



THE WORKPLACE
WELLBEING CHARTER
NATIONAL AWARD for ENGLAND™

HEALTH CHECKS IN THE WORKPLACE

a guide for employers

This Topic Guide has been commissioned and reviewed by Public Health England (PHE), but developed by Health@Work. The purpose is to provide information to help organisations of all sizes and sectors consider the value of health checks in the workplace. The information contained in this guide is not exhaustive and is intended to provide a brief overview of the topic in order for organisations to consider their current practice. Advice and signposting links towards sources of support for those who wish to develop a wellbeing strategy and enhance existing provision are also included.

HEALTH CHECKS IN THE WORKPLACE

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) encourage all workplaces to take steps to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees¹. The research conducted into the effectiveness of workplace wellbeing suggests that interventions are highly cost effective^{2,3} and have numerous benefits for both employers and employees.

Employee benefits

Organisational benefits

Reduction in health risks	Reduction in sickness absence
Increased life expectancy	Greater employee satisfaction
Improved performance	Reduced staff turnover
Better physical and mental health	Increased productivity
30 % lower risk of early death	Enhanced company reputation
	Improved team working ⁴

Health checks for employees are an effective way to capture valuable information and provide motivation for both employees and employers to take action to improve health and wellbeing, leading to the benefits listed above. CIPD recommends the provision of basic health checks in the workplace and states “through an investment in people, organisations can achieve excellence and maintain a leading edge.”⁵

Workplace wellbeing can be broken down into three main segments: ‘health and safety’, ‘managing ill health’ and ‘promotion and prevention’⁶. Health check appointments sit within the promotion and prevention category as they help to identify areas of risk for both employees and their organisation as a whole and encourage both to make improvements. In the case of regular health checks (delivered on an annual basis, for example) these can also be classed as managing ill health as they allow for monitoring of long term conditions and the effectiveness of any health and wellbeing initiatives in the workplace. Health checks also allow employers to target any future interventions on specific areas of need, therefore making workplace wellness initiatives even more beneficial and cost effective.

TAX BENEFITS

There is also a direct financial benefit of offering health checks for employees, because health checks are classed as a capital allowance as part of capital expenditure. This means an employer can offset the cost of health checks against tax while employees do not have to pay tax either as health checks are a non chargeable benefit and therefore exempt.^{7,8}

TYPES OF HEALTH SCREENING

Pre-Employment Health Checks can be offered to new employees as a way to identify any health risks or long term medical conditions which may necessitate support from the employer, making it easier for the employee to maintain good health and wellbeing and remain in work. This process must be part of a supportive mechanism and should not be used as part of the recruitment process to decide whether or not a job offer is made. Section 60⁽¹⁾ of the Equality Act 2010 generally prohibits employers from asking applicants questions about their health before a job offer is made.⁹

Health Surveillance is a system of ongoing health checks which may be required by law for employees who are exposed to noise or vibration, ionising radiation, solvents, fumes, dusts, biological agents and other substances hazardous to health, or work in compressed air. Further details on the health surveillance cycle are available from the HSE.¹⁰

NHS Health Checks are a free health MOT for adults aged 40-74 without a pre-existing medical condition. Individuals will be invited to attend via letter and will receive lifestyle advice upon completion of the check up, depending on the results. This service is for individuals and is not directly linked to the workplace. For more information please see the links section at the end of this document.

You are only entitled to an NHS Health Check from the local authority in which you live. For further information on where to get an NHS Health Check, contact your local authority, or search for NHS Health Check services near you on NHS Choices.

Health Checks to assess basic measures of health and fitness such as cholesterol, blood pressure, weight, BMI etc. can be offered as part of a workplace wellness programme designed to create a culture of health and wellbeing and improve outcomes for individuals and business as a whole.

HOW TO DELIVER HEALTH CHECKS IN THE WORKPLACE

The following points can be seen as a basic framework to establish a workplace culture which promotes, encourages and supports employees to maintain good health through the provision of health checks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider the most appropriate and effective method of offering health checks depending on the type of business, number of employees, working patterns of staff and resources.
 - » Individual appointments for health checks can offer a comprehensive range of tests to build a good overall picture of health and wellbeing. Individual appointments should allow employees the chance to discuss results in detail and receive advice and signposting information.
 - » Quicker, simpler, drop-in sessions offering basic tests such as BMI and blood pressure can be arranged for workplaces either with limited budget, very large numbers of staff and those not able to allow employees (for example) a 15 minute time slot away from their area of work.
- Consider the most appropriate provider to deliver health checks, based on organisational requirements. Ensure any provider employs staff who are fully qualified to deliver the level of health assessments required.
 - » Health checks are often offered through local NHS services and would usually be free of charge.
 - » A range of private companies can provide health checks either as standalone services or as part of wellbeing packages for an agreed fee.
 - » Health checks may be included as part of occupational health provision or through employee assistance programmes. Sourcing providers which offer this service or negotiating with existing providers to add regular health check provision can be a suitable option.
- Survey staff members to ask if they would be interested in a health check appointment. Not all members of staff may want a test within their workplace. It is important to stress that results will be kept confidential for individual employees and any reports the organisation receives following checks should point only to general trends and patterns, not specific results.

HOW TO DELIVER HEALTH CHECKS IN THE WORKPLACE

Link health check campaigns in with seasonal trends and wider health campaigns. Health checks at the start of the year can support employees to feel motivated and set realistic targets as part of New Year's resolutions. National campaigns such as 'Know Your Numbers Week' focusing on blood pressure, is every year in the second week of September and can be a useful platform to build employee wellbeing initiatives into the culture of an organisation.

Health checks should be delivered by practitioners qualified to an appropriate level depending on the nature of the tests being offered.

Health check providers should offer individual staff members appropriate information or signposting links to empower staff to be able to make positive lifestyle changes. Test results above certain levels should automatically flag up referral to an individual's own GP for further support. Providers should give individuals a GP referral letter to take to their doctor, explaining the reason for referral.

Health check providers should produce a report to the organisation identifying (for example) common trends, numbers of staff in healthy or unhealthy ranges, workplace averages to be compared to national averages etc. Any reporting should be geared towards helping the workplace create an environment which supports staff to be able to make positive lifestyle changes, without making this a requirement. Reporting should provide employees with complete anonymity and only point to general trends and themes, not specific results.

MEASURING IMPACT

Health checks themselves are a useful tool for measuring the impact of other health and wellbeing initiatives in the workplace and can run alongside staff surveys. These can be offered prior to the implementation of any initiatives and then at regular intervals thereafter. Health checks can be carried out in conjunction with staff surveys to act as method for corroborating self-reported answers.

Organisational reports following on from health checks should highlight common areas where the health of the workforce could be improved. These particular areas can be further investigated, monitored and interventions targeted.

The effectiveness of any initiatives following on from health checks can be measured through more regular health checks, surveys, discussions with line managers, performance reviews, monitoring absence rates and staff turnover.

Staff members attending health checks should ideally be given information or signposting links to empower them make positive lifestyle changes which address any areas of concern.

At organisation level, sickness absence can be monitored and compared to level prior to any health check initiatives. Completing return to work interviews and recording reasons for absence allows an organisation to monitor absences attributed to conditions linked with health concerns which may have been highlighted by health check reports. The statistics can be compared to previous levels and against the national average from sources such as CIPD Absence Management survey.

FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter, National Award for England. Access online self-assessment tool, free resources and find a local provider to support and accredit.
www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk

Change for Life.

Information and advice on how to eat healthily, be more active and lose weight
www.nhs.uk/change4life/pages/meal-planner-recipe-finder.aspx

National Institute of Clinical Excellence Guidance on NHS Health Checks

<http://publications.nice.org.uk/lgb15>

HSE Tax Rules and the Purchasing of Occupational Health Support

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/taxrules.pdf

NHS Health Check

NHS Health Check service directory

www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/NHS-Health-Check/LocationSearch/1891

Know your Numbers

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/microsites/kyn/Home>

One You

A key resource to promote adult health is the One You campaign. One You encourages people to reappraise their lifestyle choices, put themselves first and do something about their own health. Simply search One You online for a free online health quiz. There is also information and links to local sources of support to make a behaviour change.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou#F3opDgKxBdb5p25L.97>



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ABOUT THIS TOPIC GUIDE

This Topic Guide has been jointly produced between Public Health England, health@work and Liverpool City Council. The purpose of this guide is to provide information and support to help organisations of all sizes and sectors improve health in the workplace and to work towards achieving accreditation of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.

ABOUT THE WORKPLACE WELLBEING CHARTER

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter is an opportunity for employers to demonstrate their commitment to the health and well-being of their workforce. The positive impact that employment can have on health and wellbeing is now well documented. There is also strong evidence to show how having a healthy workforce can reduce sickness absence, lower staff turnover and boost productivity - this is good for employers, workers and the wider economy.

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter provides employers with an easy and clear guide on how to make workplaces a supportive and productive environment in which employees can flourish.

Organisations of all sizes can use the Charter standards. The Commitment level has been developed as a baseline for all businesses to achieve and acts as a useful checklist for smaller organisations to ensure legal obligations are met. The criteria for small businesses should not involve significant financial investments, and there are lots of free resources and guidance on the Charter website as well as support from your local provider.

Employers who volunteer to sign up will find help and support available through the Charter website. This will include a network of providers who can offer employers the services and advice they need to be accredited with the Charter, and help them to build the healthy workforce that business needs for the future.

www.workplacewellbeing.org.uk

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOUR ACCREDITATION

If you are considering applying for Charter accreditation we recommend you search for a provider in your area using the Charter website www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk

Complete a self-assessment using the benchmarking tool on the website. Your local provider can offer advice and support to help with this process and advise on next steps.

REFERENCES

^[1] National Institute of Clinical Excellence (Nice) Guidance ‘Workplace Health’ July 2012

^[2,6,] PriceWaterhouseCoopers ‘Building the Case for Wellness’ 2008

^[3] Overcoming Obesity: An Initial Economic Analysis, McKinsey Global Institute

^[4] Various sources: NHS Choices, NICE, PriceWaterhouseCoopers ‘Building the Case for Wellness’

^[5] CiPD Factsheet ‘Occupational Health’ June 2013

^[7] Tax Rules and the Purchase of Occupational Health Support, HSE

^[8] HM Revenue and Customs Helpsheet 207

^[9] Equality Act 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

^[10] ‘What is Health Surveillance’, HSE website

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