

MAYOR OF LONDON

LONDON HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD



FRANCIS CRICK INSTITUTE CASE STUDY





WHO WE ARE

The Francis Crick Institute is a Camden-based biomedical discovery institute dedicated to understanding the fundamental biology underlying health and disease. Its work is helping to understand why disease develops and to translate discoveries into new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, infections, and neurodegenerative diseases. An independent organisation, its founding partners are the Medical Research Council (MRC), Cancer Research UK, Wellcome, UCL (University College London), Imperial College London and King's College London. The Crick is a registered charity and was formed in 2015. In 2016, it moved into a brand-new state-of-the-art building in central London which brings together 1500-2000 scientists and support staff working collaboratively across disciplines, making it the biggest biomedical research facility under a single roof in Europe.

"We are bold, imaginative, open, dynamic, and collegial to ensure that we discover the biology underlying human health, improving the treatment, diagnosis and prevention of human disease and generating economic opportunities for the UK."

WHY WE TOOK PART IN THE LONDON HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD (LHWA)

The Crick has been accredited under the Mayor's Good Work Standard as an early adopter, which included describing our enthusiastic approach to wellbeing. Subsequently, we gained the LHWA Achievement Level in 2018, and we have continued to evolve and improve our wellbeing offer to Crick employees and students, as well as service partners, visiting scientist and temporary agency staff, who were included in all aspects of the wellbeing offer ever since. Some of our initiatives included, for example:



The Francis Crick institute achieved the LHWA Excellence Award in 2019.

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- I. After successful pilot walking challenges for individuals and teams, we invested in a qualified Camden walking guide to run a weekly lunchtime walking group.
- II. We offer a gym / swim loan for employees to join better leisure facilities across London and this subsidised gym initiative currently has circa 150 Crick members.
- III. In partnership with our contracted catering company, we organised activities to celebrate healthy eating week, which included creating additional signage as well as positioning healthy food more prominently.
- IV. In terms of alcohol use, there has been a review of the policy and guidance available. We will also run some educational events regarding safe levels of alcohol using the PHE campaign resources.
- V. We submitted an action plan for the Time to Change Pledge, which received positive feedback and we have since successfully signed up to it.
- VI. We have recently signed up to the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, which helps employers to ensure that all LGBT staff are accepted without exception in the workplace

Our reason for applying for the Excellence Level was to help us shape this evolving programme and ensure our continued best practice improvement for the wellbeing of everyone in the Crick community. Moreover, it would also be helpful to compare our approach to best practice and benchmark our progress against other comparable organisations.

WHAT WE DID AFTER LHWA SIGN-UP

The following sections summarise what we did after signing up for the LHWA (before submitting our application) and what we have done since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to support our people.

CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR WELLBEING

- I. The institute has a holistic wellbeing strategy and action plan, which includes but is not limited to smoke free guidance, mental wellbeing guidance, stress risk assessment, stress management, drugs and alcohol. The plan also has outcome measures such as satisfaction and levels of engagement.
- II. A new manager feedback programme pilot aims to get feedback from different groups on how well their team functions. They are encouraged that it is a safe place to give constructive feedback which is then also fed into their Group Leaders' development.
- III. Developing mental health first-aiders is a priority for the organisation. In relation to this area, one of our senior Research Group Leaders trained as a Mental

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Health First Aider to role model this to other senior scientists. We have extended the skills of our mental health first aid team to include the ASIST suicide training and are holding CRUSE bereavement training for up to 40 people in October, as this was a key area identified through our Assistance Programme quarterly data.

- IV. Mindfulness courses are part of our learning and development portfolio, which are undertaken in Crick time as part of the working day.
- V. A review of the internal space in the institute, (conducted by external design consultants) is in progress. Consultation on proposed plans has taken place with plans displayed in the atrium, so that people could share their thoughts and views on proposed changes.
- VI. Active working is being encouraged with the introduction of some sit stand desks.
- VII. Return to work meetings are run by managers to capture any new information regarding absence and any requirement for adjustments. There is also a reasonable adjustment form to capture discussion and agreed changes for longer-term medical conditions
- VIII. The HR advisory team hold regular meetings with managers and individuals who are absent, to provide advice and support towards a successful return to work. There is flexibility regarding the support offered, which is done on an individual basis. Where appropriate, we have arranged for teams, colleagues, relatives and carers to be supported by the specialist organisation Working with Cancer. We also arrange and fund private structured therapy where appropriate. These are paid for out of the central Wellbeing budget.
- IX. This is in place and is flexible and supportive e.g. compassionate leave is not limited to immediate family. There are no absolutes, and each case is decided on its merits. As we have 72 nationalities at the Crick, it is necessary to allow people to travel following a family bereavement.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- I. There was also a £1,000 investment in our second 'Bring Your Culture to Work' Day, which was attended by 200 people and promoted inclusivity and wellbeing. The event showcased the many different cultures working together at the Crick.
- II. Redundancy is rare at the Crick. Sometimes labs close and there is documented guidance on the management of this. Usually people are given 12 months' notice of a Lab closing and are supported throughout this period with their next move.
- III. Respectful Communication training was introduced in 2018 and policies are in place to guide and support people.

- IV. The Somers Town Living Centre and other local resources are used for extracurricular activities, with some of our own people running and attending classes, including yoga and Pilates. The Cricksters Sports and Social groups are very active. Activities range from netball, tennis, quiz nights and music nights.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROMOTION

- I. A travel survey takes place regularly with a commitment to reduce our carbon footprint and encourage people to use environmentally friendly ways to get to work.
- II. A sustainability group of enthusiastic Crick people help improve the environmental performance of the Crick, by raising awareness of sustainability issues within their department. They also help to promote sustainable initiatives such as reducing waste and promoting recycling, using energy and water efficiently, sustainable travel, sustainable purchasing, social responsibility.
- III. We introduced an injury rehabilitation therapist as a pilot exercise late in 2018. His attendance has been increased, to provide treatment and advice to people as a preventive measure, or those who may be experiencing issues at work e.g. repetitive strain injury. The budget for the physiotherapy service has reached £20k and is about to be reviewed.
- IV. We do not have a Crick healthy eating plan; however we work in partnership with our Catering supplier to ensure that as well as tasting good the food on offer uses locally produced high quality nutritional ingredients.
- V. Fruit is always available along with a juice bar. Crick provides free milk, fridges, and microwaves for people to use. Hot and cold filtered water is available throughout the building and fruit infused water is free from the café area.
- VI. The Crick Occupational Health team offer mini health checks, which include weight, BMI and water and fat %. Blood pressure, urine testing and finger prick tests for glucose and cholesterol are part of this.
- VII. We have close links to the local stop smoking services and promote their clinics along with offering support within the workplace through Occupational Health team on a 1:1 basis during the working day.
- VIII. In the last year Alcoholics Anonymous and the Camden Drug And Alcohol Services have attended to help educate people regarding their services and safe drinking limits. Both will be returning before Christmas to help with our event during alcohol awareness week.

MAIN CHANGES SINCE COVID-19

A. Risk Assessment and Action Planning

- I. Our decisions are guided by the latest Government and Public Health England recommendations, and the latest advice from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- II. We conducted a risk assessment for building reopening and phased return-to-work with a scope including all staff, service partner staff, contractors and others accessing the building.

B. Workforce Management

- I. The safety of staff and visitors is of the highest importance to us during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are closed to visitors and have instructed Crick staff to work from home where possible.
- II. The Crick has remained open for a limited number of staff throughout 2020, to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and to run our COVID-19 testing service for frontline healthcare staff, NHS patients, and care homes.
- III. From 1 June 2020 we opened the building to more staff, so that vital research could continue.
- IV. Scientific seminars and lectures were cancelled from 18 March 2020 onwards, but many online equivalents are now available.
- V. We have asked that all our staff follow guidance on self- and family-isolation with symptoms and take extra precautions if they fall into one of the vulnerable groups.

C. Social Distancing

- I. To encourage social distancing (2M) when in the building, we restrict numbers accessing the building, limiting staff numbers in rooms and bays, and control movement around the building using 'one-way' systems (for example).
- II. Where social distancing cannot be maintained, other control measures are in place including the segregation of workstations through the provision of cleanable, impervious shielding or screens and the provision of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks and gloves.
- III. We discourage the use of public transport to travel to the Crick and we provide reusable, washable face coverings to those staff who can only travel to the building on public transport.
- IV. We clean the building regularly and, in particular, surfaces and equipment having a higher rate of contacts (e.g. door handles, stair bannisters, etc.), toilets

and showers. It is also a requirement for staff to clean down workstation surfaces after use each day. We conduct emergency cleaning and disinfection of any area used or occupied by a person who subsequently develops COVID-19 related symptoms, or tests positive.

- V. Maintenance of good hand hygiene through provision of sanitisers at entrances and around the building and promoting regular washing of hands for 40 seconds or more.

D. Staff Wellbeing

- I. We actively support staff, particularly those working from home, to promote mental health and wellbeing, and physical health (focussing on the use of DSE and home workstations).

HOW WE COMMUNICATE AND PROMOTE INITIATIVES

- I. We run regular engagement surveys / consultation exercises, to determine where improvements can be made.
- II. There is also a Staff Consultative Forum, which is used for constructive discussion and feedback on topical issues.
- III. Our quarterly 'Town Hall' meetings give people an opportunity to get to know about institute activities from our senior leadership team, through presentations and conversations. There is also plenty of time for questions.
- IV. Dozens of questions are submitted before and during the Town Hall meeting and the answers are published on CrickNet.

OUR OUTCOME / SUCCESS MEASURES

We listen to the feedback of our employees, for example the feedback for the mindfulness courses is extremely positive with some calling the newly learned practice life changing.

The attendance rate for our wellbeing events is quite high, for example over 145 people took part in our walking month events.