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Introduction

While the UK has faced a mental health crisis for many years, the importance of promoting good mental health and wellbeing has arguably never been more important considering the ongoing consequences from the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

While work-related stress, depression, and anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health in 2020-2021¹, construction remains one of the industries most affected with two construction 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 creating a lasting culture where people feel comfortable to admit when they are not ok, without fear or judgement.

Aligned with the Building Mental Health Framework, the aims of the Campaign are to: Increase awareness across the industry, encourage companies to show commitment to the cause by signing the building mental health charter and to train Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) who could help build a positive mental health culture. HBF and its members also collectively donated funds to support the Lighthouse charity's important work, including the running of its 24/7 construction industry helpline.

¹ [HSE, Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2021](#)



Mental health is invariably complex, and the challenges cannot be fixed overnight, but HBF and its members are committed to continuing to support the industry and take steps to help those in need.

Our feedback survey is now in its third year and the following report will outline the progress the industry has made to date along with recommendations for further improvement going forward.

Mental Health Awareness Feedback Survey

Following the launch of HBF's Mental Health Awareness campaign, a survey was launched to understand the work home builders were doing and the impact mental health was having within their own companies. As part of the campaign, HBF and its members committed to following a five-step framework to build a positive mental health culture within their organisations.

1. Commit to making a difference (Signing the Building Mental Health Charter)
2. Introduce a helpline (The Lighthouse Construction Charity Industry helpline)
3. Deliver a Mental Health Toolbox Talk
4. Deliver a Mental Health or one day awareness training course
5. Ensure organisations have enough Mental Health first aiders for the workplace

The feedback survey was based on these steps and demonstrated the progress home builders had made to in changing the culture around mental health discussions.

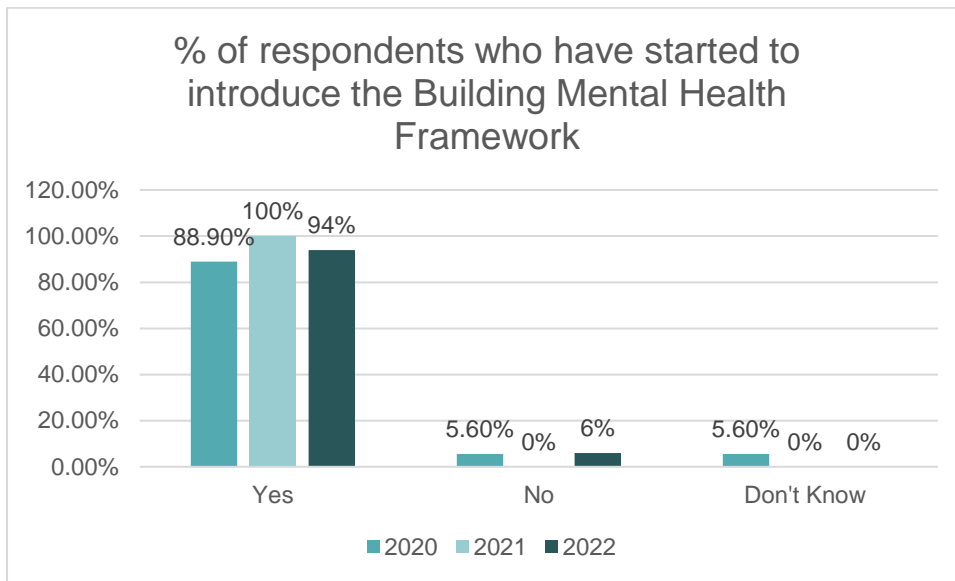
In the first year (2020) 27 organisations took part and in 2021, 24 organisations participated in the survey. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in respondents to the 2022 survey with just 18 companies responding. With over 50 developers signed up the Building Mental Health Charter, HBF will continue to encourage other developers to share their progress in delivering on the Building Mental Health Framework.

This report presents the survey results for this year and compares some of the key results with data from previous year(s) to measure progress.

Building Mental Health Framework

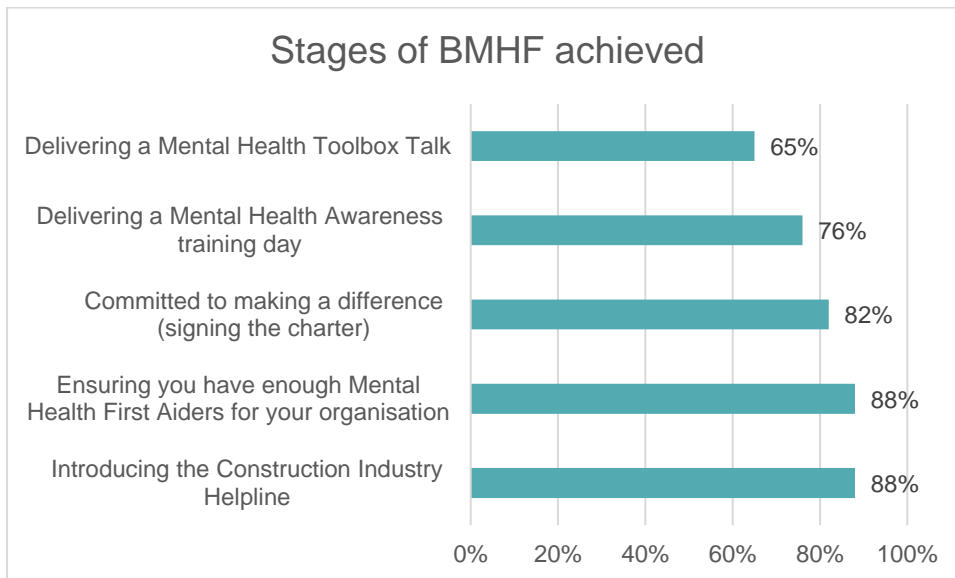
As in previous years, respondents were asked if their companies had started to introduce the Building Mental Health Framework (BMHF). In 2022, 94% of respondents said that their companies had started to introduce elements of the Building Mental Health Framework (BMHF). While this is a slight reduction on the 100% figure achieved in 2021, the campaign continues to draw new industry supporters, some of whom are just at the beginning of their mental health awareness journey and may not yet be in a position to start introducing the BMHF.





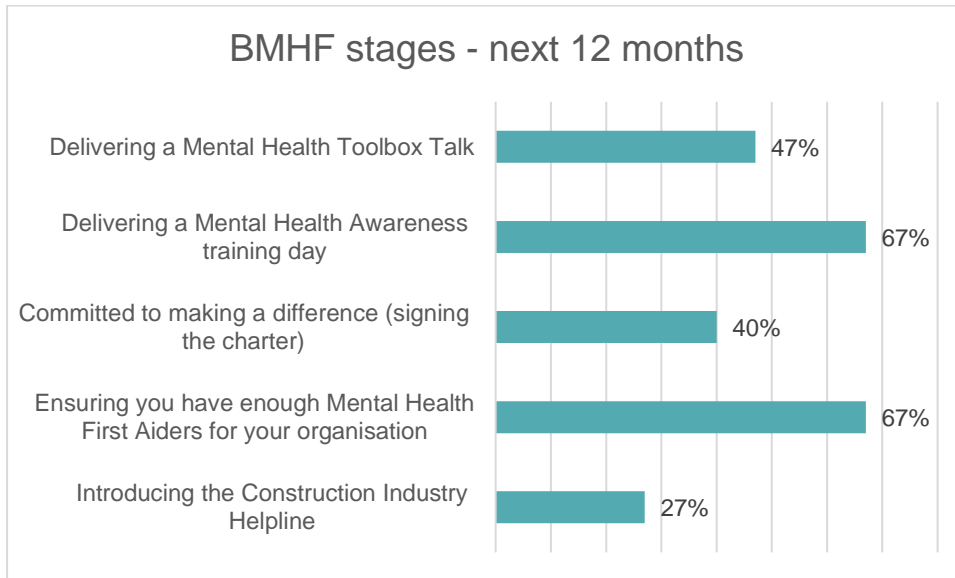
Those companies who said that they were in the process of introducing the BMHF were also asked about the specific stages they had introduced. The stages that were most widely adopted were 'Introducing the Construction Industry Helpline (88% of respondents had achieved this) and 'Ensuring you have enough Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) for your organisation (88% of respondents had achieved this). The stage that had been least frequently adopted was 'Delivering a Mental Health Toolbox Talk' (65%). These results were broadly similar to those from the 2021 Survey.

Stages of BMHF achieved



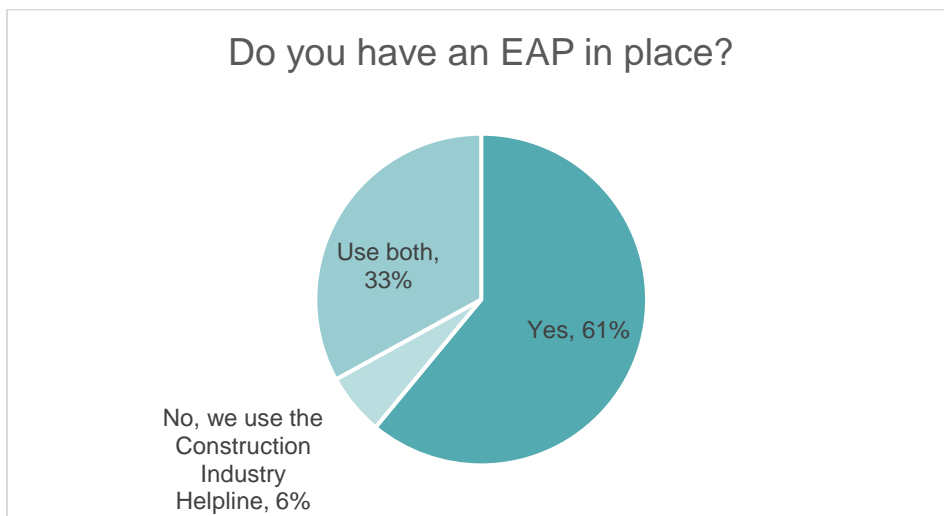
BMHF stages to be adopted in the future

Looking to the future, respondents were asked which BMHF stages they hoped to adopt in the coming 12 months. The top three focuses for companies were ‘Ensuring you have enough Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) for your organisation’ (67%), ‘Delivering a Mental Health Awareness training day’ (67%) and ‘Delivering a Mental Health Toolbox Talk’ (47%).



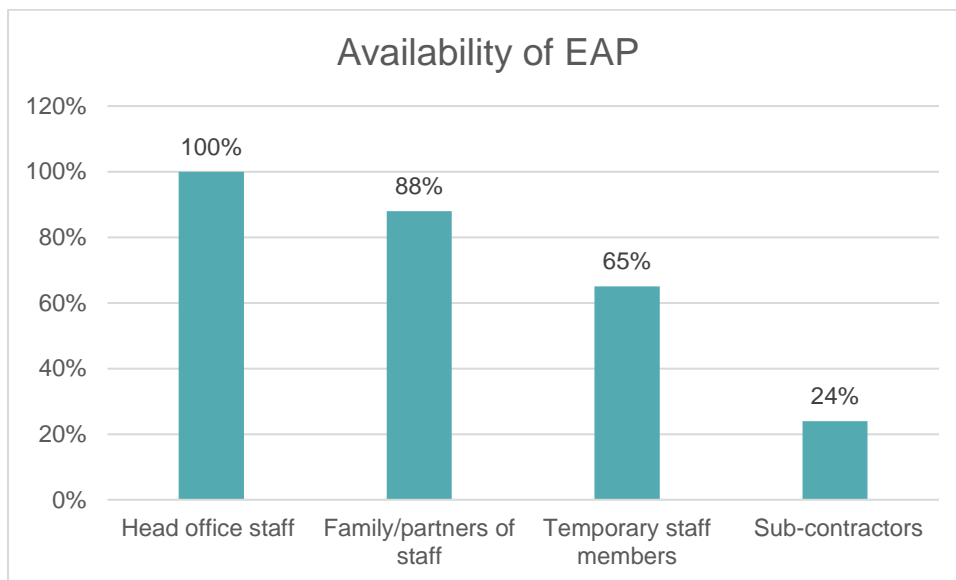
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Survey respondents were asked if they had an EAP in place and the response was very positive. 94% of companies have implemented an EAP, 33% use both an EAP and the Construction Industry Helpline. Just 6% of respondents rely on the Helpline alone.



Employee access to EAPs

A new question was introduced to the survey this year so that it could be better understood which groups of employees have access to their company's EAP. Previous analysis has shown that those working at head office will be able to access the EAP but those working onsite will have to rely on the Lighthouse Charity's Construction Industry Helpline and this was supported by the 2022 survey results; just 24% of companies with an EAP in place make it available to their sub-contractors and just 65% to temporary staff members.

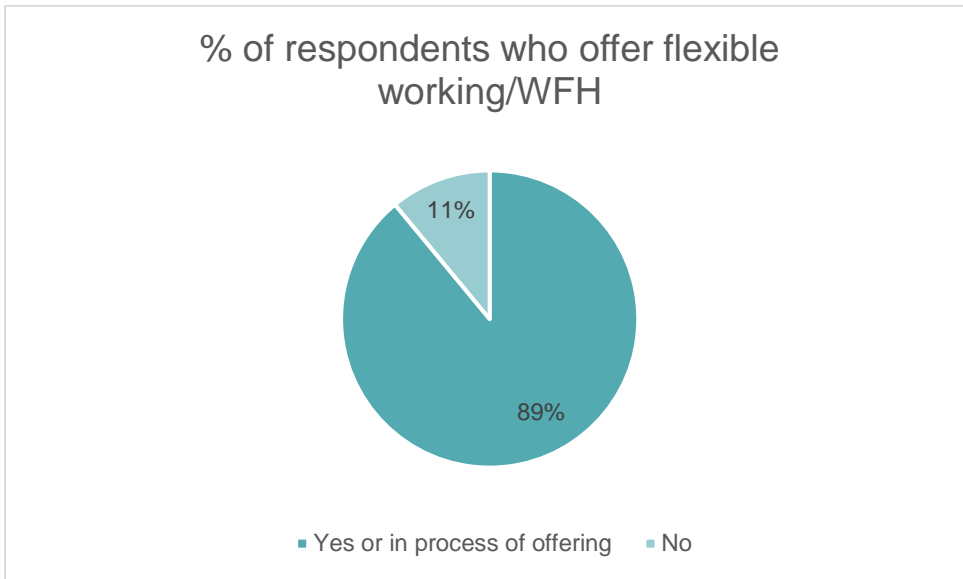


Working practices

Following a change in working practices due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a new question was included in the 2022 survey which asked respondents if their companies offered flexible/home working.

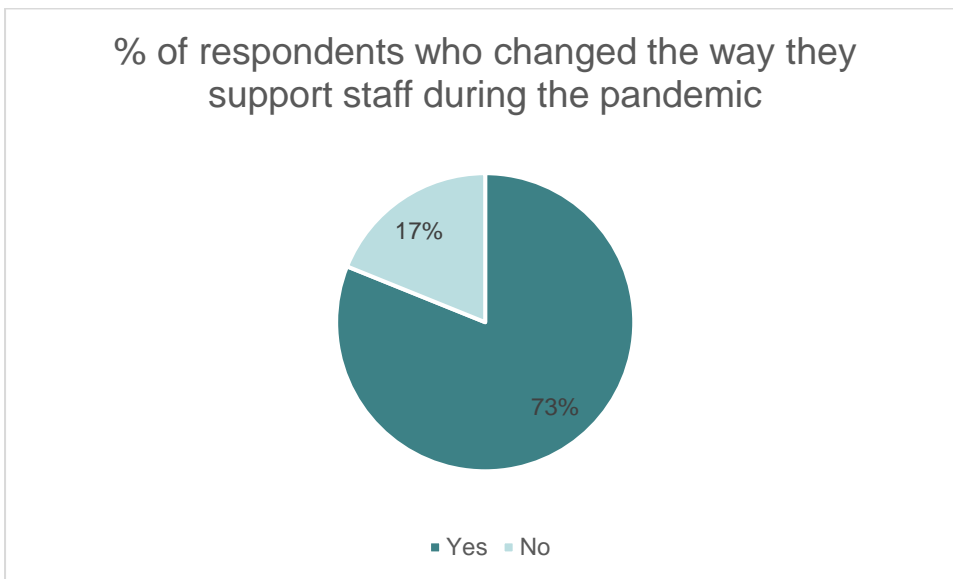
Encouragingly, 89% of respondents confirmed that their companies either offered or were in the process of offering this option. As flexible working practices are valued by many for the improvement it can make to work/life balance, the fact that so many companies offer it is to be welcomed.





Coronavirus pandemic

In light of the impacts of Covid-19, respondents were asked if they had changed the way they supported their staff during the pandemic. 73% of companies said they had.



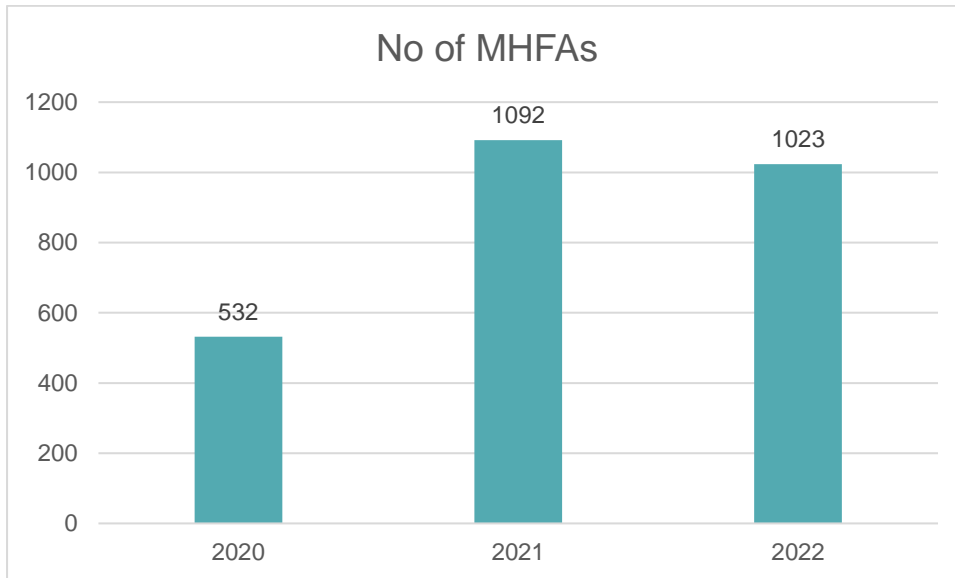
However, the 2022 survey didn't ask *how* the nature of employee support had changed during the pandemic. As such, in future surveys, it would be good to understand what these changes were and if they remained in place.

Mental Health First Aiders

Since the launch of HBF's Mental Health Awareness Campaign in 2019, training MHFAs has been a key priority for the industry.



The number of MHFAs has stayed broadly the same since 2021; 1,023 this year compared with 1,092 in 2021. Given that many companies have previously expressed an intention to train more MHFAs, it is perhaps surprising that the number has decreased slightly rather than increased. However, this year's survey did receive considerably fewer responses than its predecessor (18 responses in 2021 compared with 24 in 2022) which may go some way to explaining this result.

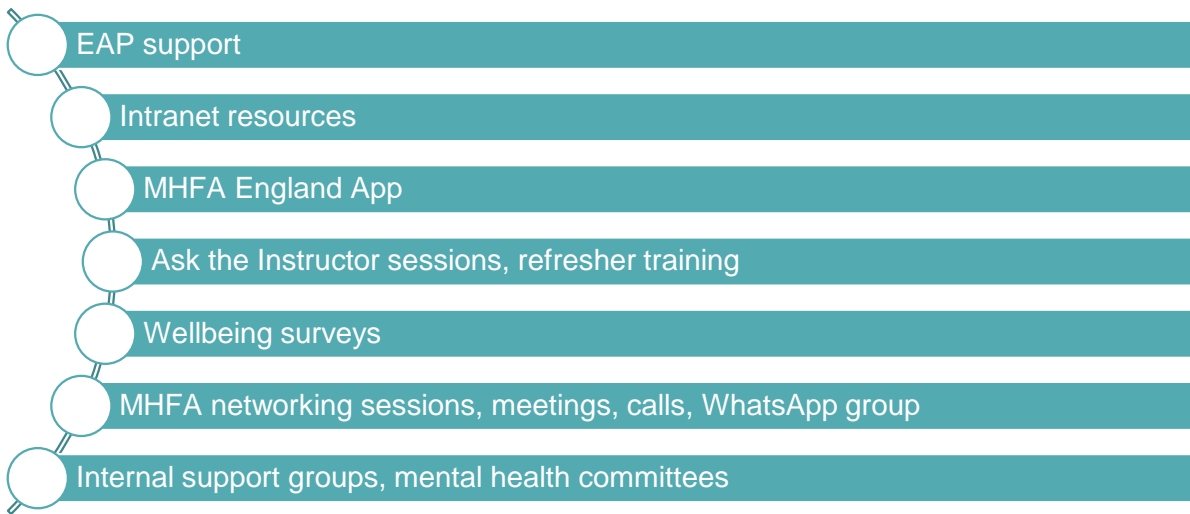


Nevertheless, we have also heard anecdotal reports that some MHFAs have resigned from the role for a variety of reasons. **As such, it is recommended that future surveys also ask respondents how many of the MHFAs they have trained have since resigned or chosen not to act on their training, and the reasons why, to enable us to better understand the MHFA landscape.**

Support for MHFAs

Further to the above, due to the emotional challenges that come with being a MHFA, it is vital that companies have systems and resources in place to support these colleagues. The survey found that companies are supporting MHFAs in a number of ways, including:

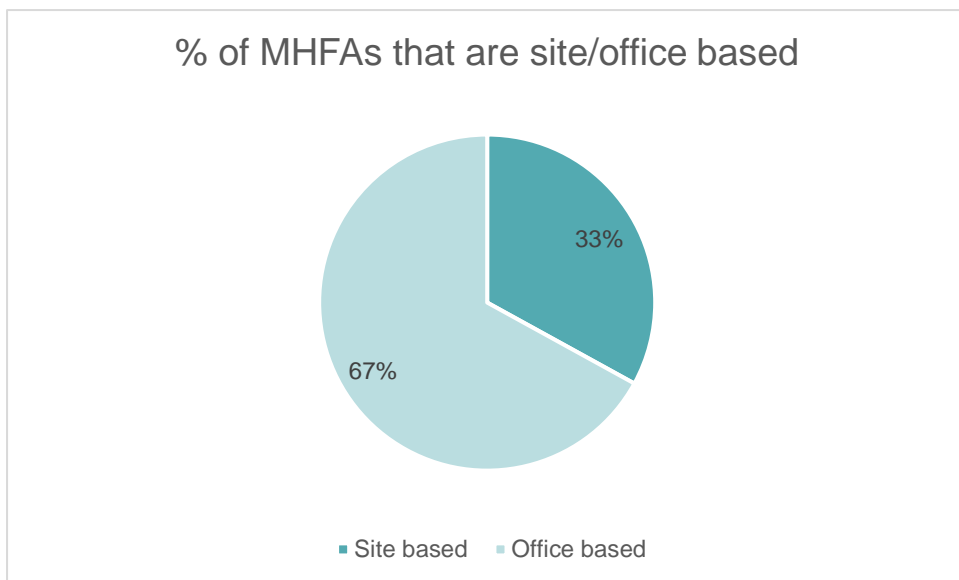




Proportion of site/office based MHFAs

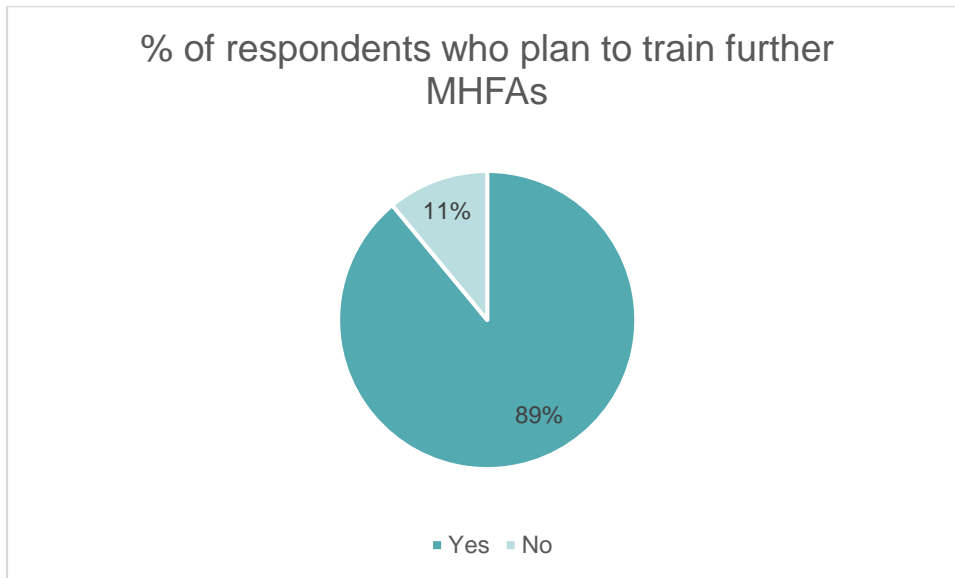
In terms of where MHFAs are located, a third are based on site. This is very encouraging given the difficulties home builders face in extending mental health training to their site-based colleagues and supply chains. The remainder are office based.

However, as the risk of a male construction worker dying by suicide is three times above the national average, it is vital that home builders increase the number of site-based MHFAs so that workers are able to spot the early signs of mental health issues and are familiar with the support and resources available, should a colleague require them. **As such, HBF’s Mental Health Group should focus on developing a plan of action to further increase the representation of MHFAs in the supply chain and on-site.**



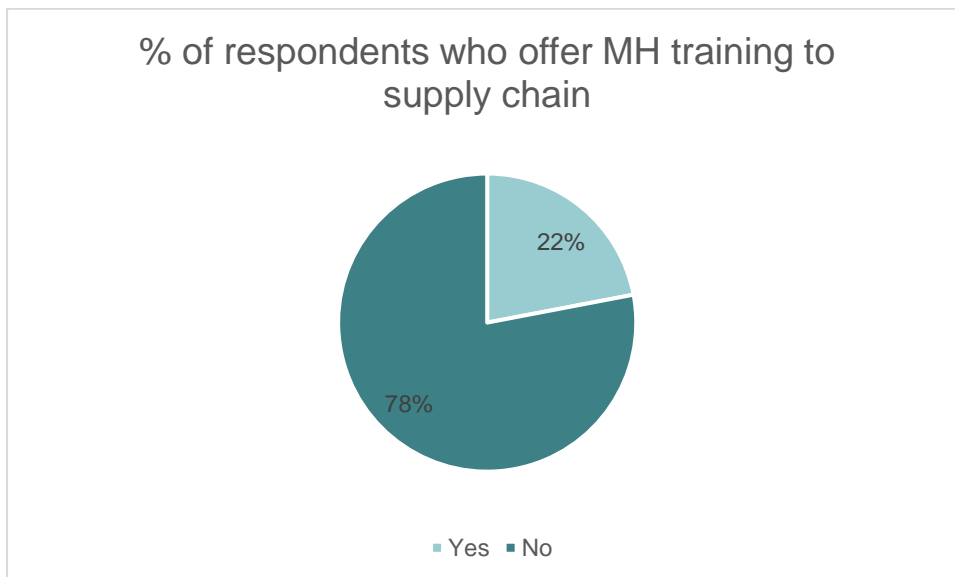
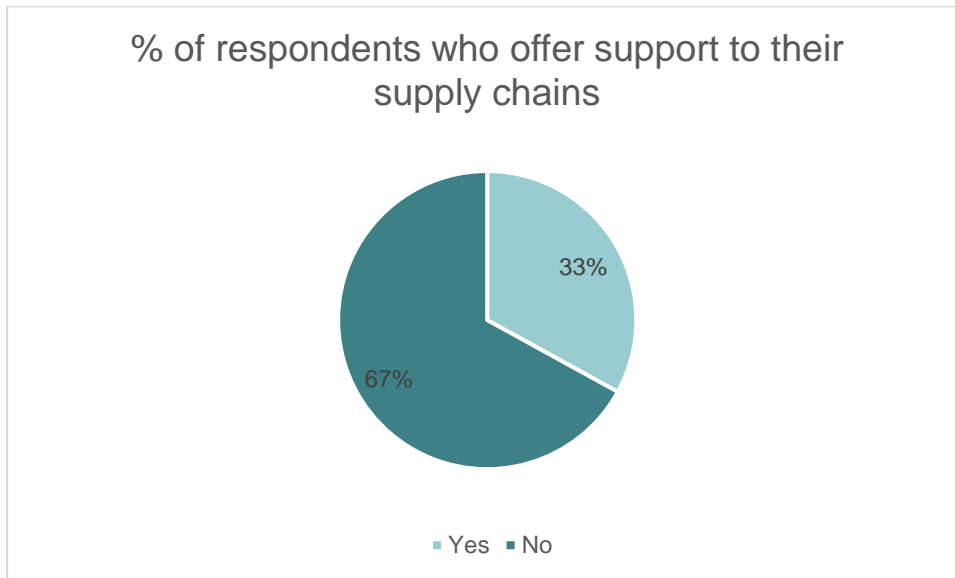
Plans to train further MHFAs

Positively, 89% of companies plan to train further MHFAs. This is important considering the ongoing mental health pressures facing individuals because of the cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to existing pressures.



Supply chain support

At present only around one third of companies offer mental health support to their supply chains and only 22% offer mental health training. This is not surprising giving the difficulties in reaching this particular group of workers.

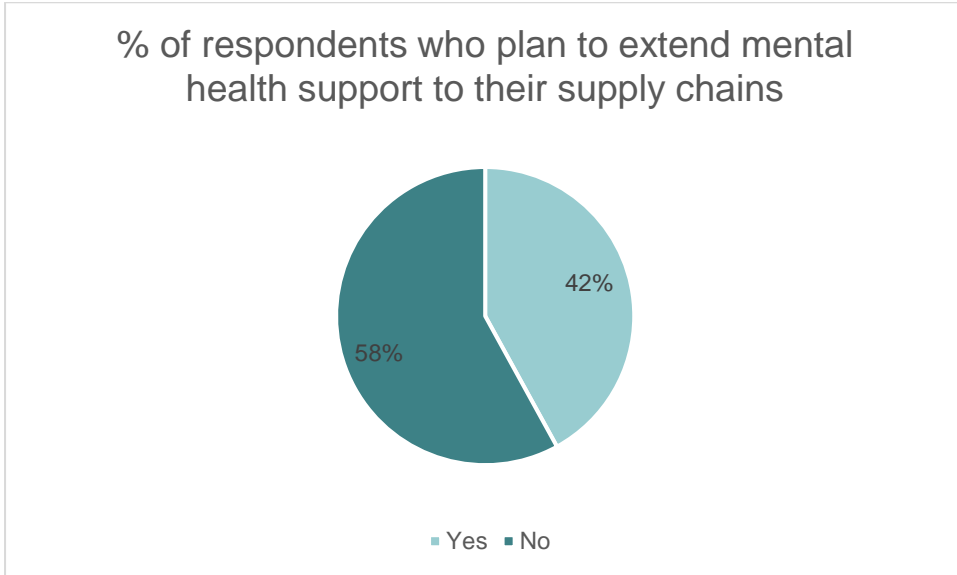


Future plans for supporting the mental health of the supply chain

However, encouragingly, 42% of companies plan to offer support to their supply chains in the future.

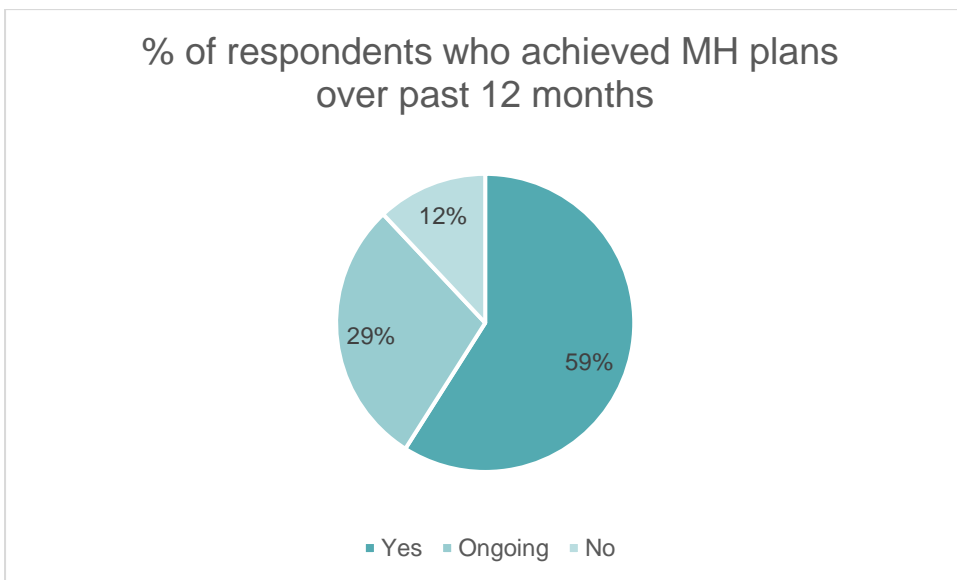


It might be useful for those companies who do already provide mental health support to their supply chain to share 'best practice' advice with those companies who plan to do so in the future. This could be taken forward through HBF's Mental Health Group.



Mental health plans

Despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic, 88% of companies confirmed that they have either achieved their mental health plans, or the work is ongoing.

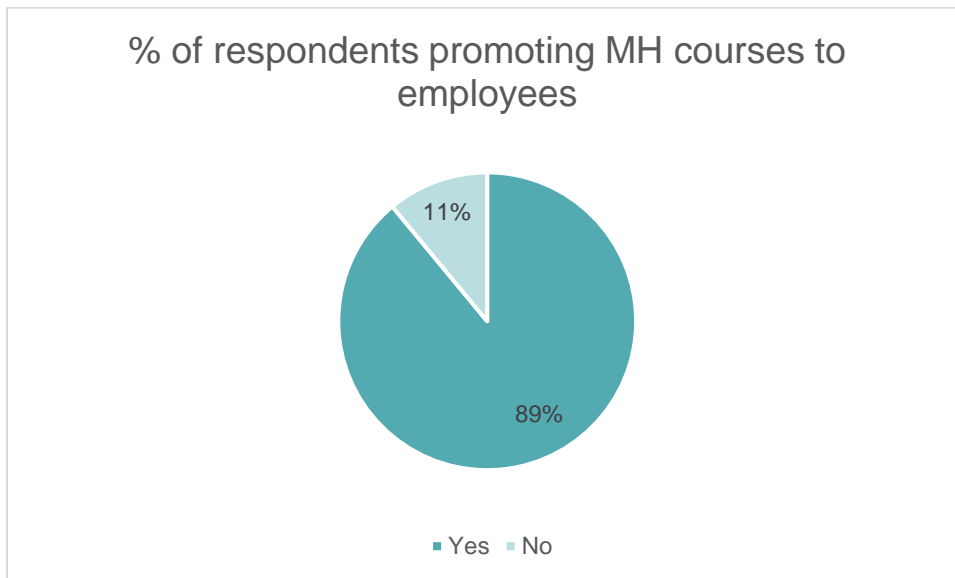


Mental health course promotion

89% of respondents said that they promote mental health courses to their employees. This is achieved through a variety of methods, including:



- Internal communications channels
- Posters
- Inductions
- Learner Management Systems

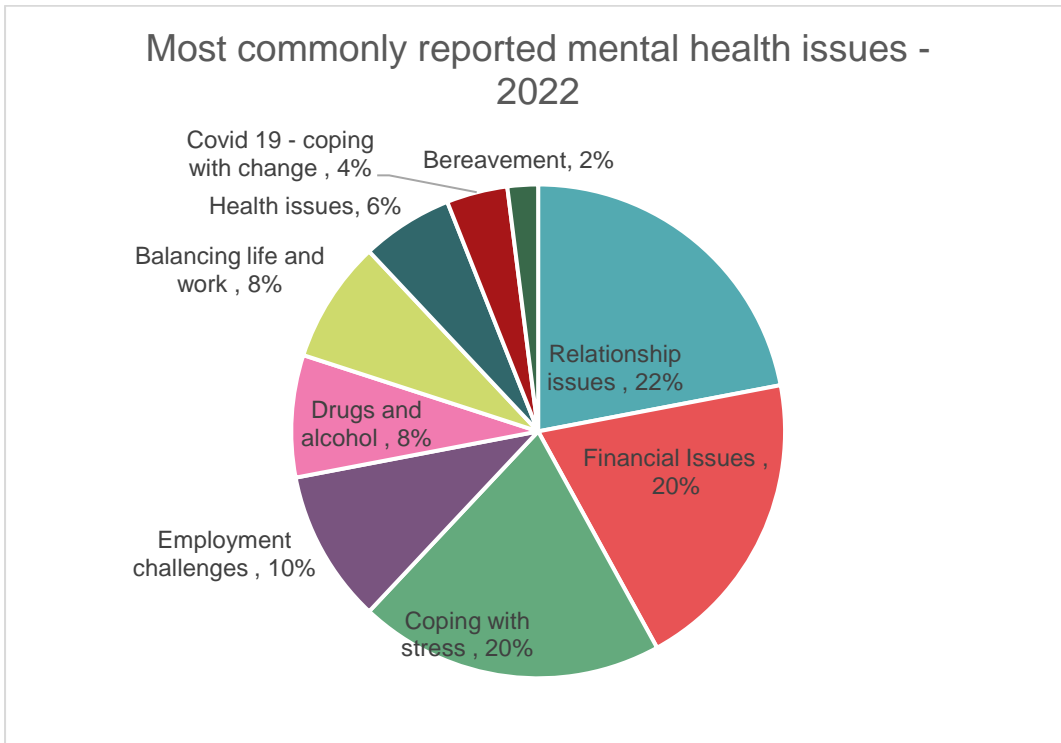


In terms of the format of the courses, these were being held both virtually and in person.

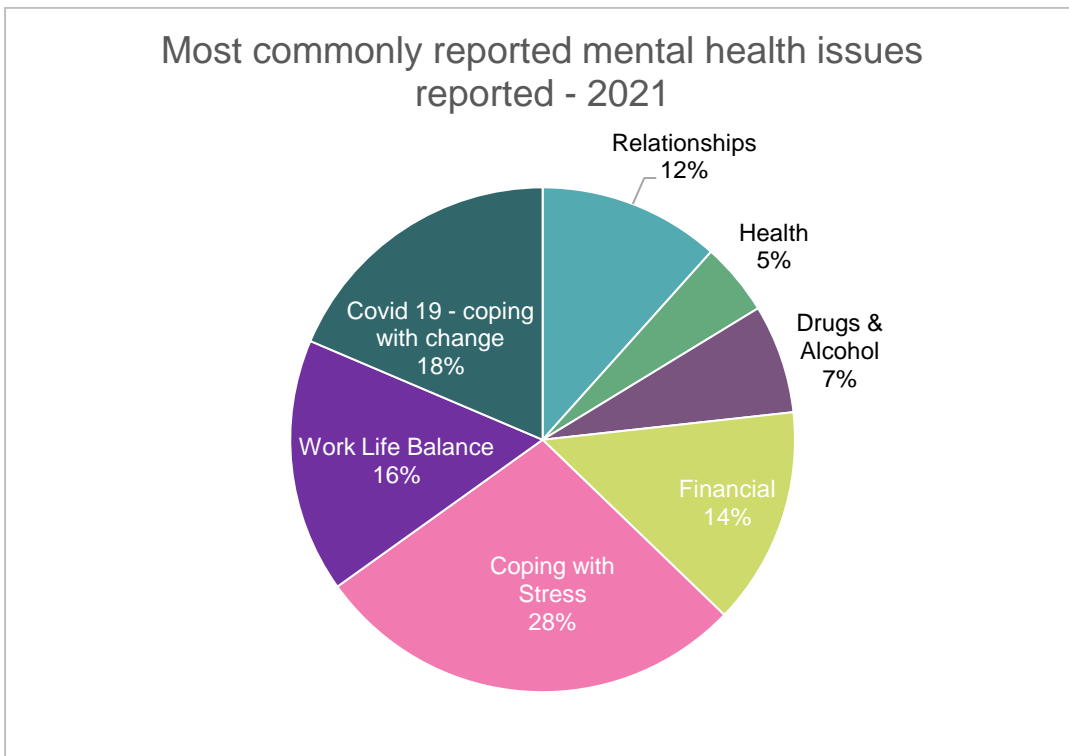
Most commonly reported mental health issues

In 2022, relationship issues (22%) were the most commonly raised mental health concern followed by financial issues (20%) and coping with stress (20%).

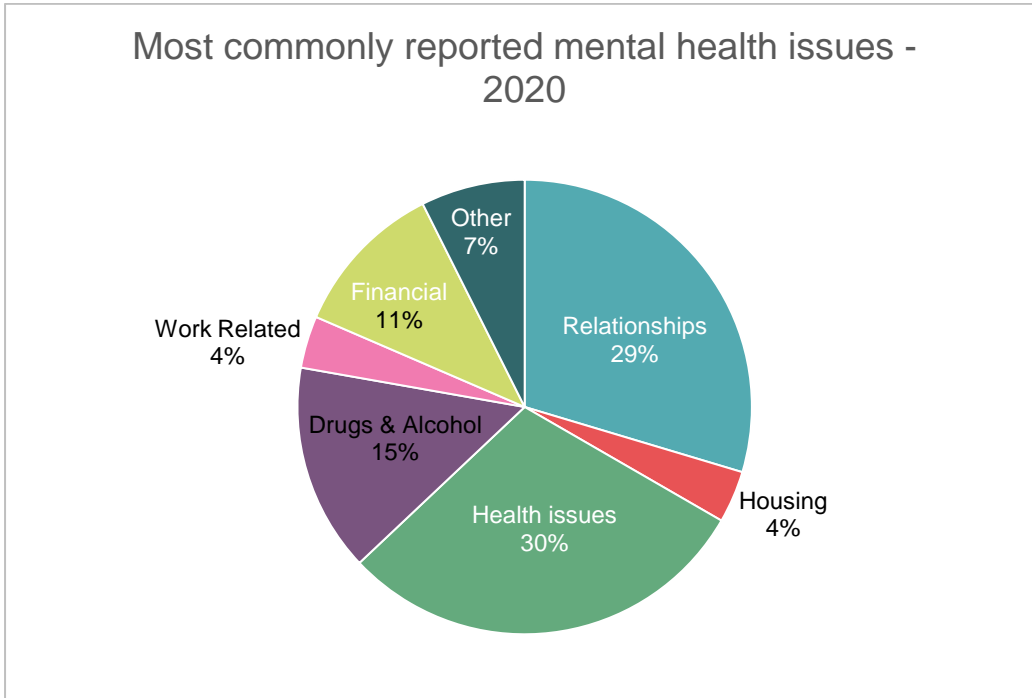




By contrast, in 2021 the most commonly raised mental health issues were coping with stress (28%), Covid-19 – coping with change, and work life balance (16%). This is not surprising given that at the time of the 2021 survey, the UK was still in midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.



In 2020, the most commonly raised mental health issues raised were health issues (30%), relationships (29%) and drugs and alcohol (15%). It's notable that health issues were reported far less frequently as a mental health concern in 2022 in comparison to 2020 (health concerns equated to 30% of all mental health issues raised to MHFAs in 2020 compared to just 6% in 2022). Potentially this is due to the Covid 19 pandemic and economic situation causing people to focus more on financial and relationship pressures.



In order to best support the homebuilding workforce, it is vital that companies are quick to respond to the changing mental health needs of workers by signposting them to appropriate support.

With the cost-of-living crisis set to be a feature in many individuals' lives for the foreseeable future, it would be sensible for developers to provide or signpost to support specifically focused around financial concerns.

Summary and recommendations

It is encouraging to see that mental health awareness remains a priority for the home building industry and that homebuilders are continuing to take steps forward in terms of the support they provide to the workforce.

However, in order to make further progress and ensure that the right people are receiving the right support, consideration should be given to actioning the following recommendations through HBF's Mental Health Group:

- 1. Increase understanding of the changes companies made to the ways they provided support to employees during the Covid-19 pandemic and if these methods have since remained in place.**
- 2. Seek to understand how many of the industry's MHFAs have resigned their roles or chosen not to put their training into practice, and the reasons why individuals have made these decisions.**



3. **Develop a plan of action to further increase the representation of MHFAs in the supply chain and on-site.**
4. **Arrange for developers who already provide mental health support to their supply chain to share 'best practice' advice with other members.**
5. **Provide or increase awareness of support for mental health concerns focused around financial worries.**

Contact

To discuss the findings of the survey in more detail, please contact:

- **Policy and External Affairs Manager, [Emma Ramell](#).**

