

# INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN HOME BUILDING

Poor mental health can affect any one of us at any time. In fact, one in four of us will experience a mental health problem each year, regardless of our background.

The home building industry is not immune to these challenges, and so the Home Builders Federation is working to help employers understand mental health issues and how they can best support their workforce.



# A message from Stewart Baseley, Executive Chairman, HBF

In these challenging times, promoting the importance of mental health awareness has never been more important or necessary, particularly in the construction sector where two workers take their own lives every working day.

Since 2019, HBF has been working with its members, and charity partner Lighthouse Club, to improve mental health awareness in the industry, to break down the stigma around it and ensure employees know where to turn for help should they need it.

Considerable progress has been achieved, with over 1,000 mental health first aiders (MHFA) trained across the industry, 1/3 of which are based on site. Developers are also supporting their workforce in a number of other ways including through mental health awareness training, employee assistance programmes (EAP) and toolbox talks.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent and there is still much more work to be done to promote the importance of good mental health and create a culture where everyone feels comfortable to admit that they are not 'okay' without fear of judgement.

Poor mental health is a complex challenge that cannot be fixed overnight, but HBF and its members are committed to taking the necessary steps to help those in need.



Stewart Baseley,  
Executive Chairman,  
Home Builders Federation

## What are the wider consequences of poor mental health?

**We all have a role to play in tackling the UK's mental health crisis, not just for the wellbeing of the individuals concerned and their loved ones, but because of the wider impacts it has on employers and the economy.**

- Poor mental health is costing employers between **£53-56bn a year**.\*
- The greatest cost (**£28bn**) comes from reduced productivity among people who are at work but unwell, known as presenteeism. This is followed by staff turnover (**£22bn**) and absenteeism (**£6bn**).\*
- **17.9 million** working days were lost in 2019/20 due to stress, depression, or anxiety.\*
- Mental ill-health is costing the UK economy at least **£117.9bn annually**.\*
- This is equivalent to around **5%** of the UK's GDP.\*

\*Deloitte, Mental health and employers: The case for investment - pandemic and beyond, April 2022. \*MHFA England, Ten workplace mental health statistics you should know in 2022, July 2022. \*HSE, Working days lost in Great Britain, 2020. \*LSE/Mental Health Foundation, The economic case for investing in the prevention of mental health conditions in the UK, March 2022. \*LSE/Mental Health Foundation, The economic case for investing in the prevention of mental health conditions in the UK, March 2022.

## Poor mental health: The challenges in the home building industry

The UK is facing a mental health crisis and construction, including home building, is one of the industries most affected.



Every working day  
**two**  
construction workers take their own life



Stress, depression, or anxiety accounts for

**27%**

of all work-related illness in construction



The risk of suicide among male labourers, particularly in construction roles, is four times higher than the male national average



## How can you help?

Ensuring construction workers know where to access appropriate mental health support is a crucial part of our campaign. While the industry has made great strides in ensuring these resources are properly signposted, there is still a considerable proportion of the industry's workforce that we need to reach.

We would be delighted if you could help us to spread the message to construction workers in your local area that it's good to talk and that help is out there if they need it.

Their first port of call should be the Lighthouse Club, the construction industry charity.



### Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity

The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity is the only charity that provides emotional, physical and financial wellbeing support to the construction community and their families.

#### Free and confidential Support 24/7 Helpline 0345 605 1956

The charity offers a free and confidential 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline which provides a range of help and advice on a huge variety of wellbeing issues. Expert helpline advisors provide a listening ear and are able to signpost to additional support where necessary.

#### 24/ Text HARDHAT to 85258 support service

The text HARDHAT service meets the needs of those who feel uncomfortable speaking with someone on the telephone or find it difficult to find a place and time to talk. The service provides immediate one-to-one support on a huge range of wellbeing issues and can signpost to further specialist support if required.

#### Self Support App

The ultimate self-help tool in the palm of your hand. The free app provides

information about how people can help themselves before taking the next step in seeking professional help. It covers all aspects of wellbeing, coping strategies and signposting to over 3,000 accredited organisations providing expert support. It can be downloaded for free from the Apple and Google Play app stores.

#### Lighthouse Beacons

There are over 350 'Lighthouse Beacons' across the UK and Ireland. These 'beacons' utilise existing groups such as Mangang and Dadspace and offer a safe place to share and socialise with like minded people. The beacons are facilitated by individuals with lived experiences who are able to encourage those struggling with life problems to share their issues and if need be signpost to additional support.

#### Free Training

The charity offer a variety of free construction focussed training programmes ranging from self paced e-learning, tutor led online masterclasses and MHFA England approved Mental Health First Aider courses.

Find out more at [www.lighthouseclub.org](http://www.lighthouseclub.org)

## Sarah Bolton, Director of Charitable Services

We are delighted to be partnering with HBF to raise awareness of the support our charity offers to the construction community. We are the only charity that is 100% dedicated to the emotional, physical and financial wellbeing of our construction community so it has been fantastic to see so many homebuilders getting involved with supporting their teams, helping to spread the word and pro-actively supporting a positive wellbeing culture across all levels of their organisations.

Homebuilders of all sizes across the country have been sharing our helpline cards and posters to ensure that people know about the support available to them and the many ways that they can reach out for support.

One of the huge successes last year was the launch of our Make it Visible tours, which enable us to reach some of our most vulnerable workers, including the trades and contractors who have nowhere else to turn to for support. It's vitally important that we get our message in at

grass roots level so we made a conscious decision to ensure that our team are from the trades and they are able to share their lived experiences with poor mental health in a down to earth and relatable way.

The emphasis is very much on having an informal chat over a 'cuppa' and we know that by simply having a conversation with people, our on-site team have made a life changing and life saving impact. We have spoken with 25 workers who said they were feeling that they had nowhere to turn to and were on the brink of taking their own lives. But as a result of opening up to our team, they have been given immediate support and our charity has put in place interventions to help them manage their issues in a positive way.

Without the support of HBF and its members, we simply wouldn't be able to provide the charitable services that are so desperately needed by our construction workforce and their families, so we're looking forward to our continued partnership and hope to see more of you in person throughout the year!

**"This initiative has enabled industry ambassadors to speak directly to our site teams and give information on the services they provide."**

Rebecca Jones, HR Manager  
William Davis Homes



# Promoting the importance of good mental health in the home building industry

Construction remains one of the industries most affected by poor mental health with **two workers** taking their own lives **every working day**. It was against this backdrop that HBF launched its **Mental Health Awareness Campaign** with the Lighthouse Construction Industry charity in March 2019.


Through the Campaign, HBF and its members have been working collectively to ensure that home building employees and their families are supported whilst breaking down the stigma around mental illness.

Aligned with the Building Mental Health Framework, the key aims of the Campaign are to:

- 1) **Increase awareness** of the importance of **good mental health** across the industry.
- 2) Encourage companies to show commitment to the cause by signing the **Building Mental Health Charter**.
- 3) Train a sufficient number **Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)** to help build a positive mental health culture.

## Progress of HBF's Mental Health Awareness Campaign

Since the launch of the campaign in 2019, considerable progress has been made in the home building industry. Home builders have:

 **Trained over 1,000 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA).**  
**1/3 of these MHFAs are based on site.**

However, the industry won't stop there. **89%** of respondents to our recent survey confirmed they have plans to train further MHFAs.



**94%** of respondents have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in place



**89%** said they offer flexible working/working from home



**89%** promote mental health courses to staff

Going forward, a top priority for the industry is to increase the reach of mental health support to its supply chains and site-based colleagues.

# Combatting poor mental health in home building

## Barratt Developments

Barratt demonstrates its commitment to promoting mental health awareness to its employees in a number of ways.

It now has over 100 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) supporting colleagues across the business. Barratt's growing network of MHFAs are themselves supported through regular network meetings and development sessions. During 2022, the developer introduced a MHFA supporters app which enables its MHFAs to have support at their fingertips.

In addition, it has a network of Health and Wellbeing Champions trained to be 'mental health aware', who are able to provide initial guidance and signposting and working to support our drive to increase awareness of mental health and reduce stigma.

With regards to training, Barratt's people managers attend Mates in Mind Manage the Conversation Training in order that they are able to increase their understanding and awareness of mental health, how to spot the signs, support their team and how to have conversations about mental health.

Furthermore, the company has now integrated a mental health awareness course into its trade apprenticeship development for 2022.

All colleagues across the business also have access to private healthcare and an annual health assessment.

This supports a holistic approach to health and wellbeing and includes access to specialist mental health support.

Finally, an annual health and wellbeing calendar supports transparency around important health and wellbeing initiatives upporting engagement, education and awareness raising for important topics.

## 2023 Health & wellbeing

We are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all of our employees. Each month we will be raising awareness of key topics, initiatives and benefits to support your wellbeing.

Look for further information through 'Employee Communication' emails, your local notice boards and the Health & Wellbeing section on Our Place.



## Seeking Support

We know that sometimes it can be difficult to manage the pressures of life or you may just want to speak to someone to get advice or support on an everyday issue - whatever the need there is professional, confidential support and help available to you, and just some are detailed below.

 Talk to someone in confidence. Call freephone 24/7 on 0800 048 2702 or access links, information and tools on their website/user id: sunum password: lifeworks. <a href="https://lunumuk.lifeworks.com/">https://lunumuk.lifeworks.com/</a>	 A free, confidential service for construction workers and their living in household dependents. Call in confidence - Freephone 8am-8pm, 7 days a week on 0800 801 0272.	 The Construction Industry Helpline offers 24/7 support for mental, physical and financial wellbeing. Call 0345 605 1956	 Get in touch about anything that's troubling you, call free on 116 123 for 24/7 confidential support or visit their website. <a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>
 Offers support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Contact them on the free helpline number 7 days a week on 0800 808 1477	 CALM is a charity which exists to prevent male suicide in the UK. They run a dedicated support line and online web chat for men who are experiencing emotional distress or are in crisis. Call 0800 58 58 58 helpline 5pm - midnight 7 days a week	 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis at any time. It's a place to go if you are struggling and need immediate help. Text SHOUT 8278 and a reader will be put in touch with a trained Crisis Volunteer who will support via text.	 Supports money management, helping tackle problem debt and improve financial capability, plus free confidential advice. Call 800 130 7777 from Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.

## Persimmon

As a company, Persimmon is committed to increasing mental health awareness in the home industry and making a difference.

Over 250 mental health first aiders (MHFA) have been trained to date with each playing an important role in supporting employee wellbeing. A range of mental health awareness training opportunities are also offered to staff, from face to face first aid and awareness training through to over 40 eLearning modules covering subjects from building resilience through to managing emotions and better decision making.

Persimmon also works closely with its Employee Assistance Provider to support its managers through training and an online managers mental health toolkit.

Employees are also offered weekly lunch and learn sessions on key health and wellbeing subjects from anxiety to menopause.

To raise funds for its charity partner, CALM - Campaign Against Living Miserably, Persimmon undertook the 50 for 50 Challenge to help mark its 50th anniversary. The challenge involved Persimmon's employees collectively completing over 50,000 miles in a six-week period with individuals and teams contributing through walking, running, swimming, cycling, or just weeding the garden.

The teams beat the target by miles and the challenge promoted wellbeing and encouraged activity whatever the participant's level.

## Taylor Wimpey

Increasing awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing is embedded throughout Taylor Wimpey's culture. Each of its business units, head office, logistics and IT have a Wellbeing Champion who helps communicate wellbeing events and support throughout the year.

This year, the developer provided support on topics such as mental health, financial health, suicide awareness, loneliness, and physical wellbeing.

Furthermore, as part of Taylor Wimpey's ongoing commitments to mental health, in the last three years it has trained over 150 employees to become Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) across its business units and sites.

Following the pandemic, the company invited its MHFAs to refresh their training in order to further support employees that may be struggling and hosted

quarterly share, learn and grow sessions to keep them updated on key issues.

Information on the mental health support available to employees has been disseminated through posters, Employee Assistance Programme business cards and new digital and print versions of its wellbeing booklet. These booklets were designed to allow a much wider access to information about Taylor Wimpey's support services across the business, with the paper versions of particular importance for site-based colleagues.

Moving forward, the developer is continuing to evolve its training and support with line manager mental health awareness training, as well as all colleague training, supported by a new eLearning module and its partnership with Lighthouse Club, the Construction Industry Charity.

## St Modwen

At St Modwen, mental health is taken seriously, and this is demonstrated through the services, resources and support the company provides to employees.

All line managers are offered mental health awareness sessions to support their teams and all colleagues have access to mental health first aiders (MHFAs). To date, over 60 MHFAs have been trained by St Modwen, available at the majority of their locations, with the aim of at least 10% of the company completing their training by the end of the year.

St Modwen has developed a Mental Health First Aider Network, a peer support group for its MHFAs, with access to meetings and guest speakers. They have created a health and wellbeing group and resource hub to share information on internal and external support as well as promote their key campaigns.

Over the past two years, St Modwen has held regular guest speaker events, centred around the topic of mental health and through their regular wellbeing comms encouraged employees to share their lived experiences of poor mental health and recovery.

Furthermore, the developer is also a signatory of the Building Mental Health Charter, a voluntary initiative which aims to support organisations in the construction sector to demonstrate their commitment to raising awareness of mental health issues.

St Modwen also work alongside leading experts, including Mind, Lighthouse Club and Health Assured to offer resources and services that genuinely help people, such as talking therapies.

Further information about how St Modwen are raising awareness of mental health issues and supporting their workforce can be found at: [www.stmodwen.co.uk/delivering-responsibly/health-wellbeing](http://www.stmodwen.co.uk/delivering-responsibly/health-wellbeing)



## William Davis Homes

One of the many ways William Davis has helped to promote good mental health and wellbeing among its employees is by welcoming ambassadors from the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity to three of its sites to raise awareness of their 'Help Inside the Hard Hat' campaign.

The Help Inside the Hard Hat tour team are all mental health first aiders with lived experiences. They met with employees to discuss the services offered by the charity and to help normalise conversations around mental health and wellbeing in the industry. Their down-to-earth approach and the fact they can share their own life experiences in the trade means they can easily relate to the issues being discussed.

The Charity visited William Davis's developments in Castle Donington, Ruddington and Shepshed to provide

practical information about the crucial services the charity provides, including a 24/7 construction industry helpline, a free wellbeing app, wellbeing masterclasses and mental health training.

In addition to its work with Lighthouse Club, the developer is also supporting colleagues through the launch of its new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) service with Health Assured.

A separate site tour was carried out to communicate this service to all site workers.

It has also recently launched a series of Mental Health First Aid training courses to train 20 mental health first aiders both at head office and across its sites. To support wellbeing, an onsite company gym has been opened which is accessible to all employees.



## Tara Group

Tara Group, which includes housebuilders Cameron Homes and Keon Homes, and groundworkers Chasetown Civil Engineering is committed to supporting their people with mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health has been identified as a key priority for the Group, in order to create an open and safe environment where its people, their families, and its supply chain feel supported and understand the importance of breaking the stigma within the industry.

To achieve this, it has introduced a range of measures, including the appointment of a Senior Leader Champion and a working group of champions as cross-representation across the Group to share ideas and be a sounding board for new tools and campaigns. It has also professionally trained a number of mental health first aiders (MHFA) and has plans to train more.

To increase mental health awareness across the Group, all employees and subcontractors are required to complete e-learning training as part of new online induction system. In addition, Tara Group has partnered with industry specific charities Mates in Mind and Lighthouse Club to ensure it is delivering the right level of support. It is also utilising Lighthouse Club's training courses and 'Help Inside the Hard Hat' van tours.

With financial worries one of the leading causes of poor mental health across the home building workforce, Tara Group is focusing heavily on financial wellbeing. Initiatives have included £100 'small gesture' voucher for summer holidays, £1,000 one-off cost of living payment, and partnering with Octopus Money Coach to provide personalised support, free of charge for all employees.

It has also introduced TaraNet, a Group-wide communication platform with money saving discounts and a wellbeing centre. The platform is also used for regular awareness campaigns such as Suicide Prevention Day, and World Mental Health Day in addition to an awareness campaign on Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Other tools available to colleagues include an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and methods for promoting it internally and externally, for example through subcontractor breakfast events, have been introduced.

The Group has also launched a #LetsTalk campaign, highlighting the importance of small conversations. The campaign includes video appearances from senior members of the Group sharing their personal stories and experience in handling poor mental health. Finally, mental health and wellbeing was the theme of Tara Group's company day, which included an update from a Senior Leader Champion and motivational speaker.



## Contact us

Further information on HBF's Mental Health Awareness Campaign can be found by visiting:

[www.hbf.co.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.hbf.co.uk/mentalhealth)

Alternatively, get in touch with us directly on the details across.

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