



Active Workplaces? Active Communities? Active **Government**...?

A manifesto for physical activity



THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY



Introduction

Asthma UK, Cancer Research UK and The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy have joined together to highlight the benefits of physical activity for the maintenance of good health and well-being, and to call on the Government to encourage people of all ages to become more active.

We know that an active lifestyle is key to improving and maintaining health. In his recent report, ***At least five a week***, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) made clear that, 'the scientific evidence is compelling. Physical activity not only contributes to well-being, but is also essential for good health.'¹ People who are physically active reduce their risk of premature death by 20-30 per cent and face a lower risk of developing a raft of chronic conditions.



Yet, activity levels across the UK are currently very low. Approximately two thirds of men and three quarters of women report doing less than the recommended 30 minutes' moderate intensity activity on a minimum of 5 days per week. Further, the cost of inactivity in England - including direct costs of treatment for the major lifestyle-related diseases, and the indirect costs caused through sickness absence - has been estimated at £8.2 billion a year.²

The Public Health White Paper and the subsequent ***Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan***, reinforced the messages conveyed by Derek Wanless and the CMO; that inactivity is a serious public health problem and we must take immediate steps to reverse current trends. If we fail to take action, we face mounting health costs and are sure to witness a rise in preventable illness.



We call on the Government to implement the physical activity action plan quickly and effectively. International experience has shown that a sustained awareness raising campaign can encourage people to become more physically active. We hope a national information campaign is launched as a priority.

In the remainder of this manifesto, we identify a number of additional calls on which we urge the Government to act.

Children and Young People

- For children and young people, a minimum of 60 minutes of at least moderate intensity physical activity each day is recommended. This should include activities to improve bone health, muscle strength and flexibility.³
- Three out of ten boys and four out of ten girls are still insufficiently active to benefit their health.⁴
- 16.6 per cent of boys and 16.7 per cent of girls are now obese.⁵
- In Europe we have a very high drop-out rate of participation in physical activity in terms of age, with poor 'transition management' between school, university and community sport.⁶



Calls to **Government**

1. We welcome the Government's Delivery Plan commitments⁷ but are keen to ensure that an effective schools strategy is implemented as a matter of urgency. First, sufficient time must be made available for high quality physical education (PE) in schools.⁸ PE helps children meet wider activity targets and teaches the skills for lifelong participation. Second, the Government should provide resources to make the school day a more active experience.

2. To complement a schools strategy, we call on the Government to ensure that the built environment and community facilities enable young people to be active. We know that outdoor play is crucial in helping children reach their activity targets and urge the Government to do more to create safe outdoor play areas.

3. The Government should work with local authorities to ensure that community sport and physical activity facilities are affordable, safe and accessible, especially in low-income areas. This will help parents and others to encourage more physical activity outside of school hours.



Lisa DuMaurier
speaking about her
13 year old son
Jordan, says:

“Jordan has fairly severe asthma but it is controllable. I believe that exercise and sport play a major part in this. We are lucky that there are a number of clubs in our area and through his kung fu and basketball, Jordan controls his breathing and has much more confidence in being able to manage his asthma.”

Physiotherapist

Bronwyn Clifford, says:

“When at work, it is important to change your job tasks and posture regularly to minimize any potential strains that you may place on your body. Try to alternate for example, between writing, typing and reading so that you do not spend more than 20 minutes on each task. Get up and walk over to your colleague's desk to discuss work rather than picking up the telephone or sending them an e-mail. The more active you are at work the less likely you are to suffer from musculoskeletal discomfort.”



The Working Population

- Two million people in Britain currently suffer from work-related illness and more than half of reported cases are back, neck and limb problems.
- Back pain alone accounts for 119 million days of certified incapacity each year, consuming 12 million GP consultations and 800,000 in-patient days of hospital care, at an annual cost to the nation of nearly half a billion pounds.
- Workplace settings provide a valuable forum for encouraging physical activity as it is estimated that individuals may spend up to 60 per cent of their waking hours at their place of work.⁹
- Many workplaces currently under-utilise the opportunities available to engage employees in exercise and encourage an activity-friendly work culture.





Calls to Government

1. We support the proposed extension of the Investors in People Standard (IiPUK) to include a healthy business assessment,¹⁰ and believe it to be a vital opportunity to generate a shift in employer attitudes. We urge that a rigorous accreditation process be developed. This should encourage employers to offer activity opportunities, provide early access to rehabilitative treatment for work-related illness, and flag up referral pathways to treatment services. Incentives from the Government will be necessary to encourage businesses to invest in more health promotion and strategies.

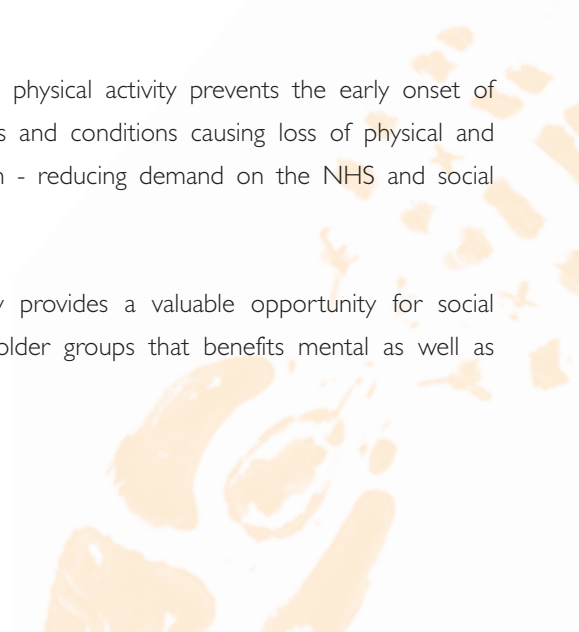
2. The Government should value workplaces as a forum to encourage more physical activity. We support the introduction of incentives to facilitate a more active workforce, and believe that corporate gym and sports club memberships should no longer be classified as a taxable benefit.

3. The evidence base for what works in workplace settings needs to be further developed. The Government should urgently allocate resources for research, to improve our knowledge in this area.



Older Adults

- We have an ageing population, life expectancy is rising and current trends look set to continue. If we are to make ageing a positive experience, longer life must be accompanied by continuing opportunities for good health and well-being.
- An increasing body of evidence suggests that activity in older groups helps the maintenance of mobility, quality of life and independence.
- We know that physical activity prevents the early onset of several diseases and conditions causing loss of physical and mental function - reducing demand on the NHS and social services.
- Physical activity provides a valuable opportunity for social interaction in older groups that benefits mental as well as physical health.



Calls to **Government**

1. Active ageing must be a Government policy priority. The *Choosing Health: a physical activity action plan*, offers positive initiatives for young people and seeks to address workplace inactivity, yet lacks detailed discussion of exercise amongst older groups. We urgently call on the Government to develop a strategy to help older adults become more active.

2. Appropriate and safe physical activity opportunities should be available for all older adults. The Government has a role to encourage providers to tailor more exercise programmes for older people, with specialist training available where necessary.

3. A national health promotion campaign expounding the benefits of physical activity for older groups could have a dramatic impact on activity take-up, and as a consequence, on the health of the nation. We urge the Government to run a sustained public information campaign.

Professor Ken Fox of the Department of Exercise and Health Sciences at the University of Bristol says:

“Physical inactivity is clearly causing serious ill-health in the population and the evidence linking lack of exercise with several forms of cancer is now convincing and continues to strengthen. The Government should implement the Public Health White Paper’s physical activity pledges as a matter of urgency and do all it can to encourage and enable more people to become active in their everyday lives. Physical activity opportunities must be accessible and attractive to all sectors of the population.”



Physical Activity and Asthma

- There are 5.2 million people with asthma in the UK including 1.1 million children.¹¹ Asthma is the most common long-term medical condition in childhood.
- One in six parents say their child's asthma stops them from doing exercise and sports at school.¹²
- An Asthma UK survey shows that 21 per cent of adults with asthma (an estimated 1.1 million) say their asthma stops them from exercising.¹³
- Older people are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of asthma, yet asthma is under-diagnosed in this group and is a growing clinical problem.^{14, 15} Asthma in older people is often associated with a lower quality of life and increased morbidity.¹⁶
- Regular physical activity, in any age group, increases exercise tolerance and improves self-esteem, as well as improving psychological and physical well-being.

Physical Activity and Cancer

- More than one in three people will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime,¹⁷ yet half of all cancers could be prevented through changes in lifestyle.
- Physical activity is associated with a reduction in the overall risk of cancer; and this is particularly marked with colon cancer. The most active individuals have a 40-50 per cent lower risk of developing colon cancer than the least active.
- The evidence linking lack of exercise with several other cancers, including breast, prostate, endometrial and lung, is now convincing and continues to strengthen.^{18, 19, 20.}
- Lack of physical activity is related to being overweight and obese, so the attributable risk for a range of cancers due to being overweight and obese may also be attributable to a lack of physical activity. Obesity is arguably the biggest cancer risk factor for non-smokers.
- The negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle are reversible and increased physical activity can reduce cancer risks even after years of inactivity.²¹

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is the professional, educational and trade union body for the UK's 45,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and assistants. Physiotherapy is the third largest healthcare profession and it continues to expand.
- Physiotherapists are experts in movement, from the way we move our backs or limbs, to the way we breathe. The prime purpose of physiotherapy is to restore function, activity and independence, and prevent injury or illness by providing information and advice on healthy lifestyles, to both patients and carers.
- Physiotherapists can help even those with complex physical needs, including the terminally ill and those with multiple long-term conditions, to become more active. Through individually tailored programmes, patients can improve their health and fitness, and also help prevent conditions such as osteoporosis.

Contact us

For more information about our organisations or any of the issues raised in this manifesto please contact us:

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 **SPORT ENGLAND**
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www.sportengland.org

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