


A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a blue top and black leggings, is stretching her right leg against the back of a wooden chair. She is looking towards the right. In the background, there is a wooden dresser with a laptop on it, a black water bottle, and various personal items. A green bar is visible in the top left corner of the image.

# Building an active culture

How to create a working environment that supports and empowers your people to build activity into their working day



## Five ways to build an active working culture

Creating a work environment that truly encourages and enables activity is a fundamental step to building an active working culture. Here are some simple ways you can make a real difference:

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1. **Give permission** – employees are more likely to take time to move if they feel genuinely encouraged to, so let them know you actively support this using some of the resources in this toolkit.
2. **Be a role model** – normalise active working by showing your teams this is something that senior leaders within your organisation genuinely embrace and practise themselves.
3. **Offer flexible working hours** – allowing staff to flex their hours to build in activity before, after or during the day can make a real difference, especially during the darker winter months.
4. **Involve and empower your employees** – ask your people what they want and need through a survey or informal conversation. Find out what their barriers are and what would help. You may even consider training staff members as Physical Activity Champions. This can provide a valuable development opportunity for the individual and generate a sustainable model of peer-to-peer support and employee-driven activity.

Further guidance for line managers on creating a supportive working environment for active working, see Workplace Movement's [Physical Activity in the Workplace: Line manager guidance](#).

# How to influence your employees through behaviour changes principles

We all know that being active is good for our health but that's not always enough to change our behaviour or tackle the practical and emotional barriers that can stand in our way. Changing behaviour is a combination of helping people feel **capable** of doing it, providing **opportunities**, and **motivating** them to join in. Here are some ideas of how you can further support and empower your employees to get active:

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- **Everything counts** – redefine what it means to be active and show your employees that any type of movement is valid, from a lunchtime walk up to a high-intensity workout. Even just getting up and moving around more makes a difference.
- **Think about language** – for those who are less active and less confident about their ability, the words “exercise” and “sport” may have negative implications whereas “being active” or “moving more” can feel more accessible.
- **Normalise an active working day** – show how senior leaders are getting involved and share examples of what staff are doing so this becomes a regular part of the working day.
- **Show “people like me”** – if you’re using imagery, make it relatable and show a diverse range of people from different backgrounds and activity levels getting active in a variety of ways that reflect your workforce.
- **Sell the benefits** – motivate employees by talking about the benefits of exercise beyond the obvious health ones – boost your energy, get away from the screen, connect with friends or team mates, build in self-care, destress, look after your mental health and create a barrier between work and home life.
- **Make it social** – people are missing interacting with colleagues and research shows that sharing progress and receiving encouragement from other can help with motivation and enjoyment. Consider setting up a workplace group on a digital platform such as Strava or set up a group challenge
- **Encourage employees to build a routine** – behavioural science tells us that doing the same thing at the same time each day can help to create longer lasting habits over time.