

Mates in Mind - Construction mental health scheme enters next stage

The full role-out of the construction industry health and mental wellbeing scheme, titled Mates in Mind, has begun.

The move means the scheme, which had been piloted by several firms, such as Tideway, Balfour Beatty, and Heathrow, will now be available to the whole sector.

It aims to create a flexible and 'joined-up' approach to mental health, tailored to the needs of individual construction firms. It aims to assist such firms with tackling poor mental health while nurturing positive mental wellbeing in the workforce.

A core aim of the initiative is to break the stigma around mental health, especially in the construction sector.

The programme is being delivered in support of the Health in Construction Leadership Group with partnership from charities including Mind, Mental Health First Aid and the Samaritans.

Breaking the silence

The scheme highlights that 18% of reported work-related illnesses are the result of mental health problems, including stress, depression and anxiety. This leads to 400,000 working days lost each year.

Data also suggests 55% of construction workers have experienced mental health issues. 42% are living with these issues at their current workplace.

Construction deaths from suicide are also believed to be potentially ten times higher than that of fatal accidents at work.

Joined-up approach

One of the central elements of the scheme is the joined-up approach, which sees support from employees, line managers and at an organisational level. This is through a tiered training framework, developed with the British Safety Council, Mind and MHFA England.

This builds understanding, knowledge and confidence among workers, so they can get help, and identifies colleagues who could benefit from further support.

Significant moment

Steve Hails, Chair of the Mates in Mind Board and director of health, safety and well-being at Tideway, said: "Today is a significant moment as we roll out the Mates in Mind framework and resources for businesses to use.

This is the culmination of several months of hard work and would not have been possible without the substantial help of key mental health charities and its championing by industry representatives.

Mates in Mind represents a meaningful way forward for tackling mental ill health in the workplace whilst also encouraging a positive wellbeing culture. Uniquely, this approach offers flexibility which enables a business to tailor the resources to their needs so that priorities can be more effectively targeted. In doing so, it should be possible to start making serious progress into an issue that is currently the source of much needless pain for so many."

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Whispering about health

Clive Johnson, Chair of the Health in Construction Leadership Group and Head of Health and Safety at Landsec, said: “For too many years the industry has been shouting about safety but only whispering about health. I am extremely proud that Landsec and the HCLG are at the forefront of ensuring mental health provision within construction is dramatically improved.”

Joscelyne Shaw, executive director of Mates in Mind, said: “As we all know, there is no health without mental health. The construction industry’s championing of Mates in Mind sends a strong message about the role workplaces can play in supporting workers’ mental wellbeing and helps to demonstrate their commitment to leading the way in managing this important issue both to their staff and society more broadly.”

Christian Van Stolk, RAND Europe, said: “It is well documented that the construction industry has many characteristics that could affect the mental health of its workforce.

“This is especially noticeable in areas such as financial concerns, work-related stress and unrealistic time pressures where in some organisations there were much higher risks reported compared to the average. This suggests that in designing mental health approaches across the sector there is an opportunity to acknowledge differing cultures and sub-sectors, learn from each other and to work to reduce variance.”

Source: SHP Online

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