Organisational Targets:

Monthly counts of bikes parked on the SVUH campus have been made since 2011, but some yearly data is available since 2006 (when the first Bike to Work day was run, with a daily count the week before and the week after the event). In 2012, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for cycling, using the monthly bike counts, was set by the hospital’s Health Promotion Committee and included in the SVUH Health Promotion Policy. To achieve the top ‘green’ level, the target was 241 bikes or more. A more achievable target of 230+ bikes was set in 2013, but when this was reached almost monthly in 2014, a stretching target was set of 250+ bikes parked on site.

Results Achieved:

The target of 250 bikes parked on site was exceeded during five months in 2014 (February, August, September, October and November). The average of the monthly readings in 2014 was 247 bikes. This represents a 125% increase on the initial count in 2006 of 110 bikes and a 17% increase on the 2013 count which was 211 bikes. The graph below shows significant year on year increases:

A total of 789 bikes have been purchased under the Cycle to Work tax relief scheme and processing of each purchase takes place within one week. Bike to work days have been organised since 2006, a full week of cycling activities took place in 2008, and lectures by relevant politicians have been organised regularly.

Additionally, SVUH has twice participated in the Smarter Travel Workplaces 10 minute cycle challenge, and in 2013, Kirsten Doherty won the Best Coordinator Prize. A team from SVUH won first prize nationally in the 2013 pedometer challenge (organised in SVUH by Irene Gilroy), and cycling strongly contributed to their overall steps.

A poster presentation of a survey of transport modes in the hospital, focusing on needs of cyclists and potential cyclists, was awarded a prize at the 2013 International Health Promoting Hospitals conference in Gothenburg, and the abstract was subsequently published in Clinical Health Promotion.

Doherty et al. (2013) ‘Two schools of thought: barriers and incentives to cycling among staff in a Dublin academic hospital.’ Clinical Health Promotion, 3 (2): 60.

How results were achieved

Co-ordinated promotion and facilitation of cycling by:

- The Dept. of Preventive Medicine and Health Promotion, Health Promotion Committee, and the Bicycle User Group which was established in 2008
- Staff surveys (initiated by SVUH and supported by NTA Smarter Travel Workplaces) revealing cycling participation, barriers and incentives towards cycling
- Instillation of high quality covered, and in some cases locked, bicycle parking areas in 2010 – 2011
- Improvement of showering and changing facilities & ongoing review by Health Promotion Committee and relevant departments
- Support of Cycle to Work tax relief scheme – efficient processing of applications by Finance department & promotion of the scheme at cycling events and on intranet
- Bike to Work day - commenced 2006 (bike displays, cyclists given voucher for breakfast in canteen, participant raffle and information)
- Cycling lectures by politicians who have advocated cycling
- SVUH cycling leaflet first produced in 2010
- Active promotion of cycling through ‘Healthwise’ newsletter, email and posters
- Participation in the 10 minute Bike Challenge twice, supported by additional internal prizes of bike vouchers
- Servicing of staff bikes by local company who collect in the morning, service bikes and return at the end of the day
- Negotiated discount in certain bike shops for staff
How colleagues were involved in reaching the targets:

The involvement of a range of departments and staff in a co-ordinated fashion has been integral to the success of cycling in SVUH and the achievement of reaching the cycling targets.

The Department of Preventive Medicine and Health Promotion, and allied staff from UCD’s School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, play an active role in promoting the contribution that active travel, including cycling, can make to health.

Hospital senior management, including CEOs, have provided support and funding for cycle promotion events.

Key committees include the Health Promotion Committee, the Active@work Committee and the Sports & Social Club Committee.

Support from the Finance Department and Human Resources Department facilitate the tax saver scheme and the flexible working hours policy, both of which enable physical activity before and after work.

Dr Kirsten Doherty, Senior Health Promotion Officer, generates overview SVUH cycling information and data, and provides high level promotion and engagement; Irene Gilroy, from the same department, supports the various cycling promotion events e.g. cycle challenges, bike breakfasts; Bettina Nolan supports the expansion and improvement of cycling-related facilities, and Jerry McSweeney, chair of the hospital’s Bicycle User Group communicates the staff cycling experience and is involved in organising the cycling events.

How activities above fit into your organisations wider agenda (e.g. CSR, environmental, student/employee health and wellbeing etc.)

SVUH is a member of the Irish Health Promoting Health Services Network, which sets standards for hospitals in physical activity to help combat the rise in chronic diseases. Standards that include physical activity and active commuting are also set by the Dept. of Health’s 2013 ‘Healthy Ireland’ framework and the 2014 HSE ‘From Standards to Practice Guidance: Document for Hospitals’.

We have a social responsibility to create a healthy environment in our local community. By increasing bicycle use, car parking space is released for hospital facilities and green areas, and local road congestion is reduced. The latter two effects reduce air pollution which is a contributor to respiratory and cardiac disease. Mental health is also affected by availability of green areas and by physical activity.

Our users include patients, visitors, students and over 3000 staff. We positively influence the health of these groups through cycling by providing proper cycling facilities, promoting cycling, providing management support and organisational approval. When staff and students use healthy methods of commuting it may positively influence their advice to patients, and they provide positive role models.

Overall, promotion of cycling fits with the hospital’s health promoting agenda of encouraging physical activity, through our Slí na Slainte, pedometer and cycle challenges and previous exercise challenges over almost two decades.


Relevant photos/illustrations (an illustrative selection of those received):