Creating a mentally healthy workplace

A guide for employers

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you if you are an employer in the construction industry, large of small, contractor or sub-contractor. After reading this guide you should:

• understand why mental health matters

• be inspired to deal with the stigma

• have steps you can take to promote mental health

• know how, when and where to get support for people in distress

• be better placed to help prevent suicides

Contents

Disclaimer:

Mental illness is diagnosed by a health care professional such as a doctor. This guide does not provide medical advice or replace a professional health crisis intervention in the work place.

Mates in Mind is a mental health awareness programme and is not connected or associated with the Australian suicide prevention programme 'MATES in Construction'.

PART 1 BACKGROUND

Introduction

There is a reason for mental health being the talk of the construction industry, and it is not just the increasing political and business interest. It is the recognition that there are alarming levels of mental ill health among our workforce and an intolerable toll of suicides.

The statistics are stark:
- construction workers are 6 times more likely to die by suicide than from falls[i]
- suicides among low-skilled male construction workers are nearly 4 times above the national average[ii].

Construction has some highly stressful challenges. Companies cite tough clients, a culture of confrontation, low margins, penalties in the supply chain and potentially bankrupting delays in payments. The need for closer collaboration between project participants and the adoption of new ways of scheduling work can be met with resistance. But while we cannot create an overnight cultural shift, we can agree to take action on *health*, not just safety, and in particular *mental health*.

But how? You may feel you lack the resources or expertise to address mental health and are daunted by the idea of supporting someone with a mental health condition.

The good news is that there are many simple and effective actions you can take to create a mentally healthy workplace and support your people. They don't need to be expensive and Mates in Mind can help. Follow this guidance and your organisation will build the understanding and confidence to join the conversation, bring about the changes necessary to improve our industry's mental health and save construction workers' lives.

While the business benefits are highlighted, adopting our practical steps and the Mates in Mind approach will empower your organisation to rise to the mental health challenge

Mates in Mind

Mates in Mind is an industry partnership between the Health in Construction Leadership Group, British Safety Council and UK mental health charities including Mind, the Samaritans and Mental Health First Aid England. We are a registered charity.

Mates in Mind promotes positive mental wellbeing across the UK construction industry and seeks to confront the silence of mental health stigma. Our holistic approach comprises four key elements:

✦ Guidance and support
The Mates in Mind team is on hand to support your organisation create a mentally healthy workplace.

✦ Awareness and education
Improving your workforce's understanding and literacy about mental health and the part they can play in improving mental wellbeing

✦ Communication
Helping you reach out to your workforce using a range of media and communication tools to ensure your visible commitment to mental health

✦ Research and development
Improving our understanding of the nature and impact of construction work and mental health to ensure we keep abreast of workforce needs with effective, sustainable solutions.

Mates in Mind model

PART 2 UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Health and work

There is a growing realisation, now backed by evidence, that work can be good for health but that the quality of work is important. Work provides us with pay and a standard of living, as well as status, companionship and a sense of purpose. Good work with an appropriate work-life balance is generally good for our health and wellbeing (the state of contentment we have when we're fulfilled and happy). Addressing wellbeing at work increases productivity by as much as 12%.[iii]

But work can also harm our health, a fact known only too well in construction where many hazardous activities, if poorly controlled, can seriously injure.

Historically our industry's focus has been on preventing harm by stopping accidents. Increasingly health and safety professionals also consider occupational ill health: preventing lung diseases, dermatitis, hearing loss and musculoskeletal disorders. Many companies also source occupational health practitioners. However, less attention has been given to psychosocial (mental health) risks. While some businesses now have counselling helplines, such as employee assistance programmes, few workers know about them or trust them so uptake is low; and in any case, they tend to be reactive rather than preventive: sometimes too little, too late.

Business benefits of investing in mental health include:

- reducing lost productivity from absenteeism and presenteeism (being in work when ill)

- reducing the cost of sickness absence payments

- retaining valued, experienced staff and avoiding recruitment and training costs

- meeting duties of care and reputational risk

- FTSE 100 companies that prioritise wellbeing outperform their peers by an average of 10%

With the business benefits of valuing workforce health increasingly seen as vital to our ageing workforce and needs for skills, health promotion in the workplace has a new momentum.

Mates in Mind believes it is integral to a company's people agenda, encouraging a holistic approach that promotes positive mental wellbeing, tackles mental health stigma and seeks to prevent stress.

What is mental health?

We all have our unique state of physical and mental health.

We are typically more in touch with our physical health, how to look after it and get help to feel better, than with our mental health. Yet mental health is an equally important resource to our fitness for daily living. It influences how we think and feel, affecting our purpose, direction and ability to deal with life's challenges.

The problem is the taboo of mental *ill* health means we are less likely to discuss our *mental* fitness or seek help when we feel something's not right; and this has sullied the language so that many people perceive 'mental health' in a negative light. Mates in Mind is here to help change these views.

Mental health continuum

Our health varies throughout life. Changing circumstances and fluctuating pressures affect us in body and in mind. People commonly talk about 'the spectrum', but since there are no absolutes the mental health *continuum* (see diagram) offers a better understanding of the intricacies of mental health and ill-health.
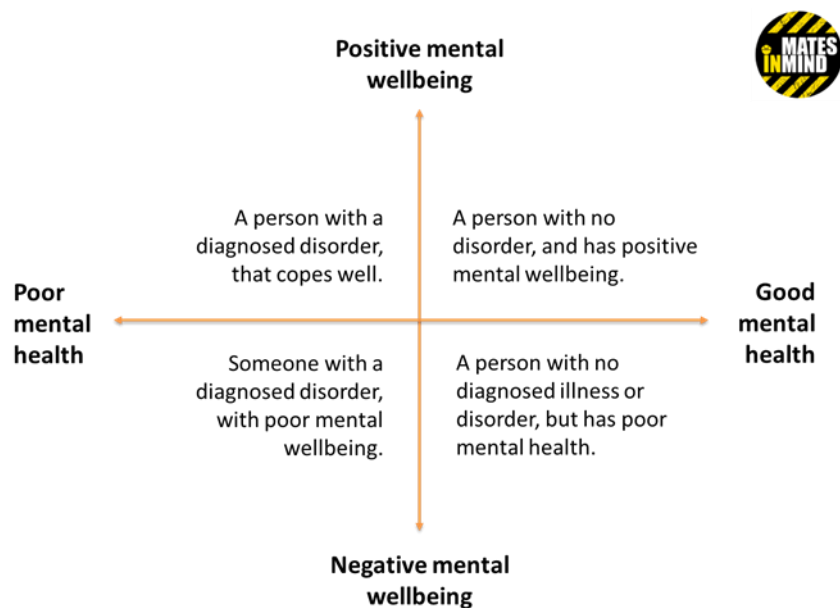
For instance, there are people living and coping successfully with a diagnosed mental illness such as bipolar disorder (previously known as manic depression). They may have developed coping strategies, be on good medication, have supportive friends, family and/or employers, and as such are in good mental health. On the other hand there are those with no diagnosed mental illness who have poor mental wellbeing, yet turn up to work (in 'body') or are absent on sick leave with no self-awareness, support or help.

Different mental health problems affect people in different ways, so diagnosis is not a definite way to understand someone's experience. A person with schizophrenia may be well able to manage their condition while someone diagnosed with anxiety may be seriously undermined by their symptoms.

What is mental illness?

Mental health problems affect around 1 in 4 people in any given year. They range from what we call 'common mental health problems', such as depression and anxiety, to rarer problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. You can find out about mental health conditions – their signs and symptoms, causes and treatment – from the Mental Health Foundation A-Z[iv].

Mental health problems are serious, real and significantly affect how we feel, interpret, behave and interact with other people. They can affect any of us at any time. This is not widely understood and indeed we may not notice or be taken by surprise. The taboo of mental illness has generated many myths that prejudice our views and created a stigma that hinders us talking and knowing about it.

The good news is that mental health problems are treatable once appropriate help is sought, providing prospects for *recovery*. The bad news is that most people wait over a year before they speak to a close friend or relative about their concerns; and then face long NHS waiting times before they access any treatment. 75% of people with diagnosable mental illness receive no help at all[v]. Opportunities for support and recovery can be significantly delayed or lost. Tragically, for some, suicide seems the only solution. In Great Britain, men aged 40 to 49 have the highest rates of suicide[vi].

Business impact of mental ill-health

Mental illness is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, costing British business billions.

> In a 2017 industry survey undertaken by the journal Construction News found:
>
> - 1 in 4 construction workers have considered taking their own life, 1 in 3 among junior members of staff and graduates
> - 55% of workers have experienced mental health issues
> - 42% have suffered these issues at their current place of work
> - Mental health problems are the 3rd most common reason for contractor absences

If your company does not know the costs of employee ill health to your business, use the on-line Workplace Wellbeing Costing Tool[vii]. It will help you create a business case for taking action.

Mental health and work

Most mental health problems arise from common mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Much of this is brought on by adverse life events, though the misuse of alcohol and other drugs is also a common factor. Most workers successfully manage their illness without it impacting on their work. But we spend about a third of our lives at work so not surprisingly that our working environments have an impact.

Unsafe and/or 'unhealthy' work environments can cause considerable 'stress', the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure that exceeds their resources to cope. This can exacerbate or contribute to the development of mental ill health. So too can a workplace incident, as anyone who has been involved in a major or fatal accident will know. For some, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may result.

What influences our mental health?			
Risk factors		Protective factors	
Individual	Community	Individual	Community
Traumatic live events	Poverty	Physical health	Family & friends
Stress	Unemployment	Confidence & self-belief	Tolerance
Smoking, drugs, alcohol	Discrimination	Problem-solving skills	Secure housing
Illness	Poor services	Coping skills	Connecting & networks
Disability	Community violence	Emotional literacy	Meaningful activity

Whereas pressure can motivate and give us a buzz, stress is serious and can kill. Overwork, long hours, bullying and harassment are stress factors commonly reported by construction workers. A toxic work environment is not only corrosive to our mental health, the stress can lead to physical illness such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes. This can happen *directly* from mental distress debilitating our physical health, but also *indirectly* when lifestyle factors such as smoking, overeating, misusing drugs and alcohol are used to cope.

Companies offering healthy meals, smoking cessation and support with addictions do help. But they fail to satisfy employer legal duties, where the expectation is *prevention*.

PART 3   THE LEGAL POSITION

Employers and employees have legal responsibilities and rights in relation to workplace health and safety, disability discrimination, privacy and confidentiality. The following covers your main duties.

Health and safety

All **employers and the self-employed (including contractors)** have common law duties of care to people affected by their activities and statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and, in construction, the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (known commonly as 'CDM'). They must ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their workforce and are expected to achieve this through risk assessment and control.

The regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), provides comprehensive guidance on how to assess the risks of stress[viii]. Stress risk management is seen as integral to good management practice, so the HSE guidance is called 'The Management Standards'. They comprise a set of conditions which, if met, enable high levels of mental health and wellbeing plus effective business performance through an approach based on prevention. This guide integrates some of the key points in Part 3 on 'creating a mentally healthy workplace'.

Most employers are also required by law to insure against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment. To protect themselves from 'stress' claims and law suits, many companies have a contract with an employee assistance programme (EAP), often provided by their insurance company as an employee benefit. Most EAPs offer a confidential 24/7 helpline for employees and members of their family to seek emotional, financial and work-related problems. Please refer to Factsheet no. 2 (Employee Assistance Programmes).

Workers also have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their work activities. They must co-operate with employers and co-workers to help everyone meet their legal requirements – this means following policies, procedures and rules. If they have queries or concerns about health and safety where they work, they should talk to their employer, manager/supervisor or a health and safety representative. If they have access to a confidential helpline, workers can ask for help with concerns such as work, family or money worries.

We all have responsibility to look after ourselves. Mates in Mind offers an on-line toolkit for workers to access a range of information and support[ix].

Employers must also consult their staff, via Trade Union safety representatives (where the union has formal recognition), on the introduction of any measure at the workplace which may substantially affect health and safety. For instance, on proposals for organisational change or restructuring, since 'change' is recognised as a psychosocial risk factor: poorly-managed change creates uncertainty and destabilises people's mental health.

Disability discrimination

Disability is a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010 which means it is unlawful for an **employer** to treat disabled people less favourably than other employees for any reason connected with their disability, unless there is justification for such action. In construction, where work can be safety-critical and demand high levels of fitness for work, the involvement of Occupational Health expertise assists employers with compliance.

Mental health conditions are *not* treated differently by the law from physical conditions. They can amount to disabilities if their effects on the individual meet the legal criteria, including a substantial and long-term effect (for at least a year) on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day duties. You may be surprised but it is a *legal* test rather than a *medical* one that determines whether a condition gains the protection of the law as a disability.

Employers also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled workers aren't seriously disadvantaged when doing their jobs. If an employer does not know about a disability they will not be able to take the necessary action to protect the employee from harm.

Workers are under no obligation to disclose their disability to their employer. It may be they don't need special support at work. However, their health and safety duties require them to consider whether their mental health condition could reasonably be seen to be a work risk for themselves or others; so they may need to decide to disclose or to take other steps to fulfil their responsibilities.

The decision to disclose a mental health problem is far from easy. Among people who have decided to disclose, some say it enabled them to get the support they needed to work productively, while others say the subsequent harassment experienced was worse than their health problem. Indeed Business in the Community (BITC) says 15% of employees who disclose mental ill health subsequently face disciplinary action, demotion or even dismissal. Creating a mentally healthy workplace must therefore involve a 'disclosure-safe' culture.

Employers should take steps to protect disabled employees from all forms of harassment to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Privacy
The Human Rights and Data Protection Acts provide legal duties concerning confidentiality and privacy. Employers should have a policy in place.

Employers must keep confidential an employee's disclosure of a mental health problem.

Health care professionals and employee assistance (counselling) services must too. However there are rare situations when breaching confidentiality is permitted, notably the concern that a worker is at risk to themselves or others. They can discuss the risk with other healthcare professionals, not with the worker's employer, and to be in a position to do this they obtain consent early on from the service-user to have access to the contact details for the user's GP or other relevant healthcare professional.

Your occupational health professionals and counselling services will have professional codes of conduct they must follow and will be able to advise you on the relevant legal requirements and safeguarding.

While privacy law limits the information healthcare professionals can share with you, you should ensure (through your service contract) that suitably anonymised data is regularly shared (e.g. quarterly) so that you can monitor and analyse trends. It will help you understand levels of stress and mental health problems.

PART 4   TAKING ACTION

What you can do
Mates in Mind seeks to give **practical advice** to the construction industry, whatever the size of your company. We are not looking to reinvent the wheel, so the guidance uses evidence and existing resources published by Government, charities and other relevant authorities.

Top Ten Tips	
Lead	End bullying
Talk	Consult
Walk the talk	Balance work and life
Support	Be fair
Educate	Make it the norm

We offer Ten Top Tips, summarised in the table. Some of which your company may already have put in place or have made plans for in a strategy.

If you are starting from a blank canvas, use the guidance to create **your action plan** with timescales and performance objectives proportionate to your business to **create a mentally healthy workplace**.

10 tips to creating a mentally healthy workplace

1. Lead

Managing mental health is no different from managing other areas of a business. Taboo makes the challenge appear greater. But through effective leadership and management, staff engagement and respect for diversity, the construction industry has been tackling workplace harm and raising equality and safety standards. We can extend this to mental health, setting company values to integrate and communicate, and objectives so we can check for progress.

> We spend a third of our lives at work and one fifth of us experience suicidal thoughts. It's up to us to create a culture in our workplaces where people feel safe enough to talk about their feelings and get support if they need it.

Some companies ask where to begin, so let's start by talking about mental health.

2. Talk

The most effective way to make your workplace mental health-friendly is to talk about mental health. Make it safe to talk about and the rest will follow. Companies have a range of ways to end the suffering and silence.

✓ Start by pledging to the **Time to Change** campaign. This will demonstrate your high-level commitment to tackling mental health stigma and desire to embed a culture where people with mental health problems feel supported. The charity will work with you to **develop an action plan** to get your people talking about mental health. This could include running events and training managers. Signing up is free and you access their resources. Extra materials are developed by the charity in time for National Time to Talk Day in February, when the whole workforce or site can come to together to talk about mental health.

- ✓ There are many other auspicious dates, including Workers' Memorial Day 28 April, World Suicide Prevention Day 10 September, World Mental Health Day 10 October and International Stress Awareness Day in November. But you don't have to wait for these.
- ✓ Some companies have staff willing to share their experiences of mental ill health in a sound bite or newsletter. A growing trend in some sectors, such as finance and the health service, is '**story-telling**' by directors and executives, demonstrating high-level commitment to challenging stigma. These initiatives inspire openness and help normalise the conversation by being cascaded, for example by alternating daily 'safety moments' with 'mental health moments' and sharing them in toolbox talks.
- ✓ The Health and Safety Executive's stress **Management Standards** also help prompt dialogue. Your company or teams can use them to discuss stress-factors: workload, role clarity, working relationships, the staff support that is available and whether it is enough.

3. Walk the talk

To engage your staff you need to turn *commitment* into *action*.

Show your people that you are serious about supporting staff with mental health problems to stay in or return to work. Credibility builds confidence and for workers who have feared seeking help, trust that they will receive a positive response is vital.

- ✓ Make **reasonable adjustments** for staff with a known mental health condition that is a disability.

  Most of these are straightforward and free or inexpensive, like allowing:

  - flexible working hours to ensure someone with anxiety needn't travel at rush hour
  - an allocated desk instead of hot-desking for someone with social anxiety disorder
  - an employee to bring a support worker or family member experienced in managing their disability to an appraisal or disciplinary meeting
  - a phased return to work, including flexible hours or part-time working, for someone who has been absent with depression.

- ✓ Similarly **support any worker** whose mental health you are concerned about, regardless of whether their condition is defined as a disability. Business benefits arise from treating your people well and supporting them to stay in work.

- ✓ Provide staff with **access to a confidential 24/7 helpline** either by sourcing an employee assistance programme (EAP) or by asking your Principal Contractor if they would extend their service to your people sharing the site or project. For an EAP to be used, you will need to explain to staff what it is, who it's for, how it works and the confidentiality agreements.

- ✓ Let workers know that they can access the Construction Industry Helpline (0345 605 1956). Provided by the charity, Lighthouse Club, and supported by the Considerate Constructors Scheme, the helpline advises on a range of matters including occupational health and wellbeing, support and advice for people with stress, and home worries such as divorce, tax and financial concerns. The services can also provide emergency financial aid to the construction community in times of crisis.

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- ✓ Know how to **keep in touch** with a worker who is off sick. The Mates in Mind toolkit for organisations[x] provides advice on absence management and returns to work, including how to access the **Fit for Work** service – the Government's free, expert and impartial work-health advice service.

- ✓ Introduce **Wellness Action Plans** for staff returning to work from a period of mental ill health. It is a free tool that is downloadable from the mental health charity Mind. Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) provide a structure that enables a manager and their employee to have a straightforward discussion

about mental health and a shared understanding of what keeps the person well, early warning signs of a problem and how to deal with a crisis or recovery period.

✓ **Tackle isolation**. Being away from home and feeling isolated are common experiences for construction workers. Consider therefore the initiatives emerging from companies leading the way in mental health. Some offer their people 'feel-good' opportunities such as providing playful recreation facilities for staff to let off steam and time to volunteer and connect with communities local to their work. Providing communal facilities and activities and internet access may help reduce the sense of isolation that many construction workers report.

✓ Mentoring and peer support (**buddy systems**) can be an effective means of connecting people, building confidence and reducing anxiety

✓ **Maintain health and safety** standards. Poor working conditions does nobody's stress levels any good. Continue to be vigilant.

4. Support

Opening the conversation about mental health typically creates a buzz and an interest to learn more. Be ready to signpost staff to information and support. There are many opportunities you can consider and tailor to your business:

✓ **Provide resources**: leaflets, posters, noticeboards, information stands, on-line pages and links. Welfare facilities are good locations for health promotion, providing space and privacy. Your pledge to Time to Change (step 2) will give you access to their materials and this guide has a section on resources.

✓ **Promote your Employee Assistance Programmes (where provided) as well as the Construction Industry Helpline service**– ensure everyone throughout the business knows what is available and know when to signpost a co-worker to them. Don't assume workers will automatically know about them or use them. 2016 research found that, on average, only 5% of employees use their EAP because of stigma. If you have an Employee Assistance Programme, build in to your supplier contract a requirement that your provider supports you in communicating their services to your workforce.

✓ Provide **Mental Health First Aiders** who can help your company:

- improve its mental health literacy
- signpost colleagues and contractors to sources of support
- respond to someone in mental health crisis
- support witnesses to an incident or on-site **trauma**.

✓ Apply **HSE's Management Standard** on the topic of 'support' to check the effectiveness of your health and safety measures.

5. Educate

Our society is not well informed about mental health or mental ill health so give your people the knowledge and confidence through learning and development opportunities. Consider the following:

✓ **Train staff in stress and mental health awareness**. Everyone needs to know the signs and symptoms of stress as well as what action to take if they are concerned, either for themselves or for someone else. We also need to understand more about other mental health problems. Mates in Mind offers a 45 minute mental health awareness course for all staff, a Managing Mental Health in Construction half-day course for foremen, supervisors and managers and the 2-day Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course. Integrate evolving knowledge into induction and refresher courses.

- ✓ **Train line managers** in handling difficult situations and conversations. Only with confidence and knowledge of helpful resources will they be comfortable starting and closing a sensitive conversation. The role of line managers is pivotal to the way employees feel about discussing mental health problems.
- ✓ Use **HSE's stress competency framework** to improve your understanding of management behaviours that are important for preventing and reducing stress in staff. It will help you provide targeted support for your managers to prevent and reduce stress in their teams - without actually increasing the workload, and therefore the stress, upon the line managers themselves.
- ✓ Be **unbiased about access** to training:
  - there are many ways to deliver: on-site or remote, face-to-face or e-learning, voluntary or mandatory and so on depending on business need
  - voluntary applications should be subject to agreement between worker and their line manager to ensure team and individual workload is managed. This is especially the case in Mental Health First Aid training, as performing the role itself will require line management support
  - ensure equal opportunities. You may fear that the MHFA role is unsuitable for someone with a mental health condition, when in fact their lived experience brings a diversity of perspectives to the role and may mean they are more attuned to distress in others, and take swifter action.
- ✓ The workplace is great for **health promotion activities** and there are lots of things companies can do. Everyone has a role to play: health and safety, HR, Occupational Health, the EAP, Trades Unions, Communications and Marketing, Mental Health First Aiders.
- ✓ Some organisations also source **specialist coaching** and life skills for their staff, such as 'mindfulness', 'resilience training' and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Many individuals have found these helpful in building their coping skills and protection against mental ill health.

  Mates in Mind supports these initiatives but encourages organisations first to focus on the organisational, collective approaches contained in this guide. They will ensure you discharge your duties of care, tackle stigma, prevent stress and create a mentally healthy workplace for *everyone*.

6. End bullying

Stigma and discrimination have long been problems for people with mental health conditions in the community and at work. Behaviours such as insulting someone, spreading rumours, constantly criticising or picking on someone and treating them unfairly are examples of workplace bullying and harassment which would stress most people. For someone with a mental health condition, such behaviour is likely to be unlawful discrimination. Don't tolerate it.

There are a number of considerations that should help to prevent this behaviour:

- ✓ Develop and implement a **formal policy**: this can be kept simple, but involve staff when writing it so everyone owns and promotes it. Include the standards of behaviour you expect
- ✓ **Lead by example**: the behaviour of senior managers sets the tone and credibility
- ✓ Improve **mental health literacy** by educating your people to mind their language. The terms often used when talking about mental ill health can be inaccurate and offensive. Mental Health First Aiders will help you as will raising awareness through mental health training.
- ✓ Have **fair procedures** that deal promptly with and respond to worker complaints.
- ✓ Apply **HSE's Management Standard** on the topic of 'relationships' to check the effectiveness of your health and safety measures.

7. Consult

Consult and communicate with everyone to involve them in decisions that affect them and problem-solving. Sharing your plans and getting staff input will ensure compliance with your health and safety duties and help people understand the benefits. Depending on the size of your company and whether you recognise trade unions, you may have to set up agreed formal structures. Remember, the top driver for employee engagement is how much employees believe senior management has a sincere interest in their wellbeing.

✓ Large organisations have HR, marketing and communication teams and Health and Safety professionals to help. They also have worker representatives and, increasingly, Mental Health First Aiders.

✓ Small businesses have the advantages of closer-knit teams, who look out for each other, and less bureaucracy, so decision-making and change can happen faster. Worker representatives and/or a Mates in Mind Champion can help spread the word.

✓ How you engage staff will therefore vary. Use a range of materials and media, vary tone to align with business temperature and, importantly, ensure your actions stay on message. Using 'you said, we did' is a great way of showing you listen and respond.

✓ Many organisations use **surveys**, such as the Workplace Wellbeing Index (from Mind) and the Management Standards Indicator Tool (from HSE). They can help gain staff views, find out what you're doing well and where you could improve. The roll out of any staff surveys should include employees in the management team to promote transparency and trust. HSE advises setting up a steering group to implement their approach and their website has a great deal of information on implementing it plus support with analysing the results.

✓ **Consulting staff during periods of change** is especially important, giving everyone a chance to understand the proposals. People don't object to change, they object to being changed. Having a say allows people to feel valued and shape planning.

✓ Apply **HSE's Management Standard** on the topic of 'change' to check the effectiveness of your health and safety measures.

✓ Use **HSE's Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit**[xi] developed by the construction industry's Leadership and Worker Engagement Forum to help contractors and managers learn how to make health and safety improvements in their businesses.

8. Balance work and life

In the introduction this guide acknowledged the challenges construction faces. We all have a part to play in tackling unreasonable demands and deadlines, avoiding a culture of constant overtime and missing breaks, and recognising the isolation of working away from home. Your company can consider:

✓ whether workers' jobs are manageable within the time for which they are contracted

✓ **make flexible working** options workable in your business. Reject the myth that these only apply to desk-based or office jobs. ACAS has guidance[xii] on many options you can explore, which include compressed working hours, a preference among those construction workers who benefit from more time at home.

✓ Apply **HSE's Management Standard** on the topic of 'demands' to check the effectiveness of your health and safety measures.

9. Be fair

Perceived unfairness at work is linked to stress because it creates distrust affecting the mental wellbeing of the workforce. Consider how your company ensures the following processes and procedures are applied fairly:

✓ selection criteria such as promotion or redundancy
✓ procedures such as performance and discipline
✓ recognising and rewarding people for their contributions
✓ balancing work and home demands.

10. Normalise mental health

You will know your company has a mentally healthy workplace when talking about mental health is the norm and colleagues can comfortably ask how the other person is, how their work is affecting their mental health and if there is anything weighing on them. Routinely checking in with colleagues helps to spot warning signs when a problem is arising. Line managers can also check mental health with their staff during:

✓ one-to-ones and supervision
✓ appraisal or performance management meetings
✓ a return to work interview

Since we all have mental health, Mind is encouraging everyone to use a Wellness Action Plan – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to improve our self-awareness of what keeps us well at work, the triggers that make us unwell and how to avoid them or ask for help.

Conclusion

Mates in Mind aspires to workplaces where everyone can thrive. Good mental health at work and good management go hand in hand.

Our Top Ten Tips are designed to help you approach the creation of a mentally healthy workplace like other business planning practices, with everyone able to be involved.

Ending the silence of suffering by breaking stigma and looking after our mental health is a collective challenge in which we *all* have a role.

Need support with your programme?

For further guidance and support, please contact the Mates in Mind Programme Support team on **020 3510 5018** or by email (**support@matesinmind.org**).

If you would like technical guidance or support, as a Supporter of Mates in Mind, you can also access our **24/7 Information Helpline - Managing Stress & Mental Health in the Workplace.** This gives you unlimited access to experienced professionals who can support you in managing stress & mental health in your workplace. From advice and guidance on your legal obligations, to tips and advice on how to create a positive culture around mental health in your workplace. The team

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can also help you support an employee experiencing a mental health problem, help you manage an employee's absence from work and what things you can do to support them in, and back into the workplace. This service can be reached on **XXXXXXXXXX**

The 24/7 Information Helpline is made available to organisations that have signed up to Mates in Mind through the kind support of the British Safety Council.

Factsheet no. 1

Sources of help

If you or someone you know needs urgent help, support or someone to talk to, there are many confidential services available. Your company may also provide a 24/7 helpline, which you should publicise. **All services have staff who are trained to listen and not to judge.**

<u>Construction Industry Helpline</u>**: 0345 605 1956**
Provided by the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity and supported by the Considerate Constructors Scheme, the helpline advises on a range of matters including work, home and financial worries. Emergency financial aid can be provided to the construction community in times of crisis.

<u>Samaritans</u>**: 116 123**
The Samaritans offer a safe place for people to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Callers don't have to be in despair or suicidal and the Samaritans will talk to people who are concerned about somebody else.

<u>Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)</u>   0800 58 58 58   www.thecalmzone.net
CALM is a charity about, for and on behalf of men dedicated to preventing male suicide. It offers support to men of any age who are down or in crisis via its helpline, webchat and website. The helpline and webchat operate 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year.

CALM also supports fellow charity Support After Suicide Partnership (SASP) which aims to ensure that everyone bereaved or **affected by suicide** is offered and receives timely and appropriate support.

<u>Prevention of Young Suicide (Papyrus)</u> 0800 068 41 41
Papyrus provides confidential help and advice to young people (children, teenagers and people up to the age of 35) and anyone worried about a young person. They can be contacted on, by email: pat@papyrus-uk.org or SMS 07786 209697

<u>Big White Wall</u>
A safe online community of people who are anxious, down or not coping, yet willing to support each other by sharing their troubles. The site is guided by trained professionals.

<u>Mind Infoline</u>**: 0300 123 3393 (or text 86463)**
The team at the leading mental health charity Mind can provide information on a range of topics including types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments. They also offer employers training and a Work Wellbeing Index benchmarking tool.

<u>Workplace mental health support service</u>**: 0300 4568114**
Provided by Remploy, in partnership with Access to Work, WMHSS offers a free and confidential support service to help you remain in your job when it is being affected by stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issue (whether diagnosed or not). If you are finding work difficult or you are absent from work their advisors will help you make a wellbeing plan and support you with workplace adjustments, including how to get support from your employer.

Factsheet no.2

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)

Unless your organisation already provides employees access to confidential counselling services, you may want to consider introducing an Employee Assistance Programme.

What is an EAP?
EAPs provide confidential information, support and counselling to staff with personal or work-related issues. Services are commonly accessed via a central 24/7, confidential telephone advice line and commonly include advice, information and support on relationship problems, addiction, caring responsibilities, financial and legal matters. Coaching, career and leadership development support may also be available, subject to the contract you arrange. Many EAP providers also offer web resources and secure online live chat features.

Governance
The professional body for the EAP industry in the UK is the Employee Assistance Programmes Association (EAPA). They are responsible for promoting the interests of the industry, setting standards and fostering the development of EAPs. They also publish various documents including EAP Guidelines, Buyers Guide and Standards of Professional Practice.

The professional body for the counsellors who are employed or contracted by an EAP is the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Service agreements
6% of UK organisations surveyed in research in 2016 said that they have an EAP as a bolt-on to an existing group insurance policy. However, not all employers are aware they have an EAP as part of an existing arrangement. So do check any existing insurance arrangements you currently provide. If you are unsure, speak to an independent employee benefit advisor or the EAPA.

EAPs are typically priced based on a per capita cost per employee and the type of services you choose. These can be summarised as follows:
- ❖ Basic helpline and online services;
- ❖ Helpline and online services, with structured (short-term solutions focussed) telephone counselling services (typically up to 8 phone-based sessions);
- ❖ Comprehensive EAP with helpline, online services and structured [short-term solutions focussed] telephone and face-to-face counselling services (typically up to 8 sessions). This is the most commonly provided service chosen by employers.

Did you know?
- 31% of managers conceded that no attempt had been made to evaluate their service (quality or impact) and 9% didn't know
- on average only 5% of employees use the company EAP. Most staff had no knowledge of an EAP or were deterred by the stigma associated with them.

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