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The average UK sitting time at work is 9.5 hours per day, which exceeds 2300 hours per year (this is nearly one third of annual hours and does not include sleeping time).

To achieve and maintain optimum health, the National Physical Activity Guidelines state 150 minutes of moderate intensity (e.g. walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity (e.g. running) exercise per week is required. So, all we have to do is accumulate 30 minutes of physical activity on 5 days each week, which is only 130 hours a year, a very low 1.5% of all annual hours.

Despite this recommendation, lack of time and long working hours continue to be common and valid barriers to exercise outside of the typical 9-to-5 day. This can partly explain why the UK is not achieving the levels required to prevent conditions including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

In some cases these conditions are increasing to epidemic proportions, contributing to more sick days, which could ultimately impact on business success. The key could be to provide and participate in a more active working environment where we are currently sitting for 27% of all annual hours.  
*Can some level of activity be introduced into your workplace, whether at home or in the office?*

It is well understood that modifications to workstations can help alleviate and prevent musculoskeletal disorders, and this has largely been the focus of ergonomic research, product development and occupational health. From a business perspective, active working by use of sit-stand workstations has been related to lower levels of absenteeism.

The evidence is in its infancy but standing and taking regular breaks are reported to improve cognitive function, memory and decision-making, therefore enhancing work productivity.

More recently there is emerging research that excessive sitting is associated with obesity, diabetes and heart disease to name the key conditions that can be prevented through lifestyle changes. Interestingly, irrespective of achieving the physical activity recommendations, individuals who sit for long periods in work and leisure time are at a greater risk than those who sit the least.

It has been shown that regular “light” physical activity, including standing, simple ambulation and active breaks have been coupled with lower measures of overweight and obesity, lower blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure.

These small bouts of activity during the day are achievable with the use of sit-stand workstations and “standing time” has now been added to Expert Statement recommendations agreed by Public Health England and Active Working CIC:

1. Progression should be made towards at least two hours of standing per day and light activity, eventually progressing to a total accumulation of four hours per day.
2. You should try and break prolonged periods of sitting by standing at regular intervals. Sit to stand work stations are highly recommended.
3. Prolonged periods of static standing should also be avoided.

4. When first trialling standing office workers may feel some fatigue that will require some time to adapt to. These sensations should be able to be relieved by changing your posture or taking a quick walk.
5. Companies should promote workers to think about how much time they spend sitting outside of work too.