

EKKIST X LANDSEC

Helping us feel great and perform better: Shaping tomorrow's healthiest work environments



September 2021

Table of contents

STENZ CONTENTS

00.

Executive summary

01.

Environmental light exposure for good quality sleep

02.

Why a trip to the office promotes daily movement

03.

How comfortable do you feel at your desk?

04.

Healthy food choices, time to dine and social eating opportunities

05.

Air quality and reducing toxic exposure for health and productivity

06.

Space and nature to keep the mind positive and engaged

07.

Conclusion

08.

Tips for creating healthy workplaces

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evolution of our workplaces was already on the horizon when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Since then, the way we work has transformed and so have our workplaces. We have collectively demonstrated that it is possible to maintain and grow businesses from our own homes and this has led most companies to adopt hybrid working as the new normal.

The dialogue around this topic is heavily weighted towards the benefits of flexibility and choosing the environment to best support our work requirements, but there is the important factor of our health to consider as well. Scientific evidence tells us that the work environment plays a significant role in employee health and productivity.

“The work environment plays a significant role in employee health and productivity”

The predominant focus for returning to the office has been the ability to reconnect with our colleagues in an environment that promotes collaboration and creativity. While reconnection is important, there are many other advantages of going back to the office – in particular, the health and productivity benefits that will come from returning to a well-designed environment. Improved air quality, lighting, thermal comfort, ergonomics, acoustics, cleanliness and opportunities for movement are all of considerable importance when assessing the health impact of our workplaces.

Office developments are increasingly being designed to consciously support human health and address environmental concerns. Many schemes are now pursuing third-party certifications such as the WELL Building Standard



to demonstrate their commitment to occupant health and well-being.

This report explores to what extent our workplaces can encourage optimal health and improve productivity, with Landsec's office buildings providing examples of design and operational features that have been implemented to help achieve this outcome.

Jade Leighton

Health and Well-being Consultant, Ekkist

01

Environmental light exposure for good quality sleep

1.1 Sleep is the primary pillar of health

When considering how good we feel and how efficiently we work, one of the most important factors is how well we sleep. Scientific research suggests that sleep may be the single most important element for our health and productivity.

Poor sleep leads to fatigue and reduced performance. It puts us [at greater risk of illness](#) and can increase the chances of developing illnesses like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Meanwhile, research shows that good rest improves our self-awareness, memory and empathy. How well we sleep is largely determined by how we spend our waking hours.

1.2 Indoor exposure to daylight, sleep quality and productivity

Exposure to sunlight helps set our internal body clock, known as the 'circadian rhythm', which keeps us awake during the day and asleep at night. Disruption of this rhythm affects sleep quality and [may also lead to health issues, including increased stress, low energy and unhealthy appetite.](#)

Employees got an extra

46 mins

of sleep a night after working in offices with optimal daylight



Being exposed to good levels of daylight in our workplaces is an important factor for regulating our body clock. [One study](#) showed employees got an extra 46 minutes of sleep a night after working in offices with optimal daylight. [Research](#) has also shown a 12% improvement in performance in employees who moved from working in a poorly-lit to a well-lit space.

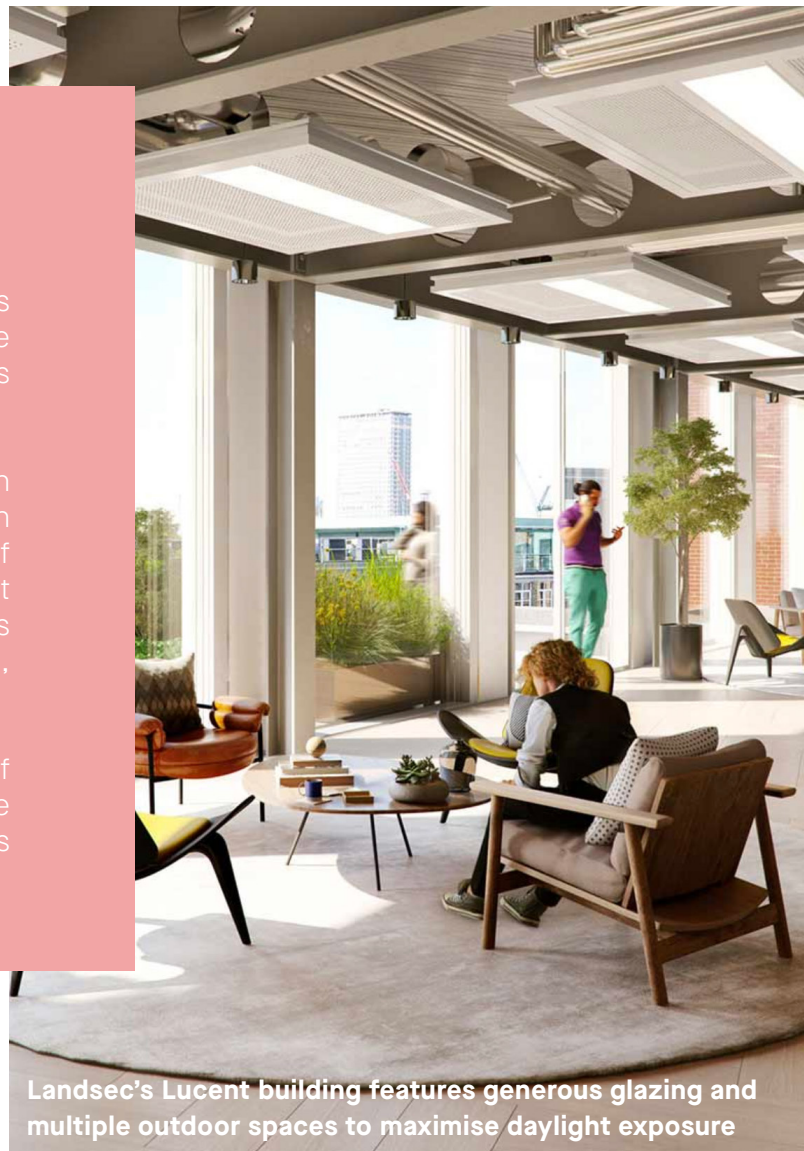
Offices designed to support the health of employees make daylight exposure a primary consideration. Generous, well-designed glazing can be used to maximise natural light levels, and a consideration of the proximity of desks to windows is also important.

Designing workplaces with high levels of daylight also has energy-saving benefits to support the environment, as there is less of a need to rely on artificial lighting.

Furthermore, for those moments in the day when we can take a break and get outside, offices that have a variety of outdoor spaces enable occupants to readily get direct daylight exposure where the intensity is often [10 to 25 times greater than those found inside through a window.](#)

Optimising daylight in practice

- Landsec's Timber Square development maximises the amount of natural light that employees are exposed to throughout the day through its bespoke façade.
- The northern façade has up to 80% glazing with 60% on the east and west sides and just 40% on the south façade to also reduce the chances of overheating. This design feature ensures that those on the north side still have as much access to natural light as possible to support their sleep, performance and overall well-being.
- Most Landsec buildings also have a number of terraces to encourage outdoor light exposure, the Lucent scheme has 22 different outdoor spaces for those working in the building.



Landsec's Lucent building features generous glazing and multiple outdoor spaces to maximise daylight exposure

Key Takeaways

- **Design consideration:** Focus on increasing exposure to natural light through window design and generous glazing with shallower floorplates where possible
- **Quick win:** Position desks as close to the windows as possible to increase natural daylight exposure, sleep quality and productivity

02

Why a trip to the office promotes daily movement

2.1 Work environments that increase daily step count

The act of leaving the house in the morning has many health benefits. Not only does it increase sunlight exposure, but it encourages daily movement. Statistics suggest that in the year that we all converted to working from home, our exercise levels decreased significantly on a global scale.

COVID lockdown led to an average global step count reduction of

27%

Lockdown led to [an average reduction in step count of 27% worldwide](#). Regular movement is a crucial aspect of a healthy lifestyle, benefitting metabolic health, cellular function, muscle strength, bone density, brain health and supporting weight management.

Despite lockdown leading to less movement, working from home gives those who want to exercise more time to do so when they would have been commuting. However, being in the office benefits us in terms of how much we naturally move throughout the day. [A recent study](#) looking at the variation in daily movement in different workspaces showed higher amounts of sedentary behaviour in those working from home, while time spent walking or standing was more than double in those working in their traditional workplaces. With the requirement to physically attend meetings and often to travel up and down several flights of stairs in the office,



employees are likely to move more throughout the day. Healthy offices should consider layouts and make a feature of staircases to encourage this further.

2.2 Active commuting options

Physical activity [has been linked](#) to improved thinking, learning and judgement skills. [One study showed](#) a 72% improvement in time management and workload completed on days when office workers exercised. For this reason, active commuter facilities are an important aspect of healthy workplace design. Ample numbers of bicycle racks, lockers and showers in workplaces make active commuting easier and more appealing. Employees choosing to actively commute into work may readily be able to achieve the 150-minutes of moderate exercise a week [recommended by the NHS](#).

Employee efficiency may improve, and outdoor commuting will also help to support a healthy circadian rhythm and improve sleep quality. Providing fitness facilities on site or being in the vicinity of a gym can help to encourage daily movement further.

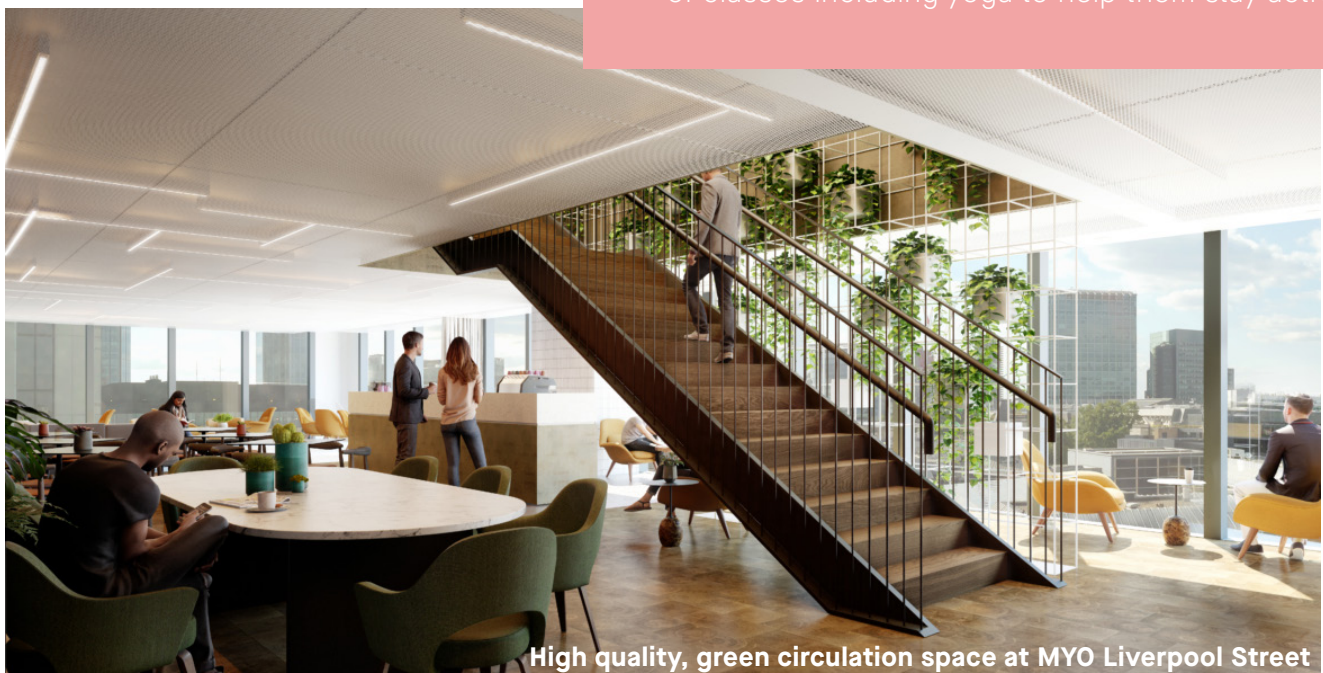
72%

improvement in productivity on days when employees exercised

The area surrounding our workplaces will also influence physical activity levels. Working in an urban location with amenities nearby encourages more movement and sustainable travel on foot during the working day, in comparison to increased car use in rural areas. While for those who commute primarily by car, it is likely to be more sustainable to work from home. A reduction in travel is therefore a clear benefit of a hybrid approach to working in terms of the time and environmental advantages.

Encouraging movement in practice

- All of Landsec's office buildings prioritise the provision of facilities for active commuting. The n2 scheme offers a choice of 329 bicycle spaces in the main internal cycle store with 36 folding bike lockers, along with 19 external short-stay spaces in the public realm. In addition to this, 37 showers (including 3 accessible showers) and 427 lockers, are provided in club-style changing amenities.
- At MYO Liverpool Street, the biophilic central staircase adorned with living foliage has been designed to encourage active stair use throughout the day. MYO members also have access to a range of classes including yoga to help them stay active.



High quality, green circulation space at MYO Liverpool Street

Key takeaways

- **Design consideration:** Feature staircases and active commuting facilities should be provided to encourage daily movement
- **Quick win:** Providing access to fitness classes either virtually or in-person may encourage employees to exercise more frequently and regularly

03

How comfortable do you feel at your desk?

3.1 Factors that make us feel comfortable

Factors like temperature control, quality of light, acoustics and ergonomic furniture all play a role in our comfort and productivity, often without us even noticing them. Yet when we are too hot or cold, or sitting on a poorly designed chair these factors quickly become distractions. The way in which these elements are designed and managed in workplaces has a direct impact on how effectively employees perform.

3.2 The interplay between temperature and productivity

The challenge of maintaining a comfortable thermal environment is something that is likely to have affected us while working from home. While it is dependent on the individual, [one study](#) saw a 4% reduction in office workers' performance when they were too cold, and a 6% reduction when they were too hot

4%

reduction in performance
when employees are too cold

6%

reduction in performance
when employees are too hot



Improving thermal comfort in practice

- Landsec buildings are often designed with external mullions and internal blinds to enable active and passive solar shading to help prevent the environment ever getting too warm.
- Timber Square's adaptable façade is an example of designing for thermal comfort. Extensive thermal modelling work has been carried out to optimise the amount of light and heat that reaches into the building while reducing energy demands.

Healthy offices are designed to mitigate against poor thermal comfort through a range of features, particularly those adhering to voluntary standards such as WELL or BREEAM, which can also have environmental benefits.

Solar shading is an important consideration that can be facilitated through façade design or by manual or automatic blinds. It offers further health benefits by preventing glare and overheating, and environmental benefits through reduced cooling loads.

60%

of respondents felt more motivated working in optimal lighting conditions

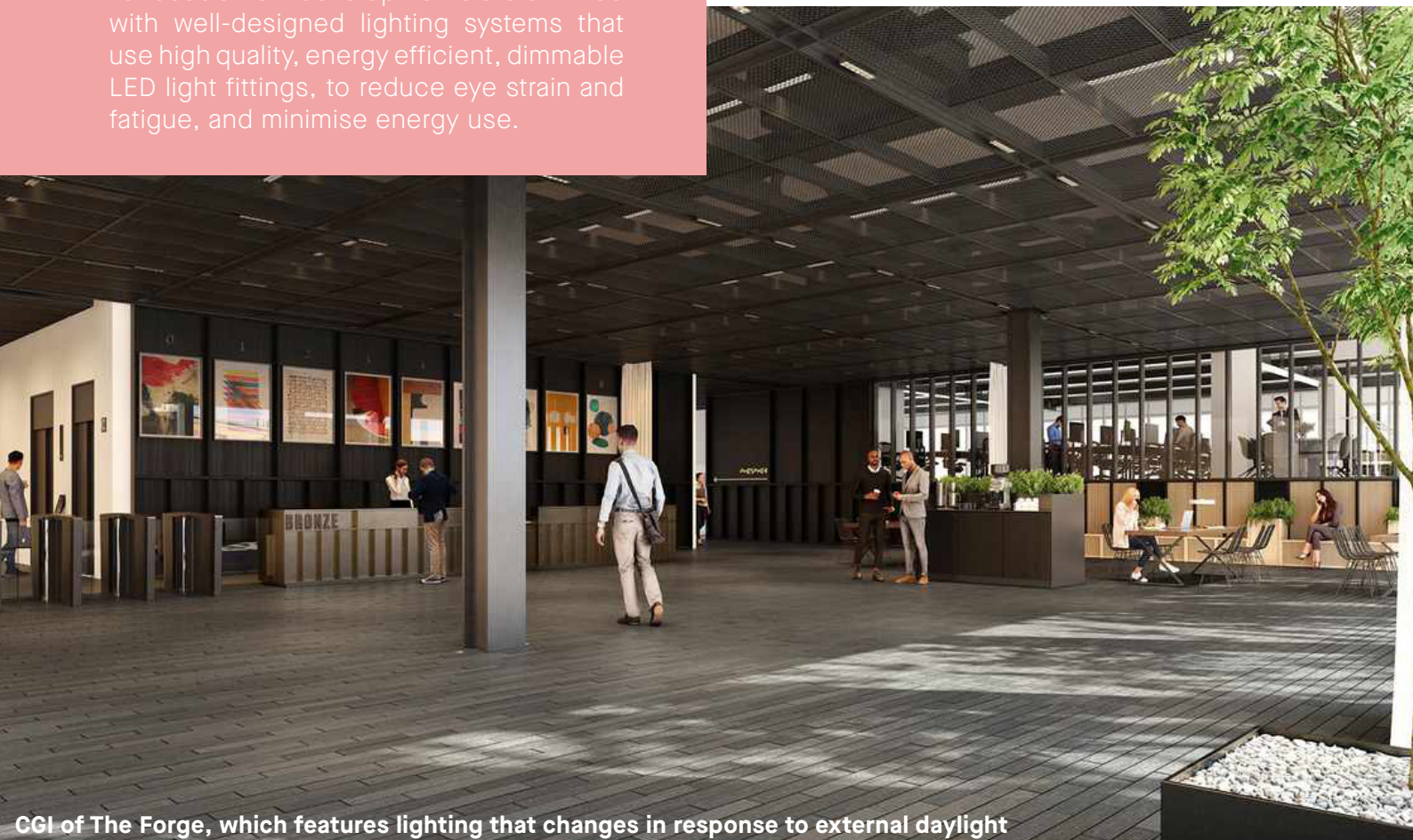
Improving visual comfort in practice

- Technology is used at The Forge which enables electric light levels to automatically change depending on the level of daylight outside. This ensures the building is optimally and efficiently lit at all times.
- Landsec's new developments are all fitted with well-designed lighting systems that use high quality, energy efficient, dimmable LED light fittings, to reduce eye strain and fatigue, and minimise energy use.

3.3 Visual comfort through quality lighting

Just as daylight exposure is important for well-being, researchers have also seen the benefits of artificial lighting on visual performance and health. [Poor lighting](#) can result in symptoms which may lead to reduced performance, particularly if the work is computer-based. Flicker is often responsible for [eye strain and headaches](#), and even the colour of lighting has been shown to affect how we feel.

[A survey-based study](#) that looked at the impact of lighting on workers showed that 71% of participants felt more energised and 60% felt more motivated working in optimal lighting conditions. With so much research in this area, [workplace lighting regulations](#) and [WELL Building Standard requirements](#) have been designed to support employee health and productivity.



CGI of The Forge, which features lighting that changes in response to external daylight

3.4 The optimal acoustic environment

According to the [World Health Organisation](#), noise is the second biggest global disease burden behind air pollution. Noise can cause physical and mental stress, with exposure to loud sounds potentially [increasing cortisol levels and blood pressure](#). As such, quality of acoustics and the mitigation of sound distractions is an important factor in a comfortable work environment.

When considering acoustics, there is research to suggest that the office is not always preferable to a home setting, with aural discomfort being one of the main sources of distractions for employees in open plan offices. [A study of 88 workers](#) showed that 99% of them reported impaired concentration when exposed to distracting noises. Therefore, for those who have a quiet home environment remote working has its advantages, particularly on tasks where a high level of focus is required.

Well-designed, healthy offices mitigate against noise pollution through a variety of work zones and the use of sound insulation. Meeting rooms are acoustically insulated, and private booths are utilised so that employees can focus on individual tasks. It is important for companies to provide the option of flexible working so that employees can move around within the office, and those who have more distracting home environments can also choose to work in the office and vice versa.

Neck pain worsened in

50%

of employees after
moving from the
office to home

Optimising acoustic comfort in practice

- Landsec has factored this in across its sites by way of acoustic panels and innovative forms of sound insulation.
- At Lucent, features like the acoustic wall in the winter garden are designed to reduce noise and create a peaceful environment.
- Meanwhile, the MYO flex office spaces provide a range of zones for different tasks and activities.

3.5 Ergonomics are key to reducing absenteeism

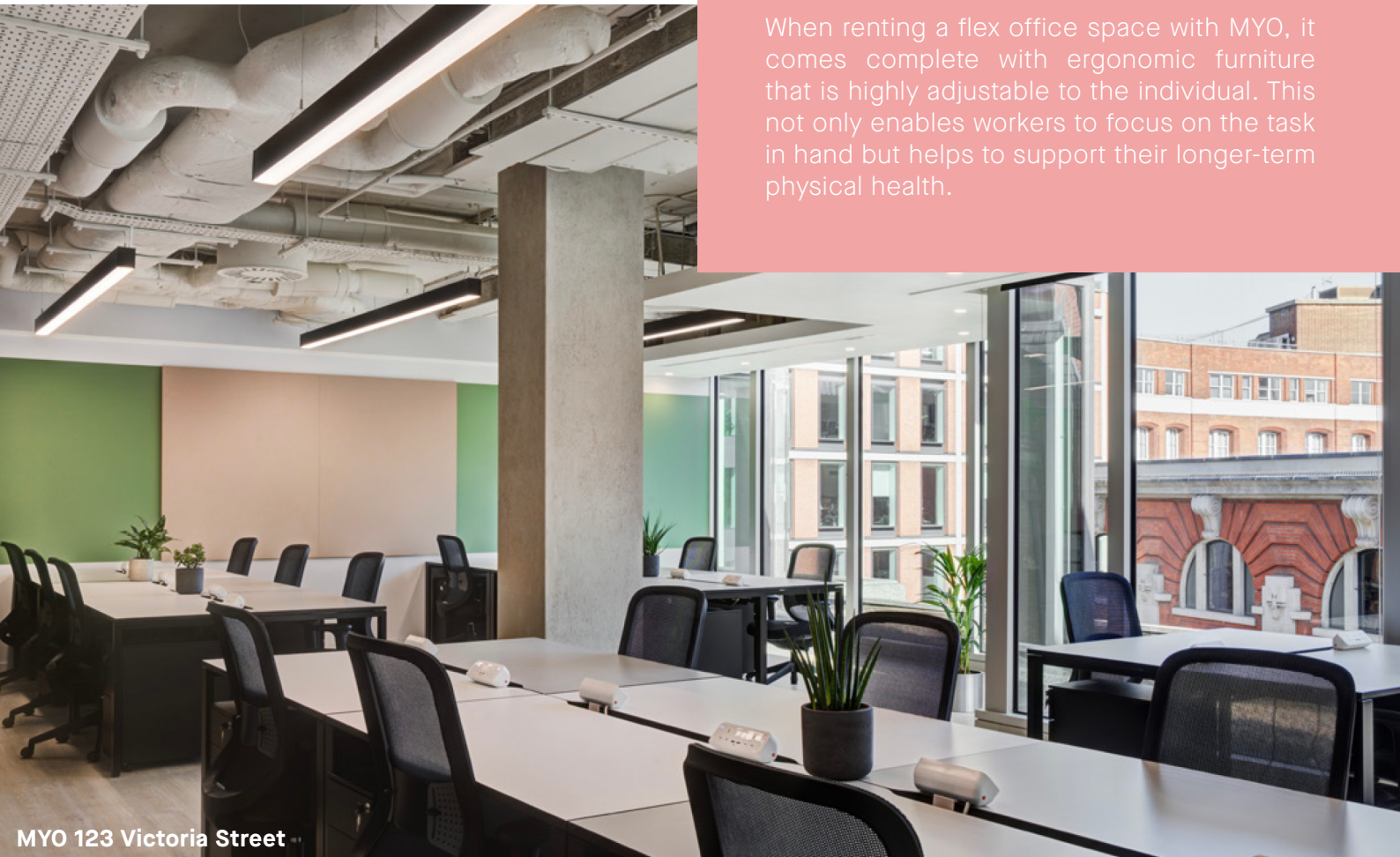
As office work generally consists of desk-based tasks, physical ergonomics plays a major role in the comfort and health of employees. [HSE statistics](#) show that in 2019/20, almost 9 million working days were lost due to work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

When considering the ergonomics of your workspace, remote working may have some disadvantages. [A study on office workers](#) who converted to home working during the pandemic saw lower back pain prevalence in 41.2% of respondents and neck pain in 50% of respondents, suggesting that many of us are not working in an ergonomic home set-up.

Effective office ergonomics [reduce the average numbers of MSDs by 61%, lost workdays by 88%, and staff turnover by 87%](#). Healthy office buildings generally provide furniture that meets HSE guidelines, and for those developments certified with the WELL Building Standard, this is a precondition.

Improving ergonomics in practice

When renting a flex office space with MYO, it comes complete with ergonomic furniture that is highly adjustable to the individual. This not only enables workers to focus on the task in hand but helps to support their longer-term physical health.



MYO 123 Victoria Street

Key takeaways

- **Design consideration:** Solar shading, high quality lighting, insulation, and a variety of work zones would all help to improve occupant comfort and productivity levels
- **Quick win:** Workstation furniture that meets HSE ergonomic guidelines will help to support musculoskeletal health and reduce absenteeism

04

Healthy food choices, time to dine and social eating opportunities

4.1 Finding the environment that promotes healthy choices

The ways in which environments affect our food choices is heavily dependent on the individual and their cooking and eating preferences. A key benefit of working from home is the ability to control your environment and choose what to stock your cupboards with; removing the temptation of unhealthy snacks that might have been available in the office. For those who enjoy cooking, the advantage of having access to your fridge and cooker is that you have the means to prepare daily meals from scratch.

Cooking at home is associated with [higher intake of fruits and vegetables](#), and lower consumption of [calories and sugar](#). Home working also enables people to eat larger meals for breakfast and lunch, rather than relying on a home-cooked meal in the evening that contains the majority of daily calories which is [associated with poor blood sugar control](#) and increased risk of metabolic disease. Those employees who enjoy preparing their own food can still do so and take it with them to the office, but for this reason workplaces should have kitchen areas with the means to store, prepare, heat and eat food.

41%

of people admit to being more likely to work through their lunch break while working from home



Dining opportunities at Nova Victoria

4.2 Time spent eating is an important predictor of health outcomes

If more time is spent preparing food, does that mean less time is left to eat it? [UK research](#) shows that 41% of British people admit to being more likely to work through their lunch breaks now they are working from home. For those who are time-constrained, and those who do not enjoy cooking, it may be harder to eat healthy meals when working from home if they need preparing first. [Evidence suggests](#) that the less time we spend eating, the more likely we are to have problems with blood sugar regulation issues and body mass index (BMI), while skipping meals is associated with a [reduction in dietary variety, quality and nutrient intake](#). Rushing our meals or eating them in front of screens also has a number of detrimental effects on the [digestive system](#) and absorption of essential nutrients.

4.3 The power of social dining

For some employees, a return to the office may benefit them from a nutritional perspective as the act of dining with team members has advantages.

Social contact with those who are not family members is associated with making healthier food choices. [One study](#) showed that more time alone was associated with reduced variety of fruits and vegetables in the diet. When translated into an office environment, it may be that those who take lunchbreaks with colleagues will be more inclined to choose healthy options.

Offices should also provide dining areas and/or cafés to encourage workers to eat socially and away from their desks. [Research](#) has identified mental and physical health benefits of social eating by way of connecting people, [increasing feelings of well-being](#) and encouraging more mindful eating habits. A social dining routine is something that could also be adopted at home in a family or house-share environment.

Encouraging healthy eating in practice

- Landsec select prime sites for their office buildings, with excellent accessibility and local amenities. As a result, they generally have a variety of grocery, café and restaurant options within walking distance. The Nova masterplan has made food into a focal point with 17 restaurants and cafes, artisan food markets and grocery stores on site.
- At Dashwood there is a dedicated eating space on the ground floor with a large communal dining table to facilitate communal lunch breaks away from the desk.

Café at Dashwood



Key takeaways

- **Design consideration:** Healthy workplaces should include meal preparation and dining facilities that promote eating wholefood-based meals and social dining over a dedicated lunch period, along with easy access to good-quality water to support hydration
- **Quick win:** Providing fresh fruit for employees and limiting the amount of ultra-processed foods in the office will help to encourage healthy dietary choices

05

Air quality and reducing toxic exposure for health and productivity

5.1 How the indoor environment determines health

We spend up to 90% of our time indoors, where air quality can vary greatly. As this can either benefit our overall productivity and health or be potentially harmful, it is important to consider the amount of fresh air available, the presence of fine dust, levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and the amount of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) in the air, which can come from furniture, paints, building materials or cleaning products. Future-facing buildings should take all of these aspects into account to determine healthy indoor air quality.

The differences between air quality in our homes and offices will become important for companies to consider when establishing a balance of hybrid working for their employees. In 2021, a review was published comparing indoor air quality in employees' homes to that of typical offices. They found a significant increase in all of the measured contaminants in homes in comparison to offices. For example, levels of fine dust (PM2.5) – which are linked to the development of acute and chronic bronchitis, asthma, cardiopulmonary disorders and other health issues – were typically found to be more than double in homes.

“A 2021 review found a significant increase in measured air contaminants in homes when compared to offices”



An increase in CO₂ can also be damaging to our health and performance. Modern office buildings increasingly have sensors to monitor levels and prevent these getting too high. It does not take long for airtight rooms to reach unsafe levels of CO₂, which have been associated with poorer decision-making, headaches, insomnia and feelings of nausea. Productivity is also affected. Research shows the ease with which CO₂ builds up to 1,000 parts per million (ppm) in occupied and poorly ventilated rooms, and that this can reduce occupants' decision-making abilities by 11%-23%.

CO₂ levels of 1,000 ppm can
reduce decision-making
abilities by

11-23%

Workspaces that are built to well-being standards with advanced ventilation systems are designed to maintain optimal air quality. Mechanical ventilation systems consider the number of air changes and litres of fresh air delivered per person to support people's health as well as optimising productivity levels. A 2011 lab test found that increasing ventilation from 5 litres per second (l/s) to 20 improved work performance by up to 8%. Such equipment can make all the difference in optimising the 'invisible' air environment for health and performance, in a way that cannot readily be replicated in our homes.

However, it is important to note that this is an area in which well-being and sustainability do not wholly align. Running a continuous mechanical ventilation system can be energy intensive, so offices must prioritise the use of energy-efficient ventilation systems and renewable energy sources in order to provide clean air sustainably. Natural ventilation strategies should always be considered and utilised in work environments where the outdoor air quality is good enough.

Another way for workplaces to improve air quality is through the selection of building materials, furnishings and cleaning products that are free from toxic chemicals. There is now a wide range of furnishings and materials that have been independently assessed in laboratories for their impact on indoor air quality, such as those with GreenGuard and Cradle to Cradle certification. This is making it easier for architects and designers to select both sustainable and healthy materials for the construction and fit-out of office developments.

Improving air quality in practice

- Landsec office developments have highly effective mechanical ventilation systems producing a continuous, generous supply of fresh, filtered air and often have air quality monitors which continuously assess the internal environment.
- The material specifications in Landsec developments consider the health of both the building occupants and the planet. There is a focus on 100% responsible sourcing and the materials are tracked in line with BREEAM and WELL requirements.
- The Forge uses a Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) approach that has benefits in terms of construction time, material efficiency and reduced waste. They also use paints, rubber and vinyl flooring in the communal areas that meet the WELL requirements for low VOCs and formaldehyde in order to support healthy air quality inside the buildings.
- The reduction of toxic chemicals in Landsec offices is carried through into latest cleaning protocols. These include a new cleaning technology which is free from chemicals and instead ionises water into liquid ozone which is harmless to humans, and does not cause measurable impact on air quality.

Key takeaways

- **Design consideration:** High quality ventilation strategies in workplace environments are necessary for supporting the health of employees as well as performance, and can also help to reduce the spread of airborne diseases
- **Quick win:** Using air filters and implementing non-toxic cleaning protocols help to support excellent ongoing air quality

06

Space and nature keep the mind positive and engaged

6.1 Our physical environments and our mental state

In recent years, the mental well-being of employees has risen on the agenda, and with good reason: [poor mental health costs UK employers £30 billion a year](#) through reduced productivity, absences and recruitment. Given that numerous studies from environmental psychology can now demonstrate a clear link between the built environment and our state of mind, it is fundamental that our workplaces are designed to support mental well-being.

We have discovered in the last year that the design of our homes does not always best support our mental health, particularly when they are used for both working and living in. [31% of Brits](#) experienced mental or physical health issues through lockdown attributed to lack of space in their homes. Offices provide an opportunity to address many of these issues.

Psychology-led design in practice

MYO projects have been designed to have various zones from busy social areas to quiet meeting rooms and booths. MYO Liverpool Street contains timber end-cut flooring, ensuring natural materials run through the building. This is complemented by prominent planting throughout, including a green planted staircase, maximising occupant exposure to nature.



New Street Square Urban Greening Living wall

31%

of Brits have experienced mental or physical health issues as a result of lack of space in their homes

6.2 The human desire for flexibility and control

How much control we have over our circumstances is a key factor in how positive we feel, with 'freedom to choose what you do in life' [identified as one of the key measures of happiness](#) by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in 2016. This need for control and adaptability translates to the built environment, with [research showing](#) that the ability to change layouts in our homes is more important to people than the size of the rooms.

If designed and operated correctly, offices can give employees greater flexibility than their homes in terms of the type of space they choose to work in, from busy or quiet; open or enclosed; to bright or dimly lit. [Recent research](#) showed that where we choose to sit can have a significant impact on our productivity and how we feel, highlighting the importance of giving employees a choice of work settings from the traditional desk to a large communal area or a small quiet space, depending on the work task.

6.3 Separation of work from home

Before Spring 2020, the vast majority of people were not well equipped with the experience, space or equipment for remote working. As a result, a challenge many have faced is the ability to separate work and home.

This has impacted the number of hours people are working, with the average UK working week [increasing by nearly 25%](#). To some extent we have also lost the psychological separation between the activities of working and relaxing. [Research tells us](#) that people who set clear boundaries between their work life and home life are less likely to experience conflict between the two areas, as they are better equipped to 'switch off' one and concentrate on the other.

In terms of hours worked, home working has led to the average UK working week increasing by nearly

25%

Home working has impacted the physical spaces of our homes too, as the clutter and paraphernalia of work has snuck into our living, dining and resting places. This will vary from person to person but can have an impact on how we feel within a space. A cluttered home may have led to higher amounts of stress by [raising cortisol levels](#). Spending the majority of our working hours in a well-designed office with optimal storage will allow us to leave work-related items at work and better support our nervous systems.

6.4 Biophilic design and the stress-relieving power of nature

One of the biggest factors in how our environment can positively impact our mood is based on the extent to which it encourages interaction with nature. Biophilia, meaning 'love of life' is the theory that, because we evolved as part of nature, we have an in-built need for contact with natural things such as plants, animals or water.

The research supports this theory in many ways – [showing for example](#) that natural building materials such as timber can make us feel calmer. The same report also suggests that access to views of nature, indoor plants, and proximity to high-quality outdoor spaces are all linked to lower stress levels, better performance and higher job satisfaction.

Biophilic design in practice

- Timber Square has made the most of the opportunities presented by natural materials, using cross-laminated timber as both a structural and aesthetic element.
- Numerous Landsec offices also encourage interaction with nature through high-quality outdoor spaces, such as Lucent which has over 600 plants on site, across 22 terraces, or the New Street Square development with its green wall and public square.

These learnings can be applied in our workplaces by way of introducing indoor plants and natural materials, and providing access to good quality outdoor spaces. Future-facing buildings are working hard to provide that important slice of nature, be this through green terraces or social areas surrounded by beautiful plants or views onto parks and green spaces.



Key takeaways

- **Design consideration:** Workplaces designed to optimise health and well-being should ensure they offer a variety of spaces and zones to provide employees with the feeling of control over their environment
- **Quick win:** Adequate storage solutions in offices and homes will prevent the build-up of workplace clutter and the inclusion of plants and natural materials can be incorporated to help manage stress levels

07 Conclusion

The future of work will inevitably be split between different environments. This decision for many companies to adopt a hybrid working approach will have a number of benefits to employees by allowing for greater flexibility, connection and focus.

However, the quality of these environments is of paramount importance in terms of how they impact our health, well-being and overall ability to do our jobs. In considering the key environmental determinants of health and performance, where we work has a significant impact on both individual well-being and business success. It should therefore be a primary concern for companies and individuals to create optimal environments or improve their existing workplaces by taking a holistic approach to design, fit-out and operations.



Healthy workplaces are those that have better air quality, optimised lighting, a variety of acoustically insulated work zones, ergonomic desk set-ups, and less-toxic materials and cleaning practices than your average office or home. They are the places that will encourage us to move more, eat well and get enough daylight exposure to support good quality sleep that will enable us to perform better. Choice of location, design, engineering, procurement, fit-out, operations and management will all have a part to play in creating and sustaining these environments to support employees and encourage business growth.

The science shows the importance of working in a *healthy* office. A well-designed office can offer benefits from some environmental factors that can be more challenging to achieve at home. Mechanical ventilation, indoor air quality, thermal comfort monitoring, acoustically insulated work zones, access to nature, high quality lighting, social dining opportunities and many other factors are necessary to not simply support health, but to optimise it.

Alongside this, companies should also look to assist employees in improving their home environments for those days of the week that remote working is desired. This can be done through ergonomic desk assessments, improved lighting, air purifiers, fans and heating to ensure that no matter where they find themselves working, the environment has been optimised to promote better health and performance.

The future of work will be more flexible, but it also has to be healthy.

TIPS FOR CREATING HEALTHY WORKPLACES

Sleep support

Design consideration: Focus on increasing exposure to natural light through window design and generous glazing with shallower floorplates where possible

Quick win: Position desks as close to the windows as possible to increase natural daylight exposure, sleep quality and productivity



Encouraging movement

Design consideration: Feature staircases and active commuting facilities should be provided to encourage daily movement

Quick win: Providing access to fitness classes either virtually or in-person may encourage employees to exercise more frequently and regularly



Improving physical and visual comfort

Design considerations: Solar shading, high quality lighting, insulation, and a variety of work zones would all help to improve occupant comfort and productivity levels

Quick win: Workstation furniture that meets HSE ergonomic guidelines will help to support musculoskeletal health and reduce absenteeism



Promoting optimal nutrition

Design consideration: Healthy workplaces should include meal preparation and dining facilities that promote eating from wholefood-based meals and social dining over a dedicated lunch period, along with easy access to good-quality water to support hydration

Quick win: Providing fresh fruit for employees and limiting the amount of ultra-processed foods in the office will help to encourage healthy dietary choices



Improving air quality

Design consideration: High quality ventilation strategies in workplace environments are necessary for supporting the health of employees as well as performance, and can also help to reduce the spread of airborne diseases

Quick wins: Using air filters and implementing non-toxic cleaning protocols help to support excellent ongoing air quality



Supporting mental health

Design consideration: Workplaces designed to optimise health and well-being should ensure they offer a variety of spaces and zones to provide employees with the feeling of control over their environment

Quick wins: Adequate storage solutions in offices and homes will prevent the build-up of workplace clutter and the inclusion of plants and natural materials can be incorporated to help manage stress levels

