**Background - Workplace Cardiovascular Disease Health Check Pilot**

In November 2023, £10m funding was secured from HMT’s Shared Outcome Fund for a programme that included launching a pilot to undertake and evaluate 150,000 cardiovascular disease (CVD) health checks in workplaces by March 2025. £8m remains of this funding for 2024/25, of which £7m is allocated to the Workplace CVD Health Checks Pilot.

CVD is one of the three leading health conditions (alongside mental health and musculoskeletal) responsible for economic inactivity. We are seeing a downward trend in the age that people are having CVD events, affecting the working population. Around 1 in 3 people who have a heart attack and 1 in 4 strokes are in people of working age, with a third of stroke survivors not returning to work afterwards. Preventing cardiovascular disease is essential not only to meet the government’s health mission goal to reduce deaths from the biggest killers, like CVD, but also to help ensure that people stay healthy at work and reduce rising economic inactivity.

The Workplace Cardiovascular Disease Health Checks Pilot grant scheme was launched in March 2024 via Section 31 (S31) of the Local Government Act 2003. The total grant funding available was £6.67 million, with local authorities (LAs) in England invited to bid for grants ranging from £15,000 to £200,000. The remaining £330,000 of funding for this part of the programme is allocated to data collection and evaluation of the pilot.

92 applications were received, representing almost two thirds of upper tier local authorities in England. The highest scoring 48 bids were selected. Three bids were subsequently withdrawn following the pause to the programme during the pre-election period, leaving a total of 45 bids and 48 local authorities taking part in the programme (including some joint bids).

Local authorities taking part in this pilot will deliver CVD checks in workplace settings in their local areas up until 31 March 2025. These checks can either be NHS Health Checks or an alternative assessment of cardiovascular disease, delivered either to a specific cohort of people or to the whole working age population. Local authorities can commission the delivery of checks in any workplace settings; from large public sector and private organisations to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises. The delivery of CVD checks in workplaces where there is an overrepresentation of people less likely to take up an NHS Health Check is of particular interest; these groups include men, younger age groups and people from more deprived communities.

The pilot will gather evidence on the feasibility and impact of workplace CVD checks. It will encourage employers to support people to stay well in work, by gathering and sharing learning on delivering CVD checks in the workplace.

**Background - NHS Health Checks Programme**

The NHS Health Check is England’s flagship cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention programme. It aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged 40-74 years. Eligible people in England are invited to have a check once every five years. The check involves calculating a person’s risk of CVD through assessing the seven main risk factors; smoking status, body mass index (BMI), alcohol consumption, physical activity level, cholesterol level, blood pressure, and blood sugar level. A person is then supported to reduce their risk of CVD through behaviour change interventions such as weight management, and to access clinical treatment where needed, for example drug treatment to reduce high blood pressure.

The programme is commissioned by local authorities, using the public health grant, and it is currently mainly delivered by health care assistants and nurses in general practice. Each year the programme engages over 1.3 million people and prevents over 400 heart attacks or strokes. It identifies around 310,000 people with obesity, 21,000 with high blood sugar, and 318,000 with high blood pressure - with about 300 premature deaths being avoided as a result.

Over 16 million people are eligible for an NHS Health Check every five years. Data from April 2019 and March 2024 (latest complete 5-year cycle) show that over 11 million (11,096,823) people were offered a check, but only 40.6% of those offered had one.

**Diversifying the NHS Health Check Programme to Reach More People**

DHSC has looked to diversify the ways in which it delivers the NHS Health Check programme to reach more people and to make it more convenient for people to understand and improve their cardiovascular health. Helping to prevent major physical health complications will contribute towards preventing the emotional distress, depression and anxiety associated with long-term illness, particularly in men, who we know are less likely to seek early help.

**Digital NHS Health Check Programme**

The Department is developing a new digital NHS Health Check which will provide local authorities with the flexibility to deliver checks face to face or online, providing a more accessible and convenient service for people.

The digital check will give participants choice about where and when to have a check and empower people to take action to improve their health independently.

Participants will complete an online questionnaire about their health behaviour, measure their height, weight and blood pressure (at home or in a community pharmacy), and complete the blood tests for cholesterol and blood sugar levels at home.

The digital NHS Health Check prototype will be user-friendly to support participants to input appropriate information themselves and share results with GPs electronically to reduce manual administrative burden for general practice.

Three local authorities have been selected to pilot the new digital NHS Health Check in early 2025 – Norfolk, Medway and Lambeth.

    **TOP LINES**

* **For the first time ever,** government will bring together local authorities with employers to deliver NHS Health Checks into workplaces across the country.
* The multi-million-pound programme will see employers offer comprehensive heart health checks that can detect people at higher risk of a range of diseases and help them to access effective treatment or take preventative action.
* These checks save lives. Every year, the NHS Health Check programme engages over **1.3 million people in England** and prevents an estimated **300 premature deaths**.
* **However, we know many people are not completing these checks. Over 16 million people** are eligible for an NHS Health Check every five years, but the latest data suggests that **only 39.9%** of those offered a check completed one. For example, men are less likely to get early help but are more likely to develop cardiovascular disease at an earlier age.
* That’s why we’re making it easier and more convenient for people to access these life-saving checks. **More than 100,000 people will receive quick and easy checks in their workplaces** as part of this programme, helping to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and kidney disease, as well as some cases of dementia.
* **Employers from a range of industries will take part in the programme** including those from the buildings, hospitality and transport sectors and the social care sector.
* With every check providing the equivalent of an NHS appointment, these checks will also **save thousands of hours of valuable NHS time, helping to cut waiting lists** and rebuild the NHS.
* We are **empowering local leaders and employers to prevent illness and deliver healthcare in the communities they know best** – helping people to live well for longer, boosting productivity, and easing the strain on our NHS.
* The **link between the health of the nation and our economy** is clear, which is why we're working with partners and taking bold action to fix our NHS and tackle the causes of sickness.

**BACKGROUND and Q&A**

**NHS HEALTH CHECKS PROGRAMME**

**What is the Health Checks Programme?**

* The NHS Health Check is England’s flagship cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention programme. It aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged 40-74 years.
* By identifying risk factors such as high blood pressure early, we can help people to get the support and treatment they need to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and avoid heart attacks and strokes - helping people to live well for longer.
* We are looking to diversify the ways in which the programme is delivered to engage more people and to make it more convenient for people to understand and improve their cardiovascular health.
* In November 2023, £7 million was secured to undertake and evaluate 130,000 cardiovascular disease (CVD) health checks in workplaces by March 2025.
* We are piloting checks in workplaces from September 2024 (to March 2025) and will be piloting digital checks that can take place at home or in the community from early 2025.
* In addition to piloting workplace checks, we are also developing a new digital NHS Health Check that will provide local authorities with the flexibility to deliver checks face-to-face or online, providing a more accessible and convenient service for people.

**Who can complete an NHS Health Check? How do people access this?**

* The standard NHS Health Check programme is eligible to people aged 40 to 74 who have not received an NHS Health Check in the last 5 years and who live in a participating area. Some individuals with existing conditions may not be eligible.
* Eligibility for the NHS Health Checks workplace pilot is broader and will vary between different local authorities. Employers will contact their employees if they are eligible for an NHS Health Check as part of this pilot. All checks will be voluntary for employees to complete and only delivered with the consent of the employee.

**When will the pilot be taking place?**

* The pilot programme will take place from September 2024 to March 2025.

**Which areas/employees will be participating in the pilot?**

* 48 local authority areas across England will be participating in this pilot. A full list of local authorities and their funding allocations and target number of checks will be published on www.gov.uk on Thursday 29th August 2024.
* Employers from a range of industries will take part in the programme including those from the building sector, hospitality and transport sectors and the social care sector.
* Three local authorities have been selected to pilot the new digital NHS Health Check in early 2025 – Norfolk, Medway and Lambeth.

**Why are we launching this pilot?**

* CVD is a leading cause of death and disability in England, accounting for almost 1 in 4 (24%) deaths in England across all ages in 2022. 80% of CVD is preventable.
* By identifying risk factors such as high blood pressure early, we can help people to get the support and treatment they need to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and avoid heart attacks and strokes - helping people to live well for longer.
* We know that the NHS Health Check is effective at preventing CVD, so we are working to remove barriers to help more people access the programme and improve understanding of the importance of having a heart health check.
* By delivering CVD checks in targeted workplaces, we hope to reach people who are at higher risk of CVD and are less likely take up the offer of a check, such as men and younger adults.

**How does the NHS Health Check work?**

* The Health Check involves patients answering a short lifestyle questionnaire; having their height, weight, and waist measured; having a blood pressure test; and having a simple blood test (e.g. a finger prick test) to measure cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
* The checks record a patient’s: age; gender; smoking status; family history of coronary heart disease; ethnicity; body mass index; cholesterol level; blood pressure; physical activity level; cardiovascular risk score; and alcohol use.

**CVD WORKPLACE CHECKS**

* The NHS Health Check is England’s flagship cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention programme. It aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged 40-74.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

* CVD is one of the three leading health conditions (alongside mental health and musculoskeletal) responsible for economic inactivity.
* CVD’s cost to the UK economy (including premature death, disability and informal costs) is estimated to be £25 billion each year
* The UK faces an obesity crisis, costing the NHS around £6.5 billion each year and being a major cause of cancer.
* Smoking costs the economy and wider society in England £17 billion a year.

**OBESITY**

* Individuals living with obesity take an additional 4 sick days per year than people of a healthy weight because of obesity-related illness.
* We are taking action to tackle the obesity crisis head on – shifting our focus from treatment to prevention – which will ease the strain on the NHS and help people to live well for longer.
* As confirmed in the King’s Speech, we will legislate to restrict advertising of junk food to children along with the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to children.
* For those with identifiable risk factors who are eager to improve their health, the NHS offers a range of support.

*What about weight loss drugs?*

* There is evidence from clinical trials that, when prescribed alongside diet, physical activity and behavioural support, people taking a weight-loss drug can lose over 15% of their body weight after one year.
* We strongly advise the public not to buy regulated medicines from unauthorised online retailers or beauty salons as they could be dangerous.

**CANCER**

* Behaviour factors such as smoking, your weight, your diet, how active you are, and how much alcohol you drink can all affect your risk of getting cancer. Poor cardiovascular health can significantly increase your chances of developing several different cancers.
* 130,000 people still die from cancer each year.  However, death rates in England have fallen by more than a fifth over the last 30 years, by 10% over the last decade, and are predicted to drop by a further 17% by 2030.
* Smoking causes a quarter of all cancer deaths and claims the lives of 80,000 per year.

**DEMENTIA**

* We want a society where every person with dementia, their families and carers, receive high quality, compassionate care, from diagnosis through to end of life.
* Early diagnosis is vital to help patients get the support and treatment they need, so we are making this possible by fixing GP services and ending the misery of waiting weeks for a doctor’s appointment.

**WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

* Since 2013 local authorities in England have been legally responsible for commissioning the NHS Health Check programme. The Government’s public health grant to local authorities is used to enable its provision, with GPs most commonly commissioned by local authorities to provide the service.
* In March 2024, a grant scheme of £6.67 million was announced, with local authorities (LAs) in England invited to bid for grants of up to £200,000.

**Q&A**

**Q: If only 40% of people invited to an NHS Health Check take up an offer, why do you continue with the programme?**

**A:** CVD is a leading cause of death and disability in England, accounting for almost 1 in 4 (24%) deaths in England across all ages in 2022.

Given that 80% of CVD is preventable, and we know that the NHS Health Check is effective at preventing CVD, we need to improve uptake, help people to understand the importance of having a heart health check, and make it easier for people to do so.

The Department will continue to explore opportunities to improve access to the NHS Health Check and remove barriers for those who may struggle to take time off work, and other responsibilities, to attend a check through their existing local programme.

**Q: Shouldn’t workplaces cover the cost of health checks for their employees?**

**A**: We know that some employers are already investing in health checks for their employees. Through this pilot we want to gather evidence on how best to deliver CVD checks and what their impact is on health and productivity, so that we can share this learning with other employers and encourage them to invest in the health of their staff.

**Q: What will the local authorities selected for the pilot be required to do?**

**A:** Local authorities taking part in this pilot will work with local employers to deliver CVD checks in workplace settings in their local areas up until 31 March 2025. These checks can either be NHS Health Checks or an alternative assessment of cardiovascular disease, that will include an assessment of blood pressure, BMI, and smoking status as a minimum.

Local authorities can commission the delivery of checks in any workplace settings; from large public sector and private organisations to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises. The delivery of CVD checks in workplaces where there is an overrepresentation of people less likely to take up an NHS Health Check is of particular interest. (Groups such as men, younger age groups and people from more deprived communities.)

**Q: Will all employees be required to receive a check if their workplace is taking part in the pilot?**

**A:** No. All CVD checks will be voluntary for employees, and only delivered with the consent of the employee. No employees will be penalised for choosing not to participate in a check should they not wish to do so.

**Q: Will employers receive the results of the CVD checks?**

**A:** No. All personal results will be confidential between the employee and the provider of the check. If the employee gives consent, the results of their check will be shared with their GP. Participating local authorities will need to submit some data as part of the evaluation of the pilot, however only aggregated data will be submitted for evaluation and will not be personally identifiable.

**Q: What if serious health problems are identified during one of the CVD health checks within a workplace?**

**A:** All service providers will follow a clinical protocol and will make a referral to the employee’s GP or to NHS emergency services if needed and as appropriate.

**Q. What is the purpose of the pilot?**

**A:** The purpose of the pilot is to generate evidence regarding the feasibility and impact of CVD checks in workplaces, and then share this learning with employers to encourage them to invest in health checks for their employees.

**Q: The programme is offered to everyone, would it not be a better use of money to target it at specific high-risk groups?**

**A:** The NHS Health Check is a universal programme as many people aged 40 years and over are already at increasing risk of CVD and there is an opportunity to both raise awareness of the CVD risk factors, and support people to reduce their risk (e.g. losing weight) so we can prevent or delay disease. Some conditions, like high blood pressure, are largely symptomless so we need to find people and help them to access effective drug treatment so they don’t suffer devastating CVD events like strokes.

Many local areas already focus their efforts on ensuring that the people at highest risk of CVD receive an NHS Health Check. We are also developing a digital NHS Health Check to make it easy for people to do a check at home, and we will then be able to focus the face to face checks on people who need them most.