

# Health and Wellbeing Newsletter

Welcome to the January 2016 Health and Wellbeing newsletter! The aim of the newsletter is to offer employees a host of useful health and wellbeing themes, tips and advice. This newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis and will sent out through the company brief. In this edition read our useful tips on staying healthy, how to manage stress and a reminder of the BHSF Drop-In Clinics. There's also an opportunity for you to get involved by becoming a Health and Wellbeing Champion.

## Our Focus for 2016

In these challenging times, looking after our health has never been more important. Looking at the year ahead, the Health and Wellbeing Forum is focused on the following:

- Encouraging staff to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
- Promoting initiatives aimed at helping staff to maintain good physical and mental health
- Encouraging regular communication through this newsletter on various health topics
- Promotion of our occupational health and welfare services
- Proactive programmes designed at raising awareness and providing practical support and advice

## Health and Wellbeing Forum

As a result of feedback from the last Employee Survey, NIE Networks set up a Health and Wellbeing forum with representatives from across the business. The Forum meets regularly to review the existing initiatives the company currently has in place and proactively considers and promotes new initiatives. These are all aimed at maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of our employees.

Last year, we ran a series of Health Fairs and also launched a 'Stay Safe in the Sun' campaign, which provided useful advice to all employees regarding the risks of the sun and tips on how to stay safe when working outdoors. It also offered field employees a bottle of high factor sun protection lotion.

It is important as a company that we strive to support our people. We are working to promote wellbeing initiatives throughout the company and if anyone has any ideas, please get in touch with any member of the Forum.

You can find out more information on the health and wellbeing initiatives currently available to staff on the wire.



*Philip Hall, Rachele Glendinning, Hal Steele, Julie Henderson, Andy Wing, Julia Carson and Keith Murphy. Also members (not pictured) - Pauline McCullough, Victoria Leathem, Philip Nelson, Anna McWhirter*

## BHSF Drop-In Clinics

The BHSF Choices Health Cash Plan is a simple health insurance plan that you can pay as little as £1.35 per week through NIE Networks payroll deduction and claim cash towards your everyday healthcare bills such as dental, optical and therapy treatments. Next month, the BHSF representative will be visiting locations to answer questions and provide advice on the scheme benefits.



<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time</b>
Monday 1 February 2016	Ballymena Conference Room	8am
Tuesday 2 February 2016	Dargan Conference Room	8am
Tuesday 2 February 2016	Heron Avenue	11am
Tuesday 2 February 2016	Danesfort Meeting Room 2	2pm
Wednesday 3 February 2016	Campsie Conference Room	8am
Thursday 4 February 2016	Omagh Conference Room	8am
Friday 5 February 2016	Craigavon Upstairs Conference Room	8am

Visit: [www.bhsf.co.uk/company](http://www.bhsf.co.uk/company) for more information.

## Could you be a Wellbeing Champion?



In order to further support the health and wellbeing of employees and the Health and Wellbeing Forum representatives we are seeking volunteers to become Wellbeing Champions. The role of the Wellbeing Champions will involve working closely with the Health and

Wellbeing Forum representatives, and managers and employees within their business unit and location.

Responsibilities of a Wellbeing Champion

- Champion the area of health and wellbeing in NIE Networks
- Signpost employees to all available resources and services
- Provide ideas and information on what initiatives would be popular with their colleagues
- Encourage employees in their location/department to participate in future wellbeing programmes/initiatives

If you are interested in becoming a Wellbeing Champion please register your interest with Julie Henderson – email [Julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk) or call 07799867809.

## WINTER WARMER SOUP!

This parsnip, apple and cumin soup, created by Sara McClintock in Communications, is a great winter meal, just add crusty bread!

### Ingredients

11/2 tbsp oil  
 2 medium onions, chopped  
 2 teaspoons cumin  
 6 medium parsnips, cut into 2cm/1in pieces  
 2 medium Bramley apples, peeled, cored, quartered and cut into chunks  
 1 small tin butter beans  
 1 litre/1¾ pints vegetable or chicken stock  
 100ml/3.5fl oz milk  
 Flaked sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

### Preparation method

- 1.Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Gently fry the onions and parsnips for 10 minutes, or until the onions are softened. Add the cumin and apples, cook for a further two minutes, stirring regularly.
- 2.Pour over the stock and bring to the boil. Add the butter beans. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for about 20 minutes, or until the parsnips are very soft. Remove from the heat and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Blend the mixture in a food processor until smooth.
- 3.Stir in the milk, adding a little extra if required. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

ues to play football, when he can find the time! Here's his five minute take on Health and Wellbeing. "A worklife balance is essential for me, especially with a young and growing family. For me, it can be difficult to find the time to train, especially during the winter, so I like to have goals throughout the year, such as taking part in the marathon relay in May and the ESB Football tournament in the autumn. Nutrition is really important and I try to eat healthily and set a good example for my kids. It's essential to make the most of the weekends and we always have days out as a family, visiting new places. For me, it's so important to appreciate the moment, enjoying my time with my wife and three children. There are more demands and pressures in today's world, but I try to manage stress, accepting the responsibilities I have at home and at work and doing my best to fulfill these. I haven't made any new year resolutions but as soon as the lighter nights come in I plan to start running again - it's never too early to get in shape for the marathon relay!"

## FINDING CLARITY

NIE Networks regards the general wellbeing of employees as an essential component of working life. We have in place proactive initiatives and a strategy for managing absence.

Our current Occupational Health provider is Blackwell Associates, who assist the company with managing this area by providing professional and specialist advice. The objective of this contract is to proactively focus on promotion, prevention and restoration of health within the context of a safe and healthy working environment. Referrals can be made through your local HR representatives.

We also have a welfare provision offered to all employees by Clarity Associates. They have trained counsellors who provide a welfare service to all employees. Clarity Associates provides a confidential helpline service which is available to everyone at NIE Networks and it enables employees to confidentially discuss work related or personal issues with a trained and experienced counsellor either by telephone or face to face.

How to contact Clarity Associates.

**Contact Clarity by telephone or email.**

**Welfare Officer: Stafford Thompson**

**Helpline number: 028 867 68674**

**Mobile number: 07711842607**

**Email: [jpssthompson@btinternet.com](mailto:jpssthompson@btinternet.com)**

*Read more about coping with stress on P4*

## Take five for wellbeing!

Ballymena Storeman Philip Hall has been on the Health and Wellbeing forum since 2014. Philip does his best to juggle a young family, work and staying active. He previously participated in mixed martial arts training and contin-



## NEW YEAR, NEW YOU!

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health, and can help you feel your best. It doesn't have to be difficult either. These eight practical tips cover the basics of healthy eating, and can help you make healthier choices:

### SUPER STARCHY FOODS!

Starchy foods should make up around one third of the foods you eat. Starchy foods include potatoes, cereals, pasta, rice and bread. Choose wholegrain varieties (or eat potatoes with their skins on) when you can: they contain more fibre, and can help you feel full. Try to include at least one starchy food with each main meal.

Some people think starchy foods are fattening, but gram for gram the carbohydrate they contain provides fewer than half the calories of fat.



### EAT MORE FISH

Fish is a good source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals. Aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, including at least one portion of oily fish. Oily fish contains omega-3 fats, which may help to prevent heart disease. You can choose from fresh, frozen and canned but remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt.

### EAT LESS SALT



Even if you don't add salt to your food, you may still be eating too much. About three-quarters of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, such as breakfast cereals, soups, breads and sauces. Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. People with high blood

pressure are more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke.

### CUT OUT SUGAR AND SATURATED FATS

We all need some fat in our diet but there are two main types of fat: saturated and unsaturated. Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk of developing heart disease.

Saturated fat is found in many foods, such as hard cheese, cakes, biscuits, sausages, cream, butter and pies. Try to cut down on your saturated fat intake and choose foods that contain unsaturated fats instead, such as vegetable oils, oily fish and avocados.

For a healthier choice, use just a small amount of vegetable oil or reduced-fat spread instead of butter, lard or ghee. When having meat, choose lean cuts and cut off any visible fat.

Cut down on sugary and alcoholic drinks, sugary breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits and pastries, which contain added sugars. Cut down on this kind of sugar, rather than sugars that are found in things such as fruit and milk.



### GET ACTIVE, STAY SLIM

Eating a healthy, balanced diet plays an essential role in maintaining a healthy weight, which is an important part of overall good health. Being overweight or obese can lead to health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, heart disease and stroke. Being underweight could also affect your health.

Physical activity can help you to maintain weight loss or be a healthy weight. Being active doesn't have to mean hours at the gym: you can find ways to fit more activity into your daily life. For example, try walking or cycling to work or maybe join a fitness class and exercise 3-4 nights

per week. Being physically active may help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.



### EAT LOTS OF FRUIT AND VEG

It sounds simple but many people still are not eating the recommended five portions of different types of fruit and veg a day. It's easier than it sounds. A glass of unsweetened 100% fruit juice (150ml) can count as one portion, and vegetables cooked into dishes also count. Why not chop a banana over your breakfast cereal, or swap your usual mid-morning snack for a piece of fresh fruit?



### THE BEST MEAL OF THE DAY!

Some people skip breakfast because they think it will help them lose weight. In fact, research shows that eating breakfast can help people control their weight. A healthy breakfast is an important part of a balanced diet, and provides some of the vitamins and minerals we need for good health. A wholegrain, lower-sugar cereal with fruit sliced over the top is a tasty and nutritious breakfast so try some porridge and prunes!

### QUENCH YOUR THIRST

We need to drink about 1.6 to 2 litres of fluid every day to stop us getting dehydrated. This is in addition to the fluid we get from the food we eat. All non-alcoholic drinks count, but water and lower-fat milk are healthier choices.

Avoid sugary soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugars and calories, and are also bad for teeth. Even unsweetened fruit juice is sugary, so try to limit how much you drink to no more than one glass (about 150ml) of fruit juice each day.



Looking for more information on how to eat right? Visit [vital-nutrition.co.uk](http://vital-nutrition.co.uk) for tips and advice.

## DON'T STRESS . . .

The effects of negative stress can be evident at any time of the year but quite often the post Christmas period can see a spike in the number of people experiencing the physical and emotional symptoms of pressure overload.

The increased personal, financial and social pressure over this period, possible negative projection with regard to the incoming year as well as any underlying issues in an individual's life (which can sometimes be masked by the distraction of the holidays) can start to take its toll. For example, we can feel tired even drained, tense and agitated, emotional, anxious and there may also be evidence of out of character behaviours. Over a short period of time we can be resilient enough to deal with symptoms like these, however, if they persist over a more prolonged period it may be time to take remedial action.

Here's how you can help cope with stress in 2016.

### **Manage your thought processes**

Be aware of any of your thought processes that may be coded as 'threat' as they will lead to the triggering of the stress response. Challenge these potentially destructive thinking patterns and create more positive and constructive alternatives. This re-programming will help to reduce the levels of any anxiety you may be experiencing. Remember, your thoughts and your behaviours are inextricably linked so it is important to use thought processes that will help you achieve positive behavioural outcomes.

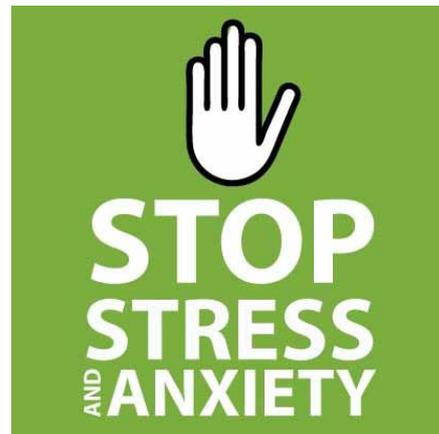
### **Externalise instead of internalizing**

Use appropriate expression to help prevent the build up of negative emotion by clarifying, checking out assumptions and validating your own thoughts and feelings. You can also use expression skills to move from passive to assertive behaviours

### **Take control**

Plan, prioritise, simplify and be flexible. Chunk problems down so they do not become overwhelming. Be prepared to use a positive NO and, as far as possible, stay in the present to prevent the triggering of past stressors and creating stress over something that hasn't actually happened.

Remember, you may not be able to control what anyone



else says or does but you always have the ability to control how you react to any situation.

### **Seek support**

Avoid feeling isolated – seek support. Be prepared to ASK. If needed, use family, friends, colleagues, your GP or external agencies to help you through difficult periods in your life. There will be people willing to help, be willing to accept it. Seeking support is a sign of strength not an admission of failure.

### **Self care**

Make your own effective health and functioning your main priority. When you feel healthy and energized you will be able to give what you want to give to the people that matter to you.

Eat healthily, keep hydrated, integrate activity / exercise into your life on a regular basis and introduce a simple breathing / relaxation exercise to your daily routine.

Do not make unreasonable demands on yourself, trust that in any given situation doing your best at that time will be good enough and avoid ceaseless striving for perfection. Know your limits.

### **Take ACTION!**

You may know what you need or want to do but until you take action nothing changes.

## LOOK AFTER YOUR BACK!

In conjunction with our Occupational Health Advisors, Blackwell Associates, the Health and Wellbeing Forum is currently looking to develop a short training programme aimed at providing useful advice and guidance to all employees on body, back care and posture and how to minimise back problems from aches, pains and injuries.



More information will be provided shortly.

## And finally . . .

you can enter our Get Moving competition to win £50 worth of vouchers for Decathlon or Sports Direct.

Where will the this year's Olympics be held?

Send your answers to  
[Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk) by  
 28th February 2016

**Coming soon** - got a question about your health and wellbeing? Send through a query via the form on the Health and Wellbeing section of the wire and our team of experts will do their best to reply. If any staff, who do not have access to a work computer, wish to receive future newsletter via email or wish to send through a query, please send your personal email address to [Julie.Henderson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julie.Henderson@nienetworks.co.uk).