Staff Health & Wellbeing

“The school should develop as a health promoting workplace, which demonstrates concern for the wellbeing of all staff.”
Audience
Healthy Schools Co-ordinators; Schools; Teachers.

Overview
This document provides information for teachers on health and well-being. The development of health and wellbeing among staff is an integral part of the work of local healthy school schemes and this booklet is provided to support that work.

Further information
Enquiries about this document should be directed to: local Healthy Schools Co-ordinators.

Additional copies
Can be obtained from: local Healthy Schools Co-ordinators.
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This booklet has been developed, with permission, from a similar publication produced by Claire Broad for the Wrexham Healthy School Scheme.
The information handbook has been developed in partnership as a tool to raise awareness of health and wellbeing among school based staff. Health is defined by the World Health Organisation (1948) as ‘a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

The health of staff is often neglected with hectic schedules and pupil and parents needs prioritised above others. Recent findings by the Welsh Assembly Government claim that 65% of teachers in maintained schools took a period of sickness absence during 2007, up from 62% in 2006. The total number of days sickness absence taken increased by over 7%. This handbook intends to highlight support services available and raise awareness of key health themes.

‘It is estimated that individuals may spend up to 60% of their waking hours in their place of work’ Peersman et al (1998) which emphasises the importance and need for a happy and healthy working culture.

The development of health and wellbeing among staff is an integral part of the work of local healthy school schemes and this booklet is provided to support that work.
The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) encourages the development of local Healthy School Schemes within a national framework. These local schemes encourage the development of health promoting schools in their area.

**What is a healthy school?**
A health promoting school is one which actively promotes, protects and embeds the physical, mental and social health and well being of its community through positive action by such means as policy, strategic planning and staff development with regard to its curriculum, ethos, physical environment and community relations.

All areas of Wales have a local Healthy School Scheme accredited by the Welsh Assembly Government. The schemes are a partnership between health and education, which recognises that there are mutual benefits in young people’s health and attainments to be gained.

As schools develop as health promoting schools they will implement a whole school approach to health by addressing:

- Leadership and communication, including the implementation of health-related policies and training;
- Curriculum;
- School ethos and environment; and
- Family and community involvement.

Within this whole school approach the following health topics will be covered:

- Mental and emotional health and well-being (including anti-bullying).
- Food and fitness (including the development of a relevant policy using the food and fitness policy guidance; and including oral health).
- Personal development and relationships (including SRE).
- Substance use and misuse (including tobacco, alcohol, legal and illegal drugs).
- Environment (internal and external).
- Safety (including sun safety, internet safety).

Schools address three action during each phase of the scheme and provide evidence for assessment before moving on to additional action areas. All actions must be sustainable and embedded into the daily life of the school. Achievements are within the context of local needs and priorities but also take account of national priorities and targets.

**Links:**
Welsh Assembly Government Health Improvement Division www.healtheschool.org.uk
Recommendations
Staff health forms one of the aspects of work for schools participating within the local Healthy School Schemes. The coordinator for your school will develop actions for positive change around staff health which are then implemented. Detailed below are points for consideration when developing a whole school approach towards a health promoting workplace:

• Do staff consider staffroom facilities to be adequate and reflect the health ethos of the school?
• Are staff consulted and involved in the development of a health-promoting workplace?
• Do staff have access to a potable water supply?
• Do teaching staff have protected PPA (Planning Preparation & Assessment) time and an appropriate work area?
• Are there any regularly planned social activities for all staff?
• Is staff health screening actively encouraged via school nurse and/or attendance at LEA health days or in house provision e.g. through Occupational Health?
• Do all staff have professional development opportunities?
• Is staff membership of leisure facilities encouraged via staff discount schemes?
• Are staff aware of and have access to support agencies who can offer help and advice? e.g. Occupational Health, Personnel Department and Teacher Support Cymru.
• Are staff familiar with policies and procedures related to health and wellbeing e.g.: Bullying and harassment, Family friendly, Smoke-free, Health and safety, Alcohol and substance misuse and Stress?
• Are elements of Quality Circle Time utilised by staff?
• Is consultation utilised by staff to identify areas for development and training?
• Is staff health and wellbeing a regular agenda item at staff meetings?
• Are there procedures in place to address work-life balance?

The healthy school coordinator will be responsible for developing an action plan and on assessment will be required to provide evidence that actions have been addressed throughout the year. Examples of evidence can include:

• Certificates of training courses attended.
• Details of support systems and communication pathways.
• Policy development.
• Staff questionnaires.
• Minutes of meetings.
• Participation in National Stress Awareness Day.
• Notice boards.
• Photographs.
• Suggestion box.
• Celebration of staff participation in events and individual achievements.
• Letters of praise and thanks.
The Corporate Health Standard is the national mark of quality for health and wellbeing in the workplace, which can be used as a tool to support practices to promote and improve health and wellbeing of employees. The standard has been developed to recognise good practice and to target the key preventable ill health issues and the Health Challenge Wales priorities. The standard is awarded at different levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

**The Corporate Health Standard is divided into two sections:**
1. Core Components; and
2. Specific Health Issues.

Core components focus on the work ethos and culture of the organisation and how employee health and safety is incorporated in to the management process.

**Core Components**
- Organisational Support.
- Communication.
- Employee Involvement.
- Policies and Policy Development.
- Health and Safety.
- Monitoring, Assessment and Review.

Specific Health Issues consider key preventable ill health issues in the work place, five of which lend themselves to Healthy School Scheme health topic areas:

**Specific Health Issues**
- Tobacco.
- Mental Health Promotion.
- Musculoskeletal Disorder.
- Alcohol and Substance misuse.
- Nutrition.
- Physical Activity.
- General Health Issues.
- Occupational Health and Rehabilitation.

Many staff employed by Local Authorities throughout Wales may already be participating in activities in relation to the Corporate Health Standard. However, if you are working in the private sector, your school may be interested in applying for the Corporate Health Standard.

**Further details can be found on:**
www.healthyworkingwales.com
An employer has a duty under the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) to bring to the notice of all its employees its policy for health, safety and welfare at work.

This will entail providing:

• Safe places of work, with safe access and egress at each workplace.
• Adequate resources for managing health & safety.
• A safe and healthy working environment and adequate welfare facilities.
• Safe plant equipment, machinery and safe systems of work.
• Arrangements for the safe use, handling, storage and transportation of articles and substances.
• Information, instruction, training and access to competent health & safety advice.
• Suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks to the health & safety of all stakeholders arising out of or in connection with work activities.
• Arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventative and protective measures.
• Systems for ensuring the selection of competent contractors, suppliers and clear responsibilities are agreed for partnership working.
• Effective joint consultation on health & safety with trade unions and employee representatives.
• Systems for the reporting, recording and investigation of accidents, incidents near misses and occupational ill health.

**Links:**
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents www.rospa.org.uk
Health & Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk
Teachers are professional voice users, using their voices constantly at work, where clear vocal communication is vital. Voice strain and voice loss is directly related to voice misuse. The most common forms of which are:

* Shouting.
* Strained loud voice used against background noise.
* Excessive throat clearing.

Vocal problems have been studied in a number of occupation groups including telemarketing staff and those involved in certain performing arts. There is evidence to suggest teachers are particularly at risk of developing voice problems, with one in ten long serving teachers likely to damage their voices at work.

**Preventative measures**

* Air quality can be improved by natural ventilation.
* Improved cleaning arrangements will help remove dust and possible fumes.
* Drinking water frequently will help keep the larynx moist.
* Adjusting classroom layout and space can improve acoustics.
* Use of audio-visual aids can help to conserve voice.

In addition it may be useful to:

* Undertake a voice warm-up.
* Stretch the neck and shoulders.
* Hum, blow out through the lips and make them vibrate.
* Say the “grrr” sound with a rolling “r”.
* Rest voice regularly.

It is rare that voice loss is due to serious disease, but any change lasting more than four weeks should be seen by a GP.


**Links:**

Voice Care Network [www.voicecare.org.uk](http://www.voicecare.org.uk)
The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council [www.iiac.org.uk](http://www.iiac.org.uk)
Smoking is the greatest preventable cause of illness, disability and premature death in Wales. It is estimated there are approximately 106,000 smoking related deaths in the UK each year, and that 6,000 of these are in Wales. This equates to nearly one in five deaths in Wales being attributed to smoking.

Smoking also damages the health of non smokers. In 1998 the UK Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health (SCOTCH) concluded that exposure to second-hand smoke causes lung cancer and heart disease in non smoking adults and respiratory disease, cot death, middle ear disease and asthmatic attacks in children. Since then, evidence on the dangers from exposure to second-hand smoke has consolidated.

On the 2nd April 2007 the Smoke-Free Premises etc. (Wales) Regulations came into force, to protect workers and the public from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. Guidance on the legislation is located at www.smokingbanwales.co.uk

**The law creates three specific offences:**
- Failing to display no-smoking signs in premises covered by the law.
- Smoking in a smoke-free place.
- Failing to prevent smoking in a smoke-free place.

**Stop Smoking Wales**
Support for those who would like to quit smoking is available from the national service, Stop Smoking Wales. Stop Smoking Wales offers free, friendly support for smokers who are ready to stop.

The service can be contacted by ringing 0800 085 2219
Further information is available on their web site www.stopsmokingwales.com

**Smokers Helpline Wales**
For help and advice how to give up smoking you can also call:
Smokers Helpline Wales – 0800 1690169

This free phone helpline offers:
- One to one confidential advice by trained advisors.
- Guidance on stopping smoking and help with associated problems.
- Information leaflets on how to get started, planning and preparing to quit smoking.
One of the contractual changes in the National Agreement on Teachers Workloads has been to ensure teachers have regard to ensuring a reasonable worklife balance.

Modern living is not always easy and it is inevitable that some people will experience stress at some point in their lives. Whilst there is no definite legal or medical definition of stress, it is referred to as ‘...the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them’ The Health & Safety Executive.

The workplace can have a positive and negative affect on employee’s mental health; it is important to consider the causes of mental distress at work, not solely the symptoms. Symptoms of stress can include; anxiety, tiredness, poor concentration, skin conditions, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, poor memory and low self esteem. However, it is how people cope with stress, in work or in private life, that can determine long term physical and mental health.

The NHS has identified some top tips for a healthier happier life:

- Make time to make good things happen.
- Set yourself realistic goals.
- Give up having regrets. You cannot change what has already happened.
- Make exercise positive, social and most importantly fun!

**What is work-life balance and how do I achieve it?**

Work-life balance is essentially about choice and flexibility, balancing life and work, balancing the needs of the school (employer) and staff (employees) and creating the best environment for performance and job satisfaction.

The first step is to realise that work-life balance is an issue for both employers and employees.

The next step is to realise that the solution will be different for everyone and that consultation is an essential part of the process.

“Work-life balance is not just about women juggling work, home and family – although that is certainly an important part of it. It is also about adjusting working patterns and policies so that everyone – regardless of race, age or gender, can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations.” From ‘Creating Work-life Balance’, DfES.

Working in the education sector is a brilliant and rewarding career which will have many high points but there will also be tough times. The important thing is to recognise this and look after yourself.
General tips

• You have a professional responsibility to monitor your health and wellbeing.
• Recognise any stress, and be aware of the issues you face at work and at home.
• Take action. Deal with one thing at a time, and ask for support. Involve your colleagues if the issue is an organisational one.
• Change your thinking. Step back and take a fresh look at the situation.
• Make boundaries – something produced in three hours will be different from something produced in one hour, but is it any better?
• Keep fit. Exercise regularly and make sure you’re eating healthily. Try to avoid increasing your intake of alcohol and caffeine, and although smoking may seem to help, it really doesn’t. A healthy lifestyle makes it easier for our bodies to cope.
• Rest and relax. Keep at least one day of the weekend free and try to avoid taking work home.
• Make sure you get sufficient sleep each night.
• Avoid paper shifting.
• Go to your GP if the feelings of low mood or stress are persistent and/or seem to be getting worse.

Tips for maintaining a healthy work-life balance

• Speak up when work expectations and demands are too much. Senior staff need to be aware of pressures in order to address them.
• Others will not expect you to know everything or have all the answers – so don’t expect this of yourself.
• Prioritise – try to ‘work smart, not long’. Set yourself a certain amount of time per task, and try not to get caught up in unproductive activities.
• Take proper breaks. This can sometimes be difficult when you have responsibilities out of the classroom, but do your best to break for lunch at least, and get out of the classroom.
• Draw a line between work and home. If you do need to bring work home, make sure you have a designated working area that you can close the door on.
• Try to ensure that family, friends, exercise and leisure activities don’t suffer because of long working hours.
• Assess your work-life balance in collaboration with your colleagues if you can. The more visible the process, the more likely it is to have an effect.
• ‘Work-life balance’ is an important consideration for any school’s management team. You are entitled to the support you need to do your job effectively.

Further information can be found at: http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Mental%20Health%20leaflet.pdf
Quality Circle Time is a democratic and creative approach used to consider a wide range of issues affecting the whole school community; teaching staff, pupils support staff, parents and governors. Quality Circle Time is a group process addressing issues relating to personal, social moral and health education. There are five structures which encourage the development of positive relationships: *self discipline, self regulating behaviour management, conflict resolution, assertive communication* and *democratic group process*. Elements of each can be utilised to benefit the health and wellbeing of staff.

Do not be afraid to ask for help if you need it and do not feel guilty about including a period of relaxation in your day. Relaxation is vital to good mental and physical health as it lets the body and mind unwind and process the information of the day. Jenny Mosley, the pioneer of Quality Circle Time, refers to short periods of relaxation as ‘Golden Moments’. Jenny believes short but frequent breaks should be taken to ‘recharge our batteries and regain our sense of connection to the beauty of the world’ Mosley, J (2003).

**Suggestions of how to develop Quality Circle Time among staff:**

- **A Review Circle** (as a regular agenda item in staff meetings) ‘One thing that is going well is... and one thing I would like help with is...’

- **Staff should establish a culture of praise** among adults as well as children, by identifying what co-workers are doing well within school and share these.

- **Create a Golden Cheer Up Board** which can include any positive comments or praise by co-workers, parents and any thank-you letters/cards.

- **Decorate** the staff toilets; this can often be the only time for a golden moment within the day.

- **Nominate a social secretary** to coordinate a social events calendar for the year.

Research has found that teachers with low self esteem find it very difficult to raise the self esteem of pupils. Teachers with high self esteem are far more able to enhance the self esteem of others; therefore it is vital to identifying means of becoming more positive, enthusiastic and consistent. Energy is one of the most important resources you have and in order to sustain the energy that you require, you must learn how to revitalise by visiting the ‘wells’. The diagram overleaf will provide some suggestions of which ‘wells’ you can visit to replenish your energy.

[www.circle-time.co.uk](http://www.circle-time.co.uk)
Finding the balance within yourself

Cognitive Well
- Reading books, watching plays & films
- Debating ideas
- Planning and structuring ideas & thinking things through
- The mind shrinks if un-stimulated

Emotional Well
- Time for fun & enjoying time with others
- Friendship & loving relationships with family
- Opportunities to express feelings

Spiritual Well
- This is about renewing your sense of wonder and awe.
  You may reach this level through:
  - Your religious beliefs
  - Taking time to be by nature
  - Sufficiently stilling the mind so you can experience energy & beauty

Creative Well
- Enjoy your senses & imagination
- Appreciate all the arts
- Write, draw, sing & dance
- Play with colour, texture, sound, scent & movement

Physical Well
- It is very difficult to enjoy good emotional health if you are physically unfit, tense & heavy with lethargy.
  To dissolve knots of tension:
  - Exercise weekly
  - Learn relaxation techniques
  - Go for a massage
  - Eat & sleep well

Gives you...
Energy Perspective & Balance

Jenny Mosley, Quality Circle Time LDA
Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD’s) are the main cause of occupational ill health in the UK (Health and Safety Executive, 2008). 80% of you will have back pain at least once at some point during your life.

The law requires workplaces to undertake risk assessments of the key MSD risks such as manual handling. Some MSD risks are preventable and employers can implement appropriate measures where and if appropriate e.g. providing lifting and handling equipment such as trolleys.

Sickness absence due to back pain costs the economy in Wales £85 million.

How staying active can help back pain?

Nearly everyone will have back pain at some time in their life, it is rarely serious and the advice is to keep moving and stay active. When they are not used back muscles will weaken, even though it may hurt, exercising your back muscles will lead to a quicker recovery.

You should continue to exercise as normal e.g. using the stairs, cycling. Exercising may also help improve your mood and reduce anxiety.

Even if you still have back pain it will help if you stay at work or return as soon as possible.

You are more likely to develop a long term back pain the longer you stay away from work.

www.healthyworkingwales.com

Stay active

• Back muscles will weaken when they are not used – exercising your back muscles, even when they hurt will lead to a quicker recovery.

• To stay active, continue with your life as normally as possible:

• Exercise as you would normally – walking; taking the stairs instead of the lift; cycling. Exercise can also improve your mood and reduce anxiety.

• Stay at work or return as soon as possible, even if you still have back pain. The longer you stay off work, the more likely you are to develop long-term back pain.

Visit our website for more information on www.welshbacks.com

Take control

• Back pain can be very distressing, but the pain you experience doesn’t indicate you are further damaging your back, so don’t let it stop you living your normal life.

If you need pain relief, you could:

• Take over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen or paracetamol (make sure you follow the instructions on the patient information leaflet).

• Talk to a pharmacist for advice on what to take, and they can supply appropriate pain killers. Remember to tell the pharmacist if you are taking other medication.
Stay in control
• It’s your back: stay in control by keeping active.
• Most people are back to normal activities within 6 weeks. If you’re not, you should be getting help to get fully active.

For more advice about continuing your work activities with back pain, contact:
• Your employer’s occupational health service and /or your GP.
• www.welshbacks.com

Back pain is rarely due to a serious disease.
If you have severe pain, which gets worse over several weeks instead of better, you should seek advice from a pharmacist or your GP. You should seek advice straight away if you have:
• Difficulty passing or controlling urine.
• Numbness around your back passage or genitals.
• Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in one or both legs.
• Unsteadiness on your feet.
Most people will use alcohol on a range of occasions and for many different reasons. It will be consumed sensibly by the majority who will experience no serious problems as a result of its use. However, excessive or inappropriate use of alcohol can lead to a range of health and social problems some of which will be seen in the workplace through absence, reduced productivity and increased risks of accidents.

**Alcohol units and sensible weekly drinking limits**

Counting units of alcohol can help to keep track of the amount you are drinking. The numbers of units in most commonly used drinks are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum DAILY unit allowance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum WEEKLY unit allowance</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.wales.gov.uk/healthchallenge
To work out the number of units of alcohol in a can or bottle when this is not given on the label use the following formula:

Multiply the % alcohol content (ABV) by the volume of liquid and divide by 100 (if the volume is stated in centilitres [cls]) or by 1000 (if the volume is in millilitres [mls])

So, for example:

- A 75cl bottle of wine with an alcohol content of 12%: 12 x 75 / 100 = 9 units.
- A 70cl bottle of vodka at 37.5%: 37.5 x 70 / 100 = 26.25 units.
- A 440cl can of lager with an alcohol content of 5.2%: 5.2 x 440 / 1000 = 2.28 units.

Men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol per day, with some alcohol-free days throughout the week and no more than 21 units a week in total.

Women should not regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol per day, with some alcohol-free days and no more than 14 units a week in total.

It is best to stop drinking altogether in pregnancy. If you do drink, limit yourself to no more than one or 2 units of alcohol, once or twice a week and avoid getting drunk.

**Sensible drinking on a night out**

Follow these tips to stay safe and enjoy your night out:

- Pace yourself – or choose smaller drinks, say a half instead of a pint every round.
- Don’t drink on an empty stomach – and try to eat something during the evening.
- Skip rounds, or choose an alcohol-free drink during some of them.
- Watch your measures at home – most of us pour much larger drinks than we would get in a pub.
- Don’t let people pressure you into having another drink – its ok to say no.
- Keep well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water, make sure you drink at least 6-8 glasses of fluid every day.
- Keep an eye on your drink and an eye on your friends when out and about!

**Do you want more advice or information for yourself or someone you know or care for?**

Sometimes people feel that their own or someone else’s drinking is causing problems. If you are concerned, you should seek advice or help from your GP and you could also phone DAN 24/7. This is a free and bilingual telephone helpline providing a single point of contact for anyone in Wales wanting further information or support relating to drugs or alcohol, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Links:**

DAN 24/7 Helpline 0800 633 5588
Alcohol Information www.knowyourlimits.org.uk
In Wales, as in the rest of the UK, the balance of diet falls short of Government recommendations, with an estimated one third of deaths from heart disease and one third of deaths from cancer in the UK attributed to diet. The Food Standards Agency Wales report (2005) found there is a high awareness of healthy eating, however the Department of Health (200/1) identified that most people consume less than recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables but more than the recommended amounts of fats, salt and sugar.

The Food Standards Agency have produced the eatwell plate to help people understand and enjoy healthy eating. The pictorial food guide below is shaped like a dinner plate and highlights the proportions and types of foods that are needed to make a healthy balanced diet. The dinner plate is divided into five food groups:

- Bread, other cereals and potatoes.
- Fruit and vegetables.
- Milk and dairy foods.
- Meat, fish and alternatives.
- Foods containing fat and foods containing sugar.

![The eatwell plate](food.gov.uk)
5-A-day
Most people are aware they should be eating more fruit and vegetables, however many know they are not eating enough. Eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day is the guideline for fruit and vegetable consumption, which can be achieved via fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced sources. Please note that potatoes cannot be counted, as they are considered a starchy food.

Why is it important?
Fruit and vegetables are good sources of many vitamins and minerals. There is mounting evidence that people who eat lots of fruit and vegetables are less likely to develop chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease and some cancers. There is so much variety to choose from all year long, and fruit and vegetables are also very low in fat.

5 great reasons to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day:
• They are packed with vitamins and minerals.
• They can help you to maintain a healthy weight.
• They are an excellent source of fibre and antioxidants.
• They help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers.
• They taste delicious and there is so much variety to choose from.

Water
Water makes up about two-thirds of your body weight and it is important for this to be maintained, because most of the chemical reactions that happen in your cells need water. Water is also needed for blood to be able to carry nutrients around the body.

Losing water – As your body works it produces waste products, some of which are toxic. The body gets rid of these toxins through the kidneys in urine and urine is mainly made up of water. You also lose water through evaporation when you breathe and sweat. As the temperature rises and as you do more activity, this increases the amount of water the body loses.

Recommendation – In climates such as the UK, you should drink approximately 1.2 litres (6 to 8 glasses) of fluid every day to prevent dehydration. In hotter climates the body needs more than this. Keep a bottle of water on your desk and drink frequently in addition to improving your own health you will act as a role model for your pupils.

Caffeine in drinks such as tea, coffee and cola, can act as mild diuretics, which means they make the body produce more urine. This affects some people more than others, but it also depends on how much caffeine you drink and how often.

Remember to drink some fluids each day that do not contain caffeine.
Why is Breakfast Important?
Many people claim they skip breakfast because of lack of time, or because they simply ‘don’t feel like it.’ There are a number of reasons why breakfast really is important:

When you wake up, your body has not had any food for several hours. Breakfast provides the energy needed to face the day, as well as some essential vitamins and minerals. Eating breakfast could also help with weight control, because without breakfast you are more likely to become hungry before lunch and snack on foods that are high in fat and sugar.

So why not go for a bowl of wholegrain cereal with some sliced banana and a glass of fruit juice for a healthy start to the day?
The Welsh Health Survey (2005) identified that only 29% of the population met the recommended levels of physical activity to benefit their health. Physical activity is a key factor in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and can contribute to the prevention and management of many conditions and diseases, as identified below. Health benefits can be achieved with participation in ‘...at least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activity on 5 or more days of the week’ (Department of Health 2004).

Research shows that physical activity has a positive impact on the most common and costly health problems encountered at work:

• **Back Pain** – The leading cause of sickness absence from work in the UK, affecting 1.1 million people.
• **Stress** – An estimated half a million UK employees believe they are experiencing work related stress.
• **Obesity** – In Wales 55.2% of adults are overweight or obese with a Body Mass Index of 25 or greater. (Welsh Health Survey).
• **Coronary Heart Disease** – CHD is the most common cause of death overall in the UK, accounting for approx 14,000 deaths a year (BHF 2004).
• **Diabetes** – There are over 112,000 people diagnosed with diabetes in Wales, a prevalence of 3.8% of the population, which is higher than the UK average of 2.3% (ABPI Nov 2006).

In Wales there is approximately 3% of staff off sick at any given moment. Research shows that workers raise their productivity by up to 15% when staff start to take regular exercise. And when are exercising, they will take 27% fewer sick days, as suggested by the Sports Council for Wales. The workplace provides a platform to promote physical activity among adults, and employees should be encouraged to build activity into their daily like through flexible working practices and a whole school approach to health and wellbeing.

The best reason for being physically active is that it’s fun and a means of getting away from the stresses and stains of everyday life. Whatever activities you choose, indoors or out, you are likely to benefit psychologically.

The risk of developing diabetes is 20-60% lower in active individuals compared with sedentary individuals. (US dept. of Health & Human Services)

Exercise has an anxiety-reducing effect. Moderate exercise can reduce short term reaction to stress and enhance recovery from stressors. (Biddle, Fox et all 2000)

Employees engaged in physical activity initiatives have reported: better concentration and mental alertness, improved memory, a reduction in stress, improved cooperation and rapport with their colleagues.
How to increase your levels of physical activity

• Parking the car further away from entrances.
• Walking or cycling to and from work.
• Provide information and raise awareness of the importance of regular physical activity.
• Provide information or contacts about local leisure centres and/or fitness classes.
• Getting off the bus a couple of stops early.
• Walking in the great Welsh outdoors in leisure times.
• Choose the stairs instead of the lift.
• Taking up an active hobby with the family, or workmates.
• Tackling the garden.
• Joining a dance class (line dancing, for example, is great exercise and good fun).
• Enter sporting events with colleagues; Race for Life, it’s a knock out.
• Establish an after school activity for staff utilising Community Chest funding (SCW).

There is no need to be fit to start with, as activity levels can be built up gradually. A lot of time need not be set aside, activities can easily become part of daily routines, with many activities cost nothing at all.

Links:
For further information about the memberships available contact your nearest leisure and activity centre.

Sports Council for Wales Funding Opportunity
The Community Chest is a National Lottery funded grant aid scheme. It is designed to encourage more people to become more physically active more often. The maximum grant is £1,000 in any 12 month period. The main purpose of the scheme is to support good projects which will create new or improved sport and physical activity opportunities.

The scheme is intended to support activities which:

• Encourage more people to become more physically active more often;
• Encourage volunteers and community champions by developing new sport and physical activity leaders, sports coaches and officials.
Teacher Support Cymru continues its support in schools
Teacher Support Cymru (TSC) is the independent charity dedicated to improving the wellbeing and effectiveness of training, serving and retired teachers in Wales. TSC provides telephone and online services which offer both preventative and reactive one-to-one support for individual teachers. Through coaching, counselling, information, money advice and financial support, the charity helps hundreds of teachers tackle personal and work-related issues each year.

Our free and confidential services include:

- 24/7 telephone support line.
- Telephone and online coaching.
- Telephone counselling.
- Money advice and financial assistance.
- Welsh and English online searchable InfoCentres of over 1000 factsheets.
- Regular eNewsletter.

Experienced and professionally-accredited counsellors and coaches provide specialist support and have a real understanding of the education system in Wales.

Teacher Support Cymru offers many services without charge, including TSC Direct, our regular e-newsletter dedicated to teacher health and wellbeing. This will keep you up-to-date with the latest developments in press and policy that affect the teaching profession, as well as information and ideas to boost your health and wellbeing.

To sign up for TSC direct, just visit our website at www.teachersupport.info

The charity also offers news, up-to-date guides and factsheets on a diverse range of issues including stress management, workplace bullying and continuous personal development.

Hundreds of teachers in Wales have already contacted TSC for information, support and counselling services via the free helpline (08000 855 088) on work-related and personal issues including, relationships, dealing with difficult people, money worries and pupil behaviour.

Teacher Support Cymru is part of the Teacher Support Network, the national, independent charity providing free support services to teachers.

To access Teacher Support Cymru Online visit www.teachersupport.info