

# ‘Change is easier than you think’



**C**hirs Perry is not a morning person. But riding into work each day is helping to change that. The 23-year-old is on a year-long placement with the Health Improvement Commission. He is studying psychology at the University of Sussex and is interested in what motivates people to get and then stay healthy. Chris initially began walking to work after the car he shared with his brother broke down. It was easier than getting the bus, he joked. ‘I’m not a morning person,’ he said. ‘So coming in and feeling awake straight away after my walk was an instant benefit that I noticed. ‘I just kept on going. Then a couple months later, I decided to get a bike because I thought it’d be even quicker. ‘I’m still very lazy so I try to take the easiest route.’ He got a secondhand bike from the Go charity shop and has been cycling in since – unless the weather is really

bad and he will use the car. Working at the Commission also means there is access to e-bikes for meetings during work time, while the staff also walk a lap of the 1km long Dorothy Langlois Nature Trail around the KGV during lunch breaks. ‘After sitting at a screen for a couple of hours, you do feel more awake coming back to it,’ he said. ‘It fits with some research that I’ve seen. When you go out and you’re doing some exercise, you’re pumping blood to your brain, because your heart rate’s up. So your brain is more active, you feel more alert, and your job doesn’t seem as bad.’ Chris was quite sedentary before he began his new routine. He might take the bus to Town, but would drive everywhere else. ‘I was always tired,’ he said. ‘I wouldn’t say that exercise is definitely the reason, but it strongly correlates that I started doing exercise and I now feel a lot better.’ He said making the change was easier than people

might think. ‘If you want to cycle, you can go to charity shops,’ he said. ‘It’s not actually expensive. The thing that was stopping me was the price of a bike. You’ll notice the benefits within a week, two weeks, of just being more awake. ‘If you’re not a morning person like me, you’ll definitely notice it in the morning instead of driving in like a zombie.’ Route planning is also important, he said, trying to avoid busy roads by using alternative lanes. It may add a few more minutes, but it will be quieter. ‘Once you get over the initial barriers and start doing it for maybe a week or two, it gets a lot easier,’ he said. ‘Because you’ll already have a route, you’ll have the equipment and you’ll notice your stamina will go up quite quickly and it’ll become literally easier and probably more fun.’ Incorporating active travel into your day can also be a starting point for more exercise, like the couch to 5k.