



Evaluation of HIVE Virtual Peer Support Programme

July 2021

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Thank you to Adé Adeniji and Rachelle Denton, who brought their full energy and heart to the design of HIVE as well as the facilitation. Individually, their respective talents are laudable, but as a pair, they are truly spellbinding.

Thank you to Dr. Sara Meddings and Dr. Emma Watson from ImROC for their critical support and encouragement. We chose to partner with ImROC because they are renowned experts in peer support in the UK and beyond. They have acted as consultants to the project; we have valued their input in session design as well as the safety and governance of the project. ImROC have helped us incorporate ideas from recovery and wellbeing education practice and peer support. We also turned to ImROC to comment on this evaluation, as experts in the evaluation of recovery and wellbeing projects. In short, HIVE was a safer, higher quality beta thanks to their involvement.

And finally to Sarah Bingham and April Doty, who conceived HIVE and brought it to life.

Executive summary

As a result of the pandemic, peer support is gaining public recognition across the country, particularly within [public health](#). It involves people sharing knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help with one another. Practised typically in a health setting and making the most impact when specific principles are followed, peer support programmes convene individuals to improve wellbeing.

Minds@Work is on a journey to assess the impact of peer support within a world of work context: using a proven peer support model and delivering in a unique, fluid, digital environment, can we create deeper human connections? Can we offer a space for peers to improve the foundations of wellbeing and therefore mental health to better thrive at work and at home?

HIVE stands for Highly Interactive Virtual Experience. It is Minds@Work's virtual peer support programme, established to help a cohort of people reach a goal they set for themselves, to improve their sleep, exercise, nutrition or relaxation, the cornerstones of mental wellbeing. Minds@Work's HIVE proposition was borne out of the pandemic crisis and possibly at the most challenging moment most businesses have had to face.

The following report offers an overview of qualitative and quantitative evaluation of its first beta HIVE, working with 36 leaders from a cross section of small to medium sized enterprises.

Overall, our findings show a positive impact on peers partaking in the HIVE programme. The World Health Organisation's Five Well-Being Index was completed at each stage of the journey. The mean score from the beginning to the end showed an improvement of 50.91 to 63.14. (Appendix 1 & 3).

In the final anonymous survey, 77% of respondents said that they were making good progress towards their health goal and in interviews, 100% of respondents said that they made progress. Interestingly, many said that this was secondary in importance to the connections they had established with fellow peers and the ability to have vulnerable conversations.

Some strong relationships were nurtured during the HIVE beta: 85% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel there is someone in the HIVE that I can turn to if I need support in my life". In qualitative interviews, 10 out of 12 participants agreed with the statement and expressed an interest in forming an alumni programme. Some groups worked better than others where behaviours such as active listening or regular attendance to bi-weekly sessions were observed.

Although many participants did form strong bonds within their groups, the beta proved that we need to explore alternative ways of matching participants to ensure the best experience.

The technology and social network platforms received generally positive reviews while acknowledging teething problems that are likely to occur when using new and/or innovative formats.

HIVE's programme design was a critical element to be tested in the beta. By its very nature, HIVE is complex. It was multifaceted with themes, domains, and peer support skills to work through in any one session combined with expert insight, facilitation and time for group discussion. The programme is designed to guide participants on a discovery journey. Through this process, they build a personal workplace wellbeing plan, though this was not made explicit nor necessarily understood. Length and format of expert guidance vis à vis group discussion remain areas to be explored. The final session that invited peers to convene outside their groups and share their experience of the HIVE journey, was universally popular.

Notable was the praise for the two facilitators, Ade Adeniji and Rachelle Denton, with one participant saying that they were "the best facilitators of any session I've ever been on."

The HIVE proved a safe format for vulnerable conversations for deeper human connections and 100% of peers taking part felt safe in their group settings. It was clear that participants would disengage if they felt they were not able to share their feelings. Further trials regarding efficacy of the HIVE on different audience groups will need to continue.

Our beta showed that HIVE provides basic education on the four key domains of health, with the added benefit of peer support to help participants to remain accountable. Peers thrived where there was sufficient commonality and relatability. Others highlighted the importance of being at the right stage of one's life journey to fully benefit and be receptive to what HIVE has to offer. Anonymity and the security that came from being a stranger among a group of strangers was highly effective in nurturing vulnerable conversations. It is not clear whether this could be replicated in a working environment where participants know one another; this would need to be tested in another beta.

Minds@Work seeks to create mental wellbeing in the workplace, but the first beta did not measure whether an individual's participation in the HIVE impacted colleagues in the workplace. The next beta will also include further session(s), designed by Board members, to equip and mobilise the HIVE cohort to take their learning back to the workplace for the benefit of others, plus measures to test the success of this.

While we are at the beginning of our HIVE journey, and changes can and will be made, we concluded that the overall impact of the programme on participants has been positive and any evolution moving forward would need to be done carefully and with our design experts' guidance.

The video testimony captured by the Minds@Work team of participants that completed the HIVE is an uplifting viewing experience. It is our hope to replicate or indeed build on the positive impact of this beta with many more people in the years to come, inspiring and equipping people to enhance mental wellbeing in the workplace.

Introduction

Minds@Work HIVE (Highly Interactive Virtual Experience) is a virtual peer support programme helping a cohort of people make a meaningful change to improve their wellbeing at home and at work.

Minds@Work developed the programme because of the escalating need for mental health support. Even before COVID, there was a mental health crisis in the workplace; in 2019, [the HSE reported](#) that depression and anxiety became the leading cause of sickness absence, accounting for 17 million lost days of work. Burnout was [acknowledged by the WHO](#) as an occupational phenomenon in 2019 and added to the International Classification of Diseases.

Then COVID hit. The social isolation of lockdown put additional pressure on our mental health and forced us to communicate through video conferencing as a norm. The need for human connection and the necessity to connect over video meant that this was the moment for us to test a model of virtual peer support, which we believe could potentially scale to help thousands of people at a low cost.

Peer support has been shown to be effective in helping people reach other health goals - Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers are two examples. Meeting face-to-face with people who understand your struggle and share common ground is emotionally nurturing.

Studies of the healthiest places on the planet ([Blue Zones](#)) show that people live longer and happier lives when they have strong relationships with a small friendship group. In contrast, when we lack the social fabric to support us through tough times, we are more at risk of mental illness and even suicide. HIVE not only endeavored to support people with their wellbeing goal, but to create the environment for new relationships to form which are nurturing to mental health.

HIVE is a living expression of Minds@Work values. We believe that a conversation can save a life and that we all have the power to support one another. We believe that mental health should be discussed openly and regularly. We know that mental health, like physical health, cannot be taken for granted; if we want to be healthy, we have to make an effort on many fronts. HIVE aims to create the social fabric to have these discussions and to make them commonplace.

About HIVE

HIVE aims to improve wellbeing, support people to identify and meet wellbeing goals and to develop a safe social fabric through virtual peer support. The first HIVE beta, a pilot sponsored by Legal & General, aimed to support leaders of small and medium sized businesses with a goal to improve their sleep, exercise, relaxation, nutrition.

Participants were recruited both from the Minds@Work community (a network of professionals who want to eradicate the stigma of mental illness and create mentally healthy workplaces),

and through a 2 month social media campaign. All participants were made aware of the fact that HIVE was in beta and everyone signed the community guidelines and terms and conditions of the programme.

HIVE participants met fortnightly on the video conferencing platform Remo, on Tuesday evenings from 7-9pm from 9 February to 4 May. In addition to meeting face-to-face, they also communicated through a private dedicated social network called Mighty Networks, which allows for private messaging between individuals, private group level communication and communication with the whole HIVE.

HIVE consisted of 7 sessions as follows:

	Exploration	Goal Focus	Peer Support Focus
The Swarm	Meet the HIVE		
The Cell	Form Your Group	Overview of 4 Goals, Finding the deeper “Why” for your goal	Active Listening
Bee Still	Self	Nutrition	Respecting Values & Practicing Non-Judgement
The Dance	Relationships	Exercise	Empathy/Vulnerability
The Work	Work	Relaxation	Boundaries
The Meadow	Environment	Sleep	Circle of Concern, Influence and Control
The Honey	Sustaining progress	Celebrating Progress	Expressing Gratitude and Consolidating Learning

The sessions were facilitated by two experienced facilitators, who provided instruction from the stage and modelled each exercise, but did not observe any individual table discussions.

Table discussions were private and groups were entirely self-reliant, however there was a support desk in the centre of the room that participants could visit at any time to talk directly to organisers. The role of the support desk was explained to participants in the early sessions. After each exercise, all participants were encouraged to provide feedback in the chat about how the exercise felt. The facilitators personally acknowledged this feedback and responded to many comments directly from the stage.

Each session contained 3 exercises to introduce concepts and practice skills such as active listening, practicing non judgement, respecting values, exercising empathy, having vulnerable conversations, and setting boundaries. These exercises were the framework for exploratory

discussions about the participant's goal. Exercises took place in either groups of 3 (splitting the table in half) or 6 (the whole table).

An expert speaker was featured for a 15 minute Q&A at most sessions to inspire and to give pragmatic advice on each of the health goals.

Evaluation Questions

The HIVE beta set out to determine the following:

1. Is HIVE associated with **improved wellbeing**
2. Is this virtual peer support model **safe**?
3. Do participants make progress on their **goal**?
4. Do participants develop nurturing **relationships** with peers?
5. Was our approach to group **formation** successful?
6. Have we chosen the right **technology** for the programme?
7. Are the **format and facilitation** engaging and effective?
8. Who is the **right audience** for HIVE?

Evaluation framework and methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative measures have been applied in this evaluation.

Quantitative:

- Remo, the events software we use for fortnightly meetings, records when a participant enters and leaves a session, so we have an accurate record of session attendance for each participant.
- In the first 10 minutes of each session, the facilitators asked participants to complete a survey on Mentimeter, the results of which would be private and anonymous. The survey was a standardised measure, the World Health Organisation 5 Wellbeing Index (WHO-5). Individuals answer 5 questions on a 5 point scale. See the full results in Appendix 2.
- In the last 10 minutes of each session, the facilitators asked the group to complete a second survey on Mentimeter, the results of which would be private and anonymous. The survey allowed participants to feedback about how the session went for them and whether the programme is meeting its objectives, helping them reach their goal and develop strong relationships in their group. Results can be seen in Appendix 3

Qualitative:

- When participants did not attend a session, we wrote to them to ask why and to determine whether they would be returning to the HIVE. For those who said they would not return, we asked for the reasons behind their decision (whether it was

because the sessions were not meeting their needs, or whether there were other personal reasons).

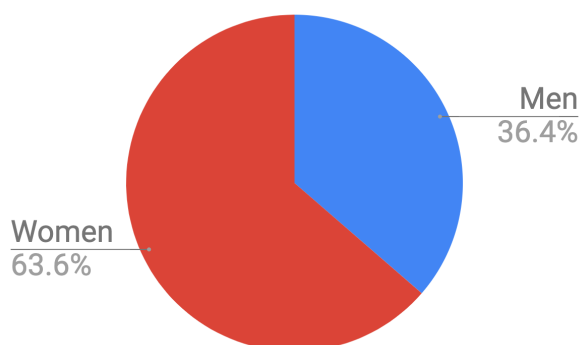
- In the last 10 minutes of each session, in the second survey on Mentimeter, in addition to providing a rating of 1-5, participants were also asked “What one thing would you change to improve tonight’s session?”
- When the HIVE ended, we asked all participants if they would give 30 minutes of their time to be interviewed by us so that we could understand the impact of the programme and what improvements we could make in the future. Twelve participants agreed to be interviewed and all interviews were conducted by a member of the Minds@Work team, in a conversational style, based on a common set of questions (See Appendix 1). Participants gave consent for these interviews on Zoom to be video recorded so that we could carefully reflect on their feedback, identify themes and share these with our sponsors.

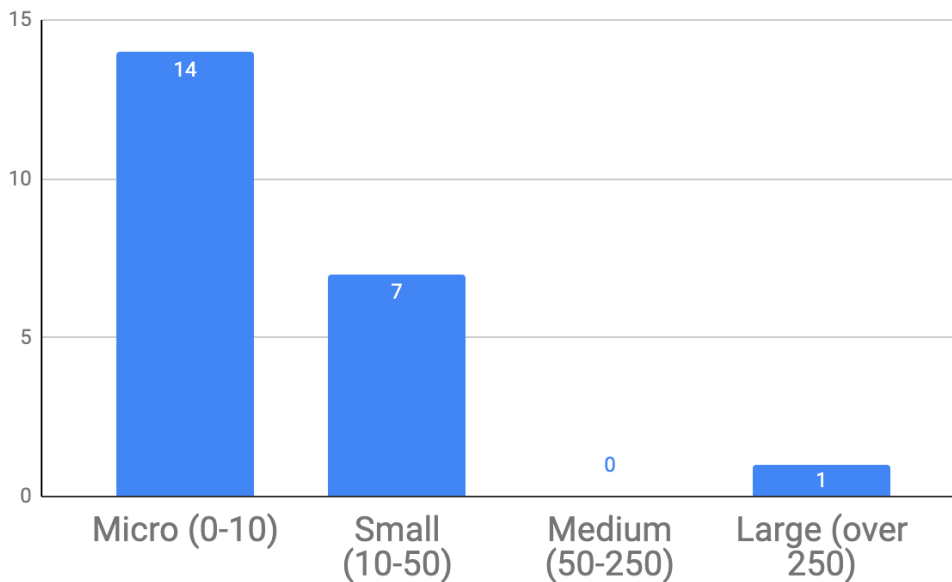
Findings

Who accessed it

- 119 people registered an interest in HIVE and were invited to the first session
- 56 people attended “the Swarm” (the first session)
- 36 people in 7 groups were tracked as “participants”; they were allocated to a group, participated in a number of sessions and interacted on Mighty Networks; their session attendance is summarised in appendix 4
- 22 people attended at least 5 of the 6 sessions that followed the Swarm

The 22 who attended virtually all of the sessions consisted of a mixture of men and women from businesses of varying sizes as seen in the charts below. A number of leaders from businesses in the wellbeing industry, including coaches, were drawn to participate in the programme as beta testers.





Reasons for unsubscribing or removal from HIVE database after initial registration

- 60 unknown (They did not respond to emails asking them why they have not attended)
- 8 people said that Tuesday nights were bad for them
- 5 people only attended the Swarm as a tester (potential future sponsor)
- 1 said they had a bad cell (“uncommitted group members”)
- 5 personal reasons (illness, death in the family, etc)
- 1 said that HIVE wasn’t what they thought (He wanted a masterclass.)
- 3 dropped out because they could not use Remo

Key successes

The purpose of HIVE was two-fold:

- Support individuals to make a meaningful change and improve their wellbeing in 90 days (reaching **goals** around sleep, exercise, nutrition or relaxation)
- Nurture deeper **relationships** between individuals over time, creating true community

Both of these aims were achieved as follows:

Goals and Wellbeing

- On average, the wellbeing of participants improved during the HIVE from a mean of 50.91 in the beginning to a mean of 63.14 in the end. This was measured by the WHO survey.
- 77% of participants who answered the final survey in the final session of HIVE “agreed or strongly agreed” with the statement “I am making good progress towards my health goal.”

- In interviews, 10 out of 12 (83%) attribute this success directly to HIVE, whilst others attribute it to other factors.
- Although they were not asked, several interviewees further offered that because of the holistic nature of the HIVE programme, they set and achieved other goals in the other 4 domains.

Relationships

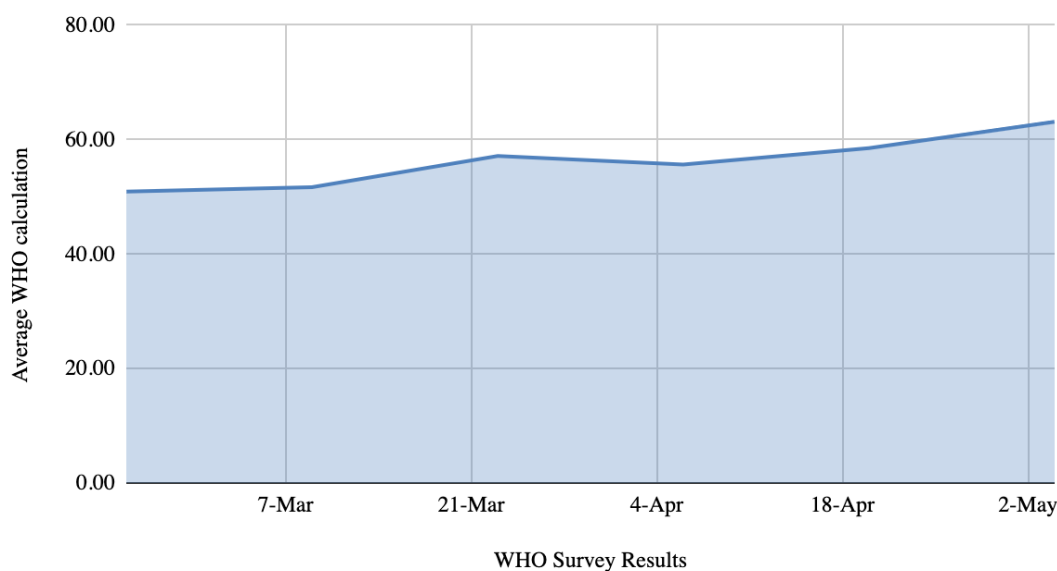
- 85% of participants who answered the final survey in the final session of HIVE “agreed or strongly agreed” with the statement “I feel there is someone in the HIVE that I can turn to if I need support in my life”.
- In interviews, 10 out of the 12 participants (83%) agreed with the same statement.

Feedback from participants

1) Is HIVE associated with improved wellbeing

The WHO survey results show that wellbeing improved from a mean of 50.91 to a mean of 63.14 from the beginning of the programme to the end. A total WHO wellbeing score is calculated by finding the sum of an individual’s 5 scores, then multiplying that number by 4, so that the highest score possible is 100.

Average WHO calculation vs. WHO Survey Results



Limited conclusions can be drawn from this data for a few reasons. First, the rules associated with lockdown eased at the end of the programme, which would also likely result in improved

wellbeing. Also, the survey was anonymous, so individual progress cannot be measured in this case.

The next HIVE beta should be measured independently, so that more personal information can be collected and firm conclusions can be drawn about the direct impact of HIVE on each participant's wellbeing.

The interviews revealed that participants did benefit from the programme on many fronts. Participants said that we created a unique community that they valued; one that doesn't exist anywhere else.

"What I was hoping to get was to meet like-minded people who were looking to improve their own wellbeing and to connect and support each other. That's what I felt - in the sessions, in the Mighty Networks and in the cell discussions, and what has come out afterwards. It feels like we don't have enough of that type of community elsewhere."

"I just feel like I got so much out of it - everything from just taking the time to focus every other Tuesday, the little bite sized presentations, and the amazing people I have met through it and been able to interact with in the next 12 weeks. It's been a great experience."

"It must have taken so much effort and time, anxiety and worry to pull this all together, but I'm sure you're super proud of what you've done -- it has been such a tricky time and by running this programme you've given a lot of people a lot of hope and connection. Even as a beta it felt really thought out - I think it's brilliant!"

"I loved participating in it. There's not a lot of spaces that are safe and easy and professional for us to come and say the things we want to say. I'm not doing that kind of sharing with my workplace and I'm not doing it with my friends -- so finding the tribe of people who are all looking at mental health, who are leaders and professionals dealing with similar challenges -- this is a unique opportunity -- I don't know many organisations doing it and I think you are onto something."

"The beauty of HIVE is that it's a really nice introduction and a way in. It's the kind of thing that really meets you where you are, so people who are at different stages and moments in their life can find a place that's natural for them and they can be exposed to really simple helpful frameworks that can stay with them and that they can use within the week...It's the perfect balance of being serious, helping you to connect to important issues, in a light touch, natural way -- so its not intimidating, its super welcoming, it gives you the opportunity to make relationships with people you might never have met met and to talk really honestly about things you might be concerned about or maybe have never had the chance to think through."

"I've just come out of HIVE feeling really positive and inspired. It's just been such an uplifting experience - it's with a heavy heart that you realise it's come to an end. It's genuinely touched and benefited me and the other people that have been involved in it."

2) Is this virtual peer support model safe?

100% of participants interviewed reported that they felt safe in their group - no event arose that the group could not deal with and they felt that we provided the environmental conditions for safety with our communications and facilitation.

"If someone needed urgent help or was oversharing, we had the kind of group and the wider HIVE that could support people."

"The behind the scenes was so seamless -- the emails were so clear, superfriendly. The Remo space was optimistic because of the layout and colours and Adé and Rachelle were exceptional, so you felt that you were coming back home -- you always felt like you were welcome...you have to sign your waiver at the beginning, which sets the framework for an environment where you have to trust one another."

In some groups, some participants experienced uncomfortable moments in the group, but did not report this to the support desk. The sources of discomfort were 1) people in the group acting as coaches instead of peers 2) the group veering off topic rather than staying true to the exercise 3) people joined the group who didn't belong.

"Early on, where people would randomly join, they would sometimes appear in the wrong group and this would be awkward if people were talking about their problems...the messaging to stay in your cell helped us build friendships."

"I once had an interaction with people who were not in my cell -- some of the community rules weren't necessarily being followed -- active listening, not fixing people, not coaching people is a phenomenal community agreement and I'm not sure everyone knew what that meant."

"I did at times feel that I needed a timeout -- sometimes listening is tiring, especially if the group dynamics or energy was low -- I felt I needed air. The break helped. But if there was a place you could go to in the room to be on your own, that would help."

"Occasionally someone was sharing quite a vulnerable space and the countdown timer starts for the end of the discussion.... If you're having a wobble, is there a safe space you can go to to talk to someone or handout and have a breather as if you would in real life...Even the word support desk felt like it was an admin/IT desk."

"I thought the way the psychological safety was set up was really impressive. In the first few weeks I was bowled over and I was talking to other people I knew about how"

impressive it was, the level of connection that was generated, and I was surprised how safe I felt in most contexts. I would say in some of the group interactions, the active listening and non judgement wasn't conducted the way I would want it to be conducted and there were times that I was really feeling for someone who was sharing and I didn't think they were getting the responses they could have been and I was probably overcompensating trying to say 'hey remember we're trying to listen'...I think there was a little bit of me hoping to coach."

3) Do participants make progress on their goal?

In the final anonymous survey, 77% of respondents said that they were making good progress towards their health goal and in interviews 100% of respondents said that they made progress on their health goal (some adding that they made progress on health goals in other domains, thanks to the holistic nature of the HIVE programme).

Some people changed their goal mid-stream, realising that another health domain was actually having a greater impact. The interplay between the 4 domains became clear to participants, e.g. improving your diet boosts your ability to reach your fitness goals, relaxation improves your ability to sleep, etc. Having a cell full of people with different goals meant that there was no competition, only collaboration and support.

People thought that the expert speakers were really helpful, though some suggested that more supportive content could be offered up front, as the speaker relating to their goal spoke in a session late in the programme.

"My goal was to get out more and exercise. I went in with the intention of getting back into a running habit, which I've never done, but HIVE did get me out and active."

"I achieved my goal, but not because of HIVE. I expected to be in a group where we were all dealing with the same problem. My group kept changing their goals...people were wandering all over the place...Either you say you get all the people interested in the topic on the same table, or you say its a holistic well being programme and you choose a goal for all 4 domains."

4) Do participants develop nurturing relationships with peers?

On the closing evening of HIVE, 85% of participants who answered the final survey "agreed or strongly agreed" with the statement "I feel there is someone in the HIVE that I can turn to if I need support in my life". In our interviews, 10 out of the 12 participants (83%) agreed with the same statement and several asked if we would consider developing an alumni programme, as they would be keen to join and continue with their group.

The hallmarks of a thriving cell with strong relationships were:

- A commitment to sharing and supporting one another equally
- A commitment to attending all sessions in the programme
- A willingness to have vulnerable conversations

“Because of the way in which we entered HIVE and progressed through it, we are each saying things to each other that we haven’t said to many people and feeling that its safe to do so with the people we have been on this journey with. We have early, but rich, relationships -- I’ve had one-on-one phone calls with people in my cell to support one another.”

“One of the other people in my group lives a few roads away from where I live and we agreed to meet up and go for a run...since then we’ve gone for a run each week. We’ve been able to have some really nice conversations...I never expected that from this programme. We have both agreed that beyond this programme, we will meet up and go for runs together.

“I was reticent until I was sure I was in my permanent group. But once it was my group, I felt I could emotionally invest - I thought -- this is my group now, no one else is coming and going.”

“The connection with the other group members -- the space to talk to them about what’s going on with work...it took time for sure, but our cell was really great -- one evening there were only two of us from the table -- and that was fine and we got to know each other really well and it was impactful. It’s the one-on-one time that builds a relationship and its harder when you have 5 people across your screen, so that something for future design...We were all really hungry for something more -- I would love to meet everybody-- wouldn’t that be amazing if we were in person together!”

“In between the fortnightly sessions, we were checking in on each other -- someone was moving house, someone started a new job -- and individually people within the group reached out to check in between sessions. That really worked well and it didn’t feel forced. You just started to build a friendship and you were wondering about them.”

“The five of us showed up every week and just having that passion, dedication and commitment to each other made a difference -- even if I have a down moment, I am looking forward to this opportunity and learning from others. This has been a relatively long time we have been together and its hard to cut the umbilical cord, especially when you have been so vulnerable and learned so much from one another.”

“I think it’s great that we have a forum (Mighty Networks) that keeps contact safe...but I wonder if there is a reunion -- is there a class of 2021?

Behaviour that led to weaker relationships in some cells were:

- When a member of the group stopped active listening and started coaching instead
- When a member of the group did not respect the clock and allow others to speak
- When a member of the group missed a session
- When a member of the group wanted to stick rigidly to the exercise while the rest of the group wanted to broaden the conversation
- When there was too much common ground in the group, with one outlier (e.g. just one younger person)

“A couple of people in my group didn’t attend every session and then some shared anxiety about coming back into the group and whether they might be accepted because they hadn’t been to every one.”

One participant reported that her group contained a coach who *“only wanted to listen and take”*. This coach was forthright in their motivations for joining -- they told the group that they only wanted to hear from others and understand their needs, to inform their coaching business. The participant who reported this in her interview did not tell the support desk and chose to continue to HIVE because she had *“met some lovely people”*, she enjoyed the facilitation, and felt that she should complete the programme, since she had committed.

5) Was our approach to group formation successful?

Although many participants did form strong bonds within their groups, the beta proved that we need to explore alternative ways of matching participants to ensure the best experience.

It’s important that people feel an affinity with a few members of their group from the start; on that foundation we slowly build trust and a sense of responsibility to one another. We designed the first session, “the Swarm” as an opportunity for people to meet others in the HIVE, so that they could naturally gravitate towards those they wanted to work with for the duration of the programme. We chose Remo as a platform because it enabled people to move from table to table, which they did in a variety of exercises during the Swarm.

Although feedback from the Swarm was overwhelmingly positive, it did not result in participants choosing the group they wanted to work with. In fact, no one interviewed felt that they had “chosen” their group - they felt that they “ended up in a group” or even that “the algorithm had put them in a group.”

Where people liked one another, they thrived. Where people didn’t like one another, they disengaged from the programme. In the worst cases, participants from a disintegrating group took matters into their own hands and temporarily joined another group, disrupting the relationships that were forming there.

“I had a quick conversation with another woman at a different table right at the start and we immediately had a connection -- we both had been through something similar

and I would have loved to have gotten to know her better, but I had no opportunity to get back in touch with her... I wish I had ended up on her table.”

“If I could do something different personally, I would have been more proactive about moving on in the Swarm, but I was enjoying the conversation and I only met a small number of people. It worked for me though.”

“I was just put in the group. We were talking about really different problems... I would have been more than happy to switch groups...it might be worth having a chat with people before putting them into groups to find out what people want before they join.”

“If I were to imagine us being together in a room, I would have had more of an opportunity to network with more people. It’s not like I chose my tribe...it was more like I met people and then I needed to find a table that had a free seat...You could put one ice-breaker question at a table and get people to circulate around and answer each question and get to know people at the table”

“I think the choice element was great, but there’s a bit of serendipity to it too.”

“It started like a choice -- we were at a table with others who wanted to sleep better, but then it felt like just a default...maybe there’s some group guidelines or support to get us working together and getting to know one another.”

“I definitely enjoyed the sessions that were more free-flowing, the Swarm...I found a bit of stagnation once we were in a cell. For whatever reason, my cell didn’t particularly bond...We struggled with someone in the sessions taking up a bit too much space. I think that reduced the bond and there was a reluctance for people to stay in our cell...I actually felt more supported by people I spoke to earlier on in the HIVE who I had really rich, deep and intimate conversations with -- I might keep in contact with them.”

“Could there have been a way to have a poll to check how connected we feel and then to mix it up a bit, so you could allow people who hadn’t bonded to work with some other cells. It would have been good to have a private moment to reach out and to see that it wasn’t really clicking.”

6) Have we chosen the right technology for the programme?

Introducing people to new technology is always a challenge, but both Remo and Mighty Networks were successfully adopted by most participants. Feedback from the Swarm showed that 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I enjoyed using the Remo platform”, an excellent score for the first session using new software.

Remo is a small company and the product is still being refined, so the user experience wasn't always smooth.

- At times people could not be seen or heard and sometimes they couldn't move from table to table.
- Accessing Remo was difficult for some, because it doesn't work on all browsers and it doesn't work on tablets

With regard to Remo, participants said:

"Coming into Remo it felt very big. As far as platform functionality it has all the right functionality but if it could be skinned slightly differently it would be cozier and work better."

"I do like the platform...the idea that you have a platform that looks and acts like a conference room really speaks to me...I would definitely come into another session using Remo...It felt a little glitchy at times, but I think that's just something to work through."

"For me it was fine, even though I live in a hamlet with a bad internet connection...In general I was impressed...I had some annoying issues when I couldn't move tables...but if I was ever on my own at a table, April spotted it and got my cell to join me."

"If there was anything that you might do differently in future, it would be to show more people from the HIVE on the screen, like you can on Zoom"

Mighty Networks served our needs well, allowing groups to communicate privately in their group and more widely with the whole HIVE. Participants successfully shared pictures and stories with one another and this was easy with the mobile app.

With regard to Mighty Networks, participants said:

"I was refreshed that you weren't forcing us to delve into Facebook...Mighty Networks is sometimes unyielding or clunky the way it works, but I liked having a separate place and having wider engagement with the HIVE..."

"I tend to only use WhatsApp. There's nothing wrong with Mighty Networks, it's just not something that I'm on."

7) Are the format and facilitation engaging and effective?

Participants were glowing in their reviews of both facilitators, who created a warm, welcoming, safe space and modelled each exercise effectively. Participants made recommendations about the format of the exercises; there was a desire for participants to have more time to form relationships, more time to ask questions of speakers and more

opportunities to see other members of the HIVE outside their group (on stage for instance). There is also a wish for greater continuity and simplicity in HIVE journey.

Each session of HIVE was multi-layered in its design, which included:

- Theme (self, relationships, work, environment)
- Domain (nutrition, exercise, relaxation and sleep)
- Peer support skill (active listening, practicing non judgement, respecting values, exercising empathy, having vulnerable conversations, and setting boundaries.)

The exercises introduced a peer support skill and invited participants to practice it in their group, in a conversation about their goal, in the context of the evening's theme. Sometimes the participants found the questions too complex -- they often asked for the exercise to be summarised in the chat for their reference.

Introducing peer support concepts and demonstrating them on the stage takes time. As one participant said:

"I think you tried to cram way too much into each session."

Some groups chose to divert away from the exercise; as one group member said:

"We played a bit fast and loose with the activity -- we used those as a jumping off point but we often found the conversation started to pick up on what was on people's minds at the time or experiences they've had with their goal. It worked for us because there wasn't a rigid structure, but there were pointers we could use in discussions"

Others thought the exercises introduced concepts that were new and helpful:

"It was an introduction and crash course of some really foundational ideas. It's the kind of thing I would recommend to people who haven't had the opportunity to do much personal development. I had amazing discussions with people who never thought about these concepts of non-judgemental active listening. It was lovely to see these materials really working in an online way."

In sessions 0-3, and especially after the cells were established, participants provided the feedback that they wanted more time to talk to one another at tables and less time on facilitation; this was adjusted in later sessions.

Clearer direction from the stage was occasionally needed -- participants were sometimes confused about whether they should stay in their cell, move outside their cell or break their cell into two in order to enable smaller group discussion. This created some discomfort when new people strayed into a group in the middle of a vulnerable conversation.

The programme is designed to guide participants on a discovery journey, improving their self awareness as well as their ability to support others. On this journey they learn what helps and hinders them to achieve their wellbeing goals. They reflect on what is within their control to change and what they need to ask for from others, including their workplace. Through this process, they are actually building a personal workplace wellbeing plan, though this was not made explicit and was not understood. As one participant said:

“Each session has been helpful, but I do not see/feel enough linkage or continuity between the sessions. Perhaps the whole programme might work better if it included “homework” between sessions - where homework has been agreed to at sign up.”

“If there was a bit of a journey -- a nice graphic showing all the speakers and topics, that would have helped me enjoy the journey a bit more to see that map and direction. The contracting at the start could be clearer. Be courageous about the fact that along the way you might not be feeling it, you might wonder what you are doing -- but the evidence from my group is that hanging on in there makes it worthwhile.”

“I feel the HIVE failed to build and maintain momentum I would suggest more frequent meetings - weekly instead of fortnightly, or Cell groups encouraged to meet up separately between meetings and everyone given “homework” to do with their cell group between meetings”

Most participants appreciated the speakers, rating them highly in the Mentimeter in each session. Participants also asked for more time for Q&A with the speaker, but this remained unresolved, as there was no further flexibility in the schedule.

“The talk with the guys who had the running group working with men from deprived backgrounds was awesome to see.”

“The presentations were really valuable, though probably rushed in some cases. You want the room for more material and more Q&A. Questions were flooding in and we were almost out of time. Maybe you should have separate sessions for the speakers...”

“I didn’t get too much value from the speakers, other than Street Wisdom where we worked on an exercise -- the rest were too superficial, too short, too disruptive to the group and facilitator dynamic.”

In the final session of HIVE there was no speaker. Instead, participants were invited to the stage to reflect on the journey. For the first time since the Swarm, people saw and heard from others outside their group. This was universally popular. As one participant said:

“For me tonight's session was perfect! :-) I suggest all other sessions would have been greatly improved by inviting table reps to come to the stage as you did this eve”

Participants had nothing but praise for the facilitators Adé Adeniji and Rachelle Denton. Choosing two facilitators instead of one for the HIVE was essential, because they were able to model the conversations that we wanted people to have in the groups.

“They were just amazing - the best facilitators of any session I’ve ever been on -- together they complemented each other well...a big part of helping make HIVE a success”

“I came every week for the positive energy, the constant learning - I looked forward to Adé and Rachelle’s energy which was welcoming. I felt I was learning from others in the group. It was a very different space in COVID than any other time -- people found themselves much more vulnerable now...no other virtual event had the positive energy that HIVE had.”

8) Who is the right audience for HIVE?

Based on the results of the HIVE beta, HIVE could potentially provide a safe structure for vulnerable conversations with a range of different audiences, as long as:

1. There is sufficient common ground amongst participants
2. Participants are ready to make a change to their lifestyle
3. Participants are open to the invitation to share their feelings as well as supporting others.

The audience for this HIVE beta was leaders from small and medium sized businesses who wanted to work on a wellbeing goal - sleep, exercise, relaxation and nutrition. Small businesses can be street food trucks or hairdressers, plumbers or IT consultants; they may have little in common in terms of business challenges or culture. This represents a challenge for successful peer support. As one participant said:

“There were no similar businesses sizes and types to mine in the HIVE, so we were talking about really different problems.”

In the case of this beta, 50% of participants were leaders of businesses in the wellbeing industry. This meant that the audience had a high degree of mental health literacy and could provide educated feedback as beta testers. In some cases however, coaches found it difficult to engage as equal peers and often fell into the habit of coaching instead of sharing and active listening, which compromised the egalitarian dynamic we were working to create in groups.

For peer support to work, participants have to be open to the invitation to share their feelings. It’s easy to imagine many different audiences who may benefit from the programme but do not meet this criteria of being open to vulnerable conversations. Several participants echoed this in their comments:

"I would want more men to do it. Guys are a harder audience to engage and I know people of a similar age and background to me would really benefit from this programme. Trying to convince them to do it though is quite hard...I was glad to see there were quite a few men who did sign up."

"I have a friend with depression who would benefit from HIVE but it would scare the bejeezus out of him. The people who need HIVE most are those that are most resistant to talk about their mental health. There's a sweet spot between people who would benefit from the safe space that HIVE offers and those who are open to it. To be in an environment with strangers where you can be vulnerable is very rare and in an environment where someone's not trying to give you advice or fix you is completely rare...there's something magical in knowing that there's people around that will listen and aren't going to tell you what to do."

For HIVE to be successful in helping people meet their goals, participants have to be willing to make a change to their lifestyle choices. HIVE provides some basic education on the 4 domains of health, plus the peer support to help you stay accountable, but individuals have to be ready. As one participant said:

"Looking at my own journey from breakdown - this programme would have benefited me 2-3 years after my breakdown, once I had a routine back into my life -- plugging this in would be the injection that would power my learning and insight."

One participant suggested that the programme might be more effective if participants were asked to pay towards it, or alternatively if they were sponsored by another person who checked in with them during the journey.

"I think you would get a much higher turnout and sustained commitment if people were paying for it, even if it was just £50 (£5 for each session). And to make sure its accessible, you can say if you like the look of it but can't afford it, we can help you find a personal sponsor. That personal sponsor can have a personal relationship with that person, so they value it more. So the person would think -- John paid the £50 for me, so I owe it to John to come to the sessions."

One striking and unexpected finding was that the anonymity in HIVE relationships helped participants connect with each other more deeply.

"If I'm having a challenge, no matter how personal, there are people I can talk to, that know me enough...it's hard to share with family because it would panic them all, or get the wrong response and most of my friends just want to make it better -- and I just want to talk. Now there's 5 people that know me and I can pick up the phone or drop a WhatsApp and ask for a chat."

"I was really struck by how powerful the anonymity was...I did wonder what this would be like in a large organisation...If I was thinking about organisations

benefiting, I would encourage them to sign up in such a way that they had 5 of their members in a network of 40 and I would distribute them across groups.”

Everyone found it easier to talk to a stranger than you would to have that conversation with someone close to you. You tend to think -- I need to deal with this, they don't need to hear this. So well done on the design of the programme -- it was totally unique.”

We asked participants whether they could imagine HIVE running within a company and invited them to consider the risks and benefits of that. They said:

“Until we joined the HIVE, none of us knew each other. That created a dynamic that enabled people to be more vulnerable and open...if you already worked with those people, you might think maybe I shouldn't have said that, because now I have to see them tomorrow. Ultimately you want to be in a position where that's how you will be at work.”

“An in-house HIVE programme would be brilliant. There are really tangible things that everyone can take away from this programme. If this were offered to employees as a benefit, it would be amazing. But I wouldn't see this programme being aimed specifically at those signed off from work for stress or other mental health conditions - that feels like something else.”

“If an organisation has enough mental health literacy, and stigma has been worked on, and they're ready for this kind of professional peer support group, I think it would go... The conditions for success need to be looked at for it to have the result that you want.”

Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

Preamble:

We hope HIVE has been of value to you. Your honest and candid feedback will help us continue to develop the next phase of the beta.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview, which should take about 30 mins. What you say in this interview will remain confidential, and we will not attribute comments or your views to you in any report that we produce.

The purpose of this interview is to find out about your experience of the Hive in more detail and to explore how you have applied what you have used in your work and your life. It builds on what we have already learned from the feedback forms.

We hope to use the information from the feedback forms and interviews to help us continue to develop the next phase of the beta and make it as useful as possible for future participants.

Before we start, would it be ok to record this interview? The recording will be kept confidential. The recordings will be stored securely as outlined in our GDPR policy. In the report all information will be anonymised. So, is it ok if we record the interview?

Interview questions

Goal

What was the goal that you set?

What progress have you made on your goal or any new goal you set?

If yes, how did HIVE help with that?

How could HIVE have helped more?

Overall program

What were the best aspects of the Hive?

Is there anything you didn't like?

Was the mix of presentations and activities suitable?

How could the Hive be improved?

Are you doing anything differently now compared to when you started hive?

Would you recommend Hive to others?

Relationships

Did you feel that you had the opportunity to choose the people that you wanted to work with?

How did you find the process of cell formation at the end of session 1 - The Cell.

Would you have preferred

- That cells were allocated randomly by the Hive team

- Cells were allocated by the Hive team considering some common ground
- Cells were chosen by participants in another way - please describe.

It was our aim that the peer support exercises would give the cells the chance to be self supporting.

Was that your experience within your cell?

How would you rate your cell as being self supporting?

Did you feel supported by your cell?

Did you feel safe to engage in what might be described as more vulnerable conversations with other members of your cell?

Did you ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe in your cell?

Did you ever consider reporting any behaviour to the support desk?

Is there anyone in your cell that you would contact if you needed some support in the future?

Will you keep in touch with anyone you met in the Hive?

Did you make any new friends in the Hive?

Speakers

What feedback would you offer regarding the length of the guest speaker segment?

Peer Support Exercises

Of the peer support exercises:

- Active Listening
- Practicing Non Judgement
- Respecting Values
- Exercising Empathy
- Having Vulnerable Conversations
- Setting Boundaries

Which exercises did you like?

Were there any exercises you didn't like?

Are you using any of them in your daily life?

Were the exercises explained clearly?

Did they help with your conversations?

Is there anything else we could have included?

Facilitators

Would you like to give any feedback on the facilitators?

Mighty Networks

Did you enjoy the experience of using Mighty Networks?

If you didn't use Mighty Networks, what was the reason?

The Future of HIVE

Some companies have expressed an interest in running HIVE with their employees. If you were part of a HIVE within a company, how would that change your experience? What risks and benefits would you foresee?

Remo

Do you think we should use Remo in the future for HIVE.
Why or why not?

Anything else you would like to say about any part of the program?

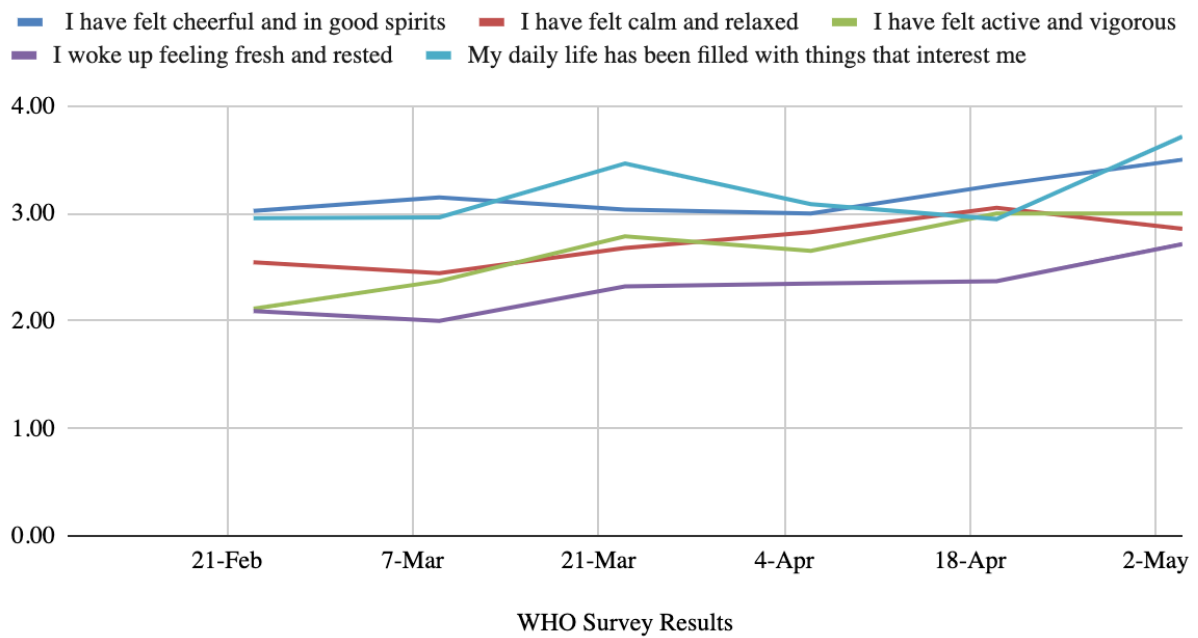
Thank you

Appendix 2 - WHO Survey

In the first 10 minutes of each session, participants were asked to “get grounded” by reflecting on how they have been feeling over the past two weeks. They were asked to complete a survey using Mentimeter, the mean results of which are shown below.

	The Swarm	The Cell	Bee Still	The Dance	The Work	The Meadow	The Honey
	9-Feb	23-Feb	9-Mar	23-Mar	6-Apr	20-Apr	4-May
Number of Completed Surveys		44	27	28	23	19	28
I have felt cheerful and in good spirits	not asked	3.02	3.15	3.04	3.00	3.26	3.50
I have felt calm and relaxed	not asked	2.55	2.44	2.68	2.83	3.05	2.86
I have felt active and vigorous	not asked	2.11	2.37	2.79	2.65	3.00	3.00
I woke up feeling fresh and rested	not asked	2.09	2.00	2.32	2.35	2.37	2.71
My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	not asked	2.95	2.96	3.46	3.09	2.95	3.71
Mean Feeling Score		2.55	2.59	2.86	2.78	2.93	3.16

WHO Survey Results



Appendix 3 - Session Evaluation Survey

In the last 10 minutes of each session, participants were asked to provide feedback on the quality of the session using Mentimeter. The results are shown below.

	The Swarm	The Cell	Bee Still	The Dance	The Work	The Meadow	The Honey
	9-Feb	23-Feb	9-Mar	23-Mar	6-Apr	20-Apr	4-May
Number of Completed Surveys	40	29	25	11	10	8	13
I felt that the event was well facilitated	4.68	4.38	4.20	4.08	4.20	4.25	4.69
I felt inspired by the speakers	not asked	4.07	3.76	4.42	4.20	4.38	not asked
I am making good progress towards my health goal	not asked	not asked	3.60	3.33	3.70	3.63	3.85
I feel there is someone in the HIVE that I can turn to if I need support in my life	not asked	not asked	3.72	3.58	3.60	3.25	4.08
I felt that tonight was a good experience overall	4.58	not asked	not asked	4.00	4.10	3.88	4.46
Average Feedback	4.50	4.20	3.89	3.86	3.87	3.73	4.18

Appendix 4 - Breakdown of Attendance by Session

	The Swarm	The Cell	Bee Still	The Dance	The Work	The Meadow	The Honey
	9-Feb	23-Feb	9-Mar	23-Mar	6-Apr	20-Apr	4-May
No of completed surveys	40	29	25	11	10	8	13
Cell 1 - (6 people)	4	5	4	4	4	2	3
Cell 2 - (5 people)	4	5	4	4	5	5	5
Cell 3 - (6 people)	5	5	4	4	4	3	5
Cell 4 - (5 people)	5	5	5	2	4	4	4
Cell 5 - (4 people)	4	4	3	4	1	2	4
Cell 6 - (5 people)	5	5	5	5	3	5	5
Cell 7 - (5 people)	3	5	3	3	2	1	3

The table below shows that 10 participants attended all of the sessions.

No Sessions Attended	Participants	% of participants
7	10	27.78%
6	10	27.78%
5	7	19.44%
4	4	11.11%
3	2	5.56%
2	3	8.33%