Healthy eating plan/ policy guidance

This guidance applies to standard 7- healthy eating

These are some of the key aspects to include within your plan/policy with examples:

Statement/introduction

Describe what you want to achieve and why

Staff engagement in creation of the plan/policy

- Describe in your plan or policy how you will do this
- All levels of the organisation need to be involved
- Consider occupational health, Human Resources, staff from different teams doing different roles and any health champions.
- What about a staff survey? Discussions in team meetings? A suggestions box? A focus group?
- Make it quick, simple/easy for staff to be involved but give a deadline

What is the current set up with regards to food and drink options and what do staff think about them?

Describe what questions you will ask/what discussions you will have

Questions you could ask: What do you do for food and drink at work at the moment? Does it work? How does your role impact on your food choices? How could it be better? What else would be useful in the canteen (if applicable), do you eat with other staff? What do you need to help you make healthier food choices?

Review your findings

- What options are there at the moment – and of those, what are the healthier options?
- What do staff do at the moment? Canteen?, eateries nearby? Take own lunch? Lunch out on site? Supermarkets nearby?
- What do staff like about what is currently on offer?
- What else do they want and how could it be healthier?

What will you consider when planning the changes

- Key aspects to consider when planning what changes to make:
- When are staff working? E.g. are they doing shift work? Working unusual hours or the standard 9-5? What about split shifts?
- Do they have a lunch break and for how long? Any other breaks when they might eat or drink?
- Are staff based in one location or are they in various locations and/or on the road
- Is anyone staying away from home overnight? If staff stay away regularly, what is your policy on food and alcohol? What options are available for staff nearby?

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- What type of work are they doing? Does it involve physical activity/movement or lots of sitting? This will impact on their dietary needs
- What type of environment are they working in? Is it particularly hot or cold? Can they drink whilst working or only during breaks?
- What about stress levels? High stress levels make employees more likely to reach for the sugary and fatty foods and drinks, but actually they need more vitamins, minerals and good fats.
- Is there easy access to water/water coolers and drinking cups? Do you provide reusable cups?
- Is there easy access to food preparation areas, a microwave and storage facilities such as a fridge? Are they sufficient for the number and location of staff?
- What about the tea fund? Does that include healthier options like herbal teas?
- Vending machines- what do they offer and how much are they used? Who supplies them?
- Review the refreshments on offer/provided during meetings/training sessions and team events. Does it encourage healthier eating and drinking or is it always standard tea and coffee and biscuits?
- Is there a work canteen and what do they provide? Do they offer anything healthy? Do their promotions/deals encourage staff to go for less healthy options? Consider drinks, snacks, meals and puddings. Are they open when all staff are working? Have they got the facilities and equipment to provide healthy options? Do the catering staff have the knowledge/training in healthier catering? Do you have a say in what they provide- can you state certain requirements in the contract etc.
- Do staff have some meals or food provided as part of the job? And are they healthy? E.g. Cabin crew
- Consider that healthy options are not just about low fat, low fat, low sugar. Some people may be malnourished, some may have additional energy needs.
- Are there facilities/space for people to eat away from where they work?
- Are staff encouraged to take a break? Do managers lead by example?

How will you now work with staff to increase the availability of healthier options?

- Could you have a focus group?
- How about creating an action plan with some timescales? It may need to be a gradual process.
- Consider how to positively communicate the changes to staff
- Be careful to not 'ban' or remove certain foods, ensure that there is still a choice (including healthier options)
- What can you practically do? E.g.
  - *Are there suppliers (e.g. vending machines or canteen caterers) who you can work with to improve the healthier options on offer?*
  - *Could you provide some additional facilities e.g. a microwave, a water cooler or an extra fridge*
  - *Could you ask for fruit to always be provided at meetings/training, not just biscuits and the same with healthier lunch options where applicable and provision of water as well as tea and coffee*

- o *Could you provide some information to staff on which are the healthier options?*
- o *Can you look at providing some options for staff working night shifts?*
- o *What can you do to encourage staff to take a break (which in turn encourages healthier eating choices rather than food on the go which tends to be less healthy)*
- o *Is there any budget available for small changes? E.g. providing some fresh fruit one day a week or providing a BPA free water bottle to encourage staff who are on the road to take a bottle of water in the car each day*
- o *Are there any other organisational policies that you need to consider?*
- o *How can you ensure there a positive corporate message with regards to healthy eating at work?*
- o *How can information be provided so that staff can make an informed choice?*

When will you evaluate /review? And how?

- Ask for feedback from staff and review
- Have the changes improved the availability of healthier eating options?
- What has worked well and why?
- Were there any difficulties or barriers and why?
- What else could you do in the future?
- When will this next be reviewed?

Further information

Business in the Community have developed a physical activity, healthy eating and healthier weight toolkit for workplaces and there is useful information on page 10-11 about developing a policy https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/physical-activity-healthy-eating-and-healthier-weight-a-toolkit-for-employers/

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