Healthy Workplaces North Somerset

North Somerset Council

The North Somerset Healthy Workplaces Awards

Supporting health and wellbeing in the workplace

Create a healthier workplace for employees and businesses to thrive.

A free scheme to support employee health and wellbeing.



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Why workplace health and wellbeing matters

Work and health

- Work is one of the biggest influences on health and wellbeing.[1]
- Employers can support physical health, mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.[2]
- Good work improves quality of life, financial security and community wellbeing.[3] Healthy workplaces help people stay well, engaged and productive.[1]

The business case

- 149 million working days are lost each year in the UK due to sickness absence and injury[4] and the cost of sickness absence and worklessness exceeds £100 billion annually.[5]
- More than 300,000 people leave work each year because of health conditions[6] and poor health can increase absence, reduce productivity and raise staff turnover.[6]
- Investing in staff health and wellbeing helps create a healthier, more productive and resilient workforce.[7]

Workplace health in North Somerset

- Around 105,100 people are employed in North Somerset[7] and the employment rate is 80.7%[7], above the England average of 75.8%.
- 74.1% of employees report a physical or mental long-term health condition.[7]
- Musculoskeletal and mental health conditions are key workforce challenges.[7] North Somerset has the highest rate of long-term musculoskeletal conditions in the South West (22.5%), compared to 18.7% in the South West and 17.9% nationally.[7]

Benefits for employers and employees

Employees

- Better physical and mental health.
- Improved wellbeing and job satisfaction.
- Greater engagement, motivation and morale.
- Better access to health and wellbeing support.
- Increased confidence to discuss health and wellbeing concerns.
- More inclusive and respectful workplace culture.
- Better support to stay healthy, thrive at work and manage health conditions.[8]

Employers

- Helps attract and retain employees.
- Supports staff attendance and productivity.
- Demonstrates commitment to employee wellbeing.
- Strengthens organisational reputation.
- Provides evidence for social value commitments.
- Contributes to recruitment and retention strategies.[8]

Better outcomes for all

Healthy workplaces help people thrive, not just prevent illness. They create supportive, inclusive and positive working environments. They can reduce health inequalities and improve workforce health and wellbeing. Investing in workplace health benefits employees, organisations and the wider North Somerset community.[8]



References

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4. Office for National Statistics (ONS). Sickness absence in the UK labour market. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes
5. Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health. Working for a Healthier Tomorrow (Black Review). Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-for-a-healthier-tomorrow-work-and-health-in-britain
6. The Health Foundation. Commission for Healthier Working Lives. Available at: https://www.health.org.uk/commission-for-healthier-working-lives
7. Work and health regional data explorer https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-and-health-regional-data-explorer
8. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Workplace health: management practices (NG13). Available at: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13

The Healthy Workplaces Awards

A free, flexible programme to support and promote the health and wellbeing of staff within local workplaces in North Somerset. This scheme provides a framework that recognises and celebrates workplace activity that supports staff health and wellbeing, enabling organisations to achieve Healthy Workplaces status at different award levels.

Whether an organisation is just beginning to explore workplace health and wellbeing or has a mature, embedded programme, the Healthy Workplaces Awards offer support, recognition, and a pathway for continuous improvement.

What is involved?

Workplaces will:

- register to join the programme as a Member
- access tailored support from the North Somerset Healthy Workplaces team
- use the benchmarking tool to develop an action plan
- choose to apply for an award
- gather simple evidence to demonstrate current practice
- celebrate successes.

The process is designed to be achievable, proportionate and meaningful. Our team works alongside each organisation to help them meet the criteria, implement realistic improvements and build lasting, positive change.

What is on offer?

Participating organisations benefit from a comprehensive package of free support, including:

- Tailored guidance and expert advice.
- Access to training, resources and tools.
- Recognition and celebration.
- Networking and shared learning.
- Events.
- Newsletter.
- Funding opportunities.
- Access to specific health improvement services and training, for example, Healthy Lifestyle Service, Stop Smoking, Health Checks, Physical Activity, Food and Nutrition & Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The framework

The framework has been developed in line with leading national guidance including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. All levels of award are based on the following goals and topics:

Six key Healthy Workplaces goals

- Leadership and commitment.
- Compassionate and effective line management.
- Engaged and supported staff.
- Employee health and wellbeing needs and evaluation.
- The workplace environment.
- An inclusive workplace.

Eight health and wellbeing topics

- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Musculoskeletal health.
- Food and nutrition.
- Physical activity.
- Smoking and vaping.
- Alcohol, drugs and gambling.
- Health conditions: prevention and management.
- Support for all life stages.





Award levels

Summary of the award levels.

- **Member** – Getting started
- **Bronze** – Foundations in place
- **Silver** – From awareness to action
- **Gold** – Embedded and influential
- **Platinum** – Sustained excellence
- **Ambassador** – Topic leadership and influence

Ambassador status is available to Platinum organisations that demonstrate leadership in a specific topic area (for example, mental health). Ambassadors share good practice, mentor others, and influence healthy work across North Somerset within their chosen focus.



How to apply for an award

Businesses can apply for each level of the award (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Ambassador). To achieve an award, businesses are asked to demonstrate how they meet the criteria for each topic area, using practical examples from their workplace.

Evidence does not need to be complex and may include:

- short written responses explaining what the business does
- simple supporting evidence such as staff survey results, policies and procedures, photos of initiatives, communications to staff, training records, meeting notes or action plans.

The latest version of the application documentation can be obtained from healthyworkplaces@n-somerset.gov.uk

The Healthy Workplaces team will review the submission and provide a feedback letter confirming:

- whether the award has been achieved, or
- any additional evidence needed to support the application

Award recognition

Successful organisations receive:

- award certificate;
- digital logo/badge;
- recognition through programme communications;
- opportunities to share good practice;
- eligibility to progress to higher award levels; and
- presentation of award at annual celebratory event.

Framework criteria

Healthy Workplaces goals

Leadership and commitment

Bronze
Employee health and wellbeing is recognised as an organisational priority, with visible commitment from senior leaders. Leaders communicate the importance of creating a healthy workplace and demonstrate their support through policies, communications or day-to-day practice. A senior member of staff has responsibility for overseeing health and wellbeing activities.

Silver
Senior leaders communicate a clear vision for workforce health and wellbeing and have identified priorities and actions to improve staff health. Health and wellbeing objectives are included within organisational plans and leaders actively promote participation in health and wellbeing initiatives.

Gold
A named senior leader is accountable for employee health and wellbeing, with appropriate resources, time and funding allocated to support delivery. Health and wellbeing is routinely considered when organisational decisions are made, and leaders regularly review progress against agreed priorities.

Platinum
Health and wellbeing is fully embedded within organisational culture, strategy and decision-making. Senior leaders use workforce data and evaluation findings to demonstrate impact, identify priorities and drive continuous improvement across the organisation.



Compassionate and effective line management

Bronze
Managers understand their role in supporting employee health and wellbeing and actively promote positive wellbeing behaviours. Employees feel able to approach their manager for support and are signposted to appropriate resources when needed.

Silver
Managers have the knowledge and confidence to support employee health and wellbeing, identify concerns at an early stage and hold regular wellbeing conversations. Consistent approaches are in place for absence management, return-to-work discussions and supporting staff experiencing health challenges.

Gold
Managers receive training and development in compassionate leadership, trauma-informed, effective communication and supporting employee health and wellbeing. Supporting staff health and wellbeing is recognised as a core management responsibility and forms part of management expectations and development.

Platinum
A culture of compassionate leadership is consistently demonstrated throughout the organisation. Staff feedback shows that managers are approachable, supportive and equipped to respond to a diverse range of health and wellbeing needs, and the organisation regularly reviews management capability to support continuous improvement.

Engaged and supported staff

Bronze
Employees feel valued, respected and able to contribute ideas and raise concerns within a supportive working environment. Information about available health and wellbeing support is accessible and regularly communicated to staff.

Silver
The organisation actively seeks employee views through surveys, forums, working groups or other engagement mechanisms. Staff are encouraged to contribute to decisions that affect their health, wellbeing and working environment, and feedback is used to inform health and wellbeing activity.

Gold
A comprehensive range of health and wellbeing support is available and promoted to all employees. The organisation regularly gathers feedback on the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of support and uses this information to make improvements.

Platinum
The organisation demonstrates a positive culture in which staff feel listened to, involved and empowered to influence change. Employee voice is routinely incorporated into organisational decision-making and evidence shows that staff feedback directly informs improvements to workplace health and wellbeing.

Employee health and wellbeing needs and evaluation

Bronze
The organisation gathers information about employee health and wellbeing needs through staff feedback, workforce data or other appropriate methods. This information is used to identify key health and wellbeing priorities for the workforce.

Silver
A workplace health needs assessment, staff survey or equivalent process has been completed and used to develop an action plan including targeted health and wellbeing interventions.

Gold
The organisation reviews a range of information, including employee feedback, workforce demographics, absence data and participation rates, to assess progress and inform future activity. Evaluation is used to understand what is working well and where additional support may be needed.

Platinum
A robust cycle of assessment, action, evaluation and review is embedded within the organisation. Workforce data and outcome measures are used to evidence impact, inform investment decisions and drive continuous improvement in employee health and wellbeing.

The workplace environment

Bronze
The organisation provides a safe and healthy working environment that complies with relevant health and safety requirements. Appropriate policies, risk assessments and procedures are in place to protect employee health and wellbeing.

Silver
Employees are actively involved in maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, have training and opportunities to identify risks and suggest improvements. The organisation takes action in response to employee feedback and changing workplace needs.

Gold
The physical and working environment actively promotes health and wellbeing through suitable facilities and spaces. This may include quiet areas, breakout spaces, facilities that encourage healthy behaviours or environments that support social connection and wellbeing.

Platinum
The workplace environment is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet employee needs and support wellbeing. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to creating restorative, inclusive and accessible environments, including making use of outdoor and green spaces where possible.

An inclusive workplace

Bronze
The organisation collects and reviews workforce diversity information and considers the needs of different staff groups when developing policies, services and wellbeing initiatives. Leaders demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels respected and valued.

Silver
Inclusive practices are embedded throughout employment, including recruitment, induction, development and retention. Employees can access appropriate support, guidance and reasonable adjustments, and managers understand their role in promoting inclusion and equity.

Gold
The organisation actively engages with diverse employee groups through staff networks, forums or consultation mechanisms. Workforce data is used to monitor participation, access to support and employee experience, helping to identify and address inequalities and inform decisions and improvements.

Platinum
The organisation adopts a strategic and continuously improving approach to inclusion and belonging. Recognised frameworks such as the Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index, workforce insights and employee feedback are used to reduce inequalities, strengthen inclusion and demonstrate measurable progress in creating a workplace where all employees can thrive.

Health and wellbeing topics.

Mental health and wellbeing

Bronze
The organisation demonstrates its commitment to mental health, wellbeing and psychological safety via a policy, commitment statement or action plan. Managers are trained to recognise the signs of stress, burnout and poor mental wellbeing, take preventative action and provide early support. Staff are routinely signposted to sources of information and support. The organisation meets its legal responsibility to identify, assess and manage work-related stress.

Silver
The organisation adopts a structured and preventative approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing across the workplace. Mental health awareness activities are delivered throughout the year, and wellbeing considerations are incorporated into workload management, job design, flexible working arrangements and work-life balance initiatives to help prevent stress and burnout. Work-related stress risks are regularly assessed and addressed (for example, using the HSE Management Standards approach to risk assessment), and managers routinely discuss wellbeing with staff through supervision, appraisals or one-to-one conversations. Employees are actively involved in identifying mental health priorities and shaping wellbeing activities. The organisation provides opportunities for staff to develop awareness of topics such as psychological safety, trauma-informed practice and suicide prevention where relevant to their roles.

Gold
The organisation provides a comprehensive and accessible range of support that may include Mental Health First Aiders, employee assistance programmes, counselling services, wellbeing champions or other evidence-based interventions. Mental health is considered within organisational planning, work design and workforce development. The organisation takes a proactive approach to building psychologically safe workplaces and supporting staff exposed to potentially distressing or traumatic situations. Evidence is gathered to demonstrate that support services are being accessed, are meeting employee needs and are contributing to positive wellbeing outcomes.

Platinum
Mental health and wellbeing are fully embedded within organisational culture, leadership and decision-making. The organisation demonstrates

measurable improvements in employee wellbeing and routinely reviews data, including staff survey findings, psychological safety indicators, work-related stress measures, sickness absence data and employee feedback. Evaluation findings are used to strengthen and continuously improve the organisation's approach. Suicide prevention, psychological safety, trauma-informed practice and wellbeing are incorporated into wider workforce strategies and organisational policies. Practice aligns with recognised frameworks such as the Mental Health at Work Commitment and serves as an example of good practice for other organisations.

Musculoskeletal health

Bronze
The organisation assesses and manages musculoskeletal risks and ensures that staff are aware of how to report concerns at an early stage. Appropriate workstation and workplace assessments are undertaken where required and employees are encouraged to take responsibility for maintaining good musculoskeletal health.

Silver
The organisation actively promotes musculoskeletal health by providing staff and managers with information, training and resources that support prevention, early intervention and self-management. Employees are encouraged to adopt safe working practices and engage in regular movement throughout the working day.

Gold
The organisation provides timely access to support for employees experiencing musculoskeletal problems and ensures that workplace adjustments, rehabilitation and return-to-work support are available when required. Evidence is gathered to demonstrate that interventions are accessible and effective.

Platinum
The organisation routinely analyses workforce data, sickness absence trends and employee feedback to understand musculoskeletal health needs and identify opportunities for improvement. Workplace design, policies and interventions are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to support long-term musculoskeletal health and wellbeing.

Food and nutrition

Bronze
The organisation provides staff with access to free drinking water and suitable facilities for storing, preparing and consuming food. Information and resources that support healthy eating are made available to employees.

Silver
The organisation actively promotes healthier eating through awareness campaigns, educational opportunities, practical resources and regular communications. Employees are encouraged to develop healthier eating habits and are consulted about food-related provision within the workplace.

Gold
The workplace environment supports healthy choices by ensuring that nutritious food and drink options are affordable, accessible and promoted across catering services, meetings, events and vending facilities. Evidence is gathered to demonstrate that healthier options are available and used by employees.

Platinum
The organisation adopts a whole-system approach to food and nutrition by embedding healthy, affordable and sustainable food principles into workplace policies, procurement arrangements and organisational culture. The impact of these approaches is regularly evaluated and used to inform continuous improvement.



Physical activity

Bronze
The organisation encourages employees to incorporate movement into their working day and promotes simple opportunities to sit less and move more through activities such as active breaks, walking meetings or stair use.

Silver
Employees have access to a range of inclusive opportunities that support increased physical activity. These may include workplace challenges, active travel initiatives, walking groups or partnerships with local providers that help staff become more active.

Gold
Physical activity is embedded within workplace practices and supported through policies, facilities and environmental changes. Employees are provided with opportunities and encouragement to remain active during and around the working day, and evidence is collected to demonstrate participation and accessibility.

Platinum
The organisation takes a strategic approach to physical activity by using workforce data and employee feedback to inform, evaluate and continuously improve its programmes. Particular attention is given to reducing barriers and increasing participation among groups least likely to be active.

Smoking and vaping

Bronze
The organisation has a clear smoke-free and vaping policy that is communicated to all employees and visitors. Information about local stop-smoking support services is routinely promoted and made accessible to staff.



Silver
The organisation actively encourages employees who smoke to access evidence-based support and regularly raises awareness of the health benefits of quitting smoking and reducing tobacco-related harm.

Gold
Managers are equipped to signpost employees to available support, and staff can access workplace initiatives that encourage and support successful quit attempts. Evidence is collected to demonstrate employee engagement with available support.

Platinum
The organisation monitors available workforce data relating to smoking and vaping and uses this information to target support and reduce smoking-related harm. Evaluation findings are used to strengthen policies, interventions and outcomes over time.

Alcohol, drugs and gambling

Bronze
The organisation has clear policies covering alcohol and drugs and ensures that employees have access to confidential information, guidance and support services, including support for gambling harm.

Silver
Awareness-raising activity is delivered regularly to improve understanding of alcohol, drug and gambling harms. Managers receive training that enables them to recognise potential concerns and respond confidently and appropriately.

Gold
The organisation provides clear pathways to evidence-based support and ensures that employees can access confidential assistance when required. Supportive workplace practices and reasonable adjustments are available where appropriate, and evidence is gathered to assess effectiveness.



Platinum
The organisation adopts a preventative and evidence-based approach that uses workforce insight, employee feedback and evaluation data to identify trends and improve support. The impact of interventions is regularly reviewed and used to drive continuous improvement in employee health and wellbeing.

Health conditions: prevention and management

Bronze
The organisation provides employees with information and signposting on health improvement, disease prevention, NHS screening programmes and support for long-term health conditions. Compassionate sickness absence and return-to-work processes are in place to support employees who experience periods of ill health.

Silver
The organisation actively promotes awareness of a broad range of health topics, including men's health, women's health, cancer awareness and NHS screening programmes. Managers understand how to have supportive conversations about health conditions and how to implement appropriate workplace adjustments.

Gold
Structured support is available for employees living with long-term health conditions, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and other chronic conditions. Policies, workplace adjustments and early intervention approaches are consistently applied, and evidence is gathered to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Platinum
The organisation uses workforce data, employee feedback and evaluation findings to understand health needs and target support where it is most required. Health inequalities are considered and addressed through tailored action, and continuous improvement is demonstrated through measurable outcomes.

Support for all life stages

Bronze
Managers understand how different life stages and major life events may affect health and wellbeing and are able to access appropriate guidance and support to help employees manage these transitions.

Silver
The organisation provides flexible and person-centred support that reflects the needs of individuals at different stages of life. Policies and practices support employees experiencing pregnancy, fertility, parenthood, caring responsibilities, menopause, bereavement, retirement and other significant life events and transitions.

Gold
Structured programmes and guidance are available to support employees through key life transitions, including returning from parental leave, balancing caring responsibilities and preparing for retirement. The organisation gathers feedback to ensure support remains relevant and accessible.

Platinum
An age-friendly and inclusive approach is embedded throughout organisational policies and practices. Workforce demographics and staff feedback are used to review, evaluate and continually strengthen support across all life stages.



What employers say

"The framework gave us structure and quick wins we could act on."

"Events were practical and local – we came away with ideas we could implement straight away"

"For us, this award isn't just about meeting criteria. It reflects the everyday choices our team makes; supporting one another, prioritising honesty, creating space for wellbeing conversations, and making sure people feel able to bring their whole selves to work."

"Being part of this programme has encouraged us to look at what we do with fresh eyes, and today we're really looking forward to learning from other providers who share our commitment."

Ready to get started?

- Join the free Healthy Workplaces Awards programme
- Complete a short registration form
- Access guidance, resources and support
- Begin working towards your first award level

Contact us

healthyworkplaces@n-somerset.gov.uk

https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/professionals/healthyworkplaces

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