

What is this slide pack for?

This slide pack provides a summary of the toolkit: The role of DFWLYH WUDYHO in improving mental health.

7KH \$FWLYH 7UDYHO 7UDYHO 7UDYHO are designed to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable transport and help LEPs and local delivery partners strategically invest in ZDONLQJ DQJ schemes. O L Q J

This slide pack includes:

- ‡Key messages
- ‡Statistics and evidence
- ‡Signposting to tools and case studies

Contents

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Key messages

- ‡ Poor mental health is a significant and often poorly understood issue in the UK and one in six workers will be experiencing depression, anxiety or problems relating to stress at any one time.
- ‡ Many benefits to mental health have been proven to be associated with physical activity including:
 - ‡ reducing work-related stress and improving productivity
 - ‡ improving self-perception and self-esteem including a sense of purpose and value, mood and sleep quality, and
 - ‡ reducing levels of anxiety and fatigue
- ‡ Evidence suggests walking and cycling (often alongside public transport) can contribute positively towards mental health both through physical activity and other factors in comparison to commuting by car.
- ‡ More needs to be done to improve links between transport, health and wellbeing nationally and locally, including how we account for mental health outcomes in transport planning.

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The benefits of physical activity for mental health

Depression and anxiety

- ‡ The link between physical activity and depression is well established. Research has found that people who are inactive have three times the rate of moderate to severe depression as active people (Weyerer et al 2002).
- ‡ Moderate regular physical activity should, therefore, be considered as a valuable means of treating depression and anxiety, and of improving mental wellbeing in the population.
- ‡ There is unequivocal evidence that physical activity has positive effects on anxiety, and specifically that short bursts of physical activity appear to be sufficient. Physically active people report fewer symptoms of anxiety or emotional distress than those who are inactive. Moderate intensity activity can reduce short-term psychological reactions to psychological stress and can help people recover more quickly.

Personal wellbeing and self-esteem

- ‡ There is strong evidence to show that physical activity makes people feel better about themselves. Activity provides benefits for wellbeing, for example improved mood, a sense of achievement, relaxation or release from daily stress (Dept. of Health, 2011).
- ‡ Becoming physically active also causes positive changes in overall physical self-worth as well as specific aspects of physical self-perception such as body image, perceived fitness and strength (Scully et al, 1998).
- ‡ In particular, physical activity can bring more generalised beneficial changes in self-esteem for those who have initial low self-esteem.

