



North East  
**Better Health**  
at Work Award

**Date: Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

**Embargo: for immediate release**

**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.

Julie Currie, health advocate and HR advisor at Tyne & Wear Metro who picked up a silver award said:

“We are delighted to have achieved silver this year and will continue our hard work towards achieving the gold award next year. Our staff really do value the support and activities available to them, helping to promote a healthier, happier lifestyle.”

Tyne & Wear Metro provides an invaluable service to commuters and many other passengers, ferrying them to their destinations on both sides of the river. With a workforce of around 500, Tyne & Wear Metro carried out a survey in 2013 to gain a good understanding of what their staff would like to see made available to help boost their health and wellbeing. These currently range from healthy eating initiatives, a quarterly staff newsletter focusing on topical health issues, to access to a physiotherapist who comes to the Gosforth Control Centre & Depot fortnightly.

Julie added:

“Our staff are really on board with our healthier lifestyle activities and we get a lot of positive feedback which is great. The physiotherapist is extremely popular, offering treatment for headaches, sports injuries, and general muscular aches and pains. And if anyone needs further treatment, they can be referred on to see a specialist. She also provides us with exercise charts for all our staff: stretches and wall presses for our drivers; chair based exercises and postural guidance for staff working at desks; exercises for customer service staff on the stations who are on their feet a lot. We hold monthly events about healthy eating with a different focus each time, and take part in health awareness weeks as they come along. We couldn't have pulled this all together without the expertise and direction from the Workplace Health Specialist based in the Newcastle Hospitals' Health Improvement Team. With his continued advice and guidance, we hope to offer more and more initiatives over the coming months, making sure there is something in place for everyone.”

Michael McMullen, workplace health specialist at the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust who supports businesses across Newcastle to achieve the North East Better Health at Work award added:

“It is excellent to see the progress that Tyne and Wear Metro have made since they signed up to the Award scheme in 2012. The hard work and enthusiasm of their team of health advocates is helping to engage with all of their workforce in regards to their health and wellbeing and it is evident that the workforce wants this support to continue.

“Many other employers based in Newcastle and across the North East are having similar positive experiences since they engaged in the Award and this is helping to recruit more and more organisations onto the scheme.”

Any employer can take part in the free Better Health at Work Award. For more information visit [www.betterhealthatworkne.org](http://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](http://www.betterhealthatworkne.org)

**Photograph Details:**

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

**Media Contacts:**

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