

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

Centre for Public Health Excellence

Review Decision

Review of the public health guidance on 'promoting physical activity in the workplace'

1 Background information

Guidance issue date: May 2008

Intervention guidance

3 year review

2 Process for updating guidance

Public health guidance is reviewed 3 years after publication to determine whether all or part of it should be updated.

The process for updating NICE public health guidance is as follows:

- NICE convenes an expert group to consider whether any new evidence or significant changes in policy and practice would be likely to lead to substantively different recommendations. The expert group consists of selected experts and academics, the review team that produced the

original evidence reviews, representatives of relevant government departments and representatives from relevant industry sectors.

- NICE consults with stakeholders on its proposal for updating the guidance (this review consultation document).
- NICE may amend its proposal, in light of feedback from stakeholder consultation.
- NICE determines where any guidance update fits within its work programme, alongside other priorities.

3 Consideration of the evidence and practice

The expert group discussed current and ongoing research of relevance to the current recommendations.

It was felt that the current recommendations were unlikely to change in the light of new evidence and that any changes in the evidence base underpinned the business case for the guidance rather than to reflecting on the recommendations themselves. However, the guidance could be better positioned in terms of using better language, focussing more on benefits to business and making a strong business case.

It was felt that clearer evidence could be presented relating to the benefits and costs of having physically active employees and creating clearer links to the benefits to the organisation, to the employees as a group and to the individual employee.

There have been significant shifts in the policy landscape that can affect these recommendations. The most notable among these is the Responsibility Deal, which can provide a huge opportunity for audiences to be made aware of this guidance. .

The group felt strongly that an overview of workplace wellness/health was called for and that a systems approach to work and health was needed. It was noted that most existing programmes are multi-faceted and would not work in isolation (for example, physical activity interventions alongside healthy eating interventions to prevent/tackle obesity). Work is a fundamental determinant of health, and it is more useful in current political contexts to think about 'wellbeing' in the workplace rather than specific health promotion or education activities.

New research into sedentary behaviour is also coming to light and sedentary time at work is an important health indicator. Sedentary behaviour is becoming regarded as an independent risk factor for ill health.

Stakeholder consultation on this proposal elicited responses from 7 organisations spanning the NHS, community organisations and an employer organisation.

The general view of respondents was that there is some new evidence but that this did not add to or refute the recommendations in the current guidance. Stakeholders felt that the guidance could have bigger impact if it was presented in different ways to different audiences. Broadly, 2 organisations felt that the guidance could be updated, 1 organisation felt the new evidence simply supported the existing recommendations and most organisations suggested that the guidance needed to be broader or part of a broader workplace health referral.

4 Equality and diversity considerations

There has been no evidence to indicate that the guidance does not comply with anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. However the following areas need to be borne in mind:

- Care needs to be taken that workplace physical activity programmes do not exclude people with disabilities.

- The nature of the guidance means that it excludes people who are workless, although it does include people who work in voluntary roles.
- Parts of any workplace guidance may be difficult to implement for organisations with home-working staff or staff who normally work remotely for other reasons.

5 Review Decision

Following consultation on this draft review proposal we will not update this guidance at this time, but reconsider it as part of a broader programme of work related to workplace wellbeing in due course.

CPHE