

# Running away with an award

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**ATHLETE** Kriss Akabusi has helped a Sunderland firm set the pace on employee health.

The Olympic medallist was in town for the North East Better Health at Work Awards, where he presented Deptford-based ABB with a bronze award for its efforts to help workers lead healthier lifestyles.

The TUC-backed awards are managed by specialist training provider **Amacus** for a partnership of Gateshead College, the NHS and the Primary Care Trusts for South of Tyne and Wear.

The scheme encourages employers to help workers lead healthier lifestyles by offering advice and support and running health initiatives at work.

Electrical switchgear manufacturer ABB was one of many organisations across the region taking part. Since getting involved last year, the company has introduced a range of initiatives including a weight-loss programme, healthy eating and exercise scheme, back pain advice sessions, as well as stress and mental health drop-ins.

These activities were introduced by volunteers within the company known as health advocates. The **Amacus** team worked with them to identify the main health concerns and gave them basic advice to tackle the problems.

More than half the workforce has now undergone health checks and many have gone on to take part in activities like the Great North Run and Three Peaks Challenge.

ABB health advocate John Brampton said: "The awards have been hugely beneficial, lifted morale and brought about positive changes in employee health.

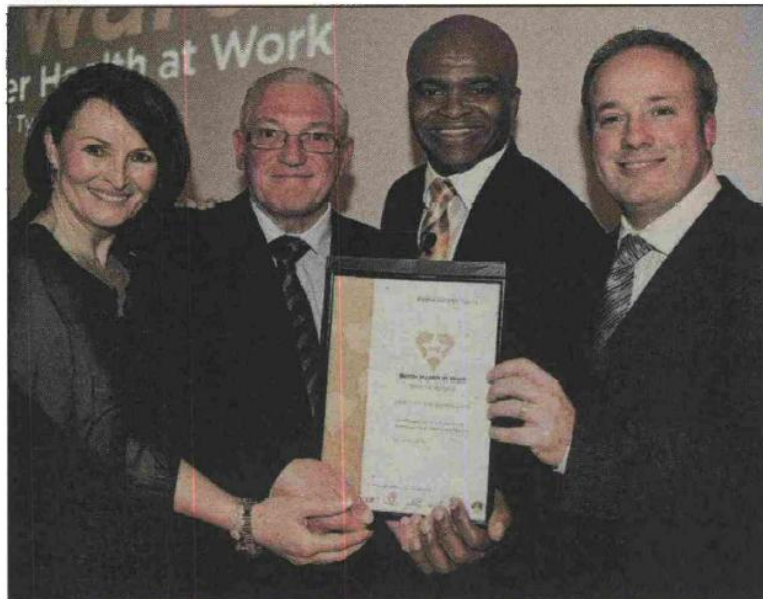
"Our colleagues have thoroughly enjoyed being involved and it's had a noticeable lift on people's health and enthusiasm."

Kriss Akabusi added: "I know from my own career the benefits to be gained

from being fit and healthy and how big an impact it can have on your performance in the workplace.

"It makes good business sense for employers to focus on the wellbeing of their employees and has a massive impact on motivation and productivity.

"I always loved competing in the North East and I'm delighted to see the impact the awards have had here. It's a pleasure to celebrate the achievements of these companies and their health advocates."



**BRONZE MEDAL:** John Brampton and Chris Smith, of ABB, receive their award from Christine Murray, of **Amacus** and Kriss Akabusi.