Chambers Ireland
SME *Well*Business Charter

SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER



Workplace Winter Wellbeing

A Practical Toolkit for the Workplace

WINTER WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

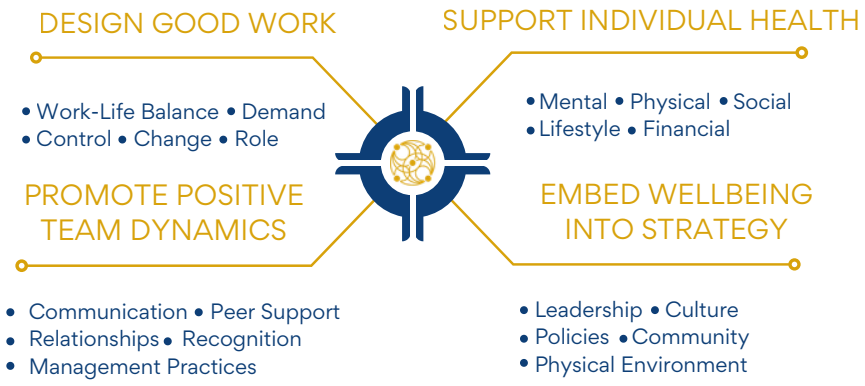
Winter can be a challenging time for workplaces, with increased illness, shorter days and seasonal pressures affecting employee wellbeing, attendance and productivity. CIPD research shows that 78% of short-term workplace absences are caused by minor illnesses such as colds and flu [1]. For SMEs, where teams are often smaller, absences can place additional pressure on colleagues and workloads, creating operational and financial costs for employers.

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This toolkit provides simple and practical actions for employees, managers, leaders and wellbeing champions to help address these seasonal challenges and create a healthier workplace this winter. The actions are aligned with the four pillars of the SME WellBusiness Charter Framework, shown below [2]. We encourage everyone to take at least one action to support their own wellbeing and contribute to a healthier workplace this winter.

SME WellBusiness Charter - Healthy Workplace Fundamentals



This framework was adapted from the Well Work 360 Indicator Tool ©

QUIZ TIME

We've also included five winter wellbeing quiz questions throughout the guide. Why not complete them with your team?

Q1 - How long can cold germs live on hands and surfaces?
A) 6 Hours B) 12 Hours C) 24 Hours

EMPLOYEE *WINTER WELLBEING*

How Can I Look After My Wellbeing This Winter?

ACTIVITY	✓	DESCRIPTION	COST	TIME	AREA
Move Every Day 	☐	Take a 20-25 minute walk, stretch between meetings or build more movement into your day to support physical and mental wellbeing [3].	Free	20-25 mins	o Physical o Lifestyle
Get Some Daylight 	☐	Get outside during daylight hours, even for a short walk. For certain people, the HSE recommends supplementing vitamin D in winter [4].	Free - Low	10-15 mins	o Physical o Lifestyle o Mental
Stay Connected 	☐	Schedule one meaningful connection each week, such as a coffee with a colleague, a phone call with a friend or attending a local community activity [5].	Free	15-30 mins	o Social o Mental
Make a Christmas Budget 	☐	Create a realistic Christmas budget and identify upcoming expenses early to help reduce financial stress and improve financial wellbeing [6].	Free	1 hour	o Financial o Mental
Eat Nourishing Food 	☐	Introduce one healthy winter habit such as making homemade soup, eating porridge for breakfast, or including oily fish once a week [7].	Low	1 hour	o Physical o Lifestyle



Q2 - True or False:
Everyone in Ireland is at risk of vitamin D deficiency in Winter?

Further guidance and resources for all activities are available to participants on the SME Wellbusiness Charter Portal.

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MANAGER *WINTER WELLBEING*

How Can I Look After My Team's Wellbeing This Winter?

ACTIVITY	✓	DESCRIPTION	COST	TIME	AREA
Encourage Annual Leave 	☐	Remind employees to take their remaining leave and disconnect during the Christmas break where possible to encourage rest and recovery.	Free	10-15 mins	o Work-Life Balance o Job Demands
Clarify Priorities 	☐	Hold conversations about what needs to be achieved before year-end and identify what can wait until January to relieve unnecessary pressure.	Free	10-15 mins	o Communication o Job Demands
Recognise Efforts 	☐	Identify one way to recognise your team's efforts for the year, such as individual thank-yous, team celebrations or highlighting achievements.	Free - Low	1 hour	o Recognition o Relationships o Communication
Support Healthy Working 	☐	Encourage employees to stay home when unwell and consider flexible working arrangements during challenging weather or periods of illness [8].	Free	10-15 mins	o Control o Physical
Check in Regularly 	☐	Use 1:1s to ask how employees are coping with workload, wellbeing and any personal supports needed, especially during busy winter periods [9].	Free	10-15 mins	o Mental o Relationships o Communication



Q3 - As a general guideline during cold and flu season, how long should you wait after your symptoms have gone before returning to work? A) 24 Hours B) 48 Hours C) 72 Hours

Further guidance and resources for all activities are available to participants on the SME Wellbusiness Charter Portal.

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LEADER *WINTER WELLBEING*

How Can I Look After My Organisation's Wellbeing This Winter?

ACTIVITY	✓	DESCRIPTION	COST	TIME	AREA
Set Clear Priorities 	☐	Clearly communicate year-end priorities and expectations over the Christmas period, and avoid contacting employees while they are on leave.	Free	15-30 mins	o Work-Life Balance o Job Demands
Bring People Together 	☐	Facilitate opportunities for colleagues to connect and celebrate successes, such as a team lunch, Christmas gathering or year-end reflection session.	Low - Medium	1-2 hours	o Social o Recognition o Culture
Winter Working Environment 	☐	Ensure workplace heating, lighting and winter safety measures are appropriate, including communication for severe weather conditions [10].	Free - Low	1 hour	o Physical Environment
Support Your Community 	☐	Pick a fundraising initiative, local charity or volunteering opportunity, so your employees and organisation can contribute to the community.	Free - Low	1-2 hours	o Community o Culture o Social
Consider Financial Recognition 	☐	Where feasible, consider bonuses, gift vouchers or other financial rewards to recognise employees' efforts during a financially challenging time of year.	Low - Medium	1-2 hours	o Financial o Recognition



Q4 - What percentage of Irish consumers planned to borrow money to fund Christmas in 2025?
A) 10% B) 20% C) 30%

Further guidance and resources for all activities are available to participants on the SME Wellbusiness Charter Portal.

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WELLBEING CHAMPION *WINTER WELLBEING*

How Can I Promote Wellbeing This Winter?

ACTIVITY	✓	DESCRIPTION	COST	TIME	AREA
Mental Health 	☐	Share information on mental health, seasonal affective disorder, available supports and employee assistance resources.	Free	15-30 mins	o Mental
Winter Nutrition 	☐	Provide simple, evidence-based tips on healthy eating, hydration and maintaining energy during winter.	Free	15-30 mins	o Physical o Lifestyle
Good Hygiene Practices 	☐	Remind employees about hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and staying home when experiencing infectious illness.	Free	15-30 mins	o Physical Environment o Physical
Movement Challenge 	☐	Encourage participation in an activity challenge, step challenge or fundraising event such as the Movember 60km walk or run challenge [11].	Free - Low	1-2 hours	o Physical o Lifestyle o Community
Financial Wellbeing Resources 	☐	Signpost budgeting tools, financial wellbeing supports and practical advice to help employees navigate festive season pressures.	Free	15-30 mins	o Financial o Mental



Q5 - True or False:
Men are more likely to experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) than women?

Further guidance and resources for all activities are available to participants on the SME Wellbusiness Charter Portal.

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QUIZ ANSWERS

Q1 - C: 24 HOURS

According to the HSE, cold germs from coughs and sneezes can live on hands and surfaces for up to 24 hours. To help prevent the spread of colds, wash your hands regularly, cough or sneeze into your elbow, use tissues and dispose of them as soon as possible. Find out more information by clicking here.

Q2 - TRUE

According to the HSE, everyone in Ireland is at risk of vitamin D deficiency in winter. They recommend that “everyone in Ireland needs to take a vitamin D supplement”, the amount you need depends on your age, skin tone, your situation and the time of year. Find out more information by clicking here.

Q3 - B: 48 HOURS

According to Healthy Workplace Ireland, it is generally recommended to wait 48 hours after symptoms have passed before returning to work. Employers are urged to facilitate this advice wherever possible, helping to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. Find out more information by clicking here.

Q4 - B: 20%

According to the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) 2025 report, 20% of people in Ireland planned to borrow to fund their Christmas spending. The same research found that the average expected Christmas spend was €1,163.

Q5 - FALSE

According to the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists, seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is about three times more common in women than it is in men. SAD is a type of depression triggered by changes of season and symptoms include low mood, lack of interest and enjoyment in life, low energy, being less sociable and being more irritable. Click here to find out more.

SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER

Commit to Building a Healthy Workplace

What is the SME WellBusiness Charter?

It is a free programme that helps businesses build a healthy workplace and support employee wellbeing. It provides practical tools, resources and training that make it easy for busy SMEs to take meaningful action. Developed in partnership with Healthy Ireland, it can be used on its own or alongside any existing wellbeing initiatives, regardless of the size of your business.

What do I commit to?

By joining the programme, you commit to four simple steps:

1. COMMIT - Get leadership on board and nominate a wellbeing champion.
2. CONSULT - Understand employee needs using our ready-made survey.
3. CREATE - Use our resources to create a plan based on employees' needs.
4. CONTINUE - Repeat process annually and drive continuous improvement.

What does it help me do?

The programme helps you create a healthy workplace culture through lasting change - not just once-off initiatives. It is built around four pillars:

- SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL HEALTH
- PROMOTE POSITIVE TEAM DYNAMICS
- DESIGN GOOD WORK
- EMBED WELLBEING INTO STRATEGY

What do I get access to on joining?

As a Chamber member and signatory you get the following for free:

• Exclusive portal access • Practical step-by-step resources • Public recognition
• Training opportunities • Talks & events • Monthly updates • 1:1 & peer support

What have our signatories said?

"The Charter has provided us with an excellent framework to use to ensure wellbeing has become a priority in our organisation. The resources and guidance from Gillian has been invaluable." ***- Boyd HR***

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How do I sign up?

To sign up or find out more information visit the Chambers Ireland website or scan the QR Code.

REFERENCES

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[2] Chambers Ireland. *SME WellBusiness Charter*. Available at: https://chambers.ie/sme-wellbusiness-charter/

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[11] Movember. *Movember Challenge Events | Help Movember Raise Funds for Men's Health.* Available at: https://ie.movember.com/support-us/challenges/

DISCOVER THE SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER

CLICK HERE

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