

**PRESS RELEASE 11 July 2023**

**‘Happy to Chat’ Cafes Pilot launched by Healthy Wexford**

An extension from the ‘Happy to Chat’ Bench initiative, which has 11 benches spread across the County, the ‘Happy to Chat’ Cafes is a new pilot initiative to increase social engagement & reduce loneliness and isolation in our county.

Pilot Cafes, based in hotels, restaurants and cafes identify one of their tables as a ‘Happy to Chat’ table, identified by a small table sign in the distinctive Healthy Ireland green colour. People are asked to consider sitting there alone or with a friend, highlighting that that you are open to others joining you.

An initiative of the Healthy County Committee at Wexford County Council, committee member Cllr Maua Bell explained ‘Initially in we sought expression of interest from Cafes in Wexford Town. We were delighted to have a number of cafes, hotels and restaurants come on board and we launched last Wednesday (5th July). The reaction has been so positive and there is demand across the county and so we have now opened the pilot up to the whole county’.

Asked how it would work for the business Annette Dupuy, of Healthy Wexford said ‘As it is a pilot we are asking the businesses to allocate one table as a ‘Happy to Chat’ table. It might not be the same table all the time and they can move the Happy to Chat card around on their tables as suits. We have asked then to make sure to brief staff on the initiative and to feed back so we can tweak and tailor the initiative should it continue beyond the pilot of July & August.

Initially launching with eight Wexford Town locations, in under a week this has extended to 13 in Wexford Town and two other locations outside of town. As the participating cafes grow, they will be updated on Healthy Wexford social media – Facebook. Instagram and Twitter. Plans are also in place to produce flyers for those not online.

Speaking on the initiative Mayor of Wexford and Chair of the Healthy County Committee Cllr John Hegarty, said ‘This is a really simple idea to increase social connection and we are hoping that with the pilot we can figure out how to it will work best. If it is successful, we would hope that it becomes a standard in County Wexford café locations.’

Participants who chat are encouraged to provide feedback to the cafes themselves or to Healthy Wexford via their social media, by emailing [annette.dupuy@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:annette.dupuy@wexfordcoco.ie) or by calling 053-9196000. Other businesses/cafes who want to get involved in the pilot can also use the same contacts.

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A green and white card on a table

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