

Community Development & Health Network











ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025



About CDHN

Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) is a regional infrastructure organisation working with local communities and across sectors to take action on the social determinants of health, improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. We work with communities to identify their own health and social needs and have a specific focus on those who experience the most disadvantage. With 30 years experience and a cross-sectoral membership of over 2400 individuals and over 110 community and voluntary organisations, we have an extensive reach across Northern Ireland.

We recognise, value, and gather evidence to understand the social determinants of health and people's lived experiences, and together with our members we design, develop, deliver, facilitate, and evaluate initiatives that improve health and address health inequalities. We use our learning, knowledge and experience to create social change and influence policy and practice through training, capacity building and community investment.



Vision

A fair, equal society where everyone experiences their best health and wellbeing.



Mission

Using community development to end health inequalities.

Our Values

We are committed to living the following values in all aspects of our work:

Social justice and sustainable development - We believe in fairness and equality. Everyone should have the same chance for a healthy life, no matter where they were born or live. We work to create conditions where people have more control of their health and wellbeing, and a voice in decisions that affect them.

Equality, **human rights and anti-discrimination** - We value diversity, challenge racism and discrimination, and will always work to build an inclusive and equitable society.

Participation and inclusion - We support people to have a voice, be included and shape decisions through meaningful participation.

Collective action and community empowerment - We believe that empowered communities can create lasting change by working together to achieve health equity.

Integrity - We act with honesty, openness and accountability. We build relationships based on trust, compassion, and mutual respect, and ensure our actions reflect our values.

This Annual Report marks the **final year of CDHN's 2021-2024 Strategy.**

This year, we have been busy developing a **new CDHN Strategic Plan for 2025-2030.** Staff and board members have taken part in workshops to develop a new logic model and strategic priorities.

We will be actively engaging with members and other key stakeholders over the coming months about our new plan, with the aim to publish it in December 2025.





Chairperson and Director's Report 2024-25

Welcome to our Annual Report 2024-25. It was wonderful to see so many of you at our 30th anniversary celebration event in Belfast last November. Taking time to reflect on our strong foundations, reconnect with our roots, and recognise our collective achievements has renewed our focus and purpose. It reinforces why CDHN continues to work alongside people, communities, power holders and future leaders to take collective action on the structural determinants of health.

Health inequalities in Northern Ireland have been widening for over a decade. The rising costs of housing, energy, and food, severely impact the social and mental well-being of children, young people, low-income women, and other vulnerable populations. Combined with geopolitical conflict and regional instability these challenges have deepened the crisis.

The need for intergovernmental and cross-societal approaches, emphasised in the recent Programme for Government, is greater than ever. Issues such as poverty, racism and discrimination, violence, homelessness, education access, and income inequality require coordinated responses. Co-design and citizen engagement must be central to implementing the Programme for Government and other social inclusion strategies, as outlined in New Decade, New Approach (2020).

Our sincere thanks go to our members, partners, and supporters for your continued collaboration in tackling the region's diverse health needs. Your commitment ensures the voices of the people and communities we work with are heard in decision-making, helping improve outcomes for all. We are especially grateful to our Board for their vision and leadership in setting strategic priorities; prevention, community health, social inclusion, communication, and sustainability; that will guide us over the next five years.

Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to our incredible team for their dedication and quality work. Through Dormant Assets Funding, they launched our Digital Foundations project, strengthening our digital capacity and presence, essential to sustaining momentum, expanding reach, and deepening impact.

CDHN was both thrilled and relieved to secure Department of Health Core Grant Funding for 2025–26. This vital support will strengthen our policy development, collaborative research, and evidence-building efforts on health disparities. We also welcome the continued partnership with the Public Health Agency's Strengthening Communities for Health Steering Group, advancing grassroots and cross-sectoral capacity in community development. Through our BCPP and Elevate regional programmes, we delivered over £500K in support and capacity building across 65 communities.

Finally, we thank all our funders, including the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, Department for Communities, Dormant Assets NI, St Stephen's Green Trust, Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs Shared Island Fund and National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR). Your support enables lasting, meaningful change.



Sheelin McKeagney CDHN Chairperson



Joanne Vance CDHN Director

Strategic Aim 1:

Community Development: To support communities as a catalyst for change in ending health inequalities

Organising Regionally and Delivering Locally

CDHN takes a regional approach to organising, funding, and evaluating programmes that are co-designed and implemented at the local level. These initiatives aim to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and drive action to reduce health inequalities. Our two flagship community development programmes - Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) and Elevate - ignite local efforts to address the social factors and root causes of poor health. By linking policy with people and grassroots action, we foster deeper, more lasting improvements in health and well-being. This approach builds trust, strengthens relationships, and empowers communities to bring their lived experience and insights into policy and decision-making processes.

Community Investment 2024/25

Over £500,000 was invested in local communities through CDHN's main funding programmes BCPP and Elevate. This investment has supported 43 new BCPP initiatives and 21 Elevate mentees through the small grants.

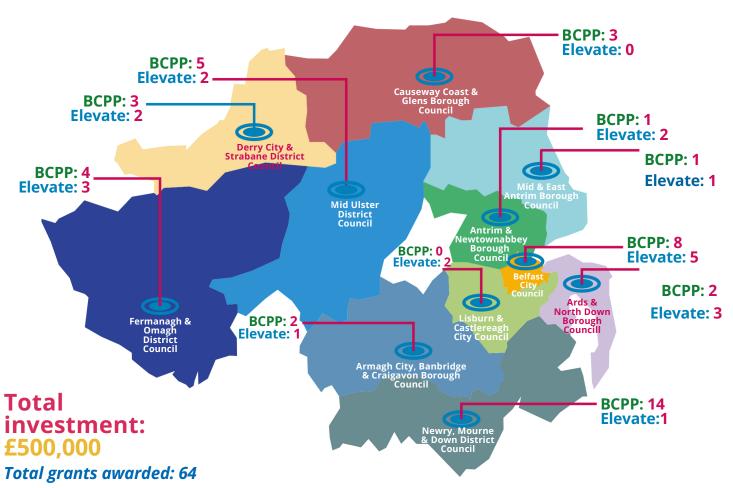


Figure 1. Elevate and BCPP Community Investment 2024/25

Building Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP)

The Building Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) programme funded by the Department of Health since 2001, continues to make a significant impact across Northern Ireland. On 6th June 2024, CDHN launched the BCPP Impact Report at the Long Gallery in Stormont. The event was attended by Health Minister Mike Nesbitt, Chair of the Health Committee Liz Kimmins, and Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Professor Cathy Harrison, who all spoke about the value of the programme.





BCPP Impact Report Launch (06 June 2024)

I'd forgotten what it felt like to laugh. That session broke something open for me
(BCPP Participant / The Well)

When I finished training, I thought I'd be doing bloods all day. It was only when I started doing this work that I realised why it's called a Community Pharmacy. Nobody trains you in how to chat to people about their health concerns but my involvement in BCPP demonstrates that this is the way to do it (Ben Harkin / Community Pharmacist)

Participants and community partners shared powerful stories that brought the report's findings to life. Lorna O'Neill from Causeway Rural and Urban Network (CRUN), community pharmacist Evan Reid, and participant Frances Dougherty spoke about the positive impact of their local project. Sheila Smyth from The Right Key, alongside pharmacist Cathy Smyth and participant Jordyn Kerr, shared how music and pharmacy collaboration supported recovery from mental health issues and addiction. Dympna Ferran from The Bridge NI delivered her moving poem, Bones, which captured the spirit of the programme.

The impact report reinforces that BCPP is much more than a health initiative. It is a proven, cross-sectoral model for tackling health inequalities, grounded in community development. It demonstrates how targeted, collaborative approaches addressing the social determinants of health can lead to lasting improvements in the lives, health, and wellbeing of people and communities across Northern Ireland.

Health Minister visits The Link

The Link Family & Community Centre has established a partnership project with McKay's Pharmacy through the Building Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) programme. During his visit to The Link, the Minister met with participants who have benefitted from the programme and heard from them how the project is making a difference.



Partnership projects between community organisations and local community pharmacies have an important role in helping to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities, particularly those in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Tackling health inequalities is one of my key areas of focus and initiatives such as this are helping to address locally defined needs linked to social determinants of health (Health Minister / Mike Nesbitt)

Sharing BCPP Impact:

The ICIC24 – 24th International Conference on Integrated Care, was held in Belfast in April 2024, welcoming over 1,000 international delegates. CDHN hosted a workshop at the event to share our insights into partnership working and key findings from the BCPP Impact Report.

We were also delighted to work with the ICIC24 team to create a video presentation which was shared at the conference plenary. Thanks to Lorna from CRUN and Evan from Henderson's Pharmacy for sharing their experiences of partnership working and addressing local needs through the BCPP programme.

Community Mentoring and Grants

CDHN's Elevate Capacity Building Programme, now in its sixth year and run in partnership with the Public Health Agency, continues to help local communities tackle health inequalities in their areas.

Our Community Mentoring & Grants Programme supported 21 local groups to carry out projects using a community development approach to reduce health inequalities locally.

The projects ranged from a 'Social Club' for young people aged 16 + with mild to moderate learning disabilities to addressing health inequalities in Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities by fostering inclusive participation, building local capacity, and promoting sustainable change, Our Mentors — ARC Healthy Living Centre, County Down Rural Community Network, Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership, and Supporting Communities NI — continue to guide these groups. They help them use CDHN's Reflective Practice Tool to assess how they are working, improve their organisations, and achieve their community development goals.



Scan QR code to watch the video



Fresh Minds Education truly treasures the opportunity to work with CDHN to deliver a high quality project with long term impacts for health locally. The CDHN model is an example of exemplary practice offering opportunities for small organisations like us to take on meaningful projects and expand our capacity to deliver community development in the longer term

(Fresh Minds Education / Aine Wallace)

Training and development

Through the Elevate programme, we delivered 15 community development and health inequalities training sessions across Northern Ireland to 196 participants from both the Community/Voluntary Sector and the Public sector bringing shared lived experience and enhancing their knowledge and confidence to address health inequalities and to take action. The Elevate Team also delivered a presentation to the South Eastern Area Integrated Partnership Board in January on health inequalities, population health and community development.

We also delivered bespoke health inequalities and community development training, and both group work skills and evidence and impact training to our BCPP and Elevate groups.





Figure 2. Training delivered by CDHN this year

Strategic Aim 2:

Policy & Practice: Influence policy and practice to support the ending of health inequalities

Collectively working

CDHN makes spaces for people to talk, share ideas and work together on their own needs. When communities, VCSE organisations, and stakeholders meet and discuss issues, we know that they can understand problems better, build trust, unite around shared goals and use their collective power to deliver social change to end poverty and inequality.

Voice Equality Experience Power (VEEP) is a collaborative initiative with Community Work Ireland and the Mental Health Foundation, focused on tackling mental health and poverty across Ireland.

It brings together community workers, organisations, and experts by experience to address the social and economic roots of inequality. 16 partner organisations and 181 community workers engaged in open dialogues to explore rights-based approaches and creative methods to reduce mental health stigma and amplify personal stories. https://www.cdhn.org/voice-equality-experience-and-power-veep

VEEP also partnered with PPR's New Script for Mental Health campaign and supported the launch of Give Five on World Mental Health Day; urging for collective action from individuals, communities, and policymakers to address the systemic causes of mental health challenges. https://www.nlb.ie/take-action/give-5



VEEP Partners and guests at knowledge exchange event in the Holywell, Trust, Derry City

CDHN's Role in Influencing Policy to Prioritise Prevention

CDHN and our members support several cross-sectoral collaboration and pioneering partnership initiatives to address social determinants of health and tackle inequalities through prevention and early intervention.

UCL, Health Equity Network (HEN), First NI Conference, Belfast, September 2024

CDHN and community partners co-operated with University College London's Health Equity Network and the Public Health Agency's steering group to organise a cross-sectoral conference. Attended by the Minister for Health, Mike Nesbitt, over 80 participants discussed the evidence-based Marmot Principles and looked at new ways of achieving health equity in Northern Ireland.



Director, Joanne Vance, Introducing the Conference to Sir Michael Marmot



Alan Higgins, UCL HEN, Joanne Vance CDHN, Vincenta Leyden, MND Association, Alison Biedron, UCL HEN, Heather McFarlane, PHA.

Mental Health Strategy Early Intervention and Prevention Plan

This year, CDHN contributed to the PHA-led Steering Group on prevention, working with stakeholders to deliver an action plan that promotes mental wellbeing and improves timely access to support. The focus is on learning, collaboration, and new approaches to transform mental health services, while addressing structural determinants of health. We:

- Took part in a Mental Health and Poverty seminar and the 1st Annual Conference
- Presented at the Project ECHO learning network on mental health inequalities
- Supported the refresh of mental health training



PHA Tobacco Strategy Implementation Steering Group (TSISG)

Smoking-related cancers remain highest in deprived communities, driving poorer health outcomes and avoidable deaths. As members of the Tobacco Strategy Implementation Steering Group, CDHN advocates for renewed action on smoking and inequalities. In partnership with the Healthy Living Centre Alliance, Cancer Focus and others, we are developing community-led stop smoking programmes tailored to disadvantaged groups, informed by best practice and population health approaches.

New Valuing Medicines Strategy Consultation

CDHN participated in the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer-led **Valuing Medicines Steering Group and Knowledge Exchange** (Oct 2023–Sept 2024), which oversaw DoH's Case for Change research on improving medicine use across HSC. The aim is to ensure medicines deliver value, are cost-effective and sustainable. CDHN will support public engagement on the social and environmental impact of over-use, while continuing to advocate for reduced over-prescribing of antidepressants and opioids, and greater access to non-pharmaceutical alternatives such as talking therapies, social prescribing and MDT-linked primary care supports.



Policy responses

We responded to three policy consultations this year: DoH EQIA impact assessment (September 2024) Draft Programme for Government (November 2024) and the PHA corporate plan (February 2025).

Promoting health literacy

Health literacy is a social determinant of health and is fundamental in tackling health inequalities. CDHN promotes and supports health literacy policy and practice across all sectors and includes it in policy responses, strategies, and action plans. This year, we were guest speakers on health literacy at the Project Echo on Transforming Medication Safety and as part of the Ulster University Pharmacy undergraduate programme.

We are members of the HSC Regional Health Literacy Forum, we are delighted to have been invited to deliver health literacy training to the forum members in April. We provide training on how to take action around health literacy on an individual, community, organisational and policy level.

Strategic Aim 3:

Evidence: To build and use the evidence base which supports community-based approaches to end health inequalities and poverty

Building evidence

Maternity Inequalities Northern Ireland

CDHN is delighted to be a partner in the new Maternity Inequalities Northern Ireland (MINI) research collaboration with Queen's University Belfast (lead partner), Ulster University and the PHA. Part of the UK-wide NIHR Maternity Disparities Consortium, this five-year programme aims to achieve measurable improvements in maternity health inequalities before, during and after pregnancy. CDHN plays a key role in the collaboration including;

- Applying a social determinants of health lens
- Embedding community engagement and coproduction, valuing women's lived experiences and sector expertise
- Promoting participatory research methods



MINI kick-off event 31 Jan 2025 Robyn Deasy (Graphic recording artist) Emer Maguire (Facilitator), Maria Loane (UU), Maurice Mulvenna (UU), Jenny McNeill (QUB), Claire Kerr (QUB); Helen McNamee (CDHN), Alison Little (PHA), Michelle McKinley (QUB), Dunla Gallagher (QUB)

MEAPP Impact AGEWELL Strategic Hub

Impact Agewell is a community-led social prescribing programme supporting older people who are isolated or living alone. As independent chair of the Strategic Hub, CDHN welcomes new Department of Health funding to sustain the programme across 20+ hubs in Mid and East Antrim—recognising eight years of strong collaboration and partnership.

Promoting the use of evidence-based research

In July 2024, we carried out a membership survey to find out from members what aspects of our work are most important to them, how they engage with us and what they value about membership. We also explored how we can use digital tools and platforms to build solidarity and increase participatory ways of working. We used the survey to inform our digital strategy, and in the development of our new strategic plan for 2025-2030.

Measuring our Impact

The BCPP Impact Report 2024, highlights the transformative role of the Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) programme in addressing health inequalities across Northern Ireland. The report presents evidence from 51 Level 2 projects completed between 2021 and 2023, showing significant improvements in health literacy, social connectedness, and community wellbeing. It emphasises how community pharmacies, working in partnership with local groups, have become trusted support for tackling the social determinants of health, especially among vulnerable populations such as older adults, people with disabilities, and those experiencing mental health challenges.

One of the key recommendations from the BCPP Impact Report 2024 was to review and amend the programme's evaluation framework and refine its outcomes and indicators to improve usability. Over the past year, enhancements were made and all BCPP projects have now adopted revised evaluation tools, supporting more effective and consistent data collection across the programme.



Scan QR code to read a copy of the report



In Elevate, we gather key data from the Elevate programme to evaluate and measure impact. Our Elevate Impact report for 2023/24 was published in December 2024. It showed the programme continues to be incredibly impactful, with the benefits going beyond the training and programme participants to the mentor organisations and wider community, and in developing skills, knowledge, and expertise in community development as a way to take action on the social determinants of health and reduce health inequalities.



Scan QR code to read a copy of the report



Supporting Our Members With Evaluation and Impact

We delivered this Evidence and Impact training to the Elevate Mentees in November 2024 and have since refined it for further delivery to our wider membership.

We support Elevate mentee groups to write their impact stories on the difference they felt the Elevate programme had made to them, their practice and to health inequalities in their community. 21 new Elevate Impact Stories were published on www.elevateni.org this year.

We support BCPP partnerships by providing group and one-to-one training on the BCPP evaluation framework. We produce two reports for each individual project; one to capture the baseline health statistics and another, on completion, to show the impact the project has made. We also support BCPP projects to write their impact stories, these are published on our website and in BCPP News.

We are members of NICVA Impact Practice Network, in June 2024, we led the Network meeting and shares learning, tips, tools and barriers to getting from the project delivery to the report stage.



BCPP Project, Causeway Rural & Urban Network (CRUN)



NICVA Impact Practice Network June 2024



Elevate Mentee, Antrim Community Fridge

Bringing People Together

Celebrating 30 Years of CDHN

On 12th November 2024, over 100 guests from across sectors gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN). The event honoured three decades of community action to address health inequalities and poverty and looked ahead to a future of social change and health equity. Hosted by UTV's Sarah Clarke, the celebration featured a keynote address from one of CDHN's founder members, Ruth Sutherland. She reflected on CDHN's beginnings during the ceasefire period, when in 1994, the focus of health promotion was on lifestyle education, largely overlooking the context of poverty and conflict and the need for action on the social determinants of health. She also spoke about CDHN's foundations and its commitment to the vital role of community development in shaping a fairer, more equitable and healthier society.

The event also featured testimonies from CDHN members who shared how the organisation's values and support have helped drive their work in communities across Northern Ireland.

- Jennifer Todd, Antrim Community Support Hub
- Grainne Graham and Fionntan Gregory of Crisis Café
- Aidan Ormsby, ARC Healthy Living Centre (Elevate Mentor)
- One of CDHN's founders, Fergal O'Brien



Networking at 30th Anniversary event



CDHN Staff with Chairperson, Sheelin McKeagney at the 30th Anniversary event

Networking and engagement

Alongside our AGM, we hosted ten events this year with over 450 people taking part. Highlights included an online networking session for BCPP projects, a member discussion on the Draft Programme for Government, and a Celebration Event marking 5 years' of Elevate in Kildress, hosted by one of our mentees.

The Elevate event showcased the impact of community-led work with groups often facing isolation—young people, older people, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, and minority communities—highlighting the power of connection and support.





Membership

CDHN's unique and varied membership is at the heart of our Network. Over half of our individual members are community and voluntary organisations. One-fifth are from the public and statutory sector including health and social care staff. Other members include community Pharmacists, GP's and their practice staff. Members continue to have their say on how we can work together to reduce health inequalities through their work, combining their strengths and assets to create healthier communities.













Being Sustainable and Effective

Developing our digital capacity

This year, we carried out an in-depth digital discovery. We looked at how we run our programmes, manage data, and engage with our members. This helped us create a digital strategy that sets out how we will improve our digital systems in line with our strategic objectives.

We've now started upgrading our CRM system and building a new website—both designed to make engagement easier and improve how we work. These will be ready by December 2025. A big thank you to Dormant Assets NI for funding this important work!





Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the financial year ending March 2025. The effective financial management of CDHN has continued to ensure that the organisation remains in a sound financial position. The strategy for developing a mixed portfolio of income and the development of new funding opportunities will continue as the organisation pursues its vision.

The financial results demonstrate the great efforts CDHN has made in ensuring the organisation retains its position as experts in community development to address health inequality.

CDHN has made a small surplus for the 2024 -25 year and has maintained a healthy cash flow and reserves position that is in line with the Reserves Policy. The CDHN Board would like to extend its thanks to the team for the focus on cost management, availing of opportunities as they arose and for the high quality delivery against contracts won.

The main sources of income for the year were from the Strategic Planning and Partnership Group (Building Community-Pharmacy Partnership and Self Care Programmes), and PHA Elevate Programme.

While delivering short term projects in parallel with long term projects, CDHN will continue to pursue opportunities for longer-term earned income and programmes which will benefit our members and help to achieve our mission. Given the uncertain funding landscape, it is important that CDHN continues to seek opportunities to diversify its funding portfolio. In doing so, the Board will continue to support CDHN in managing its finances and seeking out opportunities in a difficult and changing funding environment and in an uncertain economic and political landscape.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff who have managed and administered the finances of CDHN on behalf of the Board. Their efforts are key to the ongoing strategic development of CDHN and the achievement of its mission.

Michael Crean Treasurer



Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

| | | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|----------------|----------|----------------|
| Fixed assets | | | |
| Tangible assets | 2,115 | | 3,808 |
| Current assets | | | |
| Debtors | 110,297 | | 64,905 |
| Cash at bank & in hand | <u>491,646</u> | | <u>516,137</u> |
| | 601,943 | | 581,042 |
| Creditors: amounts falling due within one year | (173,362) | | (177,958) |
| Net current assets | | 428,581 | 403,084 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 430,696 | 406,892 |
| Long term liabilities | | | |
| Provisions | | (11,399) | (10,405) |
| Net assets | | 419,297 | 396,487 |
| The funds of the charity: | | | |
| Restricted funds | | 38,721 | 29,609 |
| Unrestricted funds | | 380,576 | <u>366,878</u> |
| | | 419,297 | 396,487 |

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and Charities SORP (FRS102).

The financial statements were approved by the Board and signed on its behalf:

| Michael Crean | Company Number: | Date: |
|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| | | |

Treasurer NI034114 (Northern Ireland) 12 September 2025

Board & Staff 2024/25

Board Members

Sheelin McKeagney / Chairperson
Janet Schofield / Vice Chairperson
Mike Crean / Treasurer
Claire Ferris
Dr Sloan Harper
Carolyn Donnelly
Conor Flanagan
Dr Ethna McFerran
Fiona Anderson
Rhoda Walker
Brian Pelan
Lekan Ojo-Okiji Abasi

You can find profiles of all our board members at <u>www.cdhn.org</u>

Staff Members

Joanne Vance / Director
Kathy Martin / Strategic Impact Manager
Helen McNamee / Research & Policy Manager
Laura Harper / Evaluation & Support Lead
Mary O'Hagan / Grants Officer
Mary McDonald / Data & Finance Administrator
Patricia Harte / Senior Training & Development Officer
Stephanie Houston / Elevate Project Manager
Eleanor McKenna / Training & Development Officer
Marion O'Hare / HR & Administrative Officer
Joana Neves / Community Evaluation & Support Officer
Caoimhe Shields / Research Associate

Thanks to Tony Clarke and team at Clarke & Co for our outsourced finance support.



Staff development and wellbeing

We know that when staff feel well and supported, everyone benefits. This year we joined a wellbeing day with Catherine Murnin and took part in NICHS health checks.

As a learning organisation, staff engaged in professional development, including risk workshops, training courses and university study.

We're proud that Kathy Martin joined the Joint Forum VCS Panel, strengthening cross-sector dialogue, and delighted that Mary O'Hagan was Highly Commended in the Bolster Workplace Heroes Awards for her kindness and commitment.

To further demonstrate our commitment as a responsible employer CDHN is now a living wage employer.











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