



CAREERS

Why I . . . cycle to work

North east GP Mark Dornan tells **Adrian O'Dowd** how cycling to work helps him destress, keep fit, and be a better doctor

Adrian O'Dowd

London, UK

Cycling to work has become an important part of Mark Dornan's working and personal life, helping his health and wellbeing.

Dornan is a GP partner in a Gateshead practice, chair of Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and a GP trainer. "Balancing all the roles we have these days as doctors can be quite tricky," he says. "It's good to create some space in your life to leave the difficulties of one job and to prepare for the challenges of the next one."

He adds, "Life at home is busy too, with children, church, and other commitments. I spend my time between my practice and the CCG. Cycling is a good way of managing the transition between the busyness of either side."

Dornan says his father, also a GP and chair of his local primary care trust, inspired him to cycle. "He chose to cycle both as a way to keep fit and to manage stress between work and home."

It takes Dornan about 35 minutes to cycle from home to his practice—compared with a 20 minute drive—and 20 minutes to cycle to the CCG building. The only time he can't cycle is when he's on-call and doing home visits.

Workplaces need the right facilities for staff who exercise, Dornan believes. "You need to prepare your building to make sure you have showers, a place to leave clothes and change, and somewhere to lock your bike," he says.

"At the CCG we've gone a step further and have an electric car which means we can cycle there and then use the pool car for the work that requires it. That's been a real transformation and helped the CCG with its car parking problems."

Dornan is a huge advocate for cycling's ability to improve his wellbeing at work. "On the whole, cycling to work is a really

positive experience. It starts your day off well. On those days when I'm rushing and not cycling, I start the day the wrong way," he says.

"Even though I have to leave home slightly earlier and return later when I'm cycling, the benefit is that I'm a nicer person when I come home because I've managed to clear my brain of all the things from work. It also fills one of my exercise slots of the week."

He adds, "We all live busy lives and if we're going to be good doctors and not burn out, we have to look after ourselves. I hugely recommend cycling. You can be a better doctor as well as a better spouse or parent through doing that, but it does require a bit of planning."

How to make the change:

- Talk to colleagues to prepare for cycle friendly working premises
- Ensure workplaces have the appropriate facilities—showers, changing rooms, and secure storage space for bicycles
- Consider rearranging working patterns to allow for staff to cycle
- Consider using a pool of electric cars
- Have a bike to work scheme so people can buy a bike through work

How do you improve your own wellbeing at work? If you, or a colleague, have made a positive change we want to hear about it. Please send a short summary to arimmer@bmj.com

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