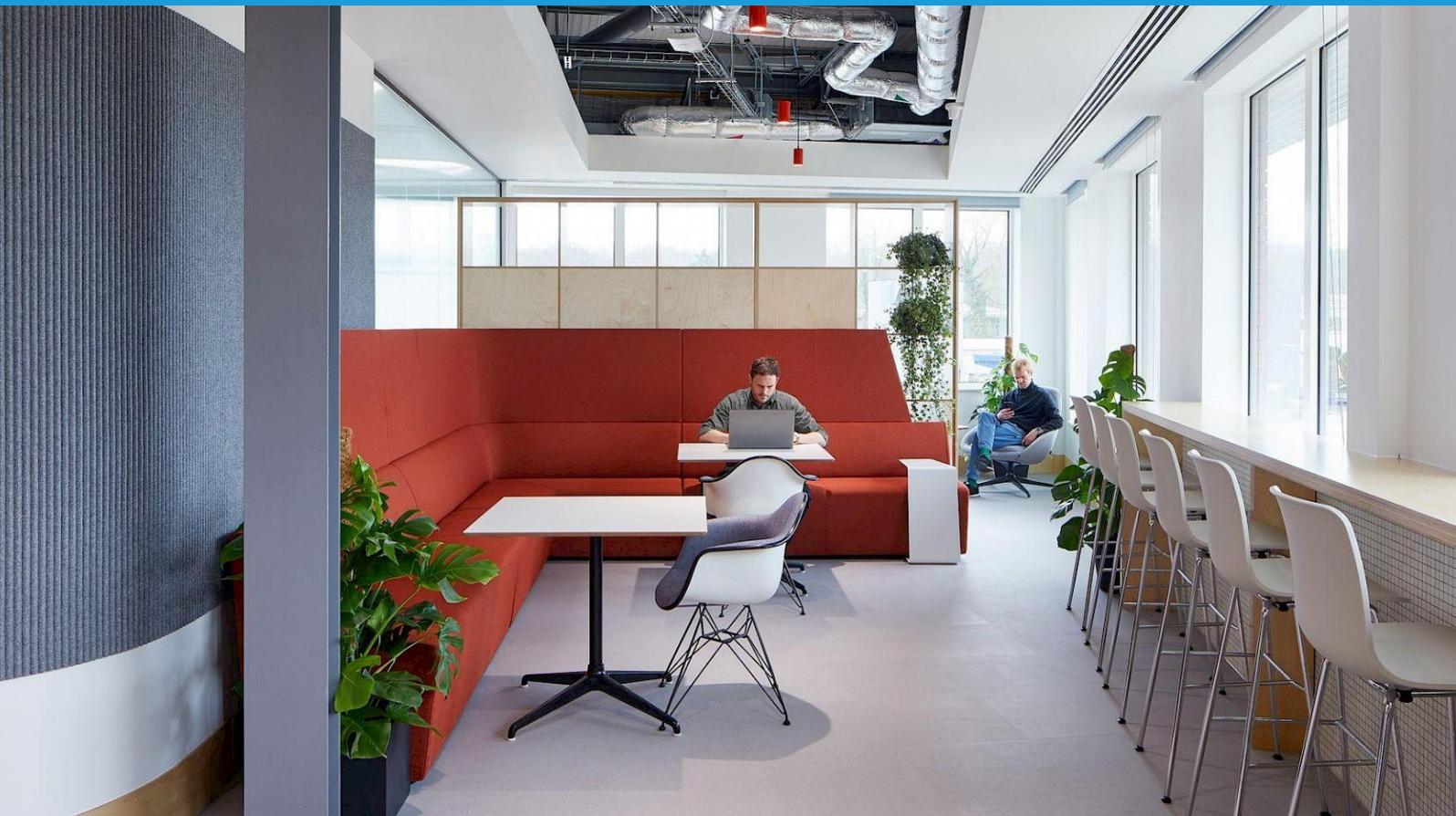


MAYOR OF LONDON

LONDON HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD



IOR GROUP CASE STUDY





WHO WE ARE

IOR Group is a Richmond-based SME specialising in building assessment, office design, office fit out, office refurbishment and office furniture. We have been providing global coverage and working with some of the world's largest organisations with our in-house team of 36 people, creating tailored, award-winning workspaces that transform businesses. Our vision revolves around one pivotal idea:

"The office of the future, like the family dining table, will be where we come together, share values, agree adventures, share information and problem solve."

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

IOR understands that people are an organisation's best asset and that a healthy and happy workforce is key to business success. Therefore, even before we found out about the London Healthy Workplace Award, we were actively seeking out opportunities and taking measures to transform workplaces including our own. Therefore, we put in place a range of initiatives to promote wellbeing among our staff, for example:



IOR Group achieved the Commitment (now Foundation) Award in 2016 as part of the LHWA accreditation scheme.

- I. We opened Ska Gold offices in beautiful Richmond, incorporating active design and agile working, filled with ergonomic furniture.
- II. We started an Employee Assistance Programme providing 24-hr confidential life-management and face-to-face counselling.
- III. 25% of our employees had signed up for the Cycle-to-Work scheme.
- IV. We provide on-site gym, shower and changing facilities.
- V. We regularly organise cultural trips to museums, theatres and galleries.
- VI. We have fresh fruit deliveries and filtered still and sparkling water on tap.

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- VII. We reduced working hours – changed from 9am to 5.30pm, to finishing at 5pm – and increased Annual Leave to promote work-life balance.
- VIII. We organise fun but health-related activities and events, such as Meat Free Mondays, Tupperware Tuesdays and Walk to Workdays (or run, bike, scoot, kayak!).

Whilst researching further ideas about wellbeing in the workplace we learnt of the LHWA, which provided us with a platform to take our efforts to the next level. We met with our assigned Workplace Health Lead, who guided us through the process, and we took steps to achieve accreditation. The benefits of the scheme inspired us to become sponsors and to use the knowledge we gained through the LHWA with our clients, i.e. we share experiences and insights to help benefit their organisations and we also incorporate wellbeing features into our design and fit out projects.

WHAT WE DID AFTER LHWA SIGN-UP

We started-off with a staff wellbeing survey, to find out how our team was really doing, so that we could identify the current state of our progress in the LHWA structure and pinpoint the areas, where action must be taken. Accordingly, three key issues became apparent, which were workload, managerial support and physical and mental health. Subsequently, we devised plans on how to address these issues and more:

CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR WELLBEING

- I. To satisfy our biophilic nature – i.e. our innate tendency to seek connections with nature – we maximised the balcony and views of the river and bought new furniture to encourage meetings and socialisation. People were given £10 to purchase their own desk plant to nurture.
- II. We relaunched and improved awareness of our Employee Assistance Programme and its benefits.
- III. To reduce workload, we started a 'Work Smarter Not Harder' campaign to improve collaboration and communication, streamline processes, reduce frustration and after-hours working.
- IV. To promote communication and socialisation, we re-designed our workspace, moving everyone onto one floor to improve communication.

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Alternative working areas were created to suit different working needs, with further breakout and collaboration zones.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- I. To improve managerial support, we provided managerial training – e.g. to recognise potential health and wellbeing issues and to deal with them – and conducted an overhaul of our induction process, to ensure we hired the right people and gave them the right tools to succeed.
- II. To improve staff mental health, we promoted and celebrated World Mental Health Day to raise awareness and funds for mental health charity, MIND. Our Green Team became the 'Green, Lean and Clean' Team by expanding their profile to incorporate wellbeing initiatives.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROMOTION

- I. To promote physical health, we encouraged walking meetings, shared lunchtime walking and running routes and put up exercise routine posters in the gym to increase physical exercise.
- II. To reduce issues in relation to alcohol, drugs and smoking, we conducted an alcohol and drug awareness campaign and people signed up for the 'Kick It' stop smoking initiative.

MAIN CHANGES SINCE COVID-19

A. Risk Assessment and Action Planning

- I. We undertook a full risk assessment in the light of COVID with involvement from individual members of staff.
- II. We have re-designed the workspace to maintain social distancing.

B. Workforce Management

- I. We adopted a 'hybrid' system, where staff work some days at home and some in the office.
- II. We have expanded and staggered working hours so employees can avoid peak travel times as much as possible; this also reduces risk of congestion or close contact on arrival and departure from the office.

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- III. Due to employee concerns about exposure to crowds, employees with longer commutes are encouraged to work from home or drive in to avoid public transport. In case of locals, walking and cycling are promoted.

C. Social Distancing

- I. We have implemented social distancing based on government guidelines; therefore, we have limited the number of people allowed in the office at any one time to 10.
- II. Physical changes in the workspace included introduction of plants into the workspace, including in seating areas, to mark out 2 M areas and limit contacts. Our aim was to reduce the negative visual impact – therefore we did not use hazard tape!

D. Staff Wellbeing

- I. We have run several staff surveys specifically to ask about the impact of COVID-19 including the concerns of people about coming back to work.
- II. What we learned from the surveys was that employees were fine about the safety of the office space, but their main concern was the risk of commuting on public transport. That meant the flexibility about whether people came into work was paramount.

HOW WE COMMUNICATE AND PROMOTE INITIATIVES

- I. Our wellbeing initiatives are communicated and promoted through several avenues:
- II. IOR Monthly Update newsletter, which covers all aspects of the business.
- III. Quarterly companywide Town Hall meetings.
- IV. Poster campaigns and Wellbeing noticeboard.
- V. 'Green Lean and Clean' quarterly newsletter.
- VI. 'All staff' invites to wellbeing activities.

These initiatives are not compulsory and team members can choose which activities they want to participate in. Our efforts to increase wellbeing and health awareness has had a positive effect on how employees spend time outside of the office as well, for example people started to take up activities such as running, Pilates and yoga. Furthermore, health and wellbeing is often the subject of discussion amongst colleagues.

THE ROLE OF OUR LEADERSHIP

The IOR Management Team is actively involved in developing, promoting and implementing the wellbeing programme. This includes seeking and reviewing employee feedback, providing resources and funding, raising awareness and encouraging people to get involved, as well as getting involved themselves. 360-degree feedback is encouraged, where managers are assessed by their teams and colleagues, providing an open and positive approach to leadership. Wellbeing is the subject of internal workshops, emails and management and board meetings.

OUR OUTCOME / SUCCESS MEASURES

Since the accreditation, IOR has continued to develop its wellbeing programme and a Staff Wellbeing Survey in 2018 showed:

- I. 81% rate their Physical Health as Very Good / Good (19% fair, 0% poor).
- II. 72% rate their Mental Health as Very Good / Good (24% fair, 3% poor).
- III. 60% of Richmond based employees have participated in early morning Bootcamp sessions.
- IV. 33% of current employees have made use of the Cycle-to-Work scheme.
- V. 50% of Richmond based employees regularly use the gym / run / cycle at lunchtimes and breaks.
- VI. 44% of Richmond based employees regularly walk, run or cycle into work.
- VII. 70% of Richmond-based employees have attended after-work mindfulness / exhibition events.

Overall, staff are happier, more active and engaged, which has also had a positive impact upon retention rates. When asked for feedback on the programme, a new employee proudly replied:

"I am amazed by the amount of effort IOR puts in to ensure a sustainable and healthy workplace, making employee wellbeing a top priority. Speaking to others has made me realise that I should be improving my lifestyle - eating healthier and walking or cycling to work. I've even signed up for the Tough Mudder, which I never thought I had the confidence to do before!"

OUR NEXT STEPS BEYOND THE AWARD

Since achieving the Commitment accreditation – the early name of the Foundation level – IOR has continued to develop initiatives for our wellbeing programme. One great example is the early morning, pre-work Bootcamps on Richmond Green. The kick-start for this was “Get off to a flying start”. Research suggests that employees who start the day active enjoy lower stress levels, have more energy, are more alert, are more productive and most importantly, are happier. The Bootcamp has been a great success, with positive effects on physical health, mental health and team bonding.

Our next challenge will be an IOR team competing in Tough Mudder, led by our Finance Director – a 5-mile, 13 obstacle, highly challenging team event, designed by British Special Forces. “Finish together, leave no person behind.”