NHS Sport and Physical Activity

Meeting the NHS Challenge to get more staff active by 2012
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SECTION 1: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NHS Sport and Physical Activity is a response to the business case Dr Boorman outlined in his 2009 review of NHS staff health and well-being. He stated in his report:

“Exercise is linked to satisfaction with life and reduces the risk of physical ill-health, and our analysis suggests that those who consider themselves to be healthy are less likely to be off sick or to be at work when they are unfit.”

“There is a considerable scope for the NHS to consider its own ‘Activity Challenge’, either as an annual event or as a cumulative, measured, activity goal.”

Dr Boorman’s NHS staff health and well-being report sets all NHS staff an ‘activity challenge’ to encourage our colleagues – and ourselves – to get involved in physical activity, making ourselves fitter and a better role model to patients.

THE BOORMAN REVIEW

As a response to Dame Carol Black’s review in 2008, Dr Steve Boorman, an occupation health expert, led a review exposing the need for NHS leaders to put the health of staff “at the heart of the NHS mission and operational approach”.

The report states that “the NHS loses 10.3 million working days annually due to sickness absence alone”, costing organisations around £1.7 billion per year.

The Electronic Staff Record (ESR) records sickness absence rates by Strategic Health Authority (SHA) region, aggregated quarterly. During the three month period of October through to December 2009, sickness rates ranged from an average of 5.19 per cent in one region to 3.85 per cent in another.

The health and well-being of NHS staff has always, and still remains, key to delivering quality care for patients. According to Dr Boorman, improving NHS staff health and well-being could reduce sickness absence by up to a third, resulting in an additional 3.4 million working days a year (the equivalent of 14,900 extra staff) and an annual direct cost saving and improvements of up to £555 million.

According to Dr Boorman’s final report, well over 80 per cent of staff contacted in the research believed the health and well-being of staff impacted on the level of patient care.
Commissioned by the Department of Health, the review found NHS workers in England take an average 10.7 days off sick every year, compared with an average of 9.7 days off that other workers in the public sector take and 6.4 days in the private sector. This equates to around one and a half times more than that of the private sector.

The report also highlighted those who work more than eight hours a day had higher sickness rates and felt pressure to return to work. Although the report establishes that most illnesses were picked up through work, this cannot explain all of the rates of absence.

“Nearly half of all NHS staff absence is accounted for by musculoskeletal disorders, and more than a quarter by stress, depression and anxiety.”

Dr Steve Boorman discusses how a return on investment can be gained in this area by applying methods which can contribute towards an overall goal of reducing sickness levels amongst employees. With happier, healthier staff, there will be less need to call in extra staff to cover sickness at additional cost, so organisations can operate in a way that is more commercially viable. With this in mind, we can envisage the impact this would have on patients as happy staff ultimately equals happier patients.
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The UK government recommends adults should try to take part in at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity at least five days a week. At present, about 40 per cent of staff exercise less than two days a week.

Dr Boorman’s report goes on to highlight the impact that lifestyle issues can have on NHS organisations. Roughly 20 per cent of the 1.3 million NHS staff members smoke, with an average of around 40,000 workers smoking more than 20 cigarettes per day. NHS workers were also found to have higher than average levels of obesity and poor mental health, affecting the quality and deliverance of patient care. Three quarters of NHS workers believe the state of their health affects patient care.

In 2008, nef (the new economics foundation) was commissioned by the UK Government’s Foresight programme to identify a set of evidence-based actions for individuals to build into their daily lives to improve their mental well-being. These are known as the “Five Ways to Well-being”:

**Connect:**
“Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community.”

**Be Active:**
“Go for a walk or a run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.”

**Take notice:**
“Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.”

**Keep learning:**
“Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.”

**Give:**
“Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Seeing yourself, and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.”
Good mental well-being is essential to making healthy lifestyle choices and changes, such as increasing the amount of daily physical activity. Effective ways of improving physical activity and health are therefore more effective if they include elements of mental health and well-being, drawing on individual and social factors.

“The opportunities for the NHS to lead by example on key public health issues such as mental health and physical activity are significant. NHS workers –via their friends, families, patients and contacts – touch millions of people every day.”

The Boorman Review sets the NHS a challenge to improve the way it supports the health and well-being of staff. Visible support by NHS leaders is vital if we are to achieve the culture shift needed to promote health and well-being as key to NHS quality and productivity. Action should be taken at an organisational level as well as encouraging individuals to live healthier lives.
SECTION 2: NHS SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

THE NHS CHALLENGE

Values such as excellence, respect, friendship, courage, determination, inspiration and equality are at the heart of the NHS. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games offer a unique opportunity to capitalise on the inspirational power of the games and will encourage us as a nation to become more physically active and engage or re-engage in sport.

The NHS has an opportunity to create a lasting legacy leading up to and beyond 2012 and NHS staff should use this as a catalyst for change.

The government has set a challenge of getting two million people participating in a regular sport in time for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

David Nicholson’s challenge to the NHS is to encourage each of the 152 PCT communities to use the inspirational power of the 2012 Games to get 2,012 NHS employees actively engaged in sport or physical activity as part of, or associated with, their NHS employment, by the time the London 2012 Games arrive. This would equate to around 25 to 30 per cent of the NHS work force becoming more active.

The engagement of 2,012 NHS staff per PCT community would significantly contribute to meeting those targets. If we can achieve these results, we expect that we can further fulfil some of Dr Boorman’s suggestions and work towards reducing sickness absence by up to a third.

WHAT IS NHS SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Many NHS organisations are already organising their own programmes for improving staff health and well-being however NHS Sport and Physical Activity can be used to compliment existing arrangements.

Organised sport and physical activity offers a great social way of addressing some of the challenges set by Boorman and can provide fun as well as health benefits for employees.

NHS Sport and Physical Activity is a programme that has been developed to introduce new methods and initiatives to benefit employees of NHS healthcare establishments.
NHS Sport and Physical Activity consists of a range of sport and physical activity initiatives designed to maintain and promote staff morale. It is an opportunity to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage staff to get more physically active whilst also fulfilling responsibilities put upon NHS organisations by the new NHS Constitution.

The programme will provide support and information on how to set up your own sport and physical activity within your NHS organisation and can provide an easy, cost effective way of improving staff health and well-being.

At present, an NHS Touch Rugby League, Netball League and Walking Club have been established, with future activities such as basketball, cricket, football, swimming and a dance league also in the pipeline. Currently, NHS touch rugby is being played throughout a number of SHAs and the first ever NHS Touch Rugby Competition is to take place in July 2010.

HOW CAN NHS SPORT HELP YOU?

“As well as financial benefits – from reduced costs of sickness absence, increased productivity and lower spending on staff turnover, agency spending and ill-health retirement – there will be benefits to patient care and patient satisfaction from being treated by happy, healthy staff working in teams with familiar colleagues, rather than by tired, unwell and unhappy staff.”

The investment in this initiative can also show how all staff, both clinical and non clinical, can lead by example by introducing a new healthier, more active lifestyle and in doing so, can become a positive influence for others, especially patients. Every interaction between NHS staff and the public is an opportunity to promote positive health and well-being. On many occasions, the first interaction a patient will have is with a receptionist, and we all know how first encounters can leave a lasting impression.

By taking part in the NHS Sport and Physical Activity programme, organisations can offer staff a relief from the everyday pressures of work life in large or multi-site organisations and reinforce a sense of community by encouraging social and teamwork skills which will be of a positive benefit in the workplace.

NHS Sport and Physical Activity is also an opportunity to deliver key health and well-being messages such as healthy eating, stop smoking campaigns, screening programmes.
SECTION 3: CASE STUDY

HEART OF ENGLAND NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Based in the West Midlands, Heart of England encompasses four sites; Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Good Hope Hospital, Solihull Hospital and Birmingham Chest Clinic. Not including contract staff, the Trust is the second largest employer in the region with around 11,000 staff and serves the health needs of a population of 1.5 million.

TOUCH RUGBY

In 2008, Heart of England wanted to create a staff project that would provide a fun activity, promote exercise and a healthy lifestyle, whilst actively encouraging staff to engage with colleagues across all directorates, hospital sites and the community.

Touch rugby enabled the Trust to promote work-life balance, exercise and health advice, in line with the health and well-being agenda within the NHS. More importantly, it encouraged staff to socialise and enjoy themselves.

The non contact sport initiative was introduced and supported by the Rugby Football League (RFL) and was the first initiative of its kind in the West Midlands with around 200 participants getting involved. Enhancing Heart of England’s reputation and community relations, a considerable amount of media coverage was achieved with national, local and broadcast media interest reaching over a million people.

Following the success of the tournament, Heart of England were given the opportunity to present the project to the then Secretary of State for Health, MP Alan Johnson, who endorsed the project and encouraged the expansion of promoting sport throughout the NHS.

As a direct result of the Trust’s Touch Rugby Tournament, the sport was initiated into all primary schools across the West Midlands for class year seven to ten girls as an alternative to netball.
Medics get in the cash raising league

The 10 team league was set up by the Sports Committee of the Hospital in order to raise funds for the new wing and to improve the facilities for patients. The league will see district medical officers and nurses from different hospitals competing against each other in a friendly competition. The league will go on to the next year if the interest is maintained.

By Jo Symes

Birmingham City University

The Birmingham City University league is one of the many events that the university is involved in to raise funds for the new wing. The league will also be used to provide a platform for local clubs to compete against each other and to promote healthy living.

Press coverage

RATs' race to a rugby triumph

SPORT: Winning debut as NHS lab team finds right formula

By Alison Dayan

The Rat's team, a group of laboratory technicians and staff, had a great win as they beat the Rugby League team in their first match. The Rat's team is made up of people from various departments around the hospital and they are determined to prove themselves on the pitch.

By Alison Dayan

BIRMINGHAM DOCTORS are swapping white coats for scrubs as they try to start a rugby team!

SPORT: Hospital doctors and nurses launch rugby league teams

By Alison Dayan

The doctors and nurses at the Birmingham Heart Hospital have launched a rugby league team as a way to promote health and fitness among their colleagues. The team will play against other medical professionals from across the city and they are looking forward to their first match.

Brummell

96.4 FM - DAB - ONLINE
STAFF FEEDBACK

The popularity of touch rugby grew and expanded with over 400 participants from within the Trust and the community taking part in the sport the following year.

A survey post-event in 2009 showed that as a direct result of the Touch Rugby Tournament:

- 50% of players increased their motivation at work
- 60% of players increased their motivation in their personal life
- 75% of players increased their motivation to get fit
- 83% of players improved their working relationships with their team members
- 95% of players enjoyed being part of NHS Touch Rugby Tournament

**Fitness** – many staff who had not taken part in sport or exercise for a number of years, saw their fitness increase and now turn up regularly at the fitness and practice sessions.

**Team work** – this initiative has enabled staff to be able to work together as a team, build upon leadership and training skills and develop a new hobby and skill whilst playing.

**Relationships** – the bond between staff at the Trust and our external partners is closer. The sporting attitude has even been applied off the pitch in participants’ daily working lives.

**Motivation** – this has increased within departments as a result of staff feeling healthier and fitter with the opportunity to meet new friends.

**Community** – the Trust has developed a community feel, bringing together the four hospital sites which can be difficult to achieve in such large organisations. It has also reduced the gap between the Board and staff and given a reason for conversation other than the usual requirements of the day job.

**Communication** – as a whole, the initiative has been well received. Staff are getting fitter for free and the social element has encouraged departments to come together and challenge others to participate. The message has been communicated well across the Trust and this healthy approach has been extended to include other health organisations across the region.

The event provided a cost effective way in which to engage staff from all departments and was run on a minimum amount due to much of the support coming from the Governing sports bodies. The only costs incurred were those for printed materials and equipment.

The modular approach used for the touch rugby is now being used for other sports both nationally and within Heart of England and the Trust is now launching its first NHS 5-a-Side Football, Netball and NHS Tennis tournament later this year due to an overwhelming demand from staff to continue physical activity all year through.
DIRECTOR FEEDBACK

MANDY COALTER
Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

“This initiative has been hugely beneficial to the Trust. It has enabled staff to work together in teams without the traditional hierarchy of the NHS and to develop their leadership skills.

“As a Trust sponsored project, it has supported both our HR agenda of ‘Best Company to Work For’ and our Occupational Health agenda of promoting healthy lifestyles. I would certainly recommend any other organisation to support similar schemes in their area.”

IAN CUNLIFFE
Trust Medical Director

“Rugby has always been a passion of mine, so setting up a tournament in this way and sharing the experience has been fantastic.

“In a Trust of 10,500 staff, it’s always going to be difficult to know anyone other than those you immediately work with, but with each league night we all got to know just a few more. This project will help to bring staff together, to work across professional boundaries and develop a community feeling within the hospital.

“I look forward with excitement to the prospect of a national NHS Touch Rugby Tournament final!”

A WORD FROM THE PROJECT LEAD

RICHA GAUTAM
NHS Sport and Physical Activity Project Lead

“I am extremely excited by the prospect of NHS Sport and Physical Activity being taken up nationally throughout the NHS.

“The project has continued to grow in strength and the project team are confident that the initiative provides good value for money and that the benefits exceed the investment put into the programme.

“We are proud of what the Trust has achieved so far and our aim is to get physical activity programmes set up at every health organisation in the England in a quest for a fitter, happier and healthier staff group.”
SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

GET INVOLVED

NHS Sport and Physical Activity can be a cost effective way to improve staff well-being and productivity.

By adopting this approach, it will allow your organisation to free up resources that can be reinvested in services, delivering long term savings as well as improvements in patient care.

This booklet has been designed to inform you of the benefits of getting involved with a physical activity programme. The activities are easy, fun to run and enthuse and inspire the staff who take part. So why not take up the NHS Challenge?

“HOW TO” ORGANISE YOUR OWN NHS ACTIVITY

Based on the Heart of England case study, we have created a guidance pack on the NHS Sport and Physical Activity website which will look at a range of different sport and activities.

These “how to” packs will give you further information on how to set up your own activity, giving examples of month by month planning, sample posters and guidance on how to advertise and market your events to staff. The resources needed to implement a programme are also explained in the pack, as well as highlighted in our case study. Log on to each activity to find out more.

www.sportandphysicalactivity.nhs.uk

The website will act as an umbrella which can link into the different organisations who are participating in the individual sports. It can also act as a free source for marketing your own activities as you will be able to link your own website into this site, so please do get in touch if you are arranging your own programme.

NHS Sport and Physical Activity is also supported by various national governing bodies and, dependent on which activity you wish to implement, there are regional contacts available across the country who are able to support you with your programme. These governing bodies can also train any volunteers who wish to become referees and provide any training programmes you require for staff. A list of regional contacts for each activity is available on the website.
MIKE FARRAR
NHS North West Chief Executive and NHS Champion for Sport and Health

“As the National Champion for Sport and Health and also Chief Executive of NHS North West, I have been hugely impressed by the Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust’s Initiative.

“It is a fabulous scheme, executed brilliantly and serves to inspire their staff and others about how to improve health, well being and morale at work, as well as hitting all the right notes in response to the national need to encourage all people to become more physically active. This initiative is an exemplar for other NHS Trusts and one I will be championing as the very best of NHS practice.

“I’m delighted that the Trust is taking a lead role to promote this initiative to other parts of the NHS and believe it will help the whole of the service to respond positively to the Boorman Report and the recently published NHS Constitution.”