

Are you ready to Energise Your Life? In this edition read our useful tips on keeping healthy in the winter, an update on Occupational Health and Wellbeing Week and the launch of a new 'Energise Your Life Challenge' focusing on improving your health this winter. Well done to Lee Smyth, whose competition winning strapline 'Energise Your Life' will be on all health and wellbeing materials from now on!

GOODBYE 2016, HELLO HEALTHY 2017!

2016 has been a busy year for the Health and Wellbeing Forum, with a number of initiatives delivered throughout the company.

 <p>300 Flu vaccinations</p>	 <p>210 suntan lotion bottles given as part of 'Stay Safe in the Sun'</p>	<p>130 at Healthy back seminars</p> 	<p>115 attended mental resilience training</p> 
<p>18 Health and Wellbeing Champions appointed</p> 	<p>300 health checks offered as part of Occupational Health and Wellbeing Week</p> 	<p>Quarterly newsletter posted to all staff with useful tips, advice and competitions.</p> 	

The following is a reminder of the proactive initiatives NIE Networks offers to help and support employees:

- Our occupational health provider is Blackwell Associates. We work in partnership with Blackwell Associates to proactively focus on promotion, prevention and restoration of health within the context of a safe and healthy working environment. Referrals can be made via your HR representative.
- Trained counsellors who provide a welfare service to all employees. In the event that you wish to avail of this confidential service Stafford Thompson from Clarity Associates can be contacted directly on 028 8676 8674.
- Low cost corporate health plan through BHSF. If you would like to find out more about this plan details can be found on the Wire or you can email Gemma.Naylor@nienetworks.co.uk.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK: ROUND UP

Occupational Health and Wellbeing Week offered staff across NIE Networks the chance to focus on every aspect of their mental and physical health. Over 580 employees attended events during the week, with over 300 health MOTs offered.

The week included five *Healthy Lunch Demonstrations* by local nutritionalist Jane McClenaghan of Vital Nutrition and an extended programme of five *Mindfulness* sessions. Hosted by Mindfulness NI, these sessions attracted almost 70 staff and covered techniques for helping to maintain a healthy mind.

New events this year included two *Yoga* sessions, delivered by Fiona Jones of Cloud NI. These sessions were held in Ballymena and Danesfort and gave attendees tips on exercises we can be doing at our desk to ensure our bodies are kept supple and loose throughout the day helping to avoid any pains which could develop if we are based at a desk for long periods of time. These were supplemented by six *How Healthy is Your Back* sessions, which were attended by over 120 staff and received positive feedback.

The week also included *Personal Resilience Work Shops* held in Ballymena and Dargan, daily advice and competitions. Feedback has been positive and will help shape this year's event.

We are also working in partnership with external health and wellbeing experts Health Matters to identify key wellbeing priorities for the company in 2017.



Nikki Sturgeon from Health Matters with the Health & Wellbeing Forum

Read what's inside!

- 2 Football, recipes and healthy tech in 2017!
- 3 Read Brian Weir's poignant journey through cancer diagnosis and treatment
- 4 Keep healthy this winter and learn more about Hygge!

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK STAFFORD

Storekeeper Philip Hall talks to Linfield player Mark Stafford about his health and exercise regime

Where are you from? County Fermanagh

Married or single? I'm married to Kylie and we have a nine month old daughter called Ellie

What is your role in NIE Networks? I've been a linesman with NIE Networks for around two and a half years. Previously I was with ENS for six years.

Favourite past time? Playing football! I currently play for Linfield FC.

How many nights do you usually train? Three nights and a game on Saturday, plus I have a pretty physical job!

How much water do you drink every day? Between 1.5 and 2 litres.

Do you take any vitamins or health supplements? No, I just try to eat healthily.

A healthy diet is required to maintain the level of fitness required to play football at this level. What would you eat on a typical day?

Breakfast would be cereal and toast. Lunch would usually be home made sandwiches or pasta with tuna. I would usually have a sandwich or some pasta and tuna before training and rice and chicken after training. My favourite meal is still steak and chips though!

How do you relax? Usually watching football

What's your top tip for a healthier lifestyle? Have a hobby which involves exercise that you enjoy doing!

Any healthy New Year's resolutions? To eat more fruit!



NIE Networks Linesman Mark Stafford in action for Linfield

CHILLI AND GARLIC INFUSED PRAWN SALAD

A healthy salad to kick start your new year!

- 1x packet of cooked or uncooked Prawns
- 1x red chilli
- 3x garlic cloves
- 1x onion
- 1x red pepper
- 1x large bowl of raw spinach
- 1x tbsp olive oil
- 2x large tomatoes or 10x cherry tomatoes



Chop the chili, garlic and onions into very fine pieces.

If prawns are uncooked, pop into a frying pan with olive oil on a medium heat and leave to cook until lightly pink (If pre-cooked, pop onto a low heat)

Add in the chilli, garlic and onions and leave to cook for 2-3 minutes

Prepare salad by cutting peppers and tomatoes and mixing in a large bowl with the spinach

Add in the prawn mixture and mix in well

Serve and enjoy!

Serves 2-3

TECH CAN MAKE YOU FIT!

If you're looking for some technical help with your fitness programme in 2017, there are a range of apps available for whatever type of training or sport you enjoy.



My Fitness Pal

An accurate way to record your diet. Breaks down the carbs, protein, fat and calories you have eaten.



7 Minute Workout

Circuit based training in 7 minutes sessions.



Fitocracy

Free workout ideas for a range of fitness levels



Strava

The ideal app for runners and cyclists



Buddhify

Cleverly weaves mindfulness into your daily activities in a way that broadens your experience.

PERKS = CHEAPER GYMS!

Fit 4 less – Reduced joining fee of £19.99 (normally £24.99) no contract and no joining fee (normally £20).

DW Sports Fitness – Half price joining fee and 10% off monthly rates.

We are Vertigo – Enjoy up to 25% off a course of 6 ski lessons

Gym Co – Special member offer no joining fee

Edenmore Country Club – 25% off membership, no joining fee

La Mon Country Club – £25 per month, no joining fee



HEALTH WORRIES . . . GET CHECKED OUT EVERY TIME

Control Shift Manager, Brian Weir shares his personal story of being diagnosed with rare appendix cancer in 2016 and his treatment and recovery.

I first noticed I had a slight swelling in early April above the groin area. It wasn't painful and my brother had had a hernia some years ago so I wasn't that concerned. I had a holiday booked for Cyprus in May and was intending to go to the European Championships in June, and more importantly, I was getting married in October so at the time, I thought I'd better see about it sooner rather than later, just to be safe.

I visited my local GP in April who advised it was a hernia. As I had health care through work I was referred. I attended Newry Clinic that month, who also advised that it was just a hernia and that it was a simple procedure to cure. I had my procedure on the 27th April.

That's when my plans for the year completely changed. My consultant said that while they had fixed my hernia they had found something else and I had to get a CT Scan as soon as possible. The consultant was concerned and said that I may have to go to Basingstoke for treatment once the diagnosis was confirmed.

The following Tuesday I was in Dungannon Hospital getting a scan and the next week my consultant confirmed my worst fears. I had a rare cancer of the appendix, which affects one in a million people each year in the UK. Typical signs of this type of cancer include having a hernia. It's a tumour that grows on the appendix and it eventually bursts, releasing a jelly like substance into the abdomen area which, when it touches organs around it also causes them to grow tumours, causing a cumulative effect.

I would indeed have to go to the UK specialist centre in Basingstoke for treatment. I attended Basingstoke mid May for a chat with the consultant and at the end of June I had a 10 hour operation called the Sugar Baker Technique. This involved a 15 inch cut from the bottom of my chest to top of the groin, removal of infected cancerous tissue and a liquid chemo wash of my abdomen area for two hours.

I was in Basingstoke for 16 days and returned home to the joy and hugs of my partner Sarah and my 20 month old child Finley. After a long period of recovery at home, I returned to work in September, well ahead of schedule for an operation of this magnitude. I am still sore at times but am cancer free at the minute. I will be scanned annually for the rest of my life as this type of cancer can be hard to eradicate completely.

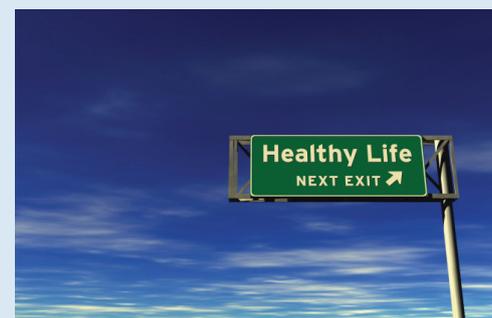


Brian Weir with son Finley at his wedding to Sarah in 2016

I am very thankful to NIE Networks for their help to me during this time and I want to urge everyone that if you notice anything out of the ordinary with your body, no matter how trivial you think it might be, get it checked out straight away by your doctor.

It could save your life.

'ENERGISE YOUR LIFE' 6 WEEK CHALLENGE!



Why not start 2017 with a challenge? There is no better time to start afresh than the New Year. After eating and drinking plenty over Christmas why not make a few small changes to your diet and exercise routine. Introducing moderate exercise and swapping unhealthy foods for a healthier alternative could help you lose some of those extra pounds that crept on during the winter.

The Health and Wellbeing Forum have come up with an **Energise Your Life Challenge** for those who are interested. This is an opportunity to make some lifestyle changes, have some fun and feel good. Taking care of yourself and living a healthy lifestyle is one of the best things that you can do for your wellbeing. Eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise can make a big difference to your health.

Interested? Here's the challenge! The Health and Wellbeing Champion in each location will run a 6 week team challenge. There will be a team weigh in at the beginning and at the end of the programme. There will be points awarded to each team by making daily pledges. The team who gains the most points at the end of the 6 week programme will win a fantastic prize.

What do you have to do? Register your interest with a Health and Wellbeing Champion and then get a team together, 3-5 colleagues - you don't have to be in the same department, just the same location. Record your progress over a six week period. Your team captain will submit your team name and progress on a weekly basis. You can start when you like, however, the six week programme must be completed by 31st March 2017. Visit **the wire** for more tips and information.



WINTER WELLBEING

Winter is here and it's important to ensure you are fit and healthy and ready to fight the dreaded winter cold and flu! Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and making small healthy changes can help reduce your risk of getting ill this winter. Here's some quick tips!

Stay warm

Staying warm in the winter months can help prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems. Wrapping up warm with a number of thin layers is a good way to maintain body heat. Clothing made from cotton, wool and fleecy fibres are recommended during the colder months.



Catch up on sleep

The average person sleeps around six and a half hours a night, much less than the recommended seven to nine hours. In the winter, we naturally sleep more because of the longer nights. This allows us time to catch up on lost sleep.



Maintain a healthy balanced diet

Porridge is a great way to start a cold winter morning. Oats full of fibre, vitamins and minerals keeping you full for longer and nourishing your body. Add some dried apricots or raisins to sweeten your porridge and help hit your 5 a day target. Natural yoghurt is the perfect snack

with a number of health benefits. Containing live cultures that improve your digestive health and boost the immune system, perfect for combating cold and flu. Adding a handful of fresh berries will sweeten the yoghurt and contribute to your 5 a day.



When it's cold and dark outside, it can be tempting to fill up on unhealthy comfort food. It is important to ensure your diet still includes five portions of fruits and vegetables with the essential nutrients you need to maintain good winter health. Dried fruits or juicy clementine's are great healthy alternatives to settle sugary cravings. Winter vegetables can such as carrots, parsnips and turnips are great additions for a warm comforting bowl of stew.

Stay active

Although the winter weather is a good excuse to stay indoors and lounge around it is important to stay active. Exercise releases endorphins keeping your spirits up, helps control body weight and boosts the immune system. Get outdoors and enjoy some brisk winter walks!



For more information and advice on staying healthy this winter visit nhs.co.uk.



BE MORE HYGGE! Pronounced 'hoo-ga', this Danish word represents a feeling or mood that comes taking genuine pleasure in making ordinary, every day moments more meaningful, beautiful or special. Whether it's making coffee by creating a ritual of making it then lingering over a cup to a cosy evening in with friends to the simple act of lighting a candle with every meal. Hygge is being aware of a good moment whether it's simple or special.

While there's no one English word to describe hygge, several can be used interchangeably to describe the idea of hygge such as cosiness, charm, happiness, contentness, security, familiarity, comfort, reassurance, kinship, and simpleness. Danes created hygge because they were trying to survive the boredom, cold, dark and same-ness and the undefinable feeling of Hygge was a way for them to find moments to celebrate or acknowledge and to break up the day, months or years. With so many cold, dark, days, the simple act of a candle glowing with a cup of coffee in the morning or a home cooked evening meal with friends can make a huge difference to one's spirit. They incorporate hygge into their daily life so it becomes a natural extension rather than a forced and stressful event. Hygge is about being present enough to recognize and acknowledge an act, moment or feeling when the ordinary feels extraordinary.

You too can bring some hygge into your life this winter!

- Invest in some candles - the flickering light creates a fundamental hygge moment
- Add texture to your home - warm and cosy interiors create the perfect relaxing moment.
- Hygge with friends - invite friends round for a home cooked meal, or don your warmest clothes and go for a winter walk with your favourite people.



We want to hear from you!

Got some health tips to share, recipe suggestions or if you'd like to tell us about an event then blog about it on our new Health and Wellbeing Blog in the Knowledge Centre of the wire! If you have a suggestion for an article for the next Health and Wellbeing Newsletter please email Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk.