



A Better,
Safer
Railway

Shaping the Rail Environment to Encourage Healthy Behaviours

A Good Practice Guide



About this guide

This guide has been created for those who are responsible for influencing employee wellbeing in the rail environment, including but not limited to those who:

- design, implement or influence wellbeing strategies and plans that promote the health and wellbeing of front line staff in their organisations
- operationally manage front line staff and want to further embed wellbeing practices in their working environment
- want to understand how to incorporate behaviour change principles into wellbeing interventions.

It provides good practice principles and actions for organisations to support rail staff to make better decisions for their health. It is based on research conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to understand organisational influences within the work environment that contribute to unhealthy behaviours. It should help identify effective recommendations that enable employees to make positive health choices.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made us much more aware of the importance of our physical and mental health. For colleagues working in the rail industry, there are particular barriers to maintaining good health and this research offers valuable insight and guidance to overcome those. I hope that senior industry leaders will use these findings to create healthier working environments.”

Patrick Verwer, CEO Govia Thameslink Railways

Background

In the rail industry, there is a concern that the prevalence of unhealthy behaviours is increasing. This is leading to serious health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, fatigue, high blood pressure, and poor mental healthⁱ.

There is often an assumption that preventing ill-health is primarily the responsibility of the individual. However individual intentions can be difficult to execute if the opportunity to make healthy choices is hindered by the workplace environment.

So, supporting people to adopt positive health behaviours within the workplace environment is a priority for the industry. To drive sustainable change, we need to move beyond a focus on

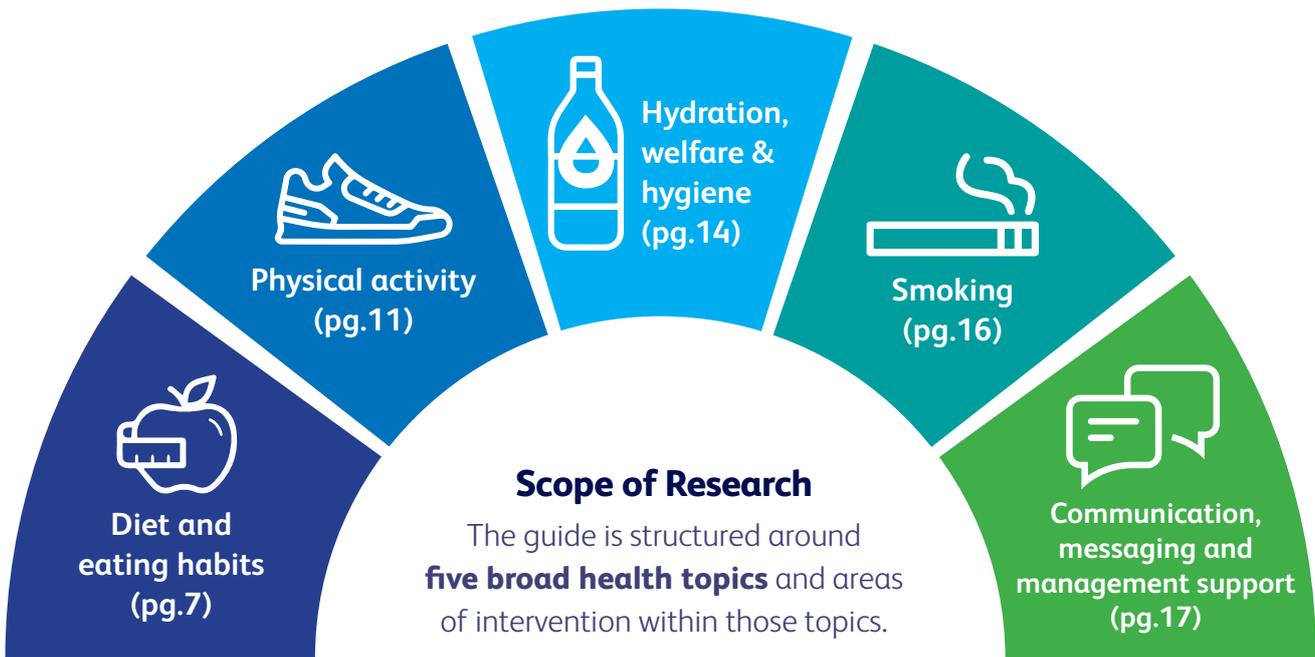
individual health promotion initiatives that offer little sustainable change. We need to move towards a culture of health that enables healthy decision-making at all levels. There is an opportunity for organisations to promote health and wellbeing in an integrated way. This will include adjustments to the rail environment and culture, as well as supporting people with the opportunities and motivation to change.

This guide is the first step towards creating that environment. One where employees have resources, tools and support that provide the opportunity and motivation to take responsibility for their own health.

i: Demou, E., MacLean, A., Cheripelli, L.J., Hunt, K., Gray, C.M. (2018) Group-based healthy lifestyle workplace interventions for shift workers: a systematic review. *Scand J Work Environ Health*; 44:568-584.



How to use this guide



The **rail reality** descriptions for each area are drawn directly from fieldwork with participants. These are based on anecdotal reports, sometimes in relation to observations participants have made about their peer group.

✓ The **taking action** sections set out broad principles to consider to set direction.

Examples of what rail companies could do provide further context and suggest practical steps that can be taken to achieve change.

A formal assessment of the practical feasibility and cost of implementation was out of scope. However, guidance points have been colour-coded based on the expected level of resource and investment needed. These are shown in this key:

<p>Quick Win A potential 'easy win' that needs minimal investment or resources</p>	<p>Requires Planning A potentially resource intensive intervention that needs further information and/or consultation with workers before acting</p>	<p>Significant Change May be highly resource intensive or disruptive to business, and needs widespread consultation before acting</p>	<p>Explaining how some principles of MINDSPACE apply and underlie various recommendations for action</p>
---	---	--	--

Good Practice Principles

Enabling change

In approaching this guide it is helpful to first consider what needs to change in order for interventions to be successful and how decision-making can be influenced through behaviour change.

Gain leadership support at the start

Managerial commitment has been identified as a success factor in achieving positive workplace changes. This helps ensure that intentions to improve wellbeing are not undermined by other organisational priorities and vice versa.

Ask what employees want

Before implementing any intervention, co-production with employees and/or their representatives is considered good practice.

Remove barriers to action

To achieve sustainable results, wellbeing interventions should be integrated with organisational changes that address workplace barriers to positive health behaviours. For example, high-quality dietary and fitness advice, whether personalised or generalised to groups may instil 'good intentions'; but actions are difficult to maintain while environmental and organisational barriers still exist.

Integrate interventions for sustainable change

Multi-level interventions are most successful in addressing positive health behaviours. Multi-level interventions combine any or all of: personalised interventions, group interventions, cultural change initiatives, or environmental change. They allow a number of behavioural levers to be used at once.

Case Study

A rail industry programme, which successfully increased the number of overweight drivers taking exercise used a mix of individual and environmental interventions. Activities included altered vending machines, provision of education materials, gym membership, and increased occupational health provision (better access to occupational health nurses and health surveillance)ⁱⁱ.

Figure 1: The COM-B model of behaviour change



ii: MacGregor, A 2009. Managing obesity. Occupational Health, 61(7): 44-46.

Starting with behaviour in mind

The COM-B model of behaviour change

The COM-B modelⁱⁱⁱ (see Figure 1) is particularly useful in illustrating the role of the workplace factors in decision making. Essentially it demonstrates that the **Capability** and **Motivation** to take action is not enough to change **Behaviour**; the **Opportunity** is also necessary.

A strong message that emerged from IES's fieldwork is that study participants appeared to be relatively well informed about positive health behaviours—they had the Capability to make changes. For example, a shift worker who was involved in the study was knowledgeable about the best way of structuring his mealtimes and sleep habits during shift work. But he found following this advice challenging, because it deprived him of family time.

More generally most workers were concerned about their fitness and/or their future health and therefore did not lack Motivation. This motivation was especially evident in some older workers who felt they had gained weight over the years and did not want to gain more.

The third ingredient of change is Opportunity. It is in this respect that organisational changes can make a difference and where the points

of guidance presented in the next section are focused. Lack of opportunities to buy healthy snacks and other foods was a recurring theme among participants, particularly while they were on rail property.

Behaviour tip

Some individuals will be more receptive to particular types of behavioural nudges. So, different types of influence could optimise positive outcomes. A recent review^{iv} concluded that programmes that did not report significant positive outcomes tended to adopt a primarily individual-level approach. They focused on tailored and targeted health messages, educational materials, and counselling approaches only.

The MINDSPACE model of behavioural influences

MINDSPACE is an evidence-based framework which was developed to inform government policy making. It explains how an individual's behaviour can be 'nudged'. The main influences are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Description of MINDSPACE principles

Incentives our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses	Norms we are strongly influenced by what others do	Defaults we 'go with the flow' of pre-set options	Salience our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us	Priming our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues	Affect our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions	Commitments we seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts	Ego we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves
--	--	---	---	---	--	---	---

iii: Michie S., van Stralen M.M., West R. The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implement. Sci.* 2011;6:42.

iv: Chapman, J. and Naweed, A. (2015). Health initiatives to target obesity in surface transport industries: Review and implications for action. *Evidence Base*, 2015(2): 1-32.



Areas for Intervention

Diet and eating habits

Knowledge about the importance of nutrition, hydration and good eating habits

Rail reality

Education campaigns do not work well on their own. They need to be accompanied by interventions that enable people to make more positive choices. There is widespread knowledge about ‘what is good for you’. But people do not always act on that knowledge, often because healthy options are not readily available.

“You try to be healthier, you watch the cooking shows on TV. And I drink lots of water. I know I eat too many takeaways but it’s often more convenient. If I’ve eaten rubbish, then I go on a health kick.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Train drivers typically reported that it was difficult to buy anything other than unhealthy or fast-food during breaks at many stations. Most knew the basic principles of a healthy diet and wanted to eat healthily. But they needed to bring a packed lunch or snack box to do so.

✓ Taking action

The information content of health campaigns should be reviewed to ensure it contains guidance that is realistic to follow.

Ensure health promotion campaigns tie in with other workplace changes to support people to make healthy choices at work.

Behaviour tip

People are heavily influenced by who communicates information—the messenger. If there is a sense that material is put out by someone who does not understand the rail environment it will not be effective. Salience is another consideration: our attention is drawn to what seems relevant to us. Campaigns and messages which do not reflect the lived experience of staff may be dismissed.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Communications could explicitly acknowledge the lack of fresh and nutritious food at smaller stations. And they could provide information about healthy food that is easy to prepare at home and doesn’t need to be kept cold. This could include food items that can be heated during breaks.
- Campaigns that highlight the importance of hydration could be launched in parallel with improved access to toilet facilities. This could be done at a local level, so it is clear to workers that their workplace facilities are compatible with drinking more water.

Rail reality

Flyers are attached to several staff notice boards that advertise food that can be ordered from or picked up at fast food outlets (e.g. pizza, fish and chips).

“If we work a weekend shift, people go to the places we all know, get a Chinese, a pizza, a sharing platter...”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

In depots or small stations there is often no alternative healthier option, particularly during or after night or late shifts.

“In the night it can be depressing and dark, we might be responding to an emergency so can't eat at a certain time... it's hard to be healthy.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

Rather than removing all flyers showing less nutritious food, consider adding flyers or posters from local suppliers of healthier options.

Bear in mind that cold snacks or salads may lack appeal to workers who are exposed to the elements and/or work late or early shifts.

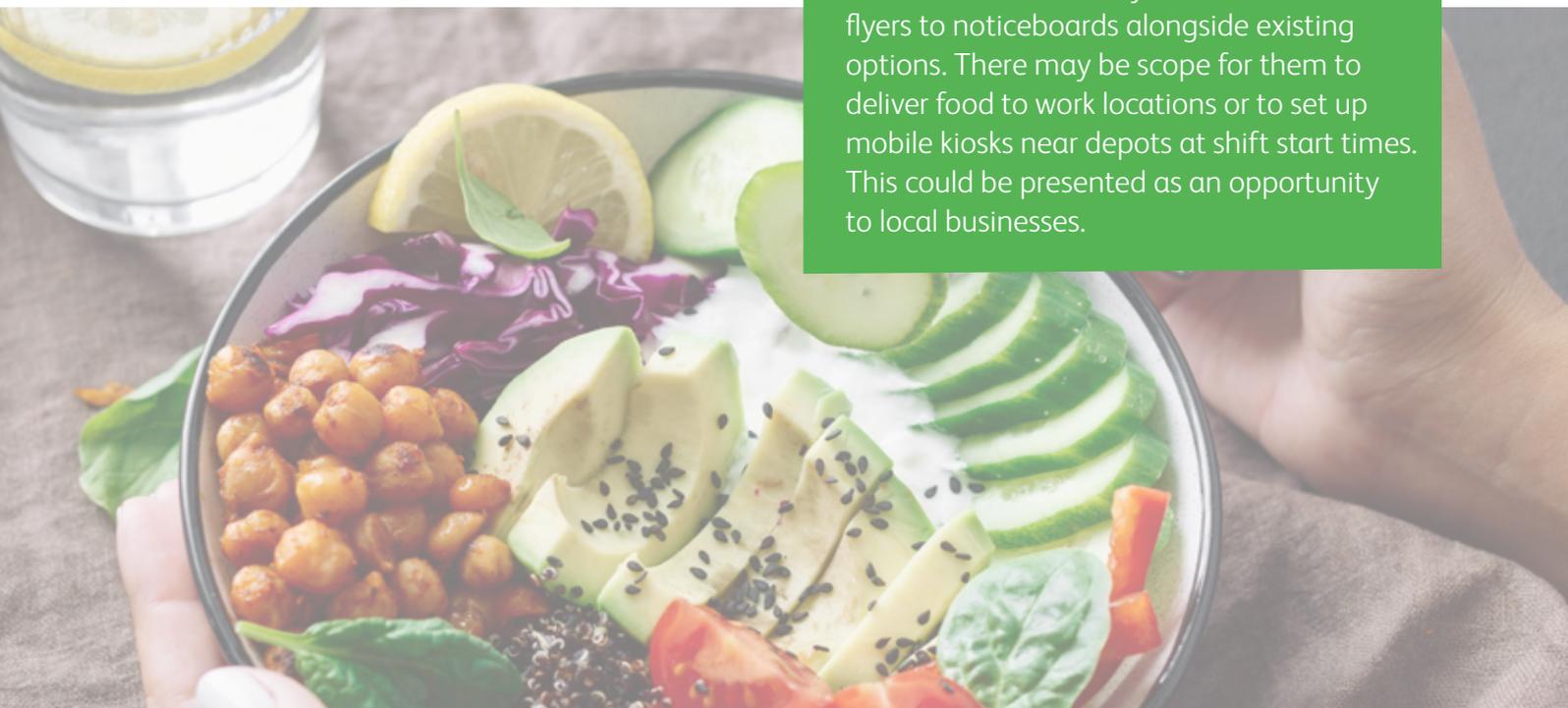
Behaviour tip

Affect or mood is relevant here: for some workers, physical discomfort may influence judgments, meaning (for example) that decisions about eating and drinking can be driven by what is comforting rather than by what is healthier. The positioning of posters in these circumstances is important as people are influenced by the **salience** or accessibility of visual information.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Research local providers of appropriately convenient and healthy food. Add their flyers to noticeboards alongside existing options. There may be scope for them to deliver food to work locations or to set up mobile kiosks near depots at shift start times. This could be presented as an opportunity to local businesses.



Opportunities to prepare fresh food

Rail reality

Workers are influenced by what is cheap and convenient (within the time they have to spare) as well as what is immediately visible or available. There is little time or inclination to prepare fresh food such as salads in staff mess areas. To achieve a healthy diet many staff bring packed lunches with salad items, snacks and/or sandwiches. Also the cleanliness of some mess areas can put people off preparing food there.

“We get an adequate supply of bottled water. But it’s difficult [to eat healthily] unless you take a packed lunch.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Fresh fruit is sometimes provided by companies, but many workers routinely add these to their own lunchboxes at home and this does not add value in those cases.

“I like a sandwich, a tin of soup and a banana and an apple. Some guys will call at the shop and have a breakfast sandwich - there is a lot of variation with five guys.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

Design a health promotion campaign around fresh food options that need little or no time to prepare (either at home or in mess areas).

Initiatives which provide food could be more impactful if they are food types that employees may not usually buy themselves.

Where necessary, review protocols and responsibilities for cleanliness of staff areas with cooking equipment.

Consider the fully range of dietary requirements of workers: for example fruit is not the best snack for people managing diabetes.

Behaviour tip

People are **incentivised** to take positive action by opportunities to save money or obtain good value for money. Also choices can be influenced by perceived expertise or authority of a source providing information (the **messenger**), such as a qualified nutritionist.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Think beyond ‘fruit basket’ initiatives: work with a nutritionist to identify healthy and tasty ‘convenience foods’ which can be gifted to staff.
- Partnering with a local health food shop or supermarket could make resources for health initiatives go further. It may enable staff to sample these products for free or at low cost.

“At work, it is extremely easy to get unhealthy fast food between journeys and during breaks at stations. I tend to drink a lot of caffeine – around half of us have a coffee subscription card for [fast food outlet].”

Driver, Chiltern Railways

Rail reality

Vending machines provide the only means of buying food and drink in staff areas. Typically, these only sell only processed food (‘junk food’ and snacks), and fizzy drinks (with caffeine and/or sugar). Cheap, healthy options can be hard to find in staff areas. Some staff reported avoiding vending machines where possible but were sometimes tempted when tired and/or hungry.

“At night not so much is open, you grab a coke or chocolate instead of an apple.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Behaviour tip

Salience describes how behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to and items that can be easily spotted. Another relevant principle is **incentivisation**: individuals seek to save time and/or money where they can. So the convenience and price of food and drink are important factors.

✓ Taking action

Ensure that all staff vending machines offer healthy food and beverage options. And that pricing does not incentivise less nutritious options.

People are influenced by the positioning and visibility of items so placement of items should be reviewed.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Conduct an audit of all vending machine contents and rate each item according to its nutritive value. In liaison with the vending machine supplier explore scope for items to be re-arranged so that more healthy items are at or near eye level. Less healthy items could be placed lower down, so they are less visible and take more effort to buy.
- Liaise with your vending machine supplier to ensure that healthier options on offer are not more expensive than junk food and sugary drinks.
- Explore the costs of vending machines that can refrigerate fresh food items, obtain pricing information and explore demand for this among staff (including how much they are prepared to pay).

Significant Change

- Where vending machines are not present, consider installing these and stocking exclusively healthy products, especially in work locations where nutritious food is not sold on site.



Areas for Intervention

Physical activity

Opportunities to create motivation to keep fit

“The work is physical but not enough to keep fit or lose weight. But with it being physical, that can mean the older workers just want to rest/relax outside work.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Rail reality

Shift workers can find it hard to establish a routine. Their working patterns make it difficult to commit to team sports and group exercise classes. However work alone, even when this involves manual handling and walking, is not generally regarded as sufficient to stay fit, especially among younger workers.

Behaviour tip

Social and cultural **norms** are the behavioural expectations, or rules, within a society or group. People often take their understanding of social norms from the behaviour of others. This might show up as participating in an event which colleagues have signed up for. **Commitments** can also factor into behaviours, e.g. committing to training if someone is part of a sports team. Also, for some, **competition** acts as an incentive to hit targets or out-perform others.

✓ Taking action

Recognise the disruptive impact of shift patterns on participation in health initiatives.

Consider building in flexibility to encourage workers with different work patterns to take advantage of initiatives.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Look for sports events with corporate sponsorship schemes which encourage staff involvement. Network with leads at companies who have experience of this. For example, Transport for Wales sponsored the Cardiff marathon and was given free places for staff.
- Explore how wearable technology can be used to inspire competition among colleagues and/or be used to demonstrate the energy expenditure of maintenance roles. For example, Eurostar has provided Fitbits for staff to encourage movement.

“I’d like to lose some weight and I know [looking after my own health] is my responsibility but I don’t have the time or energy to go to the gym, and my station doesn’t have anywhere safe to secure my bike. I could go for walks during my breaks, but it’s risky in case I’m late back.”

Driver, Chiltern Railways

Rail reality

Drivers say that decisions to walk during breaks are influenced by concerns about leaving station areas, because it is critical that they return to the train on time. The peak of the lockdown in 2019 provided a rare opportunity to walk up and down platforms safely as stations were virtually empty, but this is no longer possible.

Behaviour tip

Priming shows that people’s subsequent behaviour may be altered if they are first exposed to certain sights, words, or sensations. So, simple images associated with movement can potentially prompt activity. Role models can establish social **norms** (what is normal and acceptable) and prompt positive behaviours.

✓ Taking action

Provide information about caloric expenditure and physical fitness to motivate workers to walk. Accompany these with simple visual prompts to move.

To encourage exercise, display maps that show how safe walking routes and estimated completion times.

Reinforce these messages by encouraging managers to role-model this type of positive behaviour.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Visual prompts such as posters or footprint images on the floor of mess areas could be used to encourage drivers to take walks during breaks.
- Explore driver managers’ views on role-modelling this type of positive behaviour.
- Consider having Wellbeing Champions research local walks and share information on routes, timings, and step counts.

Rail reality

Cycling to work is a potential option for some staff. However, bike storage is not always secure enough. Cycle storage areas for staff vary considerably across the network in terms of their state of repair and degree of shelter provided. Where showers were not in a good state of cleanliness this was felt to be an additional disincentive.

“The shower facilities aren’t clean or fit for use. I wouldn’t want to cycle to work and then not be able to feel clean before work. I’ve asked about this, but nothing has been done.”

Driver, Chiltern Railways

✓ Taking action

Check that existing facilities for cyclists are fit for purpose (storage is sufficiently secure) and that areas for changing and showering are convenient and hygienic.

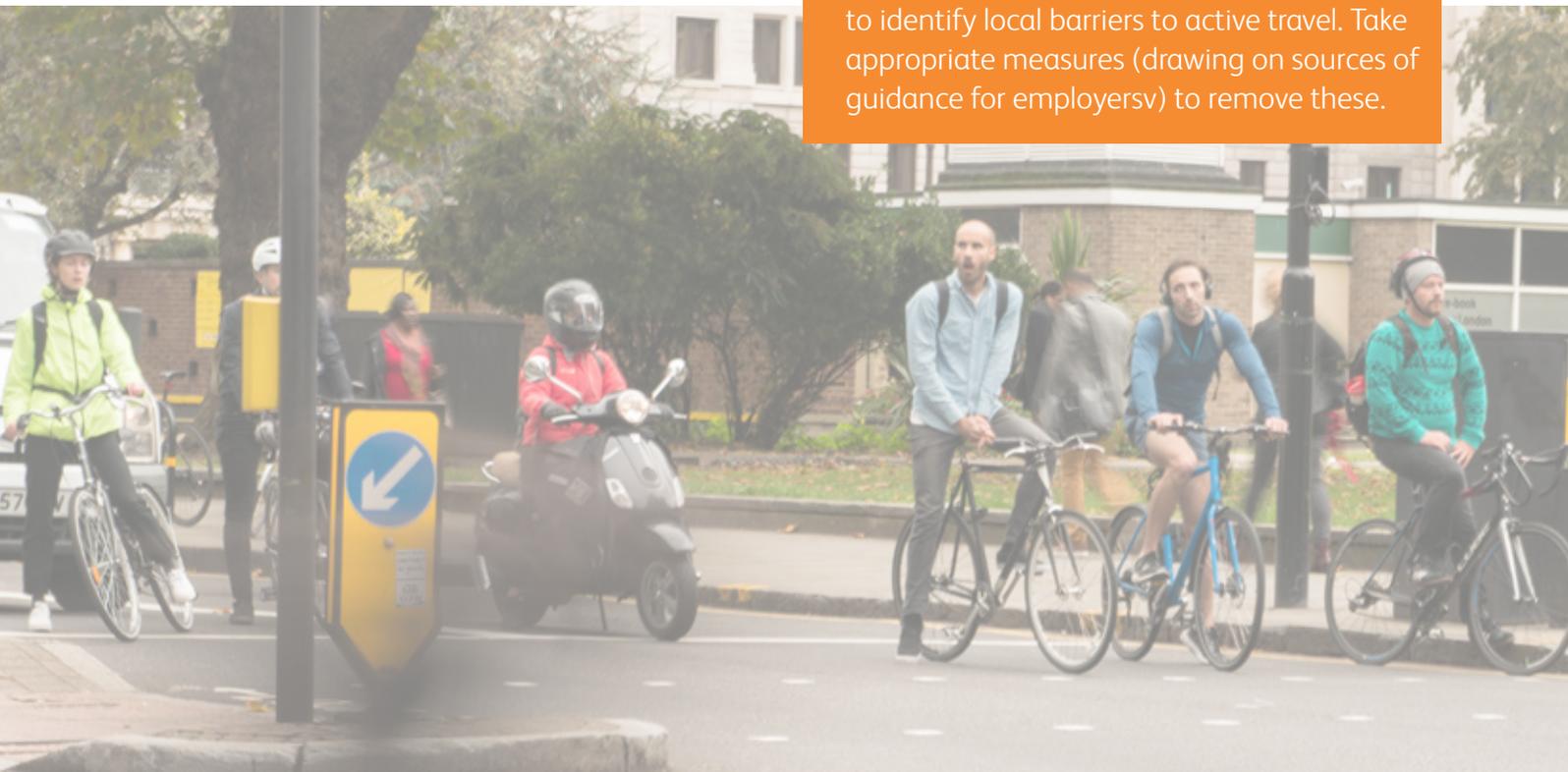
Behaviour tip

People are **incentivised** by avoiding loss; measures to prevent damage to cycles exemplify this. **Affect** or mood is also relevant: the prospect of hygienic shower facilities (a more pleasant experience), makes them more likely to be used.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Conduct an audit of staff cycle storage areas and shower areas and repair and maintain where necessary.
- Consult with staff and staff representatives to identify local barriers to active travel. Take appropriate measures (drawing on sources of guidance for employers^v) to remove these.



v. Examples include:
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/static/2bfbf9dd-1bbc-4900-9652ac136aac95a9/Active-Travel-A-guide-for-Employees-and-Employers.pdf>
<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-active-recovery-toolkit.pdf>



Areas for Intervention

Hydration, welfare and hygiene

Access to toilet facilities

Rail reality

Health promotion initiatives that encourage hydration, such as provision of bottled water, appear to be ‘at odds’ with toilet provision. Drivers report limiting fluid intake because of difficulties accessing toilets outside scheduled breaks. Stopping the train or delaying departure for personal needs is ‘frowned upon’.

“It’s fair to say I plan my day around going to the toilet – I’ll look at my schedule and if there’s no opportunity to go for a while then I’ll not drink anything.”

Driver, Chiltern Railways

While working on or beside the track, maintenance workers report that relieving themselves at the side of the track is often the only practical option. There is sparse availability of toilets at track access areas where vehicles are parked.

Behaviour tip

Policies and practices are examples of **norms**. Changing these prompts people to behave differently. Easily accessible facilities provide a ‘**default**’ hygienic option. They remove or delay the need to use alternatives such as the side of the track. Forming agreements between companies encourages **commitment**. This can bring about reciprocity (where staff from both companies benefit). The provision of specialist advice on hydration allows an authoritative **messenger** to be involved.

✓ Taking action

Review policies and practices that deter stopping for personal needs.

Increase the availability of fixed mess areas and/or portable toilets at access areas.

Explore the potential to ‘plan in’ access to welfare facilities when daily schedules are drawn up. This may include forming agreements between companies for staff to access toilets across different stations or sites.

Consider how technology can be used to ensure that maintenance workers have access to knowledge about the nearest toilet facilities at all times.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Guidance to train drivers about hydration needs to explicitly acknowledge the limitations of their work environment. It must also address how they can moderate and schedule fluid intake safely. Nutritionist expertise should be sought on this.
- Learn from other companies who have made a success of solutions. For example, Network Rail has developed a Welfare App that is accessible anywhere there is a mobile phone signal. It identifies the nearest facilities across 1334 toilet locations for the entire country^{vi}.

vi: The App does not include public facilities such as garage or supermarket toilets.

Access to private, hygienic toilet facilities

Rail reality

Maintenance workers report that toilet facilities in welfare vans are not adequate with respect to privacy and sometimes hygiene. Static mess facilities or portaloos are considered more acceptable but they are not always maintained well.

“There are some satellite facilities with a toilet and a sink but not enough of them. We had one in [location] and it was left in an appalling state.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

Increase the availability of fixed mess areas and/or portable toilets at access areas and ensure these are well maintained.

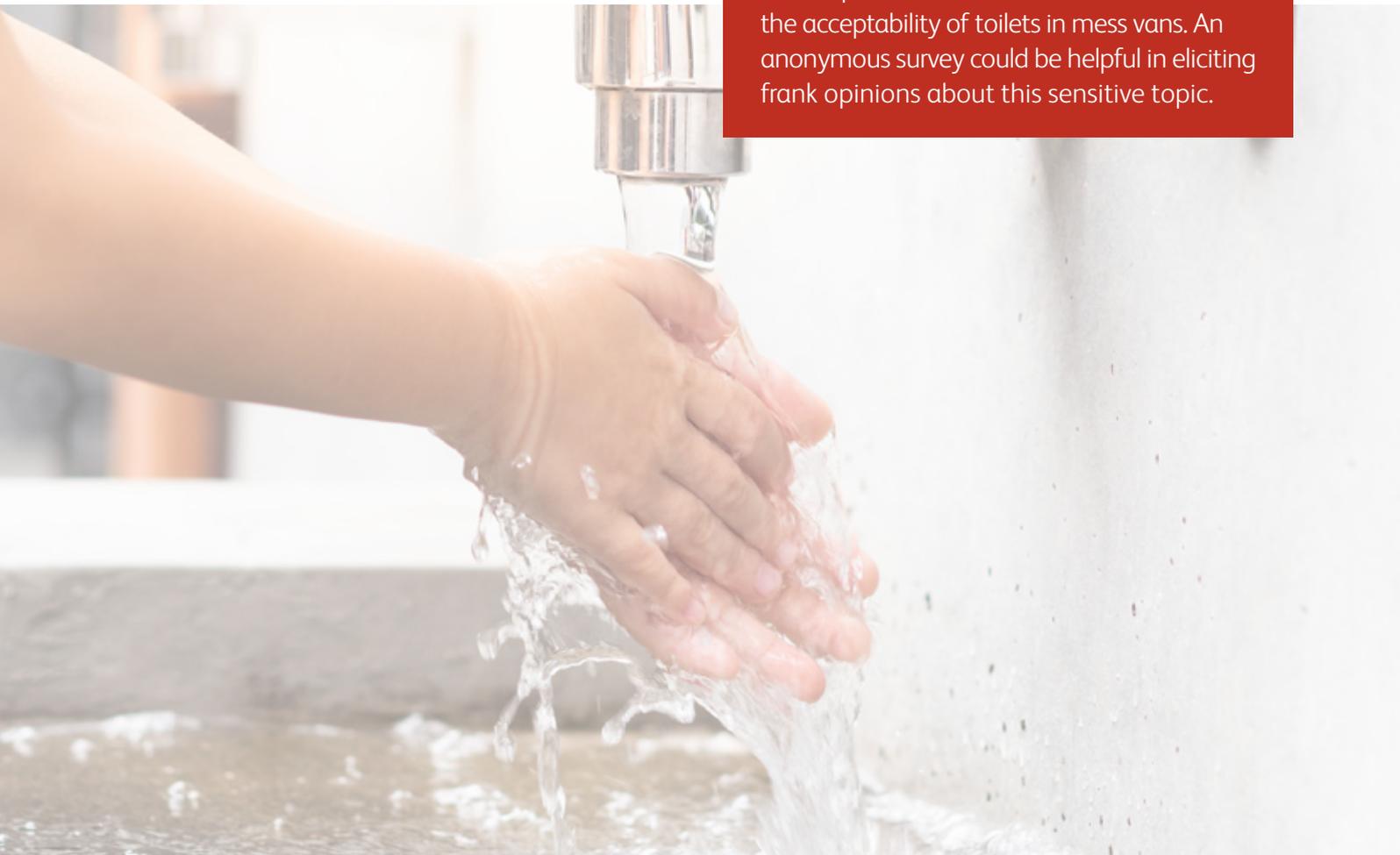
Behaviour tip

Easily accessible mess areas and toilet facilities provide a **‘default’** option. People no longer have to seek out alternatives or endure circumstances they find uncomfortable.

What a rail company could do

Significant Change

- Consult with maintenance workers and their representatives on concerns about the acceptability of toilets in mess vans. An anonymous survey could be helpful in eliciting frank opinions about this sensitive topic.





Areas for Intervention

Smoking

Rail reality

Smokers take breaks in groups at trackside, there is a social element to smoking at work. There is a reported perception of entitlement to smoking breaks. On the other hand there is acknowledgement that smoking occurs a lot less than it used to.

“In the past with the guys I worked with, a lot used to smoke but that is very rare now. Some use an e-cigarette but people on the whole are a lot more health conscious now than they were in the 80s.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

Ensure incentives to smoke are not present, such as any perception that smokers take more frequent or longer breaks.

Undertake further investigation to establish whether these reported activities are widespread.

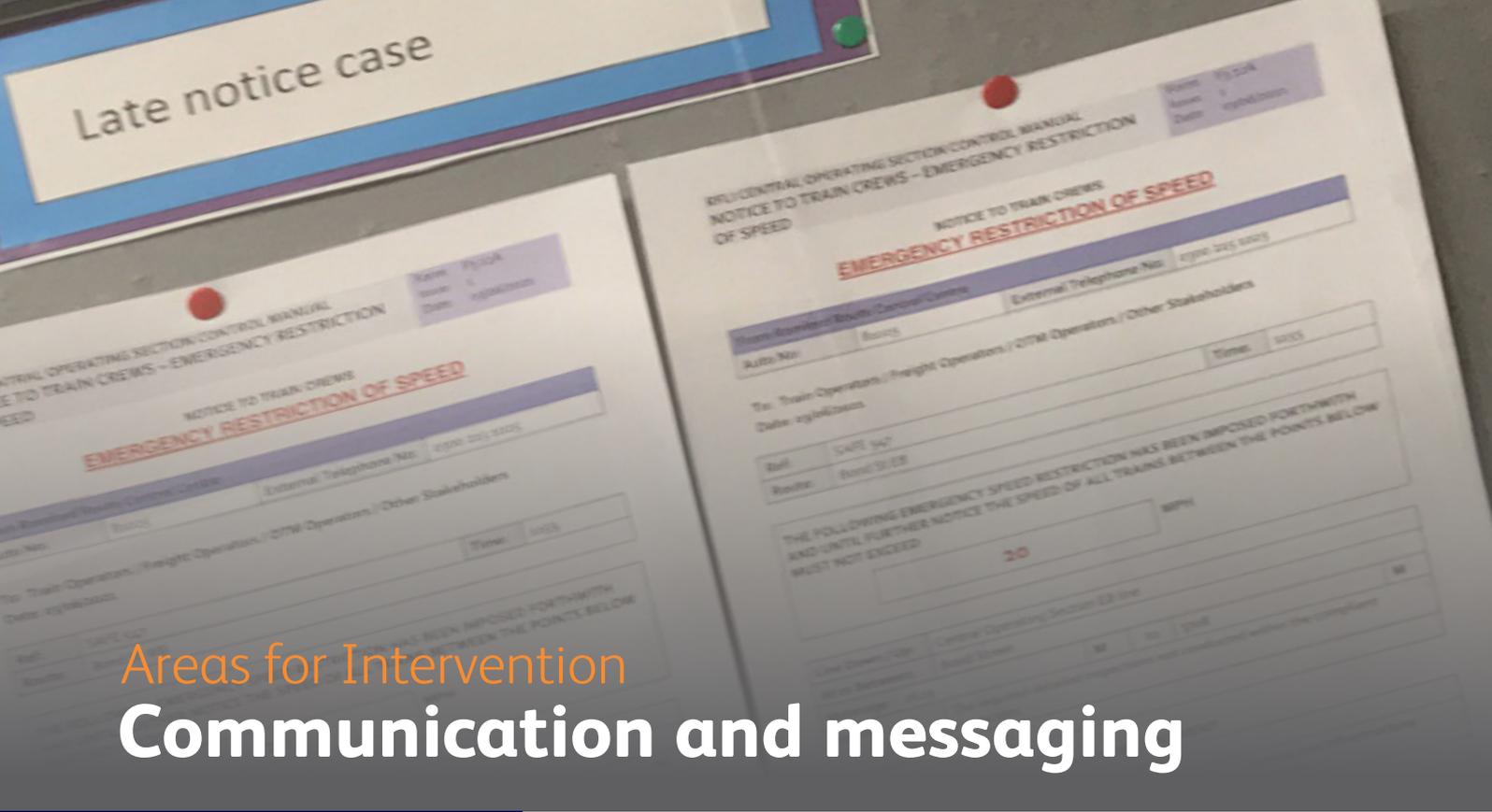
Behaviour tip

Perceived entitlement to smoke, or a perception that smoking is a social activity, are examples of cultural **norms** and changing these can prompt people to behave differently. Promotion of ‘stop smoking’ programmes also challenges norms. Signposting staff to specialist support enables an authoritative **messenger** (this could be an online resource or a health professional) to influence behaviours around smoking.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Offer support to give up or cut back on smoking, for example through the promotion of ‘stop smoking’ programmes.
- Those in team leader roles should be aware of trackside smoking culture and be equipped to signpost team members to suitable programmes.



Areas for Intervention Communication and messaging

Upkeep of notice boards

Rail reality

Observations showed staff notice boards in various states of (dis)organisation. Accessible information about offers of wellbeing support, company benefits, and health campaigns was not displayed in a consistent way. As some workers are not able to check emails regularly notice boards are an important form of communication.

✓ Taking action

Refresh the contents of notice boards regularly. People typically get used to seeing the same messages, so this will help ensure notices are seen.

Behaviour tip
Our behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to. As a result, we tend to unconsciously filter out a lot of information. People are more likely to register things that they have not seen before and that stand out.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Attend to the appearance and functionality of notice boards. Where they could be improved by (for example) spacing out messages, ensure important information is not 'buried'. Remove out of date and irrelevant information. Routinely change posters so they are seen 'fresh'.

“We don’t always see information about [company health benefits], as it’s delivered to driver work emails ... we don’t access these often due to the nature of the job.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Rail reality

In practice the degree of visibility and presence of health messages does not always convey that health is given the same priority as safety. Important messages are not always in the line of sight of all workers. An example included an information campaign about early cancer symptoms that was placed in a building entrance area that maintenance workers did not routinely use.

“The posters you can see [in a photo] are where visitors and managers can see them, the rest of us use the side entrance.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

Common sense principles about visibility of information apply as well as basic principles about running PR or advertising campaigns. Place important messages within the line of sight of all workers, preferably in areas where they stop and/or sit routinely. This would include things such as potentially impactful campaigns about prevention or early detection of health conditions.

Behaviour tip

Messages are more impactful if they are simple and digestible. Also, **priming** shows that deliberately placing certain objects in one’s environment can alter behaviour. Placing health campaign materials in a location where staff can stop and read them maximises their potential impact on subsequent health behaviours.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Carefully consider the intended outcome of information and who it is aimed at before displaying it. Knowledge of the daily routines of different types of workers can help in planning the best location – put the same information in different places if necessary, so that no-one is missed.

“There have been various comms about health and wellbeing but the emails are usually aimed at those working in the office. [The company] have pushed mental health considerably in the last few years though. We had a wellbeing champion call us up after a fatality, that resulted in a fair bit of offloading.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Rail reality

Staff do not always have regular access to emails or the time to read them. Therefore, information about health initiatives, events, or employee benefits is sometimes missed.

A ‘digital divide’ exists in some parts of the rail industry that relates to demographic factors such as age and job history. Some workers do not routinely use emails or social media. In-person or telephone communications are preferred by some individuals.

✓ Taking action

Ensure communications are ‘joined up’, inclusive and reach the whole workforce. A more personal approach than email may be appropriate where resources allow.

Behaviour tip

The principle of **salience** predicts that our behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to. In our everyday lives, we are bombarded with messages. As a result, we tend to unconsciously filter out a lot of information as a coping strategy. People are more likely to engage with communications that are easily accessed and relevant to them.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Ensure health behaviour messaging delivered by email is repeated in other media such as posters, team briefings or one-on-one meetings with supervisors.



“There’s a good set of managers asking how we are. But lack of staff can mean it’s difficult to [adopt healthy behaviours] because of the workload..”

Manager driver, Chiltern Railways

Rail reality

There can be scepticism among staff about health initiatives or health information campaigns. These can be dismissed as ‘lip service’ or gimmickry, particularly where it is felt they don’t line up with aspects of their job or their work environment.

Information alone is not enough for employees to change their behaviour. There may be environmental (or cultural) barriers to taking positive action in the workplace.

“You won’t get everyone in the gang at the same time saying ‘I want to be healthy’.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

✓ Taking action

When designing health interventions, talk to staff to understand the barriers to change.

Explicitly acknowledge barriers. Create actions to address them so that employees can feel that making different choices is a realistic prospect for them.

Behaviour tip

Our attention is drawn to what seems relevant to us and therefore **salient**, so interventions perceived as irrelevant may be dismissed. Employee **affect** or mood is another consideration: it is potentially more difficult to ‘nudge’ an employee who is aggrieved because they feel that their employer does not understand their lived experience at work. Well-designed interventions that resonate with workers are more likely to achieve positive changes.

What a rail company could do

Requires Planning

- Add content that acknowledges barriers to healthy behaviours (such as those identified in this guide). Be explicit about the practical steps your organisation is taking to address them.
- Share stories of people who have made changes within that context to help model real behaviour change.



“I eat at the wrong time of day because of the shifts. Also the shift work can make you very tired, but I get up to see my family in the evenings otherwise I won’t get to see them... I know what I need to do in terms of structuring my life more but it’s difficult putting it into practice – I don’t think it’s necessarily the company’s responsibility to change things.”

Driver, Chiltern Railways

Rail reality

The demands of shift work can have a negative impact on health behaviours (e.g. eating habits, sleeping pattern, work-life balance). The unpredictability of unscheduled work or the need to provide cover add to this. There were variable reports about the extent to which workers feel they can be open about this. Some feel their managers aren’t open to hearing about challenges in their personal life, or they feel it should be something they can manage alone.

“Briefings are harder [since the requirement for social distancing] - things can get lost in translation. They use WhatsApp a lot now due to distancing - a lot gets done that way.”

Manager driver, Chiltern Railways

Where it has been necessary to undertake supervision remotely (during the pandemic), this has presented a further barrier to open communication. Potentially this presents a barrier to ‘checking-in’ with staff in sufficient depth to gauge their mental wellbeing.

✓ Taking action

Invest in the development of soft skills among line managers, to enable them to support the health and wellbeing of their direct reports.

Behaviour tip

There is strong evidence that the persuasive impact of positive personal relationships can be used to deliver messages—the **messenger** is important. Good working relationships are associated with positive **affect** or mood, and our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions. If someone has an open and trusted relationship with their line manager, they could be more receptive to any guidance offered to address a health-related issue.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Consider providing soft skills training for managers. This should stress the importance of asking workers open-ended questions about their wellbeing. It should also create opportunities to discuss barriers to positive health behaviours, and how to signpost to specialist support if needed. This could include the impact of their current work-life balance. It should also give opportunities to check, for example, whether welfare facilities were available when they need them, whether they have had sufficient opportunity to take exercise, rest, sleep, hydrate and eat healthily.

“The guys I work with are what you’d call healthy people, they talk about what they are eating or what [diets] their wives and girlfriends are trying.”

Maintenance worker, Network Rail

Rail reality

Managers highlighted a perceived responsibility to role-model positive health behaviours, but employees do not always experience or notice this. Peer influence can be a barrier.

✓ Taking action

Encourage managers to ‘buy-in’ to health behaviour initiatives in a demonstrable way. And to actively role-model positive health behaviours.

Behaviour tip

Due to the effect of social **norms**, people have been seen to exhibit more positive behaviours when they see others exhibiting them. Also, when behaviours are demonstrated by someone with authority, there is potential for the status of the **messenger** to reinforce this.

What a rail company could do

Quick Win

- Ensure all workers with supervisory or manager responsibility are aware of the wider effects of their own actions. That the role they play can influence positive health behaviours and demonstrably support health initiatives.



A Better,
Safer
Railway

Contact: <https://customer-portal.rssb.co.uk/>

Tel: +44 (0) 20 3142 5300

Twitter: @RSSB_rail

web: www.rssb.co.uk

RSSB
Floor 4, The Helicon
One South Place
London EC2M 2RB