

'Be MSK Aware' Key Actions



MSK AWARE

A holistic approach to musculoskeletal health

Why be MSK Aware

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions such as back pain, arthritis, sprains and strains are the most common problem in the UK workplace and are one of the commonest causes of absence from work. MSK conditions affect our bones and joints, they cause pain and reduce dexterity and mobility and can impact on our mental health, causing anxiety and depression. This limits people's ability to work and impacts the productivity of businesses, both large and small. Despite this, many individuals and businesses are not aware of how they can help themselves and others.

Be MSK Aware provides key actions for employers and employees to prevent workloss through absence or early retirement by creating healthier, safer and supportive workplaces that can prevent and manage MSK conditions effectively. It goes beyond just addressing the risks of injury, and the legal requirements of providing a safe and healthy workplace. It takes a proactive approach with actions that should be taken for prevention and the promotion of good MSK health, and on supporting those with existing MSK problems. The actions are based on evidence and on consensus of what is best practice.

MSKAware CIC are committed to supporting MSK health in the workplace and brought together a range of stakeholders (experts in MSK health, health and safety, public health, occupational health and HR, including OHID, HSE and RoSPA, along with employers and employees from businesses large and small) to consider a wider approach to MSK health in the workplace through:

- **Promotion** – encouraging people to look after their wider health.
- **Prevention** – reducing risk in the workplace.
- **Support** – helping people with MSK conditions to cope as well as they can in the workplace.



Actions, for employers and employees, to promote MSK health and to prevent and support MSK problems in the workplace have been identified.

MSK Aware

Are you MSK Aware? Are you taking the actions to promote MSK health, prevent MSK problems arising in the workplace and supporting those with MSK problems to stay in work?

First recognise MSK health is important to you and your organisation. Then see how you can meet and build on your legal duties to support high quality MSK health and wellbeing in your workplace. Follow the key actions.

For more information on supporting MSK health in the workplace that can be followed by employers or employees, see <https://www.mskaware.org>



Key actions for employers and workers to protect, promote and support MSK health in the workplace

Musculoskeletal health is important so you can do the things you want to do at work and at home. MSK health is everyone's responsibility. Everyone has a right to a safe and healthy workplace. Know how to protect, promote and support musculoskeletal health in the workplace.

Employers need to

- Recognise that MSK health is important in your organisation and make a commitment from all tiers within organisation to provide a safe and healthy workplace that prevents MSK risks, promotes health and wellbeing and is inclusive for those with MSK conditions.
- Take a proactive approach and encourage and support workers to look after their MSK health both in and outside the workplace
- Ensure everyone knows their role and responsibilities in promoting, protecting and supporting MSK health.
- Create an open culture of health and wellbeing that provides opportunities for employees to speak up and enables a shared understanding of challenges and creation and ownership of solutions
- Have a an MSK health workplace champion

Workers need to

- Be aware that good MSK health at all ages is important for you at work and at home
- Know how to protect and promote your MSK health
- Know what to do if you have an MSK problem
- Work together and encourage everyone to “do the right thing” to protect and promote MSK health across the workplace

What employers and workers should know and do

Actions needed to create a MSK healthy workplace including but going beyond your legal duty

PROMOTE Look after MSK health at home & at work

Employers

- Facilitate open discussions on healthy lifestyles and lead by example.
- Encourage and support your workers to develop positive attitudes towards MSK health both in and outside the workplace.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for MSK health promoting activities such as warm-ups and minibreaks to move and stretch.
- Inform staff of available workplace support and facilities to promote their MSK health, for example through exercise.

Workers

- Do what you can to look after your MSK health by committing to a healthy lifestyle in and out of the workplace.
- Have a personal plan, set goals and take action.

Promote

PREVENT Reduce risks in the workplace to protect MSK health

Employers

- Identify and assess the risks in your workplace and manage them proactively.
- Provide training, time and equipment to enable employees to carry out their tasks safely.
- Engage with staff to ensure good practice.
- Tackle root causes with good ergonomic design and health & safety procedures.
- Have clear procedures for reporting risks and incidents in the workplace, both to recognise and mitigate individual risks, and to identify patterns and the need for action.
- Encourage and enable workers to speak up if they see a health & safety risk.

Workers

- Know how to recognise your risks in the workplace and in your work.
- Reduce your risks by participating in health & safety training and using equipment safely.
- Report any risks you identify – speak up before problems happen to you or others.
- Understand your own abilities and capacity.

Prevent

SUPPORT Support individuals who are experiencing musculoskeletal ill-health at work

Employers

- Understand the physical and psychosocial impact of MSK conditions.
- Enable, encourage and respond to early reporting of MSK problems. Ask, listen, act, feedback and learn for another time.
- Facilitate early intervention with clear pathways and by looking for simple solutions and adaptations to work.
- Know what resources are available to enable workers to manage their MSK problem in the workplace and where to signpost workers for information and support ,such as occupational health and physio services.
- Ensure employees know their rights and what support they can ask for.
- Enable and provide opportunities for employees to speak up and work together with employers, managers and health professionals to find solutions
- Be flexible in finding solutions to enable workers to stay in work.
- Learn from MSK problems that present, review work practices and then integrate any lessons into work practices and training.

Workers

- Know why early intervention is important.
- Know how to speak up, report problems, and access help.
- Act early if you experience pain or symptoms.
- Know what to ask your employer, manager or healthcare professional.
- Know where to access help and support.
- Work together with employers, managers and healthcare professionals to find and implement solutions to enable you to remain in work.

Support