

Progress in Practice

South West Strategic Health Authority's cycle to work scheme

Promoting healthier and zero carbon journeys to work, South West SHA rolled out a cycle to work scheme across the region, improving the health of its employees and encouraging trusts to become good corporate citizens.



“Living in Bristol it used to feel like I was wasting half of my life stuck in traffic congestion, which used to drive me bonkers! When combined with the environmental and health benefits on offer the cyclescheme was the final incentive I needed to make a lifestyle change and sell my car. Now I feel better on many levels; I am healthier, I feel like I'm contributing to a more sustainable future and my time management is far more efficient.”

Chris Cooper, Regional Resilience Manager, South West SHA.

Summary

The South West SHA oversees the largest geographical region in England – stretching from Land's End to Tewkesbury and with a total population of over five million. As such it is well placed to encourage behaviour change and bring about enormous benefits to both population health and the environment.

By implementing a cycle to work scheme the SHA enables and encourages its employees to improve their health and wellbeing, and also helps the local community by decreasing levels of pollution from car travel and reducing congestion.

How the scheme works

The 1999 Finance Act introduced an annual tax exemption in order to promote healthier journeys to work and to reduce environmental pollution. This allows employers to loan bicycles and cyclists' safety equipment to employees as a tax-free benefit.

The employee pays for the 'loan' of the bicycle and equipment over a 12 to 18 month period directly out of their salary. In this way, they receive the benefit in kind free of tax and National Insurance Contributions, and typical savings made are about 43% of the loan sum. At the end of this period, the employee can be given the option to purchase the equipment for a nominal sum. The scheme as a whole offers a huge incentive to staff to get cycling.

In partnership with Cyclescheme, one of the independent companies supporting this Green Transport Plan Initiative, the South West SHA are actively encouraging all NHS Trusts within the region to implement a cycle purchase scheme.

Links and organisations involved: South West Strategic Health Authority (www.southwest.nhs.uk); Bike For All (www.bikeforall.net/content/cycle_to_work_scheme.php); Cyclescheme (www.cyclescheme.co.uk)

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