



# Co%ownership

co-  
owner  
ship.  
org



Health &  
Wellbeing  
Report  
2020/21

## Contents

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Foreword: .....             | 3  |
| Introduction: .....         | 4  |
| A year in review: .....     | 5  |
| April 2020 .....            | 5  |
| June 2020 .....             | 5  |
| October 2020 .....          | 6  |
| November 2020.....          | 6  |
| December 2020.....          | 6  |
| February 2021.....          | 8  |
| March 2021 .....            | 8  |
| Ongoing support: .....      | 10 |
| Meet the HWB Team: .....    | 11 |
| Gillian Lavery: .....       | 11 |
| Bridin Captain:.....        | 12 |
| Louise Kearney: .....       | 13 |
| Gillian Hughes:.....        | 14 |
| Louise Tully:.....          | 15 |
| Lynn Harrigan:.....         | 16 |
| Michael Brown:.....         | 17 |
| Paula Dillon: .....         | 18 |
| Judith McConville: .....    | 19 |
| What the future holds:..... | 20 |

## Foreword:



At Co-Ownership, we have always strived to support the health and wellbeing of the people that work here. Promoting and supporting good physical and mental health reduces absence and makes for a more productive organisation, but more importantly it is the right thing to do as a socially responsible organisation that cares about its people.

Over the last number of years our commitment to health and wellbeing and the benefits it brings has been recognised through the external awards and recognition we have received, including the Irish News Awards and the Investors in People assessment.

The last year of course brought many health and wellbeing challenges as we faced up to living and working through a pandemic.

The Health and Wellbeing Team had to rapidly rethink what was needed and what was possible. As you will see below the team really rose to the challenge and delivered a series of relevant and imaginative initiatives.

I hope you all benefited and enjoyed some of the great initiatives below. My favourite was the coffee mornings we held during lockdown. It was lovely just to talk about family, random household things and of course puppies.

Mark Graham

Chief Executive

## **Introduction:**

When thinking back on this year, it is difficult to imagine that we would still be in working separately from each other and not sitting next to our friends in the office. When some staff went home to begin working from home in March 2020 the idea was “3 weeks to flatten the curve”. Fast forward to the time of this report and some of our staff have been working remotely for the over 12 months.

In all that time, the Health and Wellbeing Team has innovated new ways of delivering interactions with our staff and engaging in ways which have supported their journey through COVID. To say the least it has been a difficult year for everyone, friends and family members have lost their lives to COVID and our staff have faced feelings of loneliness, anxiety and sadness.

The HWB Team, have tried to encourage discussion, reaching out and talking to others, recognising kindness in the world, and trying to see beyond this time to the future.

This report will set out what the Team has delivered in what continues to be difficult circumstances and will showcase our commitment to our staff and supporting them feeling well.

In our new Health and Wellbeing Strategy we will continue to look at the specific needs of our staff and understand the external and internal factors which affect their sense of wellbeing. We have produced a new action plan to take us through the next 2 years. We will be launching the new strategy in the autumn.

## A year in review:



### April 2020

Once we knew that remote working, restrictions and being physically apart was here for the long term, the Team had to put some plans on hold and regroup. During those first 3 months the Team issued a Wellbeing Newsletter every week. We kept topics diverse and articles short but packed each issue with as much information as we could.

We covered topics such as home schooling, how to support teenagers during lockdown, eating to support immunity, arm chair yoga, mental health week, plus lots of information about our mental health first aiders, our EAP and staying in touch with colleagues.

### June 2020

We commissioned Jane from [Vital Nutrition](#) to deliver a webinar for all staff on Working Well from Home. It was filled with tips on how to eat for optimal nutrition while at home, from breakfast to snacks and a filling lunch. As the webinar was recorded our staff can access it at any time in future and refer back to Jane's tips and advice.

***"Thank you as always for what I must say is quite a comprehensive set of ideas for eating and exercising. The cheese board (but not a cheese board) is quite interesting –***

***its all about colour and textures and I get that. I will give the butterflies a go but will only send you a picture if my cut-outs are successful. Thanks again for reminding us all the importance of looking after ourselves to look after others – so true.”***

## **October 2020**

Our on-site flu clinic has been running for the last number of years but 2020 had the largest uptake ever. In total 40 staff signed up to receive their vaccination in the office on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020. As part of the clinic we had strict COVID protocols to keep our staff safe whilst in the office. For anyone who was not available on clinic day, they could attend our occupational health provider afterward and still avail of the vaccine.

## **November 2020**

In November we provided our staff with access to a free Wellbeing app provided via our insurance broker. As we couldn't attend gyms in real life we provided an app with hundreds of exercises for all skill levels, recipes, meditations, and yoga. The app also allows users to register for “live” classes which are attended virtually but in real time. The app also gives users points for doing an exercise routine, making a recipe, or completing a yoga practice and points can be used for discounts on FitBit's. The app also has a series of programmes which include reading, videos, exercises to improve sleep.

***“I would just like to email and express my thanks for this fantastic addition to our, already great, list of benefits we receive through work and our brilliant wellbeing team. This is something that I am ‘hoping’ will benefit me and get me back on track towards a healthy mindset and lifestyle. Thanks again to all and please keep up the AMAZING work you all do 😊”***

## **December 2020**

Christmas 2020 was like no other. For many of us, it meant taking a step back from normal festivities to protect our loved ones. As a group, we wanted to do something special for our staff and something that will bring them a spark of joy. Given the success of our Random Act of Kindness series in February 2020, we launched a Christmas version. Staff could nominate one of their colleagues who they felt needed reminded how special they are, and we would send them a very special Christmas gift.

In total we received 40 nominations and selected 5 staff to send a gift to. We have included some of the quotes and pictures from the staff who were surprised with a gift. For those who nominated someone and those who received a nomination but not a tree, we gave each of them a little chocolate bear to say thank you for taking part.

***“Just arrived into the office this morning to find my golden bear. (Thank you to the person who nominated me). Thanks so much for thinking to do this, and for buying the gifts and organising them for people, I appreciate it! Wonderful work wellbeing committee – please keep it up!”***



Our Christmas gift pack included everything including the tree, pot, soil, decorations and lights. The tree could also be planted outside in a garden or larger pot and be available for years to come.

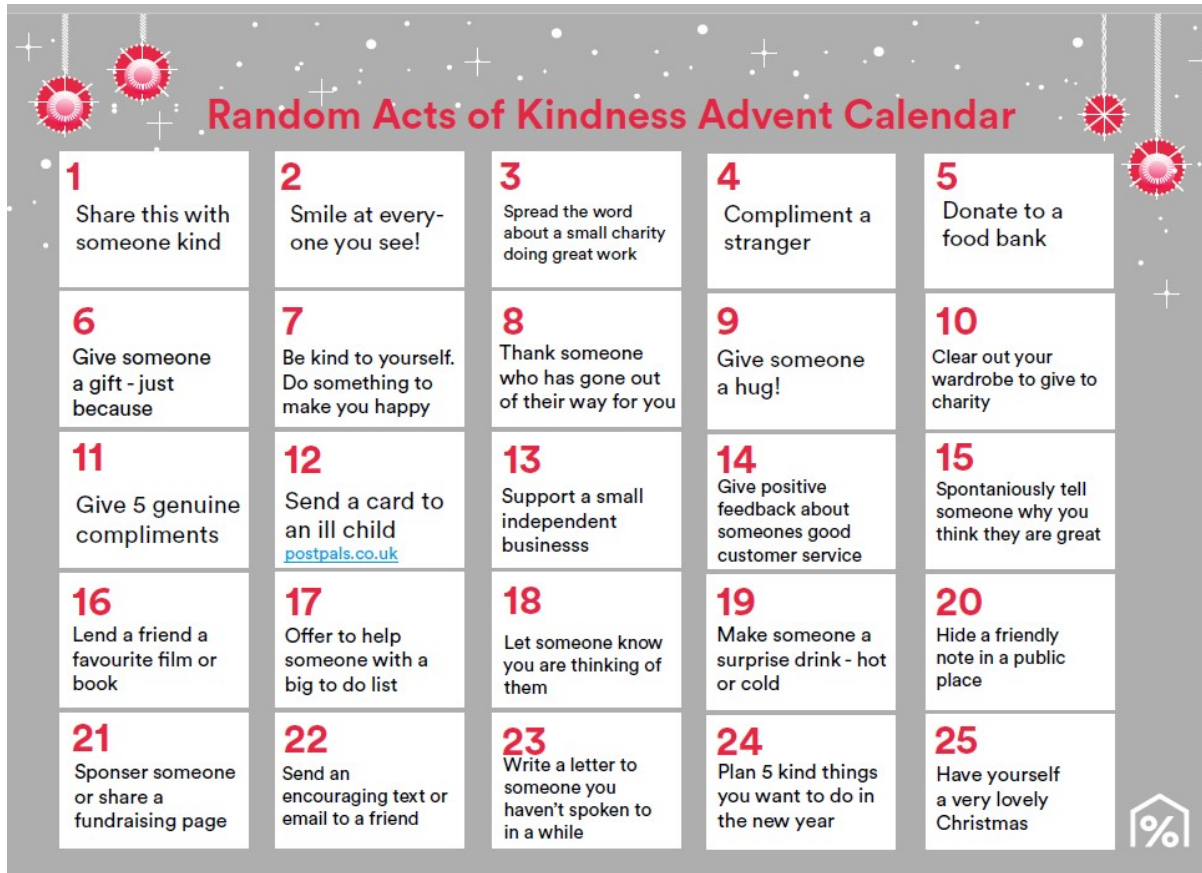
***“A blue peter craft! 😊 What an amazing idea - one for me to use in the future. Such a lovely touch from dear work colleagues. Very much appreciated and accepted with gratitude.”***

***“Thank you it is absolutely beautiful and I will be able to plant it outside in the New Year. It put a big smile on my face when I saw it. Hope you have a lovely Christmas and again Thank You 🎅”***

***“My husband is working from home atm and says I have a special delivery. He didn’t open it but read me the card. Thank you so much – I could cry.”***

It wouldn't be Christmas without an advent calendar but for 2020 we thought that a Kindness calendar was definitely called for. This year has been hard for so many and small acts of

kindness can lift someone when they are feeling low. There are also benefits to the kindness giver and we wanted to challenge staff to do a small thing each day and put some good feelings into the world.



***"Thank you so much for everything you've done this year. Your enthusiasm and dedication to staff well being in such unusual times is admirable. As a not for profit committee, working on behalf of others I am taking the suggestion of the RAK calendar to tell you what a great job you do and to keep it up."***

## February 2021

For the last 2 years we have been able to take part in Time to Talk and although we couldn't have a coffee morning with our usual buns and cakes, we still held the event virtually. It was a simple coffee break, bringing people together to talk and to see each other.

With working remotely there is a risk of feeling disconnected and we wanted a relaxed forum to just take time out and be together. Conversation ranged from the weather, to the garden to how the kids were doing.

## March 2021

Spring always brings new hope with the nights getting longer and the weather starting to improve. It also signalled a year since some of us had been working remotely and other



colleagues based in the office. We know that sometimes the small things are the ones which have the biggest impact so we wanted to send a small reminder to our staff how much we think about them and care for them.

Each member of the HWB Team wrote a number of the cards and sent them to their colleagues, with words of encouragement, kindness and to say “hello”. In keeping with our ethos to shop local and shop social where possible, we bought the postcards from a local social enterprise called [Itty Bitty Book Co.](#)



*“Thank You and the Health & Wellbeing Team for the lovely card and words of kindness, it made me smile and its lovely to know that I not only have colleagues but I have friends that care 😊”*

***“Thanks to all the Health and Wellbeing team for the little card in the post – it is most appreciated. Hopefully see you all soon.”***

## **Ongoing support:**

Along with individual events and links to national wellbeing campaigns, we have a range of benefits which support our staff wellbeing on an ongoing basis.

We currently have 4 Mental Health First Aiders and will be increasing this by a further 2 in the coming 12 months. The MHFA's are a confidential support system who can offer guidance, information and someone to speak to in times of crisis. They are supported with expert training and have knowledge of a range of support services open to all within the community.

Our Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) continues to be Staffcare. They provide 24/7, confidential telephone support and will work with the individual to identify a counsellor in their area who can support with free face-to-face advice.

We continue to support our permanent employees with access to private health insurance, including optical and dental support. This benefit allows our staff to quickly access medical tests and services without worrying about waiting lists.

Our Terms and Conditions provide all staff with access to our occupational sick scheme. This provides our staff (who have over 5 years service) with 6 months full pay and 6 months half pay benefit. Whilst we hope that staff will not need to use it, the scheme means that some of the financial worry of being off ill is removed. We want our staff to be able to take time to recover and know they don't have to worry about their pay.

Alongside this sits our occupational health provision which facilitates our staff returning to work on a phased basis and allowing us to provide support for them. They are the link between understanding how a job role can impact on an illness and we rely on them to provide pragmatic advice to allow staff to return to work. They also have provided us with our flu clinic for the last number of years, delivered in the office, with no cost to our staff.

For the last few years, we have offered the NI run Perks cards to staff. These are provided at no cost to staff and provide savings across a range of categories, including health and fitness, food, days out and breaks. From cheaper gym membership to 2 for 1 at National Trust locations, there is something for everyone. We promote the card, the associated app and anyone who registers their card gets notified of new discounts.

## Meet the HWB Team:

We wanted to let you know a bit about each of us and why we feel passionate about delivering wellbeing for everyone in Co-Ownership.

### Gillian Lavery:



Gillian's happy place 😊

#### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

I have been a member of the H&WB Committee for 4 years and my main interest is mental health. With the ever-increasing pace of everyday work and family life I often find myself feeling stressed and so I love to hear of new ways I can manage and cope with stress and learn different techniques which will help me unwind. I have found many of these strategies have been particularly useful coping with the lockdowns when I have been unable to visit family and friends.

#### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

One of my favourite ways to relax and unwind is taking my dog for a walk in the woods, it is so peaceful and really helps to clear my mind of all the little niggly worries. I also enjoy spending time pottering in the garden and looking after my plants.

#### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

The best advice I could give anyone who is feeling a little under pressure is to get out into nature as it has such a natural calming effect and helps give your head a bit of breathing space from all of life's woes.

## Bridin Captain:



Mr Benji

### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

Like many families, there are family medical histories in mine. Being a mum of 3 girls I have made them aware of any family medical history going back a few generations. This awareness allows us to control and avoid history repeating itself. This is managed via diet and exercise and lifestyle.

### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

We are a close wee family and we all enjoy being around animals especially horses and our latest edition Benji aka Mr Benj.i.man. We got Benji as a puppy a year ago as a rescue. Becoming the main focus in the family he has given the girls and myself an interest in something in common. He brings responsibility and lots of love. He gets us all out walking more often and further. He is like a magnet attracting other walkers with or without dogs to stop and chat.

### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

All issues in life are like a web, by cutting one string you are reducing the tension of another.

# Co/ownership

**Louise Kearney:**



**Charlie Kearney**

**Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

Mental and physical health and wellbeing are really important for lots of reasons and both from a personal and work perspective. As a mum of four – now grown-up kids, they will always be kids to me! – this is essential to managing a busy home and work life. Life throws personal and work challenges at us all – take the last 15 months with COVID – which is why good health and wellbeing is so important to help us cope with life's challenges. And I truly appreciate this point the older I get; taking care of yourself when you are younger, is critical to remaining healthy and well enough to do lots of things as you get older.

**Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

I refused the addition of a dog to the Kearney clan for years, explaining I was too busy for a fifth child! Wrong decision, Charlie Kearney (CK) has brought a whole new dimension to our family. He invigorated us to do the daily walks and we now plan longer walks round Tullymore Forest, Clare Glen and the Mourne at weekends. My wellbeing passion is walking – free, fresh air, nature and you can do whenever suits best!

**What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:** Take care of you so that you can take care of the family and friends around you.

## Gillian Hughes:



The ducks in Gillian's garden

### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

After always taking my physical and mental health for granted, I became aware of the importance of looking after your own health and well-being following an unexpected bereavement. With a youngish family, (at the time), I began to think more about how to look after my own mental and physical health.

### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

Like a lot of people, I don't always get it right and I have lapses when I don't eat healthily or make time to exercise and relax but being a member of the HWB team is a reminder. I do quite a bit of walking, do c25k (sporadically!!), and sometimes go to yoga classes. I'm lucky to have quite a big garden. I'm definitely not an expert gardener, but just keeping on top of the cutting and trimming gives me quite a bit of exercise and being out in the garden does help me relax.

### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

Advice I would give- everyone's so busy with work and family commitments it can be hard to take time out, but it's really important to do this. Make an appointment with yourself to relax, unwind and de-stress.

## Louise Tully:



Louise (R) in the water

**Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:** The thing that interests me most about Health and Wellbeing is how inclusive it is. It is such a vast area that there is literally something for anyone.

**Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:** This is a hard choice! I do love the feeling *after* doing cardio exercise (maybe not the feeling during it!) but my two top favourite activities for “switching off” are swimming in the sea and getting lost in a good book. Both activities are totally mindful – you can’t think about much else when you’re reading or swimming in icy water.

**What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:** The one statement I always rely on (stolen from Joe Wicks) “You never regret doing a workout” – so when I find it hard to get motivated for any physical or mental activity I just repeat this to myself. The other bit of advice is “start small” – whatever it is you are doing. Tiny ripples in the pond. Anything you do to stimulate your mental and physical health is better than doing nothing.

## Lynn Harrigan:



### Lynn's favourite place

Rossnowlagh Beach – special appearance from Aaron and Olivia Harrigan

### Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:

I think it is imperative in life to look after our health and wellbeing and to dedicate some of our time to it. We get so caught up in the stresses of everyday life, trying to fit everything and everyone in that we forget that we have to look after ourselves in order to maintain it.

### Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:

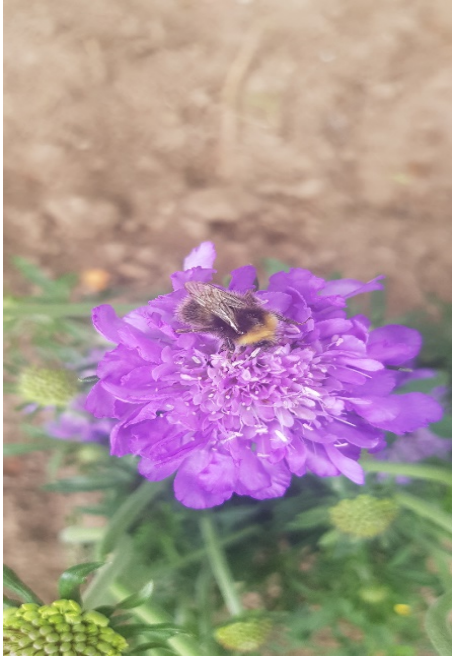
I like to read when I get a chance, head up to the caravan and get away from it all and walk by the lakes, it brings a sense of peace and calm.

### What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:

Take some of your own advice, if a friend came to you stressed think of the advice you would give them as it applies to you, sometimes we need to be kinder to ourselves and realise we are all doing our best. We all have great intentions but putting them into action is key. Looking after your health and wellbeing has a positive impact on your daily life, it could be as little as a 20 minute walk or 10 minutes in the garden, whatever works for you. You are worth it.



## Michael Brown:



**A local bee**

### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

I'm interested in learning about other people's methods of keeping good health and wellbeing and seeing if there's any interests, hints, tip or ideas that I can adapt to suit myself. E.g., A hobby or interest, etc.

### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

Activities for the best sense of wellbeing would be training, (specifically 10k to 5k race training) bee keeping, baking & video games.

### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

Best wellbeing advice I would give to somebody is 'Don't worry about the future, or worry but know that worrying is about as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing gum.' It's not mine. I heard it and really liked it.

## Paula Dillon:



Paula's favourite beach

### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

I've always had an interest in health and wellbeing issues. It is something that I think people can take for granted when they are busy in their home and work lives. The HWB committee has provided a great opportunity to promote and share information with staff on these issues. It is great to be involved.

### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

An activity that gives me the best sense of wellbeing is going for a walk with my family. We all love getting out in the fresh air, ideally beside the sea.

### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

The best wellbeing advice I would give a friend is to start small. Try and do just one thing each day which will benefit your wellbeing. For example, taking 15 minutes to go for a walk before or after work. These little things make a big difference.

## Judith McConville:



Judith in the garden

### **Tell us what interests you about health and wellbeing:**

I have had anxiety for all my adult life and bouts of depression throughout so for me an interest in wellbeing is personal. I believe that prevention is better than cure and that everyone should have the ability to feel well, whole body well, and to do that you have to listen to the person and identify their needs. Wellbeing is more than nutrition or physical activity it is that total sense of feeling good and starts with small changes.

### **Tell us what is the activity that gives you the best sense of wellbeing:**

The best way for me to feel well is sitting outside in the garden or near the sea, reading a book or just looking at the nature around me. That connection to other living elements is really important so don't be surprised to find me sitting chatting to my plants, the birds or the bees in the garden.

### **What is the best wellbeing advice you would give a friend?:**

Baz Luhrman said it best.....wear sunscreen. I am guilty of not doing it but the damage that the sun can cause is huge. In Ireland, skin cancer is the most prevalent of all cancers and yet the most preventable. I also think it is worth saying that as you get older you realise what is important so don't sweat the small stuff, look after your family, your friends and your health the rest will sort itself.

## What the future holds:

As group we have had to pivot and adjust during COVID and think about what we can safely deliver to everyone. We have some ideas, and we know that as time progresses, we may have to adjust some expectations but here is a flavour of what we will be doing in the next 12 months.

**Co-Ownership Garden and Wildlife Group** – an informal coffee break to get together all the gardeners. Whether novice, expert, growing in a garden or in a pot we will share knowledge, information and a few laughs along the way.

**Wildflower seeds** – As part of our commitment to biodiversity, we will source local seeds and send them to staff. We want our staff to feel the benefits of being outdoors and nurturing something to grow.

**Flu clinic** – Given the popularity and success of 2020 clinic, we will be running this again for all staff, completely free.

**MOT Health checks** – We had to give these a miss in 2020 but would like to see them return taking account of COVID safety.

**co-  
owner  
ship.  
org**



Moneda House, 25 - 27 Wellington  
Place, Belfast BT1 6GD

Call 028 9032 7276

Fax 028 9033 0720

Textphone 18001 028 9032 7276

[hello@co-ownership.org](mailto:hello@co-ownership.org)