

**British Heart Foundation  
Think Fit: Well@Work Program**

<http://www.bhf.org.uk/thinkfit/index.asp?SecID=1590&secondlevel=1593>

**Section I: Summary**

Well @ Work is a joint program led by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) with funding from Active England (Sport England and Big Lottery Fund's joint awards program) and the Department of Health. It is a £1.5m, two-year program to test ways of getting England's workplaces healthier.

The Well@Work program aims to highlight ways of improving diet, increasing physical activity, reducing smoking and discovering what changes in and around the workplace can affect positive differences in employees' health and achieve lasting improvement in their lifestyles.

**Section II: Statement of purpose**

Well @ Work involved eleven pilot programs across nine regions and involving 32 organizations and a potential of 10,000 employees. Trial methods of "healthy interventions" were implemented at various aimed at improving the health of employees at a variety of workplaces. The aim is to establish which changes made in and around the workplace positively influence employees' lifestyles and improve their health and which changes do not.

This is the first time any such project has been tried in the United Kingdom and the intent is to influence public health policy.

Increasing physical activity will be a major focus, but projects will also be aimed at encouraging diets, giving up smoking, reducing alcohol intake and other lifestyle changes. Attention will be paid to the working environment and how it can influence employee' health.

Some project will involve single employers across a range of sites such as Exeter City Council, while other projects will involve multiple employers across a region or country. The projects will take place in two phases initiated three months apart.

The program will be evaluated throughout the project by the University of Loughborough and a final report will be produced at the end with recommendations. The regional projects will be delivered by a regional partnership or collaboration, including representatives from Primary Care Trusts, local government, business forums and industry.

Besides having national health implications, the program will have a very strong impact in the areas where the pilots are taking place, as the program will involve local people and local employees in the national project.

### **Section III: Outcomes**

Physical activity was the main focus of the Well@Work program. Physical activities (walking, sports and recreation, travel) accounted for approximately half (49%), however this did vary across projects (26% to 73%). Popular activities include team events, competition, and come and try events that offered new and different activities to employees. The activities were characterized by being offered on-site often on work time, were free to employees, participation was voluntary and the time commitment low.

Nutrition initiatives accounted for 19% of all activities, but this varied across projects (4% to 41%). Significant increases in fruit and vegetable consumption were witnessed in five (5) projects. Initiatives included such programs as "Fruity Fridays," taster sessions (smoothy and weightloss programs) and making changes in catering menus and vending machine content.

There were no observed changes in rates of smoking or alcohol consumption and this is reflected in the low number of initiatives aimed at addressing these issues.

Self-reported participation rates varied across projects from 37% to 88%. Around two-thirds of employees thought the program information had been interesting or helpful and provided them with useful information.

Conclusions include:

- 1) physical activity initiatives can be undertaken at workplaces
- 2) Lack of necessary facilities and amenities can limit physical activity programming.
- 3) Providing and sustaining programs can be difficult
- 4) Walking programs are most successful (e.g. lunch time walking groups.)
- 5) Promoting active travel to work (walking or cycling) should be integrated into company travel policies and support with necessary amenities (e.g. bike storage and showers) and incentives (bike loan programs or bike purchase schemes)
- 6) Food programs (Fruity Fridays) are successful
- 7) Providing more health food options may be thwarted by long term contracts with food providers
- 8) Alcohol, smoking and drug awareness programs evoke skepticism in employees. More education may be needed.
- 9) Work place initiatives run during the day are highly successful

- 10) Programs must address different needs of shift workers and part-time workers
- 11) Organizational policy should be changed to support health-related changes.
- 12) Employee workplace champions help to make programs more appealing to employees.
- 13) External providers with expertise in health promotion may be helpful for promoting and motivating employees
- 14) Communication of goals and expectations with realistic goals.
- 15) Up to five years may be needed to realize the outcomes of such programs.

**Section IV: Additional resources**

Well@Work Final Evaluation Report

**[http://www.bhf.org.uk/ThinkFit/pdf/Well@Work\\_Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](http://www.bhf.org.uk/ThinkFit/pdf/Well@Work_Final_Evaluation_Report.pdf)**