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Short end of project report: Are we working (too) comfortably?

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Are we working (too) comfortably?

Collaborating with the Scottish Government to support their workforce to reduce desk-time whilst working at home

End of Project
Report Summary



The issue

The COVID-19 pandemic instigated a transformational change in the working landscape as large numbers of workers were required to work at home. Recent data indicate that 84% of UK workers who pivoted to working at home during the pandemic plan to continue working at home for at least some of the week (e.g., 'hybrid' working). Whilst there are many reported benefits to working at home (e.g., improved productivity and enhanced work life balance), there are also negative consequences, such as increased sedentary behaviour.

Sedentary behaviour is any waking behaviour characterised by low energy expenditure whilst sitting, reclining, or lying (e.g., watching TV, working at a desk). Higher levels of sedentary behaviour are associated with increased risk of a range of health outcomes including type 2 diabetes, decreased mental well-being, and increased musculoskeletal pain and discomfort. Office workers are a high-risk group for sedentary behaviour, and this risk can be exacerbated when working at home.

There is an urgent need to support workers in the home environment to move more across the working day, and reduce the negative effects of sedentary behaviour and enhance health and well-being.



The project

In partnership with Active Scotland, researchers from the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh developed an evidence-informed Toolkit to support workers to reduce sedentary time when working at home. The Toolkit focuses on four key areas and provides practical suggestions to increase movement. This Toolkit was delivered to some staff from the Scottish Government via a series of email newsletters across four weeks.

The Toolkit

Week 1 'Move more' meetings

Suggestions on how to move more during online meetings:

- schedule a no-screen walking meeting;
- create a DIY standing desk;
- integrate 2-minutes of movement during meeting;
- schedule a 50 minute meeting to reduce back-to-back meetings and add time to move.

Week 2 Active breaks

Ideas on how to take active breaks when working at home:

- take short breaks (e.g., have a dance);
- make a hot drink and integrate 'kettlecises' by doing squats or heel raises while the kettle boils;
- break for household tasks (e.g., water plants).

Week 3 Active commute

Ways to incorporate movement into start and end of the working at home day:

- can you add a home to home commute before and/or after work?

Week 4 DIY Tech

Suggestions on how to integrate movement into working at home day using technology:

- use tools on laptop (e.g., add sitting break as appointment to calendar);
- smartphone (e.g., alarm/reminder systems, apps);
- watch (alarm function).



50-minute meetings



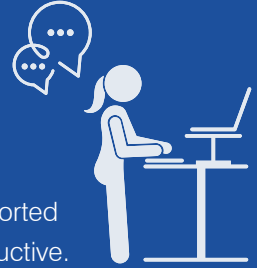
DIY tech
(using phone/
smartphone/smartpod)



Home-to-home commute

Feedback

The Toolkit was generally well received. Evaluation feedback showed that the 'active breaks' week was most popular (39% ranked this as their number 1 preference), although having a range of tools was valued. Additionally, half of respondents reported improvements in mood, and a quarter reported being more productive.



Enhancing the visibility of the toolkit through observable and ongoing leadership, and using additional mechanisms to share and reinforce the Toolkit (e.g., highlight at start of online meetings) were key recommendations for improving future delivery.

What's next?

Based on feedback, the Toolkit has been refined and is available to access via Actify.

If you're interested in moving more during the working at home day, please access the Toolkit through the links to the right.

Scan for full Report



shorturl.at/IrLP4

Scan for Toolkit



www.actify.org.uk/PAHRCw@h

For more information contact Professor Ailsa Niven: ailsa.niven@ed.ac.uk



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