

Active travel in the workplace

What's right for your organisation?




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JOIN THE MOVEMENT





The first thing you will need to do is to find out about local walking and cycling routes in your area.

This booklet provides a range of ideas for promoting walking and cycling within your organisation. These are divided into the following sections:

- Getting started
- Providing information
- Active travel friendly policies
- Equipment

Getting started

Promote safe walking and cycling routes

The first thing you will need to do is to find out about local walking and cycling routes in your area. Are there cycle paths from your premises to any of the main population centres where your staff live? These will be the important routes to promote, and will help you establish a target group for your initiatives.

A travel survey will help you identify where most staff are travelling from (see *Step-by-step guide*), and you can identify routes by looking on the Sustrans website. If there are good existing routes, free from sections of very busy road, your initiatives will be at a great advantage. Now you can promote these on your intranet, or by producing route map booklets and posters.

If there are currently no safe walking and cycling routes to your office site, there may be a few things you can do about this. You could get in touch with your local authority and Sustrans, to see if there are any route development projects planned. Perhaps there are other organisations locally you can work with to promote the improvement of walking and cycling

infrastructure in your area?

Set up a buddying scheme

Another advantage of active travel is that it can also be a sociable activity. Setting up a scheme which allows people who live nearby to identify each other allows people to meet up and either walk or cycle to work together. This is especially useful where there is a traffic free route that may feel less secure on dark evenings, for example sections of the Taff Trail in Cardiff, during the winter months.

Start a lunchtime walking or cycling group

Not all staff will live close enough to work to commute actively. Even for those who do, they may be more likely to take this step if they have the chance to start enjoying walking or cycling during their lunch hour. For workplaces located close to a pleasant traffic free route or park, this is a good way to get people started. A pool bike scheme can be a good way of setting up a lunchtime walking or cycling group – see the Flintshire County Council case study included in this toolkit.





Lay out your travel directions in the healthiest order - start with walking and cycling, then public transport (because there is usually a walk at each end of the journey) and finally car travel.

Providing information

Produce active travel directions for staff and visitors

Producing active travel directions to your premises for your website, literature or in staff induction packs will encourage both new staff and visitors to travel more actively. Providing active travel directions for new staff is particularly important, preferably before they start, since beginning a new job is a time when behaviour change may be easiest to instigate. Providing active travel directions to all interview candidates would be the best option, since this would also emphasise that you are the type of employer who promotes active travel, therefore making your organisation a more desirable place to work!

Lay out your travel directions in the healthiest order – start with walking and cycling, then public transport (because there is usually a walk at each end of the journey) and finally car travel. The following is a useful checklist for producing travel guidance:

General

- statement encouraging active travel
- brief description of location of your premises
- address, including postcode, telephone and email

Travelling within the area

- description of the location, eg. 'in the city centre' or 'in a country setting 3 miles from town'
- street map and/or description of walking route from train or bus station, parking or town centre if within 2 miles, or further if it's a nice walk
- distance from nearest bus stops; bus route numbers and frequency
- distance from National Cycle Network, other cycle route or railway station if within 5 miles; cycle route map if available

- cycle parking information
- taxi phone numbers

Getting to the area

- information on train and bus connections to the area, as appropriate
- Traveline Cymru and National Rail Enquiries details
- directions for park and ride where facilities available
- directions for 'park and stride' where possible (is there a place people could park that would allow them 10 to 30 minutes walk to your premises?)
- directions and map if required for car travel to premises and car parking information
- air travel information if required, with public transport directions to premises.

Useful information for travel guidance:

Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk) provides online maps and information on cycle routes and cycle parking.

Traveline Cymru (www.traveline-cymru.org.uk) offers information on all buses and trains in Wales, with personalised door-to-door journey planning.

National Rail Enquiries (www.nationalrail.co.uk) provides information on train times and fares.

Online maps searchable by postcode are available from www.google.co.uk/maps

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Active travel friendly policies

Introduce the Cycle to Work Scheme

The Government supported Cycle to Work Scheme offers discounts for staff on cycle purchase, through a salary sacrifice system. Savings of up to 40% on the retail cost of a bike are typical (the exact saving depends on amount earned) and there are a range of organisations set up to implement the scheme. See www.cyclescheme.co.uk for more information.

Offer competitive cycle mileage

The high car mileage rates offered by many employers can act as a disincentive to active travel modes. One way to counter this is to introduce cycle mileage, or to increase the amount if you already offer this. The maximum tax-free amount currently available for cycle mileage is 20 pence per mile. There is no theoretical maximum limit to the allowance however, which means you could offer the same allowance for cycling as for car mileage (anything over 20 pence per mile would be subject to tax). Payment of cycle mileage acknowledges the cost of maintaining a bicycle, and also offers a financial incentive to cycle.

If you already have a progressive policy on cycle mileage, why not think about introducing a shoe leather allowance? Many local meetings could easily be attended on foot (one mile can be walked in under 20 minutes by most people at a leisurely pace). Offering an allowance for pedestrian mileage would compensate employees for additional wear and tear on their shoes, and would also put forward a very strong endorsement and commitment from your organisation to promoting active travel. The current stance on this from HM Revenue and Customs is that a walking allowance would not be subject to

the same tax-free benefits as bicycle, car or motorbike allowances. Why not help to influence Government policy by being one of the first organisations to introduce this?

Allow flexible working times

A flexible approach to the time allowed for staff to travel within work time will make it easier for staff to walk and cycle. It may sometimes take longer to walk or cycle to a meeting than it would to drive, but in many cases it will be quicker due to the avoidance of traffic queues and the hidden addition to journey times that is often added by searching for a car parking space. Remember that the benefits gained (being more alert when you arrive, and less anxious after searching for a parking space, in addition to the other health benefits!) can outweigh the small amount of extra time taken.

Other policies which may help encourage active travel include flexible working hours, for instance allowing staff to combine cycling with catching the train if they live further away. Adapting your dress code to encourage staff to be more active without necessarily having to change their clothes, will also help.

Provide incentives

There is really no limit to the imagination when it comes to encouraging people to travel more actively, and you can tailor incentives to your organisation. Many organisations have had success with bike breakfasts. Another option is to review the costs of your parking, and offer a financial incentive to those who do not use it. Examples of imaginative schemes include offering a one hour early finish on a designated day per month, for those who travel to work sustainably.

Equipment

Install cycle storage

Providing secure cycle storage is an important starting point for any active travel scheme. Employees will be more inclined to bring their own bike to work if there is somewhere secure and dry for them to store it.

The most secure locations to store bikes are those that are most overlooked, preferably close to a main entrance where natural surveillance is high. Storage of bicycles in a visible location also acts as a form of promotion for others to start cycling. Remember that up to six bicycles can be stored in the space it takes to park one car!

The traditional sheffield stand storage (see photo) is a safe bet for most locations. A covered shelter can be added where storage is outdoors, so that bicycles can be protected from the damaging effects of rain and wind. Storage should allow cyclists to lock the frame of their bike, NOT the front wheel (locking the wheel to the storage stand can cause buckling, and theft of bikes with quick release wheels).

Install or upgrade showering and changing facilities

Many people will want to shower and change after walking or cycling to work, and so provision of these facilities is important. Not all organisations will have space for these facilities, but where possible they can be very beneficial.

There is no minimum ratio of showering and changing facilities recommended for different staffing levels, and the Corporate Health Standard simply states that these facilities should be available in order to achieve the Silver Award. For organisations with up to 100 staff, it should be sufficient to provide female and male changing areas with one shower each. For larger organisations, additional showers may be needed per extra two hundred staff, but this should be demand led.

Staff travelling short distances to work may not require a shower, so it is worth assessing in your travel survey whether or not this is regarded as important. The inclusion of secure lockers is important when designing changing facilities. A drying area can also be useful for staff to leave a change of clothes in wet weather.



Start a pool bike scheme

Many organisations are now choosing to provide a pool of bicycles for their staff to use for work related journeys, leisure activities at lunch, and even to cycle to and from work or for use at weekends. Pool bikes can be especially useful for staff who live too far from work to commute actively, but might use a bike for meetings or at lunchtime. Many such schemes work well in conjunction with a Cycle to Work scheme (see later section), as staff can try out using a pool bike, and if they enjoy cycling, can buy their own at a discount.

There are many things to bear in mind when investing in a fleet of pool bikes. A list of the main considerations is given here:

Type of bike

A hybrid style bike is usually the most suitable for a pool bike scheme, being ideal for relatively short journeys in and around town, complete with pannier rack and other accessories. If staff are likely to combine public transport with cycling, or may need to transport the bike in a vehicle some of the time, then you might like to invest in some folding bikes.

Who will use the bikes, and when?

Many pool bike schemes allow their staff to take the bikes home over night, and some may keep the bikes for weeks at a time. The advantage of this is that a greater sense of ownership is created, and long lasting behavioural change to active travel is more likely. The location of your offices and the frequency with which staff go to local site visits or meetings, will determine whether the bikes are used much for work purposes. Allowing the bikes to be used for commuting will almost certainly increase the impact of the scheme.



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Who will maintain the bikes?

Ensuring that you have several staff trained in basic bike maintenance and safety checks will vastly improve the sustainability of your scheme. In a one-day training course, it is easy to learn enough to repair simple things like punctures, adjust brakes and seat height, as well as identifying more complex jobs that will require professional attention.

How will you implement the scheme?

You will need a system in place for booking the bikes – existing schemes have found that electronic systems work best (for example using an Outlook calendar). You will also need systems for logging faults on bikes, and recording which have had a safety check before use.

Have you got the support of your health and safety representative?

This can be a stumbling block for many pool bike schemes, partly due to a large amount of misinformation about the perceived risks of cycling. Health and safety red tape does not have to be a barrier however. Information is available from Sustrans on the facts about safe cycling. The bottom line here is that you have a system in place. The standard approach

towards health and safety in pool bike use is that employees sign a 'disclaimer' before use, and that they are covered by their organisation's third party insurance in much the same way as they would be for using a pool car.

There are a number of examples of successful pool bike schemes in the *Case studies* booklet included in this toolkit. A series of more detailed guides on how to set up a pool bike scheme is available at www.activetravelcymru.org.uk/toolkit

Further Information

This guide is part of the Active travel workplace toolkit. The toolkit and additional resources are available online at www.activetravelcymru.org.uk/toolkit, including more detailed information on cycle storage and pool bike schemes. You can also contact Active Travel Cymru directly on activetravelcymru@sustrans.org.uk or by calling 029 2065 0602.

Other useful information, including help with route planning, is available at www.sustrans.org.uk

Active Travel Cymru works with policy-makers and practitioners to promote walking and cycling as health-enhancing physical activity.

Sustrans

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, working on practical projects so people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

Sustrans' work is supported by many partners, local authorities and other organisations together with the personal donations of approximately 40,000 supporters.

To find out more about Sustrans or to become a Sustrans Supporter visit www.sustrans.org.uk or call 0845 113 00 65.

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