

# Thurrock Council – Health at work: an employer's perspective

## A guide for small and medium enterprises.

Health and safety at work is governed by Health and Safety at Work law. It places a legal obligation and duty on employers to assess, manage and protect the health, safety, and welfare of their employees both in the physical workplace and working remotely.

Assessments and management should include protection from common workplace risks such as trips, falls, fire, noise, poor ventilation, asbestos, use of suitable equipment, manual-handling and work-related stress.

Part of an employer's duties under health and safety law is to put mechanisms in place to promote and endorse health messages alongside relevant training suitable to different roles. For small businesses without access to human resources, occupational health, or learning and development teams, addressing workplace health may be harder. However, improving workers' health offers benefits to both the employer and employees.

It is widely recognised that being in good work is better for health and wellbeing than being out of work. 'Good work' is defined as having a safe and secure job with good working hours and conditions, supportive management and opportunities for training and development.

Good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives and protects against social exclusion through the provision of income, identity and purpose, a core role and social interaction. It also supports and benefits families and society more widely. All these factors are influenced by the conditions of the work environment.

Further information and sources of support for embedding good workplace health practices can be found at the end of this toolkit. They include things such as signposting staff to local services including NHS Health Checks and mental health services.

Investing in your employees' health and wellbeing is good for business; a healthy workplace is a more productive workplace. **A healthy workforce:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>has better morale – improved staff and management relationships, work culture and social wellbeing</b></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>takes less time off – reduced absenteeism cost</b></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>is less likely to leave – better corporate image, improved customer service</b></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>performs better and is more productive – better job satisfaction, higher engagement in job and business competitiveness</b></li></ul>	

## What you can do as an employer

**Support staff to be physically active, such as going for lunchtime walks**



**Consider making reasonable adjustments such as standing desks or flexible working –**  
[www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers](http://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers)



**Attend training to support understanding about how to talk to staff about physical and mental health**



**Encourage employees to attend their NHS Health Check and dental and eye appointments**



**Encourage healthy behaviours such as healthy eating**



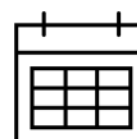
**Support employees to quit smoking**



**Encourage staff to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated**



**Enable staff to take time off to attend appointments, such as for vaccinations and screening**



# Five core elements of health and wellbeing

**Mental wellbeing** enables us to work productively, cope with the normal stresses of everyday living and realise our potential.

Being **physically active** at work can have a positive effect on behaviour, overall fitness, mental wellbeing, work attendance and job stress.

**Healthy eating** – what we eat and drink affects our health and our performance at work. Eating a healthy well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water reduces our risk of developing headaches, feeling fatigued or struggling to concentrate.

**Smoking** is one of the major health risks for heart disease. It is one of the leading causes of premature death. Employers can play an important role in supporting people to stop smoking.

Excessive **alcohol** consumption is one of the leading causes of ill health and premature deaths in 25 to 29 year-olds. Even small amounts of alcohol can affect reaction times, perception and control.

## Benefits to employers of promoting healthy behaviours

Behaviour	Increased productivity	Reduced absenteeism	Cost savings	Improved morale	Reduced accidents	Improved focus
<b>Mental Health</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes			
<b>Physical Health</b>	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Healthy Eating</b>	Yes		Yes	Yes		
<b>Smoking</b>	Yes	Yes				Yes
<b>Alcohol</b>	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes

## Benefits to employees of a healthier lifestyle

Behaviour	Improved productivity	Reduction in illness	Improved Morale	Maintain healthy body weight	Improved confidence	Improved focus
<b>Mental Health</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
<b>Physical Health</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
<b>Healthy Eating</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
<b>Smoking</b>	Yes	Yes				Yes
<b>Alcohol</b>	Yes	Yes				Yes

# Making the most of everyday conversations

**Making Every Contact Count (MECC)** is the name given to a simple but evidence-based NHS-approved approach to improving the health and wellbeing of the people around us through everyday conversations.

Free training is provided online to help employers and staff feel comfortable about starting conversations about health – go to [www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/making-every-contact-count](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/making-every-contact-count)

The Thurrock MECC Link web pages – [www.mecclink.co.uk/east-of-england](http://www.mecclink.co.uk/east-of-england) – signpost where to go next for local support on a range of health and wellbeing topics including those listed below:

- Affordable Warmth
- Alcohol
- Bereavement
- Carers
- Dementia/Memory Problems
- Domestic Abuse
- Falls and Frailty
- Financial Inclusion
- Gambling
- Health Checks
- Healthy Diet and Healthy Weight
- Housing and Homelessness
- Mental Wellbeing
- Physical Activity
- Sexual Health
- Smoking
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Stay Well This Winter – Norovirus
- Stay Well This Winter - Winter Ready
- Substance Misuse
- Suicide Prevention
- Stay Well This Winter - Flu and COVID-19



## **Five top tips for supporting staff wellbeing**

Top tips for supporting staff wellbeing are:

- 1. encourage staff to take regular breaks in which to stretch to support their physical and mental health**
- 2. encourage staff to go for a walk during their lunchtime to help them to stay physically active and get some fresh air**
- 3. support staff to take regular holiday periods, work reliable hours and discourage them from working a total number of hours that is greatly over or under their contracted hours of employment**
- 4. support staff to walk or cycle to work where possible – for example, through provision of showers, safe storage for clothes, and cycle racks**
- 5. organise a shared activity – for example, a picnic where colleagues can spend time together and share good food**

# Further information and support

## General Health and Wellbeing

Business in the Community (BITC) is a UK-wide business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world together. It provides toolkits to help employers support their workforce to be productive and have good health and wellbeing. Toolkits include:

- domestic abuse
- drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- mental health
- musculoskeletal health
- physical activity, healthy eating and healthier weight
- sleep and recovery
- suicide prevention
- suicide postvention

Go to [www.bitc.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.bitc.org.uk/wellbeing) and [www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/?filter\\_tag\[\]=14099](http://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/?filter_tag[]=14099)

**Better Health** is a NHS-led website with information to support a healthy lifestyle, including how to quit smoking, get active, drink less alcohol and lose weight – go to [www.nhs.uk/better-health](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health)

## Immunisations and screening

The NHS vaccination web pages provide information on childhood and adult immunisations and when to have them – go to [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)

The NHS Screening webpage provides support and advice about the screening programmes available in England and how to access them – go to [www.nhs.uk/screening](http://www.nhs.uk/screening)

## Women's health – menopause

The Henpicked Menopause Hub offers resources to support managing the menopause in the workplace – go to [www.henpicked.net/menopause](http://www.henpicked.net/menopause)

## Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

Health Education England provide training on MECC through their e-learning for health website as well as related 'All our Health' bitesize e-learning modules. Go to:

- [www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/making-every-contact-count](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/making-every-contact-count)
- [www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/all-our-health](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/all-our-health)

The MECC Link – [www.mecclink.co.uk/east-of-england](http://www.mecclink.co.uk/east-of-england) – can be used to signpost employees to a range of health and wellbeing information and support services. It provides information about how you can have a conversation with your employees about health and wellbeing related topics.