



# Workplace Yoga

**Employer: North Tyneside Council**

**Area: Physical Activity/ Wellbeing**

**Theme: Physical Activity**



## Workplace Yoga

The Health & Wellbeing survey highlighted that colleagues felt they wanted do more to improve their health and wellbeing, particularly by increasing their physical activity levels, but they often felt that they didn't have time to do activities. Nearly half of people responding to the survey also said that they were having trouble sleeping. There was also a recognition that physical activity can have a beneficial impact on mental health and wellbeing, which is the organisation's highest reason for sickness absence.

The organisation invested an initial 3-month course of workplace yoga to take place across both Quadrant and Killingworth sites. However the sessions have proven to be so positively received by colleagues that they have been extended and have now been in operation for a year.

Using the feedback we had previously received that colleagues found it difficult to attend sessions that took place over lunch time because they struggled with workload and taking time out of the day we made sure the sessions were more accessible. Yoga sessions included an early morning class taking place between 7.30am-8.30am on a Tuesday and an evening session on a Wednesday between 5.30-6.30pm.

**66** workplace yoga sessions have taken place over this period, sessions are open to all Council staff. **714** places have been taken during this time.

A qualified yoga instructor delivers the sessions as is able to tailor the exercise to the individual needs of people within the group. This was very important to ensure that the sessions were as inclusive and accessible for everyone, whether you had been to a yoga class before or not.

The yoga sessions were promoted via internal communications & Teamwork, the response to this was very positive and we were pleased to see both female and male colleagues coming forward to take part.

*"I didn't think Yoga would be the thing for me (age and bad back). However, I have thoroughly enjoyed every session. The sessions are tailored to the skills of the group and flow very well. I cannot speak more highly of Holly. Holly is a very knowledgeable, approachable, and*



***enthusiastic instructor. It has been a great way to start the mornings and get ready for the day ahead. (Lee Humphreys, Assistant Procurement Officer.)"***

As well supporting physical activity and mental health by creating a greater sense of wellbeing & relaxation, the yoga classes have also provided a social aspect and have given colleagues the opportunity to meet people that they would not have necessarily crossed paths with before.

The offer of yoga in the workplace has also opened up new ways of exercising for staff and supported them to manage illnesses they may have. Yoga has given people new techniques and coping strategies for pain management.

Many colleagues have also highlighted how the yoga sessions has had a positive impact on their mental health & Wellbeing and sets them up for the day or helps them to wind down and relax more on the evenings.

Feedback from one of our Mental Health First Aiders indicates that she frequently signposts colleagues to the workplace yoga sessions who are struggling with their mental health.

The future aim for the workplace yoga sessions is to continue to offer places across Quadrant and Killingworth and look at other venues across Council sites.

***"The added benefit of the classes is the opportunity to meet and chat to other people within NTC that you would never normally chat too. I have really appreciated that aspect. (Lee Humphreys, Assistant Procurement Officer.)"***

***"Back in 2021, I was diagnosed with a chronic illness, it devastated me. It also forced me to review and adapt my exercise regime. I struggle daily with pain and inflammation, I was tentative to restart the Yoga sessions when they were relaunched; however, since I restarted the practice, it has really helped to decrease that pain perception and I use Yoga as part of my pain management strategy. (Emma Phillips, Governance & Compliance Manager.)"***

***"Yoga has so many health benefits for me personally, I would recommend anyone to give it a try to find theirs. I really do advocate Yoga to other staff,***



*especially as a Mental Health First Aider, it is one of my main signposts for staff struggling with stress and anxiety. (Emma Phillips, Governance & Compliance Manager.)"*

*"I would like to applaud North Tyneside Council for facilitating these Yoga sessions. I can honestly say it's the excellent decision. I look forward to the sessions each week. Firstly I was made to feel welcome by Holly the trainer (Who is an absolutely superb trainer by the way) as well as the overall group. These sessions have helped me greatly in many ways. I was struggling a little with my health and wellbeing and the Yoga sessions have changed my health both physically and mentally. I could say much more, but really just wanted to say a huge thank you and hats off to whoever came up with this idea it's so much appreciated. (Mick Gurkin, Adaptions Co-ordinator) "*

