

Walking charity launches new award to get Scotland's workforce moving

A Scottish charity has launched a new accreditation that aims to reverse the trend of inactive workplaces.

Paths for All has created the Walk at Work Award to reward employers across the country who are encouraging everyday walking in their workplace.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland (ICAS) is among the first to sign up to the Walk at Work Award, which was launched in the capital by the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn.

With the average working-age adult sitting for 9.5 hours a day, the charity will not just recognise employers who promote everyday walking, but will also offer guidance to those who want their workforce to become more active.

Active meetings, lunchtime walks, standing desks and promoting ways to get to work on foot will all count towards the award.

By signing up for the award, employers will receive one-to-one support on how to create a walking culture at work as well as examples of best practice and where to find extra help and resources.

Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn said: "When people commute, particularly those who work in offices or who travel by car, they tend to be more inactive. This award will reward employers who encourage regular walks, breaks from the desk and activity during the working day. It will also offer support to businesses who are interested in

helping their staff become more active but perhaps don't know where to start.

"I'd encourage employers to look at what they can do to foster a walking culture and register for the Walk at Work Award."

Ian Findlay, Chief Officer at Paths for All, said: "Walking is one of the simplest and best things we can do for our physical and mental health. It's free, you don't need any special equipment, and it can be easily incorporated into the average working day.

"Research shows that employees who are physically active in and around the working day take fewer sick days, are more motivated and productive, and are more able to concentrate, so walking is not just good for us, it's good for business.

"Many adults sit for long periods of time while at work, so workplaces must take action to reduce sedentary behaviour and improve health and wellbeing.

"This award will not only reward workplaces that are creating a walking culture for their staff, it will also increase and encourage a variety of different walking opportunities and activities during the day.

"Working alongside partners such as Cycle Scotland who offer the Cycle Friendly Employer Award, and having received endorsement from Healthy Working Lives, this new award is part of a suite of awards available to help create a healthier, more active workforce."

As regular participants in the Step Count Challenge – Paths for All's biannual workplace online challenge – ICAS in Edinburgh was keen to sign up to the Walk at Work Award.

Lesley Glen, ICAS's Chief Operating Officer, said: "At ICAS we have created a strong walking culture and are boosting our wellbeing with lots of healthy activities, from taking part in

the Step Count Challenge to sharing pedometers and staying active through the day with the option of standing desks.

“We’re delighted that the Walk at Work Award will allow us to celebrate our walking initiatives and the fantastic impact these have on the physical and mental health of ICAS colleagues.”

Recent findings from UK workplaces reveal that half of all employees experience poor mental health at work, including stress, anxiety and depression. Regular walking can reduce the effects of poor mental health, particularly walking in greenspace.

Physical activity can also combat against the risk of type 2 diabetes, some cancers and stroke.

For more information, or to register for the Walk at Work Award, visit www.walkatwork.scot, email walkatwork@pathsforall.org.uk or call 01259 218888.