



North East
Better Health
at Work Award

Date: Monday 10th March

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Attention: Health, business and industrial correspondents and newsdesk editors

Award recognises local employers' commitment to staff health and wellbeing

Local businesses have been recognised for their commitment to staff health and wellbeing at the North East Better Health at Work Award Celebration Event the North of Tyne area, held last week.

Over 50 employers in Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle received their awards at the ceremony at the Holiday Inn Newcastle last week (Thursday 6 March).

The ceremony, which was jointly hosted by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, recognises the workplaces who have successfully achieved the Award by developing and embedding a sustainable culture of health and wellbeing in the workplace. It is also when they received their official Better Health at Work award (BHAWA).

Businesses were presented with their awards by Steve Black, one of Europe's leading motivational speakers who has worked with high profile sportsmen in both rugby and football including Kevin Keegan, Peter Reid and Jonny Wilkinson.

The North East Better Health at Work award (BHAWA) has four levels - Bronze, Silver, Gold and Continuing Excellence and is delivered by a range of local NHS Trusts, local authorities and other providers, who provide support to employers across the region.

The criteria to achieve the awards includes identifying staff 'health advocates', providing support to help staff stop smoking, creating a better awareness of how health can be affected by work activities, asking staff what health issues they would like help with and running subsequent health improvement campaigns to address the most popular topics. At



the higher levels organisations are required to promote health within their wider community and to families of the workforce.

Victoria Solomon, health advocate and manager at Busy Bees Nursery in North Tyneside who picked up a gold award said:

“We are really pleased to receive the award. We are part of a national chain of nurseries and it’s really helped us to raise the profile of our nursery within the organisation. Senior managers are delighted we’ve got the award as they see the benefits to staff and families.”

Based in Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside, the nursery currently employs 40 staff and cares for 200 children each week. They started in 2011 and as part of the awards they have delivered a variety of activities to promote healthier lifestyles to staff. As part of the gold award in 2013-14 their health and wellbeing activities now involve children and parents who use the nursery as well.

Activities range from free weight loss and physical activity programmes including bootcamps and zumbathons at the nursery, free healthy recipes and fruit for staff and families, to events that raise awareness of particular health issues such as common cancers and first aid training.

Victoria added:

“We started with a short survey with staff to identify areas to focus on. It’s been hard work but the support we’ve got has been brilliant. The staff at Northumbria Healthcare are always there for you, providing lots of advice, ideas and contacts to help you run the activities.

Our staff really value what we’ve achieved- they say they feel healthier including me. I lost 2 stone on our weight loss programme. In particular the health checks with the nurses and family events to raise awareness of particular health issues have been very successful.

We are planning to build on this over the next 3 years and because we still do the surveys twice a year it helps us to prioritise what works well for everyone and to try new things when new things are flagged up.”

Steven Chater, health promotion specialist at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust who support businesses in Northumberland and North Tyneside to achieve the North East Better Health at Work award added:

“We are thrilled that Busy Bees have achieved their gold award and are delighted that so many local employers have demonstrated their commitment to the health and wellbeing of their employees over the last year and were successful in attaining awards.

Many people spend a great deal of time in the workplace, making it one of the most important places to get advice about healthier lifestyles. Evidence shows that workplace health programmes, like ours, can help to reduce sickness absence, as well as motivating and helping to retain staff. It's good for everyone."

Any employer can take part in the free Better Health at Work Award. For more information visit www.betterhealthatworkne.org

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- On average, the reported **cost of absence per employee per year was £595** in 2013
- The average level of employee absence in 2013 was **7.6 days**
- **56 000 people suffered from work-related illness**
- **1.6 million working days were lost** due to workplace injury and ill health in 2011/12 in the North East
- Work-related ill health was responsible for an estimated **22.7 million working days lost** in 2011/12
- The **direct cost of sickness absence to the UK economy is around £14billion per year**
- It is estimated that **mental ill health costs UK employers almost £1 million per year**. Identifying problems early – or preventing them in the first place, could result in **cost savings of 30%**.
- Physical activity programmes at work have been found to **reduce absenteeism by up to 20%**
- Job satisfaction can help to **reduce staff turnover by between 10 and 25%**
- Businesses taking part in the North East Better Health at Work Award have reported average **reductions in sickness absence of between 0.26 and 2.0 days per employee**, depending on the length and level of participation and sector of employment

The Northern TUC coordinate the Better Health at Work Award across the North East in a partnership between themselves, the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) and the NHS.

Since its inception, more than 400 employers have participated. In 2013 alone, over 150 employers, with nearly 130,000 staff achieved the Better health At Work Award.

The benefits of participating in the Better Health at Work award include:

For employers

- A healthier workforce
- Lower sickness absence
- Lower employee turnover
- A reduction in insurance premiums
- Greater employee motivation
- An enhanced company image

For employees

- Improved working conditions
- Health information at work
- Practical help to improve their own and their families' health
- Improved morale and motivation

For more information visit www.betterhealthatworkne.org

Photograph Details:

- High-resolution photographs available/attached. Please use the contact details below if you are having trouble accessing.

Media Contacts:

For more information on the North East Better Health at Work Award in general contact

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