

**Press Release – Embargoed until 00.01am Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August**

---

**GP practices supported to recommend active lifestyles to patients and staff by launch of new UK-wide Active Practice Charter**

- One in four people say they would be more active if it was recommended by a GP or nurse
- New toolkit will support GPs – who are short on time – to bring up activity in conversation with patients and achieve Active Practice status

The Royal College of GPs and Sport England have teamed up to launch the very first Active Practice Charter to inspire and celebrate GP practices that are taking steps to increase activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in their patients and staff.

It will benefit the approximately 8,000 GP practices in the UK, by raising awareness of the simple changes that can be made to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of patients and staff, such as signposting to local exercise classes or partnering with a nearby activity provider.

The ground-breaking Active Practice Charter builds on an existing initiative where GP practices have been encouraged to develop closer links with their local parkrun to become certified ‘parkrun practices.’

The Active Practice Charter – which is supported by National Lottery investment from Sport England – outlines the key principles of what it means for a practice to be ‘active’, and the steps GPs and their teams can take to get there.

To become an ‘Active Practice’ and receive a certificate recognising their status, surgeries will demonstrate that they have taken a number of steps, including:

- Increasing physical activity in patients and staff
- Reducing sedentary behaviour in patients and staff
- Partnering with a local physical activity provider to support the practice to get more people active

Research shows that doing regular physical activity can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke by as much as 35% and decrease the risk of early death by as much as 30%.

However, the UK population is around 20% less active than during the 1960s and physical inactivity is a significant financial burden, estimated to cost as much as £7.4 billion each year, including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone.

One in four patients say they would be more active if it was recommended by a GP or nurse.<sup>[1]</sup>

[And while many GPs already promote physical activity in their surgeries, some identify barriers to prescribing exercise or discussing physical activity – for example, not having enough time in the consultation to have effective conversations with patients.](#)

This is why the Royal College of General Practitioners and Sport England have also launched a [Physical Activity and Lifestyle toolkit to help practices achieve Active Practice status. It](#)

[contains a comprehensive selection of condition-specific, professional-facing information documents that can be used to help all healthcare professionals – including the Moving Medicine website, a step by step guide to conversations with patients about physical activity.](#)

**Dr Andrew Boyd, RCGP Clinical Champion for Physical Activity and Lifestyle said:** “Busy GPs can’t be expected to do everything when it comes to getting the nation more active, but we can play a vital role in starting the conversation with patients.

“By making small changes in our own workplace – using standing desks, encouraging active transport for staff, and partnering with local physical activity providers, for example - we can demonstrate to patients that being more active is good for everyone’s physical and mental health.”

**Sport England’s CEO Tim Hollingworth said:** “Physical activity has a key role to play in helping people manage and improve their health and wellbeing. As trusted sources of information, GPs and practice teams have a real opportunity to start discussions that help it become the new normal in their community – for prevention as well as treatment.

“This toolkit will help busy GPs talk to patients about getting active and recommend local opportunities as part of their routine practice. We’re delighted to be celebrating those GP practices who are promoting active lifestyles to patients and staff through the Active Practice Charter.”

**Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said:** “All GPs know that encouraging patients to be more active can have huge benefits on their health and wellbeing and, in some cases, drastically improve conditions such as diabetes and heart disease - even dementia.

“But having the time to advise patients on lifestyle in the current 10-minute consultation can be a huge challenge, especially when there are often so many other things we need to discuss and when this probably wasn’t the reason the patient has made the appointment – so taking a practice-wide approach to encouraging healthier lifestyles, for all of us, is a great idea.

“I’m delighted to see this project come to fruition and hope it helps practices up and down the country, including my own, further promote the truly life-changing health and wellbeing benefits of physical activity and keeping an active lifestyle.”

The RCGP Physical Activity and Lifestyle Project is led by RCGP Clinical Champions, Dr Zoe Williams and Dr Andrew Boyd, who promote healthier and more active lifestyles in their GP surgeries.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- GPs can visit the Active Practice Charter Site [here to find out more and work as a practice to develop plans to become an accredited practice.](#)
- The Physical Activity and Lifestyle Toolkit can be downloaded [here to help healthcare professionals embed physical activity within the conversations they are having with patients where appropriate.](#)
- Healthcare professionals can access Public Health England’s Physical Activity Clinical Champions Training to receive face to face training on embedding physical activity within their everyday work. To find out more or to book a session contact: [physicalactivity@phe.gov.uk](mailto:physicalactivity@phe.gov.uk)

[1] ([Health Survey for England 2008: CVD and risk factors adults, obesity and risk factors children](#))

ENDS

## NOTES TO EDITORS

The Royal College of GPs and Sport England have partnered in a multi-year 'Physical Activity and Lifestyle' project to support GP surgeries to encourage physical activity and sport as a tool to drive up the health and wellbeing of patients. The partnership is supported by £160,435 of National Lottery investment from Sport England.

**The Royal College of General Practitioners** is a network of more than 53,000 family doctors working to improve care for patients. We work to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and act as the voice of GPs on education, training, research and clinical standards.

**Sport England** is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

RCGP Press office – 020 3188 7574/7575/7633

Out of hours: 0203 188 7659

[press@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:press@rcgp.org.uk)