



Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

OSPHE 018

Physical Activity in the Work Place

Physical Activity in the Work Place

CANDIDATE PACK

Candidate task

You are a member of the local public health team meeting with the chief executive of the local acute hospital trust. You are the chair of the Physical Activity Steering Group and are meeting with him/her to encourage him/her to develop a workplace physical activity strategy for the workforce of the hospital.

You should prepare a four-minute presentation for the chief executive about the Steering Group, why the hospital should take an active role in this work and some of the things that they could do. You will then have 4 minutes to discuss the proposals with him/her.

Outline of the situation

You chair the Physical Activity Steering Group for your locality. This is a multi-disciplinary, multi-organisational group which aims to promote physical activity as part of an over-arching obesity strategy. You have had a good response from the local authority and local factories but the hospital trust rarely attends and if they do sends someone different every time.

You have made an appointment to see the chief executive of the local trust and he/she has agreed to give you an 8 minute slot. It has been agreed that you will provide him/her with a brief presentation about the group, its aims and what the hospital could do followed by discussion.

The hospital is a large teaching hospital with several thousand staff, sited in a deprived, inner city area. The general health of the local population is poor with high levels of obesity, diabetes and stroke.

You have been provided with:

Two documents from the British Heart Foundation:

Why be active at work?
A Workplace activity programme

You have been provided with a flipchart and pens which you may wish to use.

At the station

You will be greeted by a marker examiner who will take your candidate number and name, and then hand over to the role-player by saying:

"This is a role-player who is playing the part of the chief executive. They will now start the station".

Candidate Briefing Pack

1	Why be active at work?
2	A Workforce activity programme

Why be active at work?

Good for you

To stay healthy and productive we need to programme activity back into our working lives.

But take heart, even 30 minutes of activity while you are at work can help you stay healthy and your work will benefit too.

10 reasons to be active at work:

1. **Health** - Activity can improve the quality of your life in the future. People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, strokes, obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), colorectal cancer, stress, anxiety, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and low back pain.
2. **Energy** - Activity peps you up, giving you plenty of enthusiasm for your leisure when you've finished work.
3. **Metabolism** - You burn more energy at work and rest as a result of being active, so it's great for maintaining or losing weight.
4. **Mood** - Activity stimulates endorphins – the 'happy hormones' which make you feel good. Everything seems easier and more enjoyable.
5. **Concentration** - Even a short activity break helps to re-focus the mind and improves the quality and quantity of work you do.
6. **Stress** - Staying active while you cope with life's ups and downs relaxes the mind and body, and helps to reduce the build-up of tension.
7. **Strength** - Regular activity helps you maintain your strength as you get older. Keeping your bones and muscles strong – including your heart – protects you from disease, accidents and loss of independence.
8. **Immunity** - Activity boosts the immune system, helping to prevent those irritating illnesses that get you down, and allowing you to enjoy work and play throughout the year.
9. **Self-esteem** - Many physical activities develop skills, build confidence and help you feel more in control of your life.
10. **Social life** - Activities in teams, clubs or leisure centres are great for meeting people outside work and expanding your network of friends.

Good for business...

Promoting physical activity in and around the workplace is simple and inexpensive.

The workplace can benefit from active employees who are healthy, happy and lead a more balanced lifestyle.

Physical activity can contribute to the health of your business through:

- increasing productivity;
- improving absenteeism and ability to return to work after illness;
- retaining staff;
- reducing workplace injuries;
- improving workability among older employees;
- creating a positive corporate image;
- reducing industrial injuries;
- improving the morale and health of the workforce, and
- helping your business achieve Health at Work awards.

Did you know?

- Increasing activity levels can help to protect against coronary heart disease, strokes, obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), colorectal cancer, stress, anxiety, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and low back pain - all major causes of disease and disability in our society.
- Physical activity helps people to manage stress, back pain, weight and medical conditions – all of which may lead to absenteeism and loss of production.
- Active people report less illness and recover more quickly from the illnesses they do get (Shephard, 1997).
- Physically active employees take 27% fewer days of sick leave, which equates to over 2 days improved attendance and a saving of £135 per employee (Physical Activity Task Force, 2003).
- Employees engaged in physical activity initiatives have reported greater enjoyment of their work, increased concentration and mental alertness and improved cooperation and rapport with colleagues (Shephard 1997, 2002).

A workplace environment that fosters physical activity and good health can contribute to the health and well-being of all employees and presents a positive image both to the outside world and to employees.

A Workplace activity programme

You can become a workplace activity champion set up a workplace activity programme for your workplace and get everyone active.

A successful workplace physical activity programme

1. Appoint a physical activity 'champion'

- The success of any workplace initiative is often down to a 'champion' who takes on the role of a coordinator.
- The champion starts the ball rolling and then acts as a driving force once the programme is up and running.

2. Consult with management

- It is useful to get management on board straight away.
- Why not arrange a meeting with management to discuss ideas and secure their support and commitment.
- Ideally, have a member of the senior management who is willing to take overall responsibility for the physical activity initiative and who can act as a point of contact.

3. Create a physical activity network group

- A 'physical activity network group' can ease the champion's workload.
- The group can meet and work together to plan and deliver the activity programme.

4. Find out about employee needs

- Talk to employees informally to find out their interests and needs.
- Or conduct a more formal employee assessment in the form of a questionnaire.

5. Look at your workplace environment

- Look at your workplace - the working day, structures, facilities and resources.
- You can conduct a workplace assessment to highlight ways you can use existing resources or adapt the environment to support your physical activity programme.

6. Create a physical activity policy or statement of intent

- This will show, on paper for all to see, the organisation's support for and commitment to employee participation in physical activity.
- The policy should have an aim, outline roles and responsibilities and show how the organisation will promote and encourage physical activity.

- 7. Challenge and excite your employees with various activity options**
 - See what **activity options** you could choose for your workplace.
 - Think about providing employees with information, activities to get involved in and a supportive environment.
 - Choose activities that your employees have shown an interest in and are suitable for your workplace environment.

- 8. Develop your chosen activity ideas and produce a programme**
 - Tailor the activity options to suit your workplace.
 - Work out:
 - when and for how long you will offer the activities;
 - where the activity will be offered;
 - who will lead, support or organise the activity option.
 - Don't try to do too much at once, little and often is the key!

- 9. Decide how to promote your activities and motivate employees**
 - Raise awareness - spread physical activity messages, tips, facts and information.
 - Promote the activities - spread the word and excite people, let them know what, when, where and how they can get involved.
 - Motivate employees - consider ways to encourage employees be active and stay active.

- 10. Keep track of your programme**
 - Record meeting dates and minutes.
 - Record any physical activity initiatives you get involved with.
 - Check how you are doing - talk to employees and/or conduct an evaluation.
 - Make sure the activities you offer are safe and risk free.

Physical Activity in the Work Place

MAIN MARKER EXAMINER PACK

Examiner situation

You will greet the candidate and record their candidate number and name and then hand over to the actor by saying:

“This is a role-player who is playing the part of the chief executive. They will now start the station”.

Examiner Answer guidance

The candidate is expected to be able to summarise evidence of the value of exercise from their existing knowledge and use the material and scenario provided to promote a practical way forwards in a hospital setting where this might not, at first, appear to be a high priority for the chief executive.

Examiner briefing pack (these will be inserted by the Faculty office)

Candidate pack, Role-player briefing pack.

Marking Guide for Examiners

1. Has the candidate appropriately demonstrated presenting skills in a typical public health setting (presenting to a person or audience)?

Avoids jargon. Appropriate language for the audience. Maintains eye contact. Appropriate manner and non-verbal communication for the situation. Shows empathy. The candidate to provide the introduction to themselves and the steering group. They should give an idea of who is on the group. The candidate should be polite but not deferential to the chief executive.

2. Has the candidate appropriately demonstrated listening skills in a typical public health setting? (listening and responding appropriately)?

Ensures role play questions are answered appropriately. Answers totality of the question. Manner of response appropriate. Clarifies if questions unclear. The candidate should reflect back their understanding of the hospital trust's need to concentrate on targets and respond with suggestions that provide win win answers that should show how physical activity will benefit the hospital workforce.

3. Has the candidate demonstrated ascertainment of key public health facts from the material provided and used it appropriately?

The candidate should say why physical activity is important for health and why the workplace is considered to be an appropriate place to target physical activity. The candidate should make reference to importance of the NHS leading the way. And why hospital staff would benefit. They should also be able to justify why the staff should be encouraged to increase their activity in the workplace and how this could be done.

The candidate should provide a list of proposals that would be appropriate for the trust to adopt.

During the question and answer, the candidate should respond positively with a mix of theory (why people should do exercise) and recommendations or proposals for the trust to adopt.

An excellent candidate would be able to provide innovative examples of how this could be done.

4. Has the candidate given a balanced view and/or explained appropriately key public health concepts in a public health setting?

The candidate should be able to consider the behaviour change needed to increase exercise and the complexity of achieving this. Provide some indication of evidence of positive effects of exercise on mortality, good mental health and stress, blood pressure.

An excellent candidate would provide innovative examples of how to achieve behavioural change: e.g. leadership by key clinicians or managers.

5. Has the candidate demonstrated sensitivity in handling uncertainty, the unexpected, conflict? and/or responding to challenging questions?

The candidate should demonstrate a balanced style that assures the chief executive that they understand the trust agenda without being "fobbed" off.

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**ROLE-PLAYER BRIEFING
PACK**

Station background

As candidate briefing.

Role Play Brief

The candidate will be greeted by a marker examiner who will take their candidate number and name, and then hand over to you by saying:

"This is a role-player who is playing the part of the chief executive. They will now start the station".

You should start the station by saying:

"Thanks for coming in. Please can you quickly outline the role and expectations we should have of the physical activity group"

After 4 minutes if the candidate does not stop talking interrupt saying:

"Thank you very much for an interesting presentation, I can see that you very keen on getting people to be active. Of course, this is an important issue but at the moment we have some serious performance problems and do not have time for this sort of thing."

Wait for a response, if one is not forthcoming say:

"I understood that the chief physiotherapist was on the Group and perhaps you would be better talking to her."

At this point leave a silence and wait for the candidate to respond. If the candidate has not given you a clear outline of why physical activity in the workplace is important for your hospital, ask:

"Tell me, why you think it is important for the hospital to do this".

Further questions:

"We haven't really got time for staff to go off and do exercise during the working day; shouldn't they be doing this in their own time"?

"I realise this is a sensible thing to do but won't it take too much time".

"Can you give me some idea of quick wins"?

The chief executive should be polite but slightly distant and pre-occupied. At the end of the session the role-player should say:

"Thank you very much, that completes the station".