

Mates in Mind – The construction Industry's Answer to Mental Ill Health

By Lauren Applebey

26th January 2017 saw leaders from across the construction industry gather to discuss health in construction, and it also saw the official launch of the industry's "worst kept secret" Mates in Mind.



Announcing the launch of the Mates in Mind website and explaining how the programme, which aims to be a single initiative for the industry, will be rolled out, Steve Hails, Chair of the Mates in Mind Board said: "In the first year, we intend to engage with 100,000 workers in the industry. We want people in the industry to know it exists and that there are individuals who can provide support and direction for those that are suffering from mental ill health".

In a nutshell

So what is Mates in Mind (MiM) and how will it support the industry in tackling the problems it faces with mental ill health?

Mates in Mind has been set up by the Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) with the support of the British Safety Council and is a charitable programme that aims to raise awareness and understanding of poor mental health in the construction sector.

Along with its core partners which include Mind, Mental Health First Aid England and Samaritans, the programme includes three training modules. Its purpose is to bring the industry together to openly talk and address the stigma associated with mental ill health.

Originally based on the Australian Mates in Construction model, which began in 2008, it aims to support employers in addressing this challenge of poor mental health and signpost them to various sources of information.

Mates in Construction has focused mainly around the high suicide rates in the industry. Martin Coyd, head of health and safety in construction at Mace had spoken for many years about bringing the concept over to the UK – and a UK focused version was created.

How big is the problem of mental ill health in construction?

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year (Mind UK).
- A Mind and YouGov poll (2014) found that over half of workers (56 per cent) found their work very or quite stressful.
- In construction, employing some 2.1million workers (constituting 6% of the UK workforce), some 350,000 people experience a mental health issue at any one time
- Suicide is the single biggest killer of men aged under 45 in the UK, with 76% of all suicides in 2014 being men (ONS, NISRA, GRO 2014).
- Research suggests that in the construction sector, people could be 10 times more likely to die by suicide than from on-site accidents

Why is the problem so prevalent in this sector?

The workforce in construction is predominantly male (and men are thought to not be as open about their feelings in general as women) and exposed to a range of stress factors: e.g. heavy workloads, long working hours, extensive travel, family separation, fear of redundancy and job insecurity.

Those with mental health problems are also often overrepresented in high-turnover, low-pay and often part-time or temporary work.

Speaking to SHP at the launch event Mike Robinson CEO of the British Safety Council and Director at Mates in Mind said: "Mental health is something that affects every industry, so why are we starting in construction? Well because there's a pull from the industry and a desire to build something.

And also because construction has got some particular issues. If you look at the demographics and age groups of the workers, it's mostly male, transient workers, living away from home – it's got a whole number of issues that tend to drive suicide rates higher.

It's the British safety Council's desire that once this is working like clockwork we can lift this and take it to other industries."

Training with Mates in Mind

Mates in Mind aims to support business through training, support and campaigns to have a better understanding of mental health and to help fight the stigma surrounding it.

There are three main levels of awareness and training:

One - Module: 45 min induction session to begin the conversation about mental health – targeting all operatives. This will be run with the British Safety Council.

Two - Module: 3.5 hour training course to increase awareness of mental ill health – targeted at foremen, supervisors and managers. This course will be run with mental health charity Mind.

Three - Module: two-day construction course – targeting at those within their organisations who will become Construction Mental Health Champions. This will be run with Mental Health First Aid England.

The MiM programme's first phase will be rolled out soon in five organisations, including Heathrow, Tideway and Wilmot Dixon. The next stage of the programme will be rolled out in spring 2017.

Speaking to SHP Michael Whitmore of Mates in Mind said: "We are talking about the first phase roll out currently and then we will be taking a staggered approach to distributing it wider.

We are taking expressions of interest now to start those conversations and looking to the summer to be rolling out in greater detail."

To find out more about how your business can get involved visit: <https://www.matesinmind.org/>

HSE to Make Cost Recovery Dispute Process Fully Independent

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has announced that it is to consult on proposals to make its cost recovery scheme dispute process fully independent.

The scheme, Fee for Intervention (FFI) was introduced in October 2012 to shift the cost of regulating workplace health and safety from the public purse to businesses which break the law and ensures the cost burden of HSE intervention is picked up by those companies and not taxpayers.

If an inspector identifies serious health and safety failings in the workplace about which they need to write to the dutyholder, then that dutyholder has to pay the costs of the HSE visit. If the inspector simply issues verbal advice there is no charge. If there is disagreement on HSE's decision the dutyholder can dispute it.

Until now, disputes were considered by a panel which consisted of two members from HSE and one independent person. However, after reviewing the current process HSE will consult with relevant stakeholders with a view to making the process fully independent.

A spokesperson for HSE said: "HSE has always kept the dispute process under review and following a recent application for a judicial review we believe the time is right to move to a dispute process which is completely independent of HSE."

Notes:

- A full guide to the Fee for Intervention scheme is available on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/index.htm
- Costs will be recovered where there has been a material breach of health and safety law. A material breach is where a business or organisation has broken the law and the inspector considers it serious enough to notify them in writing.

Building Contractor Jailed After Worker's Fatal Fall

A Manchester building contractor has been jailed following the death of a casual labourer who fell nearly seven metres through a fragile roof.

The 45-year-old labourer from Manchester had been carrying out repair work at Witney Mill, Manchester when the incident occurred on 23 November 2013.

Saleem Hussain had been engaged by the warehouse owner, who believed him to be a competent building contractor, to carry out repair and maintenance work on the warehouse roof. He then hired two people to do the work.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that both workers were not qualified to carry out work at height.

They had accessed the roof via a ladder in order to repair and seal leaking guttering. No safety precautions were in place to protect the two men from the danger of falling through the fragile roof.

Manchester Crown Court heard that Mr Hussain failed to assess the risks or put a safe working method in place. No suitable training or equipment to work on the roof had been provided.

Saleem Hussain of Birchfields Road, Manchester pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was sentenced to 8 months immediate imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing HSE Principal Inspector Mike Sebastian said:"

The dangers of falls through fragile roofs and working at height are well known. Simple steps such as removing the need to access the roof directly by using mobile working platforms, or boarding out the roof, or using safety harnesses, can and should be used to prevent accident and injury. Mr Hussain's failure to take any such actions resulted in a tragic and needless loss of life".

For more information regarding work at height go to: www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safety/topics/workatheight.htm

Construction Company Director Imprisoned After Safety Failings

The director of a construction company has been imprisoned for eight months after failing to take appropriate action which resulted in a young worker receiving serious burns.

Cardiff Crown Court heard the young worker was instructed to stand on top of a skip and pour a drum of flammable thinners onto the burning waste to help it to burn. The fireball that resulted when the thinners ignited caused the worker to be blown from the skip and he suffered substantial burns to his arms and legs.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company director did not ensure the burning of the waste material was being carried out in a safe or appropriate manner.

He failed to administer any first aid to the young injured worker and did not send him to hospital, the most appropriate response given the severity of the injuries suffered. He failed to inform HSE of the incident, a legal requirement, and the incident was only reported sometime later by a third party.

David Gordon Stead of Mildred Street, Beddau, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and also pled guilty to breaching Section 4 (1) of The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) and was sentenced to 32 weeks imprisonment, half on release under licence.

He has also been disqualified from being a company director for seven years.

Speaking after the case HSE inspector Adele Davies said "David Stead failed his employees. His actions could have resulted in the death of this worker.

The young man suffered unnecessary life threatening injuries due to poor working standards. "We hope this sentence sends out a message that directors of businesses must take their health and safety responsibilities seriously."

Useful Web Links/Information

- HSE Website www.hse.gov.uk
- Institution of Occupational Safety and Health www.iosh.co.uk
- www.gov.uk (The Business Link website has a tool to help small businesses get a summary of the legislation that is relevant to them (not just on health and safety))
- www.hse.gov.uk/workplacehealth/index.htm (Free and impartial advice for businesses of 5-250 people)
- www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm (HSE Asbestos Information)

Construction Safety Solutions Ltd

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