

The London Borough of Sutton chose to pilot Activate Your Workplace (AYW) in the Environmental and Leisure Group (E&L) where there is a workforce of 916 predominantly office based staff. This department was selected as it offered a good representation of the diverse demographic of staff across the council. A recently published Physical Activity and Sport Strategy included an outcome to commit and implement an active workplace charter; it was considered that AYW would fit well with achieving that outcome.

Excellent progress has been made in E&L since joining the programme in June 2007, encouraging healthier lifestyles for all its employees. Uptake of the programme has exceeded expectations and over 500 employees have been involved in the programme so far.

The Workplace Health Champion, Laurel Joseph has developed lots of interventions and working partnerships, which have increased health opportunities for staff and brought expertise into the programme. A partnership with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) provided staff with free gym membership for three months, which was initially offered to encourage employees to 'try out' using a gym. Due to high demand, in January 2008 GLL ran a 'No Excuses' campaign where any class was £1.50, which has also been well attended. Another partnership was formed with SCOLA (Sutton College of Learning for Adults) who ran workshops to help staff manage stress. SCOLA saw an opportunity to apply their services to the working environment and E&L recognised the opportunity to bring expertise in stress management into the programme.

An allotment has been allocated near the Denmark Road site; staff who have been involved are very enthusiastic. This initiative offers the opportunity for people who would like to participate in moderate intensity physical activity, to do something outside that is not associated with sport. The intervention has been free of cost because the Champion secured a free allotment due to the site being council owned. Furthermore, this initiative also contributes to The London Borough of Sutton's role as a sustainable council.

In the monthly ELite magazine, which is available to all council employees', articles have been published about the project and its successes. There is also a promotional video coming out in 2008 that will help to publicise the London Borough of Sutton as a healthy employer of choice and assist shared learning within and outside the council.

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Challenges encountered during the pilot project included working within a short time frame, which meant the programme needed to gain momentum quickly to achieve the desired outcome. Engaging all employees across a diverse demographic proved to be challenging when trying to ensure everyone's needs were met. However because many interventions have been piloted in a short time frame, in the long term this will help shape a better planned programme to roll out across the council.

Laurel has enjoyed her role and the opportunity to help people achieve their goals. Since taking on the role as a Workplace Health Champion Laurel is keen to widen her knowledge in Public Health. She has especially enjoyed the 'away days' organised by Activate which allowed her to gain an insight in to the health arena. Laurel found that walking groups were effective in engaging a number of employees in the programme, encourage interaction between employees from different departments and are inexpensive.

Interventions

Yoga (6 wks x 1 hr)
Lunch time walks (weekly x ? hr)
Cycle ride (monthly x ? hr)
Managing stress workshops (1 x 1hr)
5 a side football (1 session)
'No Excuses' leisure centre classes
On site massage
Allotments
Fruit deliveries (4 wks)
Active Gym (30 free memberships for 3 months)
Love Your Bike event (one session)
Staff Olympics (sponsored by Activate)
Rounders matches (after work)

Organisations and individuals London Borough of Sutton have worked with for the Activate programme

Sutton & Merton PCT
Greenwich Leisure Ltd
SCOLA (Sutton College of Learning for Adults)
ECOLocal
VegZED
Smarter Travel Sutton
Rounders Association
Yoga instructors
Positive Futures
Sutton's Sports Development team
Goals