employers and stakeholders.

The role of NICE

There was a perception from a minority of stakeholders that NICE have more important issues; and they do not have the right position or authority to get involved with this area of work.

Also, a number of stakeholders felt there needed to be one single voice from government for the promotion of physical activity⁹.

Confused by statement wording

A large number of stakeholders were confused by the statements as they felt they were not really statements (no objective). It was suggested that they should have more supporting information providing ideas on what to do, how to do it and who should be involved in doing it, rather than providing 'it'.

Top down approach versus employee engagement

Stakeholders were also concerned that the statements may be perceived by employees as a top down approach and that, employers needed to be encouraged to promote physical activity using role models and advocates within the workforce.

It was also felt important that a clearer distinction was made between the responsibilities of employers and the responsibilities of employees e.g. being involved with the consultation exercise, engaging in activities that are made available for them etc. Delegates felt that it was important that these statements and any activities arising out of them were being provided for employees by their employers, but that it was the responsibility of the employees to engage.

Who are the statements aimed at

Employers stated that there needed to be a clearer message as to who the statements were aimed at, in their present format they could have been aimed at employees at work and outside of work.

Definition of physical activity

Finally stakeholders felt that it was important to make a clear distinction between what was meant by exercise and what was meant by physical activity when referenced in the statements.

⁹ Delegates were aware of Dame Carol Black's review of the health of the working age population and were inquiring as to whether the NICE statements were linked or being implemented in unison with this.

3.1.2 Implementability of the statements

Feed back from stakeholders and employers suggested that the statements should be able to be implemented by organisations.

However the following potential difficulties were suggested in reference to their implementation:

- The size of the organisation,
- Geographical location,
- Time available,
- Cost implications and
- Dispersion of the organisation (e.g. multiple offices).

Small versus large organisations (time, cost and resources)

The majority of employers and stakeholders felt that smaller organisations would struggle to provide the resources to implement the statements, and the employer interviews with small organisations supported this finding. It was not only finding resources that was suggested as an issue but also financing the implementation of these statements in smaller organisations. However a minority of employers felt that the statements would be easier to implement in smaller organisations as it would be easier to communicate and relay information and material about the statement, management commitment would be more visible and the range of occupations less varied.

Some responses suggested that for larger organisations where there were often multiple departments and a greater number of employees it would have been more difficult. Stakeholders felt that large organisations would have possessed adequate resources in terms of time and staff, and although they would have been more likely to have in-house health professionals, they may still suffer in terms of lack of expertise of public health or health-related initiatives. Employers raised availability of expertise as a concern, particularly related to the provision of a health check (statement 2).

Geographical location

Organisations which were based in remote geographical locations, locations that had fewer facilities and locations where there were barriers to active travel or physical activity around the workplace would find the statements more challenging to implement. An example that was given by one stakeholder was an oil rig where employers would face unique challenges to provide a varied range of activities to staff. They would need to rely on clear communication channels to share and implement the statements across dispersed organisations.

Dispersed organisations

Organisations that have offices dispersed across numerous locations or where employers do not work on site, work at different sites or with a high number of home workers would find these statements challenging to implement.

3.1.3 Integration with existing policies

Respondents made four main points regarding the integration of the statements into organisational policy.

Integration into current health and wellbeing policies

Respondents indicated that the statements will be more challenging to implement in isolation of existing health and wellbeing policies and would have benefited from being integrated with other business policies, i.e. not standalone physical activity policies but instead integrated into current policies.

Stakeholders felt that it was important that any physical activity policy was linked into work on health and safety within the organisation. Stakeholders also felt it was important to link physical activity with other aspects of a healthy lifestyle such as healthy eating, smoking cessation and mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing was particularly emphasised here, due to the strong link between physical activity and the reduction in levels of depression and stress.

Small versus large organisations

The larger organisations (large and major) that were interviewed frequently had a health or wellbeing policy in place, so the perceived workload for them to have integrated into this a physical activity element was relatively low. However smaller organisations did not tend to have an existing health or wellbeing policy and would be faced with formulating a completely new policy. It would have been useful if the statements had provided employers with a comprehensive understanding of what a physical activity policy would consist of, reference to where they could find supporting material and example templates to help implement them.

Integration into wider environmental policy

The statements effectiveness would be enhanced if they were integrated with other organisational policies such as a wellbeing or health policies. Examples of this could include integrating with environmental policies to encourage employees to adopt active travel as it is good for their health and helping the environment.

Engaging with local community

Stakeholders felt that engaging with the local community was important and therefore also linking in with local initiatives. This was in part to increase the range of activities offered to staff e.g. subsidised access to local leisure centres, provision (by the local council) of well-lit routes for walking etc. A number of stakeholders suggested the importance of linking in with regional or national initiatives. Examples given included:

- BHF work on the two year programme 'Well at Work' funded by Sport England;
- The physical activity toolkit available from June 2007 (Loughborough is evaluating the pilots early 2008);
- Linking in with DoH work;
- Linking in with work on mental health e.g. HSE's Management Standards on Stress at Work; and;
- Links with the health inequalities agenda.

3.1.4 Conveying the business case

Demonstrating business benefits

The respondents indicated that the benefits of the statements needed to be sold to employers to encourage them to implement the statements.

The statements needed to be tailored towards employers and they need to be sold the benefits that the business would gain from implementing the statements. Major barriers that were mentioned by employers of all sizes were time, resources and cost and employers may need to be able to justify this investment. They need to have:

- Clear reference to any benefits of implementing the statements;
- Be given practical advice on how to measure the benefits (e.g. how to measure absenteeism in your workforce) and;
- Be provided with any links to potential funding or financial assistance.

Stakeholders suggested that employers could be provided with the following information concerning national sickness absence rates and productivity rates in order to demonstrate to organisations, as well as explaining how organisations can gather this information for themselves. Examples given by respondents suggested that:

- ‘Healthy’ people could be as much as six times more productive than ‘non-healthy’ people;
- Inactive workers may be almost 6 hours less productive every week than active workers.

Please note there were no reference for these statistics, which were given by participants, and therefore it cannot be guaranteed that they are accurate.

Incentives for organisations

Respondents maintained that the statements needed to gain support from senior management and those in control of the finances within an organisation. Financial assistance or incentives (such as tax breaks, funding) and the benefits and improvements that these could bring was mentioned by numerous employers. Around a quarter of stakeholders felt that some kind of incentive would be required unless the statements were to be made a legislative requirement e.g. linking to national standard such as Investors In People (IIP) to the corporate social responsibility agenda.

Public versus private sector

Employers within the public sector in particular were concerned with the justification of spending in this area. They felt that unless it could be justified by cost benefit criteria they may struggle to be able to implement any of the statements that would require additional investment or where public sectors employees were to be seen to be getting a “better deal” than others (i.e. private sector). The majority of stakeholders felt that private sector organisations would have more financial resource to implement the statements but less inclination generally. However this view was not shared by the majority of private sector organisations interviewed, who stated that the statements would have financial implications and barriers for implementation into their organisations also. Local government organisations suggested that they could implement the statement with assistance from their local PCT, however this may stretch resources.

3.1.5 Selling the benefits to employees

Staff resistance

A large number of employers and stakeholders felt that resistance from staff would be a significant barrier in implementing the statements; as such it was felt important to effectively make the case to employees in order to engage them. In order to secure employee buy-in, employers need to be able to implement the statements without coming across as if they are interfering in employees personal issues or becoming too “nanny state” like. Some employers felt that it would be important to use a “soft approach” otherwise employees may resist or react badly to the statements.

Need for advice to employers on engaging employees

Numerous employers felt that they would need more advice and guidance on how to secure this approach, as if they were to make an error in the approach first time it could alienate employees. Employers also felt that they needed to ensure that employees were clear why they were implementing the statements and that it was not just for company benefit.

Respondents felt there was a need to provide information to “those who should take action” on how they should sell the statements to employees. This could include information on:

- How to sell the benefits to employees,
- How to engage all employees within your workforce and;
- How best to approach employees with interventions of this type.

Delegates indicated that at present the statements gave employers little guidance and do not provide reference to outside resources. Employers less familiar with implementing and devising policies might struggle to implement these statements and include all members of the workforce.

Suggestions on how to engage employees

Respondents offered suggestions on how to engage employees. These included:

- Stakeholders and employers felt that to encourage employees to partake in physical activity they would need information on the benefits to themselves, such as health benefits and improved performance at work.
- Incentives would encourage employees to engage and suggestions from stakeholders included plaques, winners’ badges and employers suggested financial incentives such as tax breaks.
- There was a consensus of opinion that it was important that senior management supported any interventions and were also seen to partake.
- Stakeholders suggested that one of the most effective ways to encourage physical activity is to make it fun.
- Employers felt that it was essential that employees were reminded regularly about participating in physical activity and the benefits that they can gain.

Staff consultation is essential

Both employers and stakeholders agreed that staff consultation was an essential element within the development and/or integration of a physical activity policy and within the development of physical activity interventions within the workplace. It would enable employees to take ownership of any initiative or programme and to ensure that the activities offered were suitable for all members of the workforce.

3.1.6 Inclusion of the complete workforce

Concerns about exclusion of certain members of the workforce

All stakeholders and most employees felt that the statements are not inclusive of all members of the workforce and may therefore inadvertently increase the health inequalities between employees.

Respondents indicated that by and large it is more challenging to include certain members of the workforce who will be keener to participate in physical activity interventions. However stakeholders and employers alike felt that the statements exclude a number of members of the workforce. Excluded employees groups are listed below:

- Disabled – those with disabilities (be they physical, mental, sensory-related or health-related e.g. diabetes) may experience exclusion in relation to some activities e.g. climbing stairs, walking to work or being motivated to participate (e.g. those with depression);
- Ethnicity – (Including Asian, South Asian and Bangladeshi women, minority groups) South Asian women, for example, may not feel it is appropriate or safe to partake in physical activity in the workplace. Suggestions to alleviate this included using advocates within the community to encourage participation, however this would need to be a partnership approach;
- Shift workers (e.g. factory workers) may experience barriers such as safety issues, access to facilities and issues with body clock and energy levels;
- Gender – women in particular may not feel comfortable engaging in physical activity alongside male colleagues. Women and men may require different activities to encourage them to engage;
- Social class/education background – educational background and class were raised by three stakeholders as being a specific concern – those of a higher class, higher level of educational attainment or with more available income were felt to be more likely to engage in physical activity;
- Certain types of workers – such as home workers, agency staff, drivers, transient workers, call centre workers, lone workers and self-employed individuals;
- Unemployed/job seekers – many unemployed workers would benefit from increased levels of physical activity but are excluded from this guidance;
- Already fit v disinterested – those who are already fit and interested in physical activity will get fitter, and those who are currently not interested will remain not interested and the gap between the two will increase.

Pregnant workers and older workers were mentioned as two specific groups that may need to have specialist or tailored advice on how to ensure physical activity initiatives are safe and appropriate.

It was indicated that employers need to have access to the knowledge and awareness to be able to tailor the statements to include all employees within their workforce. There may be issues that are specific to an employer's workplace such as company location, safety of employees and access to local facilities. This would all need to be considered by employers.

Suggestions on how to be inclusive

Stakeholders and employers suggested some ways in which these workers could be considered more thoroughly and included. Suggestions included translating material into other languages, however this assumes a certain literacy level, and some employees may not be able to read. Buddy pairing was suggested as a way to overcome issues of safety for lone exercising, involving the community or setting up local partnerships with appropriate individuals and organisations. It was suggested that these statements could be promoted through job centres so that job seekers could benefit from the statements. This is essential to avoid exclusion of members of the workforce and to ensure that a representative sample of employees has been consulted.

3.1.7 Risks of implementing the statements

The implementation of the statements may give rise to some risks for organisations. These risks may deter employers from implementing the statements, or may be major barriers. The risks mentioned included:

- Concerns about litigation;
- Employee resistance;
- Competence to perform health check and handle identified health issues.

Both the stakeholders and employers felt that concerns of litigation should an employee become injured would be a major issue and this would make employers wary of implementing the statements.

The majority of employers mentioned the resistance of employees to the statements was a risk and that they were concerned they would perceive these statements as a 'big brother' or 'nanny state' approach. Employers were also concerned that the statements and any interventions that were introduced may distract employees from their work and reduce productivity.

Other concerns that were consistently raised involved the provision of a health check included in statement 2. Not only were there concerns for providing provisions for this, but also ensuring that all employers are aware of what level of expertise an employer would need before they could perform such a check. Finally they would need to be able to provide employees with some follow up to the check up if they identified any health issues. Employers need more detailed information on what should be included in the health check and who would be qualified to perform it.

3.1.8 Advice and Support

It was considered important that employers are given adequate support to implement the statements, and employers stated that they need practical advice and achievable targets. Employers will use the statements to develop policies and initiatives to encourage employees to uptake the statements. Employers stated they felt there needed to be more of an evidence base to justify the statements and that they would need access to support and advice in order to implement the statements successfully. Employers repeatedly suggested that the inclusion of case study type material would be very useful. Similarly alternative methods of disseminating the statements to employees were cited, such as through employee representative organisations, trade associations or through local authorities. A large number of stakeholders felt that all organisations would need access to health education, health promotion and physical health experts.

Feedback from the workshops and interviews suggested that employees would also need access to advice and support, particularly if they were an employee that was in a minority or vulnerable group (e.g. ethnic minority groups, disabled groups).

3.1.9 Promotion

Respondents indicated that for the statements to be successful they need to reach a wide audience, therefore promotion and accessibility will be key issues to secure. Employers and stakeholders were concerned with the general awareness of NICE guidance with employers as a whole. They felt that some public sector employers may not be aware of the guidance and ensuring that the guidance was accessible to all sizes, sectors and types of organisation would be very important. Stakeholders suggested using national promotion campaigns through the media and some employers suggested a form of front end promotion to enlighten and encourage employees to partake.

Employers felt it is essential that the statements elicit buy in from employers. Suggestions of linking physical activity and improvements in mental health could be used to further promote the statements to employers. The employer interviews revealed examples where physical activity had been used successfully to improve employee mental health.

One employer mentioned the possibility of linking the statements into existing awards, such as within education the National Healthy Schools Award a long term initiative that helps young people and their schools to be healthy.

Employers suggested that creative forms of marketing need to be used to promote the statement.

3.1.10 Aids to implementation

Stakeholders and employers felt that the statements would benefit from more details and suggestions to aid implementation. Possibly suggestions included:

- Flexible working hours;
- Adapting the speed of the lift;
- Ensuring employees were aware of the location of the staircase;

- Promote that interventions and initiatives that are developed should be fun;
- Providing activities in lunch hours onsite e.g. yoga;
- Providing a range of activities at different times of the day;
- Ensure that the statements are in the right language and avoid ‘medical language’ or ‘policy language’.

3.2 STATEMENT SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

3.2.1 Overall points

Stakeholders and employers questioned the structure of the statements and stakeholders queried the lack of integration with other NICE recommendations, such as the recommendations on changes to the physical environment. There were also concerns that there was no clear evidence or justification for the statements contained in the document.

Questions were raised as to why there was such a severe contrast between the structure of statements 1 and 2 and the structure of statements 3 and 4. Statements 1 and 2 are broad and overarching statements whereas statements 3 and 4 are very specific. Feedback suggested that in order to make statements 3 and 4 inclusive of all members of the workforce they needed to include more example initiatives so that employers could tailor the activities to all members of their workforce.

Some feedback from stakeholders suggested that the statements would only impact on those members of the workforce in paid employment and would therefore exclude those seeking employment and those unable to work and who may also benefit from a more physically active lifestyle.

The statements act as an interface to communicate effective promotion of physical activity to employers, the responsibility of promoting the statements and their contents to employees is left in the hands of the employer. Both employers and delegates continually mentioned the importance of the statements securing employer “buy in” but also demonstrating and giving examples of how to elicit the interest of their employees and change their behaviour regarding physical activity in the workplace and perhaps lay provision for outside the workplace too.

General barriers to all the statements included:

- Lack of time;
- Lack of resources;
- Commitment and “buy in” from employers/senior managers;
- Attitude and commitment from employees.

3.2.2 Feedback statement 1

Statement 1:

Develop an organisation-wide policy or plan to encourage employees to be more physically active. This should:

- Include multiple approaches
- Be based on a staff consultation
- Link to other internal HR policies (for example, on alcohol and smoking or flexible working) and to national health policies
- Set organisational targets
- Be sustainable.

Statement 1 had mixed feedback from both employers and stakeholders, the larger organisations felt they would be able to integrate the statements into their current policy however, smaller organisations felt they would have to completely develop a policy from scratch and this would be more challenging. Stakeholders felt that for this statement to be effective it would need a high level of promotion and senior management commitment, possibly obtained through the use of a good business case.

Employers and stakeholders questioned some of the content of statement 1 as they were unsure (and were unsure if employers would know) what multiple approaches meant and felt this needed to be explained further with examples given of possible multiple approaches. Queries were also present of how organisations would set targets and whether indeed this would be the right approach to be taken. Stakeholders felt that physical activity in itself is difficult to measure and setting targets can lead to contrary results that are not a true reflection of the situation.

As mentioned in the business case section above employers and stakeholders felt that employers would want some sort of justification and incentive (e.g. tax incentives) for implementing this statement. Stakeholders felt this statement would be more effective if it was integrated with other health and wellbeing policies and other business policies (e.g. environmental policy).

Other similar themes that have been mentioned in the overall section were mentioned for this statement, such as ensuring the benefits to employees were clear and robust to ensure that employees would “buy in” to the statements.

Stakeholders mentioned they felt that integrating a physical activity policy could aid staff retention within certain industry sectors, particularly those with high staff turnover, such as call centres.

Employers and stakeholders felt that the use of staff consultation and ensuring that the policy was sustainable were key elements to this statement. They felt this should apply to the statements as a whole.

3.2.3 Feedback statement 2

Statement 2

- Introduce and monitor an organisation-wide, multi-component programme to encourage employees to be physically active. This could be part of a broader programme to improve health. It could include:
 - Provision of a health check;
 - Dissemination of information on how to be more physically active and the health benefits of such activity (this should be tailored to meet individual needs) along with written information about activities;
 - Advice and support to help individuals plan how they are going to increase their levels of physical activity;
 - Flexible working policies and incentive schemes to encourage employees to be physically active.
- Ensure employees are involved in planning and designing activities.

Statement 2 also received mixed feedback and stakeholders felt its success would be very much dependent on how the statement was implemented by employers. Indeed employers felt that they needed to be given more guidance in order to make this statement work successfully within organisations. Employers also questioned what was meant by a health check, who would be qualified to perform the health check and how follow up to the health check would be managed. There were also concerns on issues of confidentiality of the results of the health check and whether employees would be happy with this approach coming from their employer. Employers and stakeholders were concerned with the cost and resource implications of introducing health checks, stakeholders suggested that outside organisations could be brought in to perform the health checks. Employers felt that if they were to be expected to implement a health check and potentially offset future NHS or health related expenditure they would deserve a financial incentive for this.

Stakeholders suggested that some innovative examples of dissemination of information needed to be included, such as through company intranet systems, emails, pop-ups.

Stakeholders and employers suggested a selection of facilitators for implementing this statement including financial gain such as reduction in absenteeism, increase in productivity. Evidence for this effect in previous initiatives would support and help employers to justify implementation of this statement. Other facilitators included incentive schemes such as tax free bikes, transferable incentives so that employees did not lose benefits if they were to leave their current employer, tax incentives for both employers and employees, alternative forms of physical activity.

Barriers specific to this statement included lack of facilities and provisions to perform a health check and working culture of the organisation.

Employers and stakeholders felt there were a few gaps in this statement including where employers could access knowledge and resources for this statement, in particular any examples or case studies of other physical activity interventions that have been successfully implemented within organisations. It was suggested that this could be split by industry sector, organisation size or sector and a case study format would be helpful as this would demonstrate to employers, method to implement the statements and examples of benefits that could be obtained.

3.2.4 Feedback statement 3

Statement 3

Put up signs at strategic points and distribute written information to encourage employees to use the stairs rather than taking a lift where possible. The signs could point out that climbing stairs burns calories, may be quicker than waiting for the lift and is a good form of exercise.

Although statement 3 received positive feedback as it was felt it would be relatively easy to implement, there were concerns raised regarding its sustainability and potential for exclusion of large sections of the workforce.

Employers felt that this statement would be easy to implement and did not require input of lots of additional resources or investment. Employers suggested that some pre-prepared, editable and downloadable example signs would be useful and would make employers job easier. Stakeholders felt that it was very important that employers were aware of their complete workforce so that they could ensure all signs were tailored to their workforce. For example the statements would need to suggest that employers may need to have the sign in multiple languages, include a Braille version of the sign or use a pictorial sign.

Employers and stakeholders were concerned with the potential for exclusion with this statement in two main areas. Firstly they were concerned with excluding large numbers of the workforce that are not able to use the stairs due to mobility issues, health problems or due to the nature of their work (e.g. porters or cleaners who need to use the lifts to carry items). Secondly this statement would exclude workers that work in single storey buildings or those that do not work in buildings. Even in organisations where there are stairs, delegates were concerned that employees may be deterred from using them as they may not want to become hot and out of breath in front of fellow employees. Especially in cases where there were many flights of stairs. Finally stakeholders raised the question of the health and safety implications of using the stairs and whether this would be exacerbated by this statement. Employer liability was raised again here in reference to this statement and clarification was needed on who would be responsible in case of injury.

Both employers and stakeholders were concerned with the sustainability of this statement. They felt that this was an essential element to any physical activity intervention, but felt that employees would perhaps be inspired at the outset of this initiative but lose interest very quickly. They felt that employers needed to be supplied with more examples of how to maintain employee's interest in this initiative and keep it sustainable.

Stakeholders suggested that if this statement was to be successful the staircase needed to be incentivised, perhaps by slowing down the lift. Employees also needed to be made more aware of the location of the stairs in a building, suggestions to improve this included signage, placing foot marks on the floor to show employees where the stairs are located and keeping doors to stairs open (although potential fire hazards to this were raised).

Stakeholders felt that the most important element of this statement was to make it fun and engage employee's interest. Stakeholders felt that more examples of case studies could be provided such as devising a stair walking challenge to scale the height of Mount Everest. This would provide employees with a challenge and level of achievement for small steps of effort. Stakeholders and employers were keen for there to be more examples of other initiatives that could be used to encourage physical activity in the workplace as they could then tailor the intervention to the specific needs of their workplace and employees. One stakeholder provided first hand experience of a 10 week stair walking interventions which recorded a significant decrease in resting blood pressure.

Employers may need some encouragement from the content of this statement to ensure that they achieve this, however the staff consultation mentioned in statement 1 would be a good starting point. Other examples suggested included no email days, moving the bin so that employees need to get up to find it and walking meetings.

Finally stakeholders questioned the inclusion of this statement, and felt that the body of evidence to support this statement was due to the ease at which stair walking interventions can be measured and not due to the strength of this form of physical activity intervention.

3.2.5 Feedback statement 4

Statement 4

Encourage employees to increase the distance they walk during the working day. For example, encourage them to walk part or all of the way to and from work, provide information about walking routes and encourage them to set goals and monitor the distances they walk.

Statement 4 received some positive feedback from employers and stakeholders as it is another low cost option however, there were significant barriers identified to its successful integration within all industry sectors. Stakeholders felt that the success of this statement was heavily dependent on employee's knowledge of the local area and information and support that employers could provide to encourage employees to partake in active travel. Stakeholders and employers requested more examples to be provided to ensure that employers could ensure the statements were inclusive. Similarly to statement 3, at present this statement excludes workers with mobility issues and/or health problems.

There were a number of barriers mentioned by stakeholders and employers to the implementation and inclusion of this statement. Firstly considering active travel; these include the geographical location of the organisation and whether there is the necessary infrastructure to allow employees to walk. For example, some roads do not have pavements or street lighting and so would not be appropriate or safe for employees. Employees that work regularly at differing locations may find it more difficult to walk to work, or those employees that travel as part of their job and so would need to have access to their car at work. Safety is another major barrier, as discussed above and in inner city locations where fear of crime may discourage employees from walking and prevent employers from promoting this. Personal circumstances may restrict employees from walking to work, for example they may have children that they need to be taken to school before work and pick up after work.

It was indicated that there are ways in which employers could promote active travel and make it easier for employees to partake in active travel. Some suggestions from the stakeholders included providing information on walking routes in the local area, ensuring there are facilities for employees at the workplace, including cycling as an alternative form of active travel and circulating interesting and fun walking routes to employees such as nature walks, history walks, time saving etc., provide links to informative resources e.g. websites such as walkit.com, employer forums for sharing ideas, allow employees to work flexible working hours to make active travel more accessible, increase mileage expenses for green travel and or the discouragement of other forms of travel such as reduced car parking spaces. Stakeholders suggested that partnerships with local councils could help to alleviate this risk through the provision of well lit walking routes.

Secondly there would be some key barriers to increasing the distance walked during the working day. These would include:

- The nature of the workplace (e.g. would need to be careful promoting walking in factory type workplaces);
- Location of the workplace as if employees were to be encouraged to walk at lunchtime there would need to be some area that was safe and accessible for them to walk and employers may need to put together promotional material to suggest this.

Employers felt that examples of how to practically implement this part of the statement in the workplace would need to be supplied to employers to encourage them and ensure that they understood how feasible this statement is to implement. Examples of other aids to implementation such as physical activity champions within the workforce would be of benefit to employers too.

Finally there were concerns that as with statement 3 this statement would exclude disabled employees and additionally shift workers. There were some concerns those employees from ethnic minorities such as Asian women may be excluded from this statement as they may not feel it is appropriate for them to walk alone.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Practicality and relevance

The feedback from respondents indicated that the statements were considered to be practical and relevant to organisations. However, they have cited a range of factors that could limit implementation of the statements and whether all activities would be sustained; this leads onto the next conclusion.

4.2 Implementation support and promotion

Respondents cited a range of factors that they perceived may limit the implementation of the statements, including:

- Extent to which employees are engaged with and support the activities;
- Geographic location and dispersal of the organisation;
- Concerns about health and safety of the activities;
- Concerns about their ability to conduct health checks and to act on the identified health issues;
- Exclusion of some sections of the workforce from the recommended activities.

These points indicated a need for further advice and support to be provided to enable implementation particularly with regard to:

- How to engage employees in physical activity rather than alienate employees, including options such as consulting workers when identifying possible physical activities and enabling participation through options such as flexible working;
- How to engage all sections of the workforce, including disabled, shift workers etc;
- Advice on how to assess and plan activities, including risk assessment, assessment of practical options and how to handle health issues arising from health checks;
- Advice on how to design sustainable physical activity interventions.

This could include providing more practical examples and case studies.

The findings indicated that small organisations in particular required simple advice and support, whilst larger organisations were thought to possess more resources to implement the statements. However it was clear that organisations of any size required a business case to commit time and resource to the implementation of these statements. Feedback indicated that this could cover issues such as reduction in absence and productivity.

In the case of small firms, reference to sources of grants may have also helped address concerns over cost.

Respondents stated that further support in the promotion of the statements, such as through mass media; trade associations or local authorities would help to sell employees and employers the benefits of promoting physical activity in the workplace.

4.3 Integration into wider wellbeing and health policies

Respondents indicated that these statements would and should form part of wider health and wellbeing policies (as well as environmental policies) rather than standalone policies. Larger organisations would commonly have health and wellbeing policies in place already. Smaller organisations are less likely to already have a health or wellbeing policy in place and would need support to develop one.

4.4 Overlap of workplace health promotion statements

Respondents indicated that a holistic approach to workplace health promotion should be adopted rather than separating approaches to physical and mental health. This suggests that consideration could be to integrating the implementation advice for NICE recommendations on workplace health promotion.

4.5 Further development of the specific statements

Feedback indicated that statements 3 and 4 were viewed as examples of physical activity only and were very specific. An option is to advise that organisations identify physical activities, such as through worker consultation, and that the activities included in statements 3 and 4 (using stairs and walking to work) are cited as examples. Respondents felt that the statements would have benefited from examples of activities that may apply to all sections of the workforce, such as disabled and obese people.

Statements 1 and 2 contained some points, such as target setting and health check that were queried and may benefit from re-wording or clarification.

It was also indicated that certain aspects of the statements wording could be further developed such as including objectives and clarifying if the statements are aimed at work alone.