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Workplace Mental Health in the Construction Industry

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Abstract

There is a growing awareness in society around mental health and the importance of maintaining good mental health, but recent figures show that approximately one in four people now experience a mental health problem each year.

Several studies into mental health have identified construction as one of the worst industries to work in when it comes to mental ill health, with males in construction three times more likely to commit suicide than the national average. Further research by industry bodies and charities has identified potential causes which are linked to the work and culture relative to the industry; including long working hours, low pay, increased time away from family and the 'macho' culture.

This report is a response to the recent government advice on addressing mental health in the workplace; focussing on the construction industry and specifically SME's who may struggle to access information and training, in the same way larger organisations can, due to a lack of resources and support. Through reviewing existing research and guidance it seeks ascertain the causes and reasons specific to the working environment and identify the potential cost to employers if action is not taken.

It goes on to further investigate the perception of mental health by those working within the industry through both interviews and surveys, with a view to identifying where the challenges are, what solutions could be proposed and any potential barriers that may be faced; before identifying potential actions to enable development of the industry, addressing the stigma around mental health.

The report then concludes with a set of proposed set of actions, to allow small and medium enterprises to increase their awareness and utilise existing tools and guidance in order to address the mental health problems experienced by employees.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
MHWP	Mental Health at Work Plan
MiM	Mates in Mind
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
WAP	Wellness Action Plan

Acknowledgements

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1.0 Introduction

Mental health has been defined by several sources with varying definitions. On a fundamental level Oxford dictionary defines it as:

mental health; *noun*. A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018)

It is important to understand that mental health, much like physical health, can be both good or poor; it is measured through emotional, behavioural, and social maturity. It is fundamental to the collective and individual ability as humans to think, interact with each other, pursue a career and enjoy leisure time.

The World Health Organization defines good mental health as:

"... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." (Who.int, 2014)

In recent years, researchers have identified an increase in mental health issues. It is now understood that, in the UK, approximately one in four will experience a mental health problem each year (McManus et al., 2009). A 2014 survey showed that in England only 39 % of adults with mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, were accessing mental health treatment (McManus et al., 2016). It is suggested that those experiencing these often choose not to disclose them due to the perceived stigma and fear of repercussions; this impacts the level of support they are able to access.

Poor mental health can affect not only an individual's life, but their friends and family around them too. They may experience lack of sleep, low confidence, difficultly concentrating and panic attacks. They might also find themselves less able to cope with the pressures of daily life including work demands, social situations, relationships and financial concerns. The culmination of these pressures may lead to withdrawals from their support networks when needed most, with the ultimate cost being the cost of human life through suicide.

With this growing awareness of the importance of good mental health, the Government took action last year and commissioned an independent review into how employers can better support the wellbeing of employees at work. As a result; '*Thriving at Work: a review of mental health and employers*' by Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer was published in October 2017. Thriving at Work highlights that the scale of poor mental health is significant, but that it is

manageable and, in their opinion, even preventable (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.15). In the context of the work environment, which their review is focussed on; mental health can be related to the work itself or personal circumstances which are experienced at work.

Their review specifically highlighted the construction industry as one of the worst industries. It was suggested that this is due to specific industry characteristics such as long working hours, job insecurity and a 'macho' culture (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.23). This finding has been backed by other research and independent studies; a recent study by the Office for National Statistics found the risk of suicide among low-skilled male labourers, particularly those working in construction roles, was three times higher than the male national average. For males working in skilled trades, the highest risk was among building finishing trades; particularly, plasterers and painters and decorators who had more than double the risk of suicide than the male national average (Office for National Statistics, 2017b).

The *Thriving at Work* review proposed a set of 'mental health core standards' for organisations to look to adopt. It also recommended that industry groups, which provide support and accreditation to professionals, provide further assistance and guidance to those they work with to implement these core standards. They also recommended that professional bodies, with responsibility for training or accrediting professional qualifications, include workplace mental health information in their training programmes and assessments (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.41).

This report is a response to these recommended standards in relation to the construction industry and how the framework recommendations can be utilised. It will be specifically focussing on SME's, which make up over 99% of the construction industry (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2018), as statistics show people working in these businesses are more likely to experience mental health issues (Alderson, 2018a).

1.1 Aims

This report aims to highlight issues around the mental health culture within the construction industry; and seeks to identify the actions required to create increased awareness and understanding amongst employers and employees. Enabling the development of a more positive attitude towards mental health for all those working within the industry; therefore, tackling the stigma around poor mental health.

1.2 Objectives

o Understand the causes and symptoms of poor mental health specific to the industry.
o Research the mental health challenge and effects within the construction industry through analysis of interviews, surveys and news articles and the use of quantified evidence.
o Develop a framework of guidance on how SME's can address mental health and raise awareness in the workplace using readily available tools.

1.3 Methodology

The report intends to achieve these objectives through the approach outlined below, which is split into four key methods of working.

Literature Review
- Section 2.0 - Understand how mental health is defined including causes, signs and symptoms. Identify the statistics within construction industry specifically
- Section 3.0 - Review Thriving at Work to ascertain the research methods used, outline the 10-year vision and understand the core standards proposed
- Section 4.0 - Appraise construction specific surveys to further identify perceived problems within the industry and key statistics

Research Methods
- Section 5.0 - Indentify Health and Safety Guidance and Legal duties to understand employer responsibility
- Section 6.0 - Highlight the estimated cost of poor mental health in construction to provide quantative evidence
- Section 7.0 - Investigate examples of existing support available with regards to poor mental health

Data Analysis
- Section 8.0 - Undertake interviews to determine problems faced specifically by different sized businesses
- Section 9.0 - Conduct survey to collect first hand research and investigate how the proposed core standards are currently reflected within the industry

Discussion of Results
- Section 10.1 - Conclude findings of report
- Section 10.2 - Propose framework of guidance for small to medium enterprises

2.0 What is Mental Health?

Before beginning to review the literature, resources and guidance around mental health, it is important to establish what is meant by 'mental health' in this report. As highlighted in the introduction, there are different definitions for mental health but principally they are connected by an understanding that mental health is made up of several different components relating to emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It is an integral part of the mind, affecting feeling, thoughts and actions on a day to day basis. Everyone has mental health, whether it is good or poor, which dictates mood, behaviour and response to social situations, daily stress and choices.

This report focusses on poor mental health; mental health can become poor for a variety of reasons including, biological factors, family history or life experiences. Work plays a major part in the state of and individuals mental health and wellbeing as it is a continuous factor in day to day lives which, allows a person to form relationships, achieve aspirations and fund specific lifestyles. This report is focussing on the construction industry alone because of the uniqueness of the working environment and the specific links to poor mental health.

2.1 Types of Poor Mental Health

There are many types of mental health problems (Mind, 2018), a list and brief description of common mental health problems can be found in Appendix A; or further information can be found online on websites such as NHS or MIND.

2.2 Causes of Poor Mental Health

A common cause of poor mental health, especially in the work environment, is stress, this can be brought on by work or a personal situation which affects a person at work (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.34). Work factors include demands of a job, a lack of control, a lack of support or information, problems with work relationships or constant changes within the working environment (hse.gov.uk, 2018).

Stress to an extent can be a positive motivator for many people; added pressure from a deadline or a challenge can increase productivity and create a sense of achievement when goals are met. However, those under a consistent level of pressure, and therefore stress, can have an adverse reaction to it; causing more and longer-term damage to their wellbeing (hse.gov.uk, 2018). This can have an even larger impact if a person already has an existing mental health problem.

Mental health can also be affected by personal issues too; such as social isolation, bereavement, poor housing situations, drug and alcohol misuse or significant trauma as a child or an adult (Mind, 2018b). How employers support people at these times can impact their mental wellbeing; types of support include workplace adjustments such as changes to their role, how they perform their role and additional support (Mind, 2018a).

Effective support provided by employers to those struggling with their mental health can have an impact on the wider society and reduce pressure on resources such as the NHS and police or ambulance services. For example; the top five individual repeat callers to the Metropolitan Police Service, all of whom have mental health problems, called a combined total of 8,655 times in 2017. The total cost to answer these calls over the year was £70,000 (Moore, 2018).

2.3 Signs and Symptoms of Poor Mental Health

Mental health is not considered to be as obvious to identify as physical symptoms, as they are not visible (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p20). However, there are signs which can be recognised within the workplace, such as;

o Absence; Mental health sickness absence is a key indicator which has risen by 5% since 2009, people off for mental health reasons are three times more likely to have long term sickness periods (Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health, 2016)
o Presenteeism; This involves an individual showing up at work when ill, either physically or mentally, resulting in productivity loss, increased poor health and exhaustion.
o Limiting progression; Such as a lack of drive to learn, develop and grow within an organisation due to a perception of mental health hampering progression. 35% of people think they are less likely to get promoted if they have depression (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p20).
o Physical signs; Such as changes in weight, loss of energy, exhaustion, restlessness or agitation and abuse of alcohol or drugs
o Emotional symptoms; Such as the inability to concentrate, withdrawal from social situations, mood swings or outbursts of emotion.

2.4 Construction Industry Specifics

Construction has been highlighted as one of the worst industries for poor mental health (Office for National Statistics, 2017b); this is suspected to be due to the type of working environment and the culture leading to a perceived stigma. Due to barriers like these and a fear of discrimination, employers are missing opportunities for early intervention (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017).

Mental health problems can also be increased by industry specific factors such as demanding workloads, long working hours, long commutes, increased time away from friends or family and job insecurity. Problems are also more common in work environments with a high-turnover, low-pay and part-time or temporary work; all of which are experienced within the construction industry.

Research has found that males working in the low-skilled occupations, such as labourers, had a 44% higher risk of suicide than the male national average; the risk among males in skilled trades was 35% higher. Low-skilled workers tend to receive lower pay, have less job security and less control over their work patterns than higher-skilled workers. For males working in skilled trades, the highest risk was among building finishing trades; particularly, plasterers, painters and decorators who had more than double the risk of suicide than the national average for males (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

3.0 Review of Thriving at Work

The catalyst for this report was *Thriving at Work*, which was research commissioned by Theresa May in January 2017 and published in October of the same year. This research investigated the current state of work place mental health and explored the cost of poor mental health to UK businesses and the economy as a whole. It identified that society is at a vital point in time with more businesses than expected facing a mental health challenge at work (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017).

Their research highlighted that around 15% of people at work have symptoms of an existing mental health condition; it also discovered that approximately 300,000 people with a long term mental health problem lose their job each year (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.5).

The research also made special efforts into identifying the effects these figures have on businesses and was able to provide quantified reasons why investing in mental health is good for business and employee productivity. Statistics revealed the cost to UK employers as a whole is between £33billion and £42billion annually due to poor mental health, with over half of this being generated from presenteeism (Deloitte MCS Limited, 2017).

3.1 A 10-Year Vision

As an outcome, their review highlighted a 10-year vision of the changes they hoped to see within the workplace environment of all businesses. The vision has been summarised by Stevenson and Farmer (2017, p6) as the following main points;

- o A 'good work' environment which contributes positively to our mental health and our society.
- o The provision of knowledge and tools to understand our mental health and provide us with the confidence to look after it.
- o Organisations of all sizes to be equipped with tools and awareness to not only address poor mental health but prevent it.
- o Overall reducing the proportion of people with a mental health issue.

This vision of change is particularly prudent when applied to the current situation within the construction industry, as highlighted further below.

3.1.1 Good Work in Construction

Good work consists of autonomy, fair pay, work life balance and opportunities for progression, and the absence of bullying and harassment (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017, p.16). In Construction, achieving 'good work' as defined by *Thriving at Work* can be considered more challenging due to the nature of work within the industry.

For example, when breaking down the industry drivers, the construction environment is largely dictated by cost and programme; tight programmes, necessary sequencing of works and the interface with other trades could limit the autonomy available to employees lower down the skill set.

With regards to fair pay, the construction industry is seen to have its average wages increasing steadily in line with the economy, as illustrated in Figure 1. By September 2017, construction was the second-highest earning sector in the UK, with average earnings of £610 per week (ons.gov.uk, 2017).
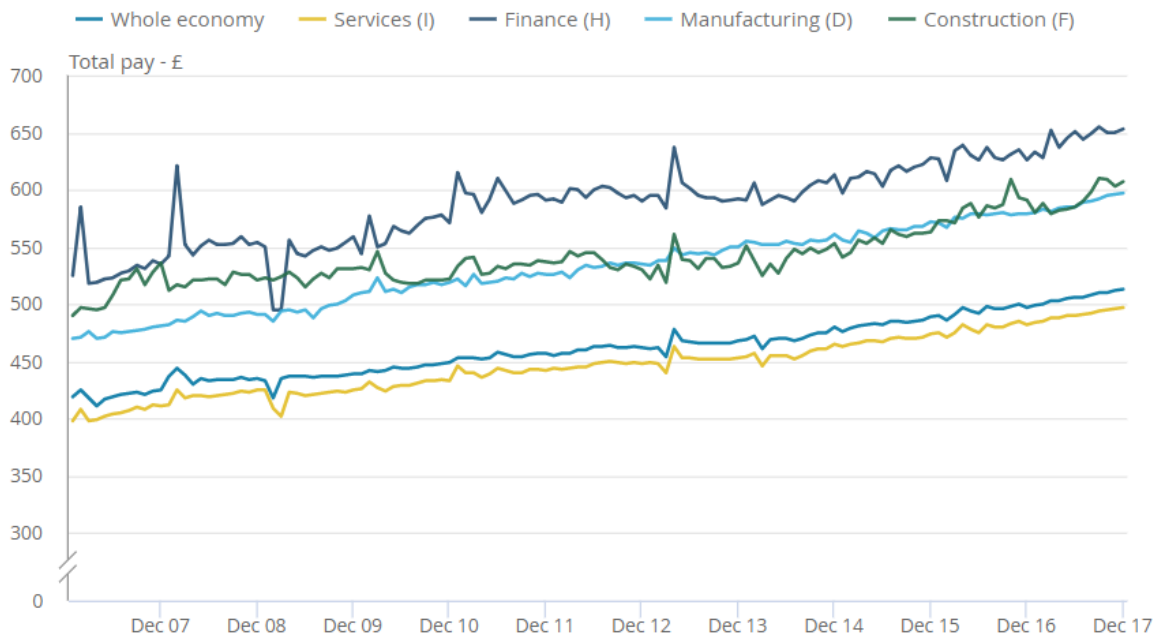
Figure 1: Average weekly earnings by sector – total pay (£), 2007 to 2017 (ons.gov.uk, 2017)

The pressures around work life balance within the industry are related to the type of working culture specific to construction which includes long hours, time pressures and significant periods away from home. With regards to opportunities for progression, the diversity of skills and businesses within the industry are a challenge. There are a wide range of skills sets, as The Department of Business Innovations and Skills infographic (gov.uk, 2013) demonstrates in Figure 2. Construction is also a fragmented industry, with over 37% of the workforce being self-employed, when the national average is 13% (Rhodes, 2018).
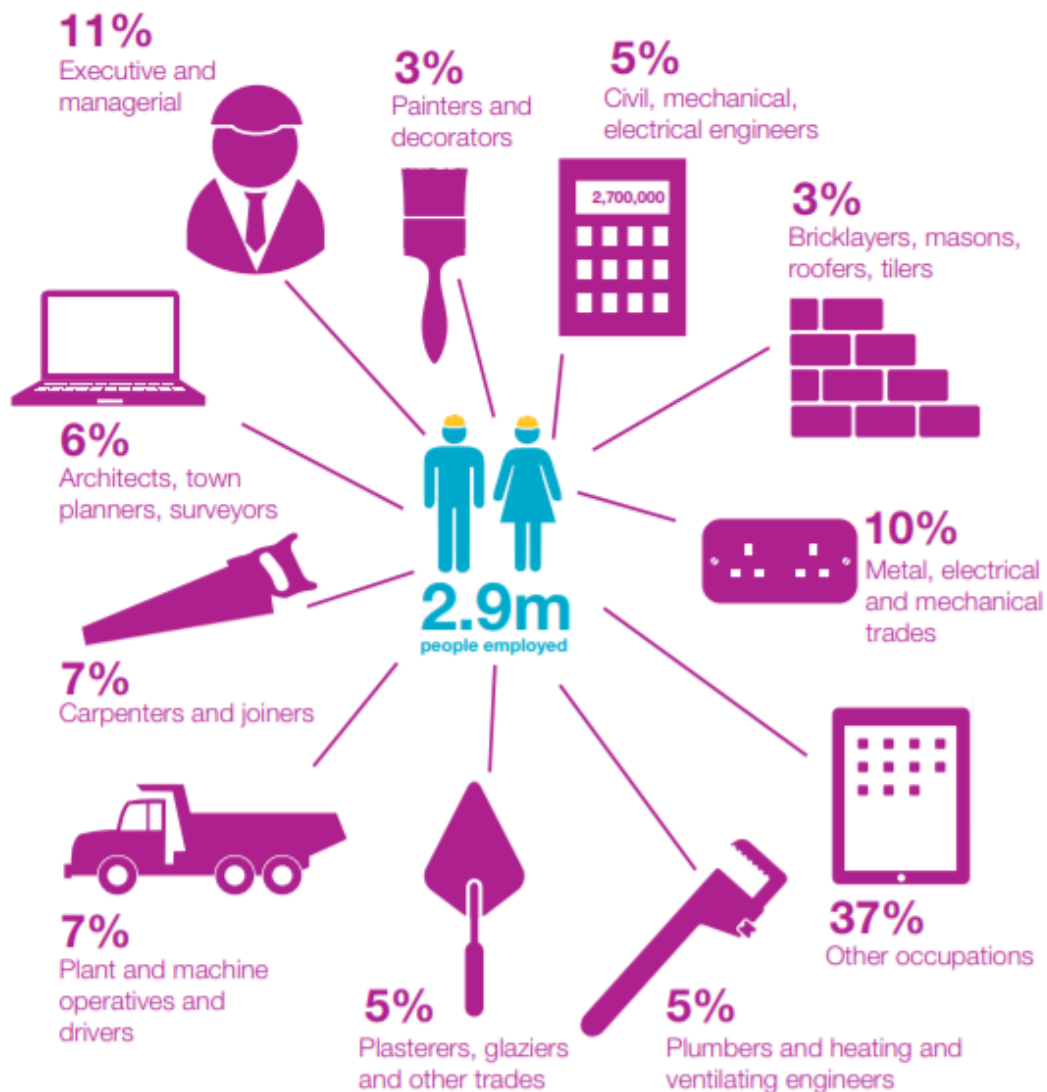
Figure 2: Infographic of skills sets within the industry (GOV.UK, 2013)

3.1.2 Knowledge, Tools and Awareness

As part of the *Thriving at Work* 10-year vision, it is recommended that companies also need to look at how they can up-skill their workforce with knowledge and tools, in order to create awareness.

In the construction industry, workforces of larger companies are usually given regular toolbox talks; these are short presentations, each one on a specific area of health and safety in order to raise awareness around that issue. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provide a selection of toolbox talks for employers in the construction industry to utilise, but currently none of these focus on mental health or wellbeing specifically.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) provides a downloadable toolbox talk based on the Equality Act 2010, which touches on the HSE stress indicators mentioned earlier in the report, a link to this talk can be found in Appendix D.

In May 2018, Building Mental Health, published a 45-minute Tool Box Talk on Mental Health Awareness in partnership with the Lighthouse Club, Mace, LendLease and the CITB, a link for this can be found in Appendix D.

3.2 Mental Health Core Standards

Further to the *Thriving at Work* proposal of the 10-year vision, the review also provides a more broken-down recommendation of a framework set of actions known as the 'mental health core standards'. These outline basic requirements that they recommend employers fulfil and have been written so that they can be adopted and applied to a variety of industries, and crucially require little to no cost to implement.

The proposed mental health core standards are summarised below;

Proposed Standard	Summary of Requirement
Creation of a Mental Health at Work Plan	A document outlining the approach by a company to protect the mental health of employees, promote good mental health for all staff and to encourage an open organisational culture.
Develop mental health awareness	Make information, tools and support available to employees.
Encourage open conversations	About mental health and support available for those who are struggling; ensuring this support is followed through on, including when struggling employees return to work.
Provide 'Good Work' Conditions	These include a good work life balance and opportunities for development, good pay, job security and education/training opportunities.
Effective people management	Ensuring employees are provided with the opportunity to discuss their health and wellbeing with line managers, who have been trained to be able to provide support.
Monitoring mental health	Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing by measuring results through a variety of tools including sickness absence data, staff surveys and mood trackers.

4.0 Review of Construction News Survey

4.1 Construction News Survey 2017

Construction News is a provider of industry news which available in a variety of forms, most predominately a magazine and a website. In 2017, they undertook their first survey on mental health in the construction industry. A total of 1139 people took part, answering questions on a range of topics around mental health (Construction News, 2017a). The survey highlighted that construction industry statistics are predominately worse than the national average in many areas, which is thought to reflect the working patterns and the staff demographic within the industry (Construction News, 2017b).

The survey identified some key statistics within the industry, such as finding that 55% of people have experienced a mental health issue and 42% have experienced issues at their current place of work; which is more than double the national average (Alderson, 2017). It identified that nearly one third of people have taken time off due to mental health issues, with only three-fifths telling their manager that this was the reason. Other findings of the survey are illustrated in figures 3 and 4.
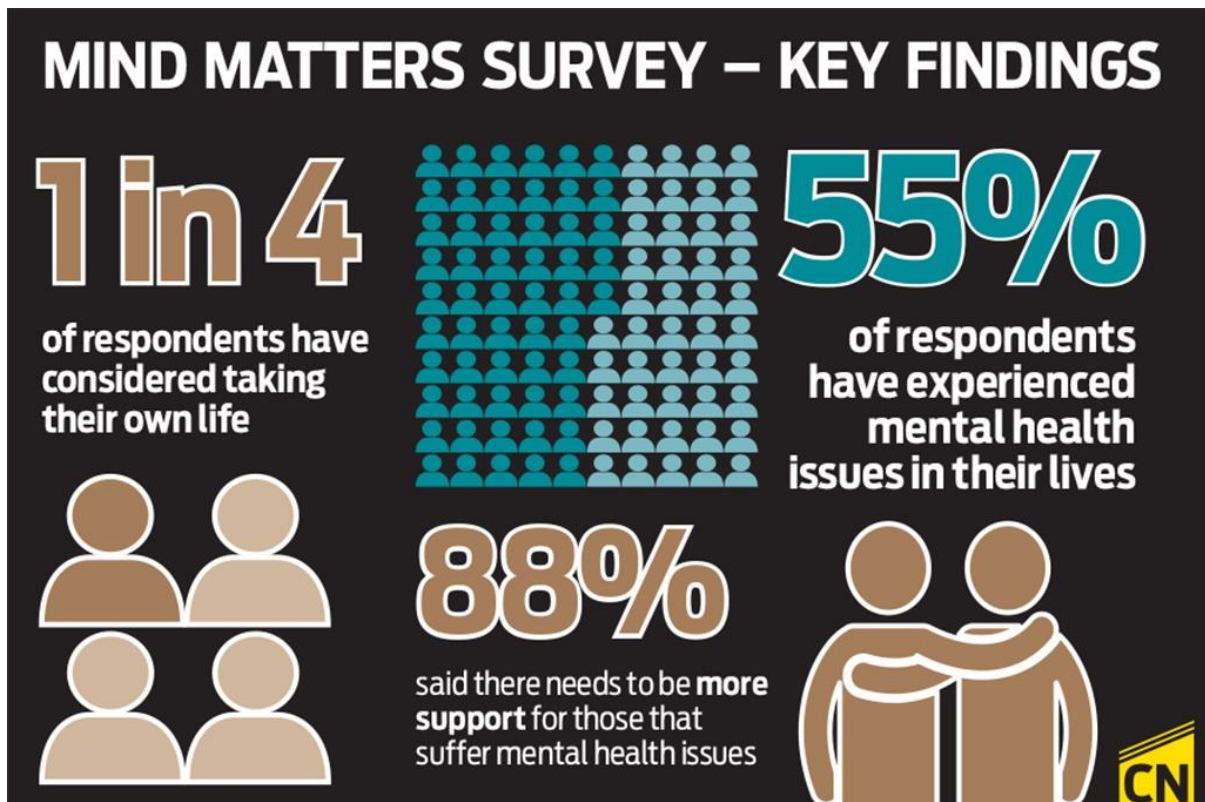
Figure 3: Infographic of key survey findings 2017 (Construction News, 2017b)

Results highlighted that mental health issues are also subject to a level of stigma. This is thought to be because they cannot be seen in the way that physical issues can, which represents a lack of awareness and knowledge (Construction News, 2017b). The survey revealed that a quarter of people have thought of taking their own life, rising to one in three for junior or graduate-level employees. In addition, 14% said they have lost a colleague to suicide and over 90% said they did not or would not turn to their employer for support (Alderson, 2018).

4.2 Mind Matters Campaign
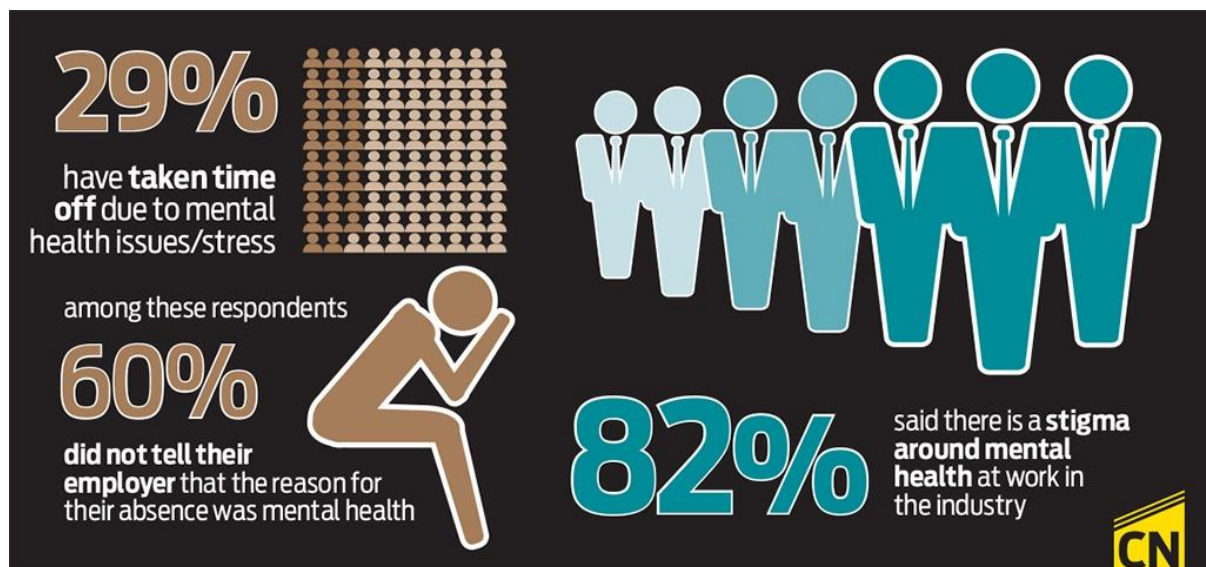
Figure 4: Infographic of further survey findings 2017 (Construction News, 2017b)

The Construction News survey marked the launch of the Construction News Mind Matters Campaign which aims to encourage the industry to take mental health more seriously and pledge to make a difference. The campaign has several main aims including identifying the scale of mental health issues within the construction industry and providing a dedicated online hub with news, analysis, advice and contacts. There is an additional focus within the campaign on the commercial impact employees with poor mental health may have on the business.

The campaign worked with the Health in Construction Leadership Group and the Mates in Mind programme, to try to improve mental health awareness and training through a collaborative approach. Together they aim to obtain support from construction leaders and companies who could pledge one or more actions they would take to support mental health awareness among their colleagues and employees. Whilst this pledge allowed the Mind Matters campaign to monitor the impact of their work, it would also give employers accountability for their actions.

4.3 Construction News Survey 2018

A year on from the launch of the Mind Matters campaign, Construction News undertook a second survey to assess the impact of their work so far. The statistics presented by the new survey were fairly similar to those of the previous year, indicating that the same problems are continuing to exist (Alderson, L. 2018).

Statistics from the 2018 survey, illustrated in figure 5, highlight the scale of the issue within construction, with the statistics being similar to those from last year. However, they found that 67% of people feel that support has improved over the last year. More companies are making commitments towards improving mental health, such as Skanska including training within graduate schemes and the CITB helping to fund training for 2500 mental health first aiders by 2020 (Alderson, L. 2018)
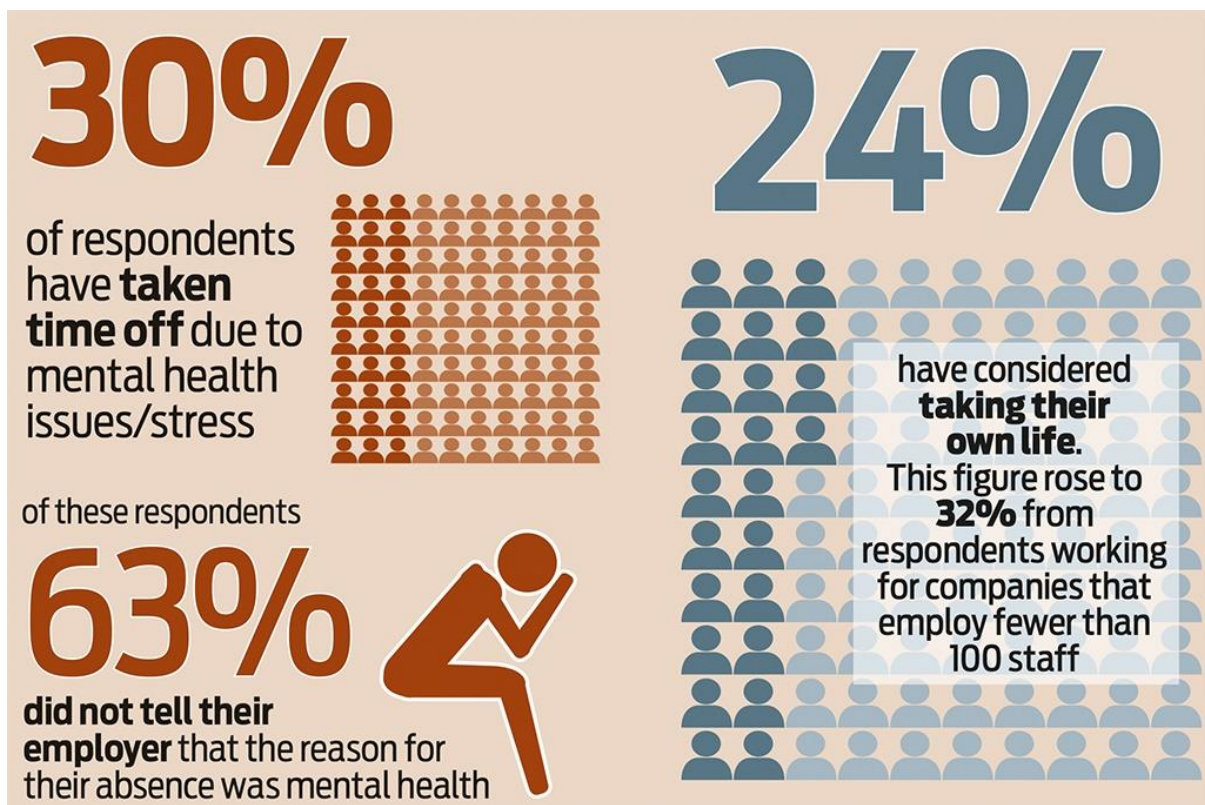
Figure 5: Infographic of survey findings 2018 (Alderson, L. 2018)

The survey was able to identify the number of people experiencing mental health issues is higher in smaller companies. In these businesses 65% of people have experienced mental health issues, compared to 57% overall (Alderson, 2018a). Several reasons for this were suggested by people who took part in the survey, including having to chase payments and failing to cope with the pressures faced in delivering projects. Others acknowledged other reasons such as working away from home, not being paid the agreed amount or

working unpaid overtime to meet deadlines. Further to this it was found that there are perceived added stresses from zero-hour contract, uncertainty of workflow and unfavourable working condition (Alderson, 2018).

The survey also sought to again assess the perceived stigma, as it is thought men are less likely to discuss issues or seek support; it was found that 81% of those surveyed agreed that there is still a stigma. The survey found the number of people taking time off work due to stress or mental health had slightly increased over the last year, but the number of people who considered taking their own life marginally decreased, as illustrated in figure 6. However, the graph also illustrates that there is little change between 2017 and 2018 figures, despite an increase in efforts to raise awareness and address issues.

Mental health survey: 2017 vs 2018
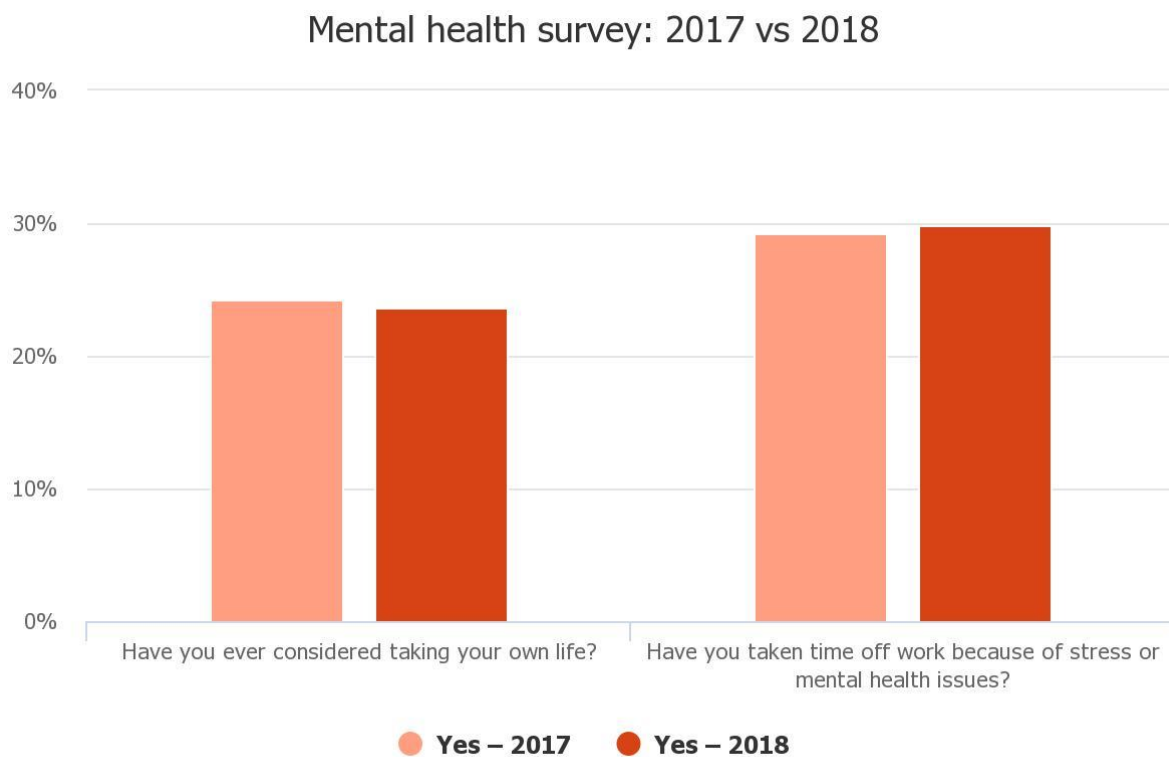
Figure 6: Comparative of 2017 and 2018 survey results (Alderson, L. 2018)

5.0 Review of Health and Safety Guidance and Legal Duties

5.1 Legal Duties

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires an employer to take measures to control risk. Mental health hazards should be identified and managed in the same way as physical health (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974). If a company has five or more employees, they are required by law to write the risk assessment down; a risk assessment should help identify, evaluate, communicate and manage risks within a business.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require all employers to conduct risk assessments to identify hazards in the workplace, including risks to physical and mental health (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999). Often though, employers only focus on physical risks, the reason for this is not clear, it may be because there is a lack of understanding around mental health and the risks or causes of poor mental health.

The Equality Act 2010 protects a person from discrimination or unfair treatment because they have a certain characteristic, known as a 'protected characteristic'. One of these characteristics is disability; under the Equality Act a person is classified as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Equality Act 2010). The employer has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure any disadvantages because of the disability are reduced; with regards to mental health these could include flexible working, a role change or access to counselling (Rethink.org, 2019).

5.2 The Health and Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the government agency responsible for the regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare. On their website, they have provided a set of 'management standards' which highlight risks in the work environment which are linked to stress. Work-related stress can lead to poor mental health or worsen an existing mental health problem (Health and Safety Executive, 2018b).

These management standards seek to assist companies in creating a system of good practice and culture, through assessing their current work situation. This assessment is done by identifying the main risk factors, helping employers focus on underlying causes and assisting with tools on how to monitor progress

as a result of action taken. Monitoring results is crucial to understand whether the actions being undertaken by a business are effective in achieving the desired results, as recommended by *Thriving at Work*.

The proposed management standards also seek to promote discussions with employers and employees to ensure the solutions proposed are practical, this discussion can help to create an open and honest work environment.

5.2.1 Management Standards

The HSE Management Standards have been categorised into six key headings:

- o *Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment*
- o *Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work i.e. creating a sense of autonomy*
- o *Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues*
- o *Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour such and abuse or bulling*
- o *Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles*
- o *Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated to employees effectively*

(Health and Safety Executive, 2018c)

These management standards can be compared to the points raised by *Thriving at Work* in highlighting that a sense of autonomy, good people management and open conversations at work can all contribute to managing, reducing and even preventing mental health problems.

Undertaking a risk assessment allows a business to identify areas where they are addressing risks well and where improvement is required. Examples of the risk assessments are available on the HSE website for a variety of business sizes, but it is important to ensure the risks are specific to each business.

5.2.2 Health Risks in Construction

The HSE also provides detailed information on health risks in construction; whilst these appear to be focussed on physical health risks, such as cancer and hazardous substances, they can be applied to mental health too.

For example, the information draws attention to construction site environments; which can be varied and each present their own set of risks (Health and Safety Executive, 2018a). Some businesses are now placing more focus on off-site manufacture, this is for several reasons such as cost and programme related savings, but also for health and safety reasons. The option to reduce the physical time required on site can reduce the risk of accidents but also benefit employees' mental health by reducing stress of programme demands, likewise it means those working away from home are potentially doing so for shorter amounts of time.

Other risks highlighted include the dynamic nature of the work; whilst some employees can thrive on this type of work, others may find the constantly changing environment, through the impact from other trades, unsettling and exhausting. The nature of employment in construction is also considered; many workers are either self-employed, work for small companies, work away from home or frequently change employers which create constant uncertainty around employment security.

The HSE guidance highlights that failure to assess and address site and project risks can have several consequences in relation to the cost to a business. There is a financial cost; poor management can lead to high staff turnover and a failure to retain experienced and skilled workers (Health and Safety Executive, 2018a). Poor mental health because of poor management can also lead to symptoms such as presenteeism which affects productivity at work and a business's output.

However, the human costs are equally as detrimental; any level of illness means someone is suffering unnecessarily, which affects not only them but their friends and family too (Health and Safety Executive, 2018a). There is also a reputational cost to consider; harsh working environments can deter high skilled employees from seeking recruitment with a business. Clients are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of social value within projects, they are now putting increased leverage on this meaning companies with a stronger agenda are more likely to win work.

6.0 The Cost of Occupational Ill Health

6.1 Deloitte Statistics

Earlier in this report, it was noted that *Thriving at Work* highlighted the costs of poor mental health on employers, with the financial cost alone being between £33billion to £42billion annually and half of that being generated through presenteeism (Deloitte MCS Limited, 2017). This statistic was discovered through a study by Deloitte, which was commissioned specifically for the Stephenson Farmer review. They also identified that whilst the average number of sickness absence days is decreasing overall, absence due to mental health conditions is increasing (Deloitte MCS Limited, 2017. P7).

One of the aims of this additional study was to highlight the business case for investment into employee's mental health; sighting that the biggest losses were through the cost of absence, presenteeism and turnover. The statistics highlighted that the cost of mental health related absence is around £7.9bn, the cost of mental health related presenteeism is £16.8-26.4bn and the cost of mental health related turnover is £7.9bn (Deloitte MCS Limited, 2017). Although this figure refers to the UK economy as a whole, including both private and public sectors, not just the construction industry.

Based on the government estimation that 6.8% of all jobs are in the construction industry (Rhodes, 2018), it can be estimated that based on the Deloitte figures, the cost on mental health related illnesses to the construction industry alone is £2.25 billion to £2.86 billion, with £544m of that related directly to absence costs alone. Overall, based on the figure of 2.4m employees in construction (Rhodes, 2018), the cost to employers can be estimated at around £933 to £1191 per employee. That is per employee in the business, not per employee with a mental health issue.

6.2 Institute of Civil Engineers Statistics

In February 2018, the Institute of Civil Engineers published the report '*The Cost of Occupational Ill Health in Construction*'. In their report, occupational ill health was considered to be ill health caused by or made worse by work (Gibbs, A., Drake, C. & Jones, W., 2018, p1).

It estimated that the financial cost to employers was £848m per annum, further information on how this cost was calculated can be found in the original report, but it is suggested that this figure is a substantial underestimation (Gibbs, A., Drake, C. & Jones, W., 2018, p2). This cost is made up of a variety of both physical and mental issues, as illustrated in figure 7. Stress is estimated to be the

second largest contributor, costing employers £178m per annum; of this £178m, 98% is direct cost to labour including sick pay, overtime, presenteeism and lodgings (Gibbs, A., Drake, C. & Jones, W., 2018)

Occupational ill-health in construction
Employer costs £848M p.a.
Excluding cancers, fines, compensation, legal costs, loss of reputation and loss of future work
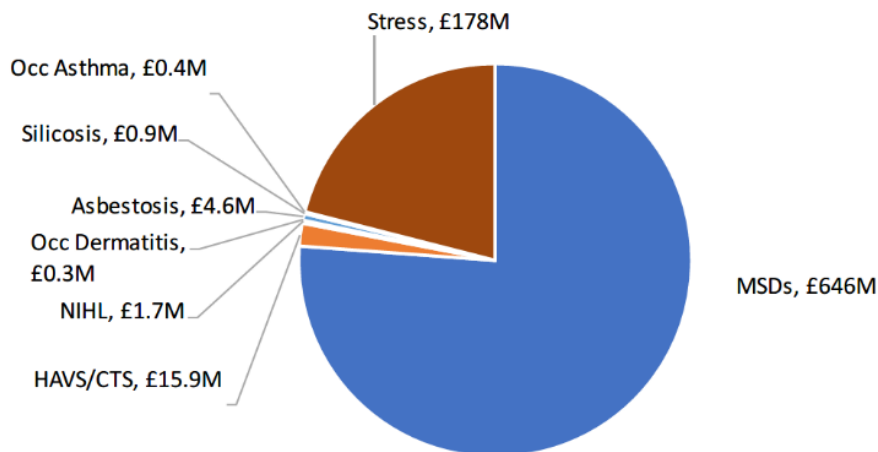
Key

MSDs	Musculoskeletal disorders	**Asbestosis**	Asbestosis
HAVS/CTS	Hand-arm vibration syndrome / Carpal tunnel syndrome	**Silicosis**	Silicosis
NIHL	Noise induced hearing loss	**Occ Asthma**	Occupational Asthma
Occ Dermatitis	Occupational dermatitis	**Stress**	Stress-related ill-health

Figure 7: Employer costs of occupational ill -health in construction (Gibbs, A., Drake, C. & Jones, W., 2018)

6.3 Other Costs to be Considered

Both sets of figures from Deloitte and ICE have been calculated on their own merits and equally highlight that the cost is not insignificant. However, costs discussed above are the financial costs to UK businesses.

The impact of poor mental health can be wide ranging, it affects a person's well-being, causing loss of sleep, panic attacks, difficultly concentrating and withdrawal from social situations (Stevenson, L. and Farmer, P. 2017. P23). These symptoms may have further negative effects on close friends and family's due to irritability, lack of energy, low mood and less interest in day to day activities. This can lead to the creation of a distance between those who are struggling and their support networks (Stevenson, L. and Farmer, P. 2017). At the end of scale, without the correct support through work, friends and family, or externally, significant mental health problems can lead to suicide.

7.0 Access to support

With mental health awareness increasing, both employers and employees are looking for more information, advice and guidance. There are a range of resources available online, however it can be challenging for those seeking help to know where to begin looking and which advice is most reliable. Support can be found through a variety of sources such as the NHS, mental health charities and employee assistance programmes.

It was advised, by the *Thriving at Work* Review, that industry groups, professional and regulatory bodies help with the implementation of mental health support at work (Stevenson, L. and Farmer, P. 2017. P41). These bodies which register or accredit qualifications should provide guidance, training and assessments to promote the mental health and wellbeing of their members. The CIOB have recently begun to support such initiatives through MIND and Building Mental Health, however this is not yet a direct requirement of their accreditation standards.

Employee assistance programmes are employer-funded schemes that allow employees to access independent advice, tools and guidance on a variety of professional and personal issues; on a completely confidential basis. They are available from a range of companies, such as AXA, CiC and Lifeworks; with varying levels of support and costs to the employer. Support can include 24/7 on call advisors, face to face counselling and access to online tools and resources.

There are also several charities which are able to provide assistance and guidance, the majority of which is free to access. Many charities also offer assistance to companies for a small contribution, this may not be a possibility for some SME's, but the investment in tailored advice could outweigh the cost of poor mental health a business experiences. This report is going to review on two of these charities to gain an understanding of the free support available with Mind and Mates in Mind.

7.1 Mind

Mind is one of the UK's leading mental health charities; it was established in 1946 as the National Association for Mental Health, before changing to Mind in 1972. Although not focussed specifically on the construction industry, they provide a range of advice suited to a variety of mental health issues and situations.

The website is clearly presented with a section offering information on the types of mental health problems including common symptoms. They provide explanations and guidance on how to address poor mental health or where to seek further help; whilst also offering advice on a variety of issues surrounding mental health including discrimination and legal rights.

Mind have been part of several mental health campaigns including Time to Change and Heads Together. These aim to bring awareness of mental health to the wider public and address the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health. Time to Change was established in 2007 through a partnership of Mine and Rethink Mental Illness. It reports that between 2008 and 2016 their surveys showed a 9.6% positive change in attitudes towards mental health (Time to Change, 2019). They also found that average levels of reported discrimination fell from 41.6% to 28.4% between 2008 and 2014; with some of the biggest reductions coming from the changed behaviour of family and friends (Time to Change, 2019).

Mind also provide a dedicated section on Mental Health at work, with information and resources for both employers and employees. According to Mind, 56 % of employers said they would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing but don't feel they have the right training or guidance (Mind, 2018) therefore these resources address an area of concern for companies which revolves around a perceived lack of knowledge. The downloadable resources provided by Mind provide the foundations for campaigns and support to all should further assistance be required, including toolkits specifically focussed at small businesses and examples of Wellness Action Plans.

7.2 Mates in Mind

Mates in Mind (MiM) is a mental health charity which aims to raise awareness and address the stigma of poor mental health specifically in the construction industry (Mates in Mind 2018). The charity was formed in September 2016 but officially launched in January 2017 and was set up by the Health in Construction Leadership Group and the British Safety Council. It also works closely with other charities including Mind, Samaritans and Mental Health First Aid England.

Their aim is to provide a collective, single point of resource for advice and guidance on mental health, by 2025 they aim to have reached 75% of the construction industry (Mates in Mind 2018). One of the main focuses of MiM is the high suicide rate within the construction industry, research suggests that in

the construction sector, people could be 10 times more likely to die by suicide than from on-site accidents (Matesinmind.org, 2018).

The Mates in Mind website, much like Mind, provide resources and guidance for managing mental health at work and addressing stress. It provides framework guidance which allows each individual business to tailor an approach to suit their company culture; however, this costs a small fee. There is also an excess of free resources available on the site to be utilised. The website has two key sections titled 'Tools for Workers' and 'Tools for Organisations', these provide overall guidance with many links to external sources for further information and campaign resources.

7.3 Other Resources

There are many other free resources available online including information from Health in Construction and Building Mental Health. Business can direct employees and managers to these tools online to access support and information, either for themselves or a colleague.

Construction Industry Helpline have created a free app of the same name which allows individuals to undertake a self-assessment, access information or tools and provides links to further support if required.
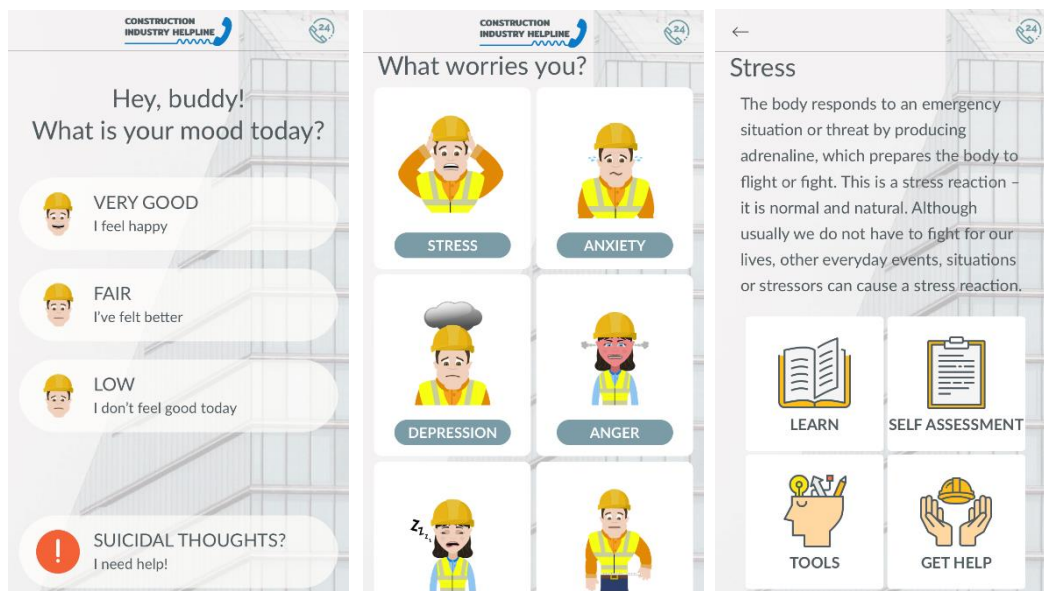

Figure 8 Screenshots from Construction Industry Helpline App

8.0 Discussions with Industry Employees

These discussions were approached as informal conversations rather than interviews. An outline of the questions used in these discussions can be found in Appendix B, and were based on the six framework actions proposed by *Thriving at Work*. The aim of each conversation was to understand the current approach to managing mental health, from of a variety of business types and sizes; and to determine how these aligned with research to date. Conversations were conducted on a one to one basis with four different people, from various types of businesses.

8.1 Small Specialist Consultant

For anonymity, this interviewee, who is the director and owner of the business, will be referred to as SSC form this point forward.

As a small business with fewer than ten employees and only one director, SSC felt largely overlooked when companies are offered support, as they usually feel too small to follow the guidance; however, they did also admit that mental health is less of a priority due to a lack of personal time and their own awareness of available information.

SSC's own personal cognizance and knowledge of staff on a personal level has previously allowed them to spot early signs of stress and poor mental health in some employees, but no level training has been provided directly to the staff. On reflection, this was thought to be down to a lack of knowledge leading to a level of avoidance; for example, if awareness amongst staff was raised and as a result someone came forward with an issue, SSC felt that they would not be confident of the appropriate next steps needed to address the issue. Equally, for example, if an employee took a break due to stress, when they returned to work there would be no back to work meeting or follow up due to SSC's uncertainty of how to approach the conversation including the correct language and follow up actions. Within the business, there are no formal systems or processes around mental health due to the business growing organically, but projects are reviewed at completion and long hours, sickness etc are taken note of by SSC.

SSC suggested that open conversations between employers and employees may be difficult because of a perceived stigma around mental health and the fear of repercussions; including within their own business, despite the close working relationships within this small company. As a leader, SSC is aware they need to make it clearer that open conversations or an employee admitting they are having issues are acceptable.

One challenge for a smaller business, in SSC's opinion, is the personal learning curve of the director or managers, which begins with learning how to raise awareness and start the conversation around mental health within their business. To begin with, the SSC identified that they would need to make an active effort to educate themselves and source information or resources, before distributing information to the wider team. As an additional challenge; the staff within this company work from home remotely, so they would require further information on how to ensure staff are looking after their own wellbeing in an isolated environment.

SSC identified that perceived barriers in the construction industry include the 'banter' culture and the need to 'soldier on'; with employees feeling the need to be at work and seen as being present. A positive of smaller businesses such as SSC's is the opportunity to know staff on a personal level; the regular interaction and opportunity to recognise when someone's acting differently which could suggest that they are perhaps struggling.

To summarise; this type of business is potentially one of the more difficult to support as they are largely independent and rely on the time, intuition and knowledge of the directors and managers. A key outcome of this discussion is that SSC is keen to raise awareness and support their staff but feel they do not have the knowledge or support currently. Whilst there are resources available online, for those who are just beginning to address mental health in the workplace, it can be confusing.

8.2 Small to Medium Contractor

For anonymity, these two interviewees, who are employees within the company, will be referred to as SMC form this point forward. The interview took place over the phone due to geographical distances.

The business recently recruited a new consultant to form an internal working group which would be focussed on mental health and wellbeing within the company. SMC's first action in this role was to develop an outline framework to gain backing from the company directors, before producing a detailed strategy which would include further advice from mental health industry experts. SMC suggested that the creation of this position within the company indicated that the management team are keen to review the business' current position and potentially look to implement some changes, but appreciated that they first need to understand actions involved and the benefits in the form of staff wellbeing, productivity and financial implications.

SMC suggested that company already promotes a good work life balance through encouraging standard working hours and already maintain a high a duty of care which includes regular meetings to assess employee satisfaction and development opportunities; but there is no specific mental health policy in place currently. SMC felt that an awareness or a conversation around mental health including causes and symptoms was not yet part of the company culture; as part of the new strategy they aim to improve this, as well as provide opportunities for training. Other future plans from SMC include potentially utilising health kiosks on site, providing free or discounted access to exercise classes and implementing healthy eat initiatives, such as Fruit Fridays.

When asked about anticipated barriers for this new strategy and the industry as a whole, SMC voiced reservations on how to implement a culture change amongst employees; it was appreciated that the new strategy needed to ensure employees from all levels are involved. They also anticipated the need for a continuous, almost relentless, approach to ensure people do not revert back to 'old habits'.

"Programme deadlines on construction sites, and old school mentality to work longer get more done, instead of work smarter and healthier and be more productive." – Anonymous

To summarise; the size of the business has enabled the company to invest resources to employ specifically for the purpose of improving mental health and wellbeing. The initial phase of identifying an outline framework prior to a full strategy is also providing opportunity for the company to gain director and managerial support. This middle phase could also include consultation with the wider workforce, as it has been identified by SMC that a key element of employee adoption of new work policies is their involvement in developing them.

8.3 Large Contractor/Consultant

For anonymity, this interviewee, who is a management level employee within the company, will be referred to as LCC form this point forward.

As a larger company, LCC appreciates there is an expectation that funding and resources are more readily available to assist with addressing mental health awareness and training staff. LCC has experience from working for two large construction companies in recent years. In their opinion one company

strives to raise awareness through various events including 'Lunch and Learn' and 'Step Up' days, where their project collective spends half a day discussing common issues, including mental health. This company also invests in training staff to be Mental Health Champions who are then more able to recognise symptoms of mental health and raise awareness on their individual projects.

LCC highlighted that the second company however has a different approach; it does offer training, but this is undertaken in addition to expected working hours. Therefore, it is not particularly popular, especially if the training is perceived to not help them to directly progress in their career, such as mental health awareness. The 'bonus culture' in this company is also driven by perceived productivity which LCC suggested could lead to a level of presenteeism within the work environment. Even with a certain level of training being provided, LCC felt that there is still not an open conversation culture within the work environment. There is also evidence to LCC of a lack of understanding; as mental health is not a physical symptom people are often thought of as 'faking it' if they call in sick, especially if they are seen to be fine at work in the days preceding these sick days.

In the construction industry, LCC observed that there is an expectation to work longer hours and quite often feels that projects are understaffed given the demanding programmes they are working to. As a manager, LCC is likely to start early to be in before their staff and then also stay until they leave; which can lead to over 50 hour long working weeks and a poor work life balance. LCC speculated that this is possibly because with the cost of hiring equipment longer than anticipated can cause the project to lose money; therefore, the quicker the work is complete, the less time the equipment is on hire.

Other barriers perceived by LCC within the industry include the bidding process for work; when bidding for a project there was traditionally emphasis on contractors being the cheapest or the fastest, but there has been a shift lately with clients placing more emphasis on the sustainability and social impact projects have. There is also a problem, in LCC's experience, for recruiting and retaining staff, particularly on infrastructure projects where the work is further away; this is due to the long commutes, extended working hours and working away from friends or family. LCC also commented that quite often larger projects are also joint-venture projects, meaning company cultures may be different and clash, or that managers potentially have less control over the working environment.

To summarise; there is a feeling that company's approach to mental health in the workplace is becoming more of a box ticking exercise given the emphasis

given to sustainability and social responsibility in work bidding. Whilst there is a drive for better wellbeing, this is not seen to be supported by the business, as managers are still under programme pressure and productivity outcomes. LCC feels that increased follow through and changes in company policies would better support these initiatives and gain employee buy in, leading to more successful culture changes.

8.4 Industry Group and Public-Sector Business

For anonymity, this interviewee, who is an employee within the company, will be referred to as PSB form this point forward. This company is involved in construction but only marginally, rather than being a supplier or contractor, they are more advisory, supporting the industry from an external source.

There is an understanding from PSB that employees are considered to be this company's best asset; therefore, staff have access to a variety of sources including life coaching or mentoring by the business. The company also promotes cycle to work schemes and encourages cycling or running clubs with work colleagues. PSB also feels that staff are also actively encouraged to take a lunch break away from their computers, desks and the office space.

This company does not have ambassadors as, in PSB's opinion, they have succeeded in creating a culture at work where everyone is actively aware of mental health and are continually supported; such as the production of regular newsletters which include information on mental health and wellbeing. There is an Organisational Development Team which lead workshops and staff training days, to ensure there is structure on the information being provided. Hard work and long hours, when necessary, are also rewarded with additional time off to ensure a positive work life balance. PSB understands that leadership teams fully support this culture and this is reflected in their company policy which treats stress and mental health as equals to physical health.

To summarise; other businesses have succeeded in creating a positive culture towards mental health through various means including internal support and resources, regular awareness drives and company policies reflecting company intentions.

9.0 Data Analysis

The concluding proposals of this research are intended to be based around the framework actions as proposed by the *Thriving at Work* Review. It was therefore necessary to collect information on the general perception of support currently available to employees in the construction industry, including any barriers they expect to meet.

An independent survey was launched in November 2018 for one week and was shared via email, Facebook, Linked In and Twitter. In total 132 people took part in providing responses, however it there was difficulty contacting site workers and SME's, as is reflected is the results of job types. This is thought to be for a few reasons such as site operatives not often having a work email address and SME's working more independently, if more time was available then increased efforts to target more individuals would have been beneficial. Below is a review of the information collected, more detailed results can be viewed in Appendix C.

9.1 Review of Survey Results

9.1.1 Mental Health at Work Plan

Out of those surveyed, 62 % said their company had a Mental Health at Work Plan (MHWP) which included mental health champions, first aiders and confidential call lines. In addition, it was found some companies provide confidential counselling and support for the employees' families, whilst others are providing mental health focussed emails to share information and useful contact details. Some of those surveyed felt that these plans within their companies are poorly communicated, especially through to the lower levels of the organisation and that some plans or incentives are not sufficient as they do not address the workplace culture.

No one who works for a micro to medium business said their employer has a MHWP, or if they did then they did not know about it. Whilst over 70 % of those in larger companies (over 250+ employers) were aware of their company's MHWP.

Some suggestions of actions which can be found in a MHWP were put forward to ascertain whether employers currently provided any individual elements already, the responses between overall figures and those from SME's specifically are compared below.

Suggested Action	Overall % Agree	SME % Agree
Improve and support physical activity	68%	25%
Encourage staff networks / social events	67&	50%
Have an open culture for mental health discussions	91%	19%
Regular reviews for wellbeing	34%	25%
Encourage healthy behaviours	59%	43%

The largest areas of differences between the overall responses and those of SME's specifically are around the perception of employers having an open culture for discussions around mental health and having a plan to support and improve physical activity, in both situations SME's are much lower.

9.1.2 Mental Health Awareness

Survey participants were asked whether their company or employers offered training or raised awareness in the following forms;

- o Training for line managers or employees
- o Toolbox talks
- o Emails/newsletters/campaigns
- o Online internal information or external support with self-help tools
- o Mental health champions or peer to peer support.

Just over 14 % of those surveyed said none of the suggestions were applicable to their place of work; over 75 % of micro to medium companies were perceived to not offer any of these. The most popular types of information offered were tool box talks, followed closely by campaigns and newsletters.

"I do know of colleagues that have had paid time off for depression but this is something I am too embarrassed to approach work with. Just getting on with it" - Anonymous

Comments in response to this question suggested employees felt the campaigns were not particularly effective, acting more as a tick box exercise, they also suggested that line managers are not as well supported as they could be to help deal with mental health awareness. There were concerns raised

about how the support is available for weekly paid staff and whether it is easily accessible.

9.1.3 Open Conversations

Whilst the perception of whether people feel open discussions are encouraged is largely subjective, there are some suggestions of how to create an environment for these conversations such as the creation of support groups or forums; a third of those surveyed felt these were provided. Over 40 % were aware of their sick leave entitlements if they were experiencing mental health problems, and over 50 % felt there was an option for adjustments to manage their mental health issues, such as time off for appointments.

"Personally, I prefer not to talk about it as it gets me down. I like to stay positive and in a positive environment I'm OK. Some things should be kept personal and professional"
– Anonymous

9.1.4 Good Work Conditions

It is recommended by the Stephenson Farmer Review (2017) that employees are provided with good work conditions; which include suggestions such as a good work life balance and opportunities for development.

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not well and 5 being really well, participants were asked to score how well they felt their employer provided good work conditions through the following examples;

Examples of Good Work	Total Score	Avg. All	Avg. SME
Promote fair pay	455	3.45	3.44
Provide job security	471	3.57	3.69
Provide good working conditions	479	3.63	3.50
Offer education and training	514	3.89	3.19
Undertake staff consultation and representation	406	3.08	2.88
Creates a sense of autonomy	405	3.07	2.87

Table 1: Scores for Examples of Good Work
Total score is out of 660.
Avg. All – Average score per person from 132 participants
Avg. SME – Average score per person from those in SME's

The opportunity for education and training scored most highly suggesting that employee development is are being invested in by the business. The lowest scoring examples were whether employers undertook staff consultation or created a sense of autonomy. The average scores are also reflected in the micro to medium sized businesses (SME's) showing that these scores reflect the whole industry fairly well.

9.1.5 Effective People Management

Providing employees with the opportunity to discuss their health and wellbeing with line managers has been identified by the *Thriving at Work* Review (2017) as one of the core standards. This includes managers providing support through various forms including opportunities for feedback, performance reviews and training opportunities. When asked to score these suggestions from 1 to 5, the majority scored an average between 3.1 and 3.6, highlighting an issue within the industry.

9.1.6 Monitoring Results

"Working on the culture to support mental health issues, some office bases or site locations are good at working on the environment and culture but others are not, they can take a very old school presenteeism approach to work (have to be seen to be working). I don't feel this supports mental wellbeing or productivity of the workforce" – Anonymous

In order to track staff wellbeing and identify improvements to employee's mental health and wellbeing; results can be measured through a variety of tools including sickness absence data, staff surveys and mood trackers. Only 42 % of participants said their company did this through surveys, such as the Wellbeing Index and Mind's annual survey. However, concerns were raised by some of those surveyed that the monitoring processes are focussed on desk based and monthly paid employees.

"Creating and promoting a healthy work life balance, through recovery, renewal and reflection is absolutely critical. It also carries with it a side benefit or increased productivity. We are still in the dark ages in construction, particularly on the contracting front with respect of mental health awareness - I would consider this issue a 'sleeping giant' within our industry" – Anonymous

9.2 Further Questions

9.2.1 Participant Views of Beneficial Actions

Question: From the suggestions in the previous questions of this survey; what action do you think would benefit you and your mental health most?

Figure 9: Pie chart indicating suggestions from survey participants grouped into similar categories

Key	Category	Examples
1	Better Wellbeing Support at work	Improved working environments, access to healthy food/gyms, longer breaks, opportunity to exercise at lunch or before/after work
2	Formal Structure or Plan from Employer	Clear steps or processes, regular opportunities to address issues, clearly communicated plans with opportunities for input and engagement
3	Active Forums	Open and safe spaces, online support and tools, opportunity for anonymous discussions and support
4	Feedback from Managers	More regular good and bad feedback, off the record discussions, opportunities to discuss wellbeing or issues
5	Awareness and Education	On issues, symptoms, stress management, improved lifestyles, support available
6	Culture Shift	Open and honest, clear support, regular conversations, presenteeism, reduce stigma and fear, management style changes
7	Support - Professional, Mentor, Peer to Peer	Access to life coaches, counselling, doctors, formal support, mental health champions, discussion groups
8	Flexible Working / Work Life Balance	Option for extra holidays, flexibility for parents, appropriate shifts, work from home, mental health days, lieu days for overtime, autonomy at work

9.2.2 Participant Views of Perceived Barriers

Question: Based on your suggestion in the last questions, if your company/employer was to implement this (or any of the other suggestions) what barriers do you see them coming up against?
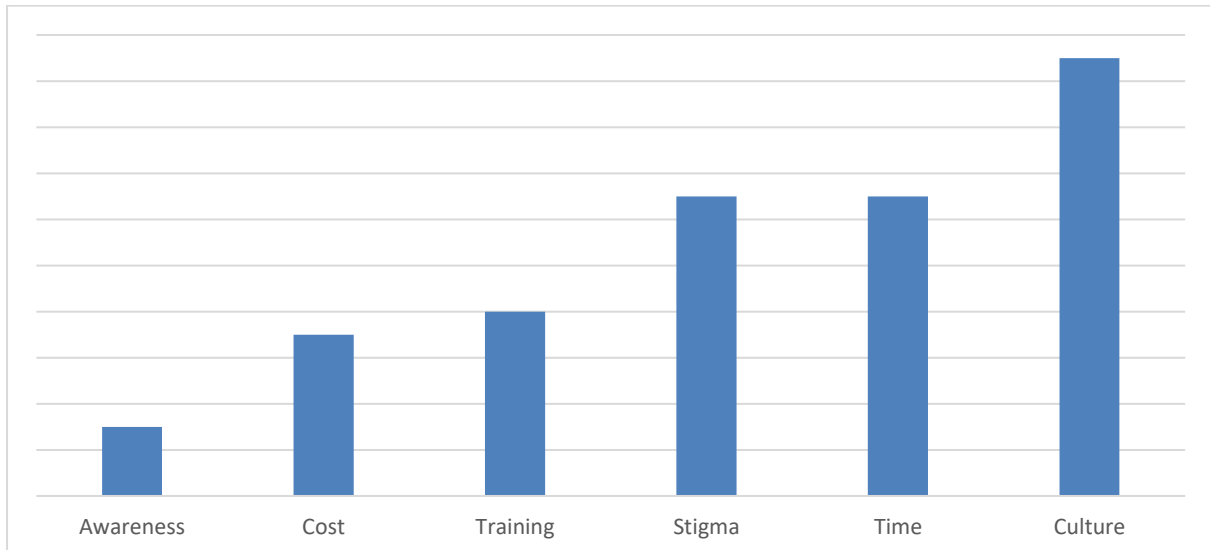

Figure 10: Bar graph illustrating perceived barriers in broad categories

Category	Examples
Awareness	Knowing and recognising issues, addressing existing preconceptions, releasing information and statistics to create knowledge
Cost	Assigning a value to benefits, implications of staff being off site for counselling / training, address tenders/bids being awarded to lowest tender, understanding how flexible hours impact productivity
Training	Of line managers, knowing how to manage different types of employees and address specific issues, understanding issues which cause stress etc
Stigma	Buy in from employees to benefits, working within male dominated industry, employers being open and supportive, fear of repercussions i.e. loss of job
Time	Finding time between long working days, working with tight construction programmes, availability to take time off work, time taken to educate managers to implement changes
Culture	Active engagement from employees, fast turnovers and staff shortages affect ability to train all staff, old school mentality, address attitudes across industry as a whole, lack of trust or innovation

9.2.3 Personal Experiences

Question: Do you have any stories/experiences/observations about mental health or your place of work that you would like to share?

This question in the survey was an open-ended question, allowing people to share personal experiences or observations. The anonymity of the survey allowed people to be open, providing a personal insight into the industry. For this section, extracts will be taken to provoke thoughts rather than assessed as part of the report.

"In 2016 a member of my team lost his life to mental health, whilst the immediate team was devastated the organisation didn't appear to learn anything. The terrible culture of long hours and unnecessary stress continued on the project."

"I had CBT with MIND and it really helped me get through a tough year and learn how to manage my anxiety am now a mental health first aider and try to support others as best I can"

"Every time I have been off with depression when I return everyone ignores the fact that I've been off. So, no one asks if I'm ok or better. Also, now being made redundant after maternity leave and can't help but feel that my mental health issue was a factor for selection. Sad but true."

"As the project moves on my role has transformed. The skills required are not those that I was originally hired for. since then I have had none or little mentoring or coaching. My immediate line manager is not available to provide support or direction. It becomes harder to motivate myself without some direction from my superior. This creates anxiety and doubt over my job security which then motivates me to look for other opportunities away from the company."

10.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 Conclusion

The emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of a person, known as their mental health, can range from good to poor, much like physical health can. In construction specifically, there is a significant issue with poor mental health; with males working in the construction industry being three times more likely to commit suicide than in any other industry.

The mental health challenge within the construction industry has been recognised through an in-depth literature review consisting of advice from the government, health and safety bodies and industry specific news or research.

Common causes of poor mental health have been identified, with specific focus on those typically experienced within the industry including stress, long working hours and job insecurity. Another factor which has been discussed is the stigma around mental health and the culture within the industry. Meaning those struggling with issues outside of work such as bereavement, drug and alcohol misuse or trauma may not feel supported at work due to the absence of opportunities to talk about problems or the perceived lack of support, therefore their mental health may decline as a result, putting additional pressure on society's resources.

In October 2017, the government published the 'Thriving at Work' review which investigated poor mental health within the work environment. This again identified the construction industry as one of the worst industries regarding the mental health of employees. The review proposed a framework set of actions, known as the mental health core standards, for all industries and employers to look to adopt in order to achieve a 10-year vision for improved mental health in UK workplaces.

Employers have a duty of care regarding the health, safety and wellbeing, including mental wellbeing of all employees as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The HSE provides further guidance on how to identify causes of poor mental health and address these issues through risk assessments.

A survey conducted as part of the Mind Matters campaign identified the scale of the issue of poor mental health, with 55% of people having experienced a mental health issue in their lives and 1 in 4 people considering taking their own lives. Research into current support initiatives and campaigns, especially those which are focussed on construction, has highlighted industry specific figures to

support the argument that investment into employees' mental health is not only of benefit to individuals, but to the businesses as a whole.

Employees with poor mental health can impact the wider workplace through higher rates of absenteeism, low productivity and higher staff turnovers. Other external research estimated the financial cost of mental health related illnesses to the construction industry alone to be £2.24 billion to £2.86 billion, with £537m of that related directly to absence costs alone. When broken down, it was found out that the estimated cost to employers is estimated to be £933 to £1191, per employee, per year. There is also a cost to society through the impact poor mental health has on a person's wellbeing and that of their friends and family.

First hand interviews and surveys provided additional insight into the approach towards mental health of different companies. The views of those working directly within the industry presented possible causes, problems and barriers moving forward. Certain issues are faced by SME's specifically, such as knowledge of available resources, access to support and the requirements of cost and time investment to implement and sustain positive changes.

10.2 Recommendations

Based on the guidance given in the *Thriving at Work* Review and the research detailed within this report, guidance and recommendations are provided to enable businesses within the construction industry start to develop their own approach to managing mental health within the workplace.

These revolve around three main recommended activities:

1. **Undertake a risk assessment**
2. **Write and implement a 'Mental Health at Work' Plan**
3. **Provide and support positive working conditions**

One final task to these recommendations, will be to ensure the above activities are monitored to allow the business to understand the impact these initiatives are having and to identify areas of improvement.

1. Undertake a risk assessment

The first action businesses should undertake is a risk assessment, this will allow a company to review their current position and outline a clear set of areas where improvement is needed to protect the mental health of employees. Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress, by assessing and acting on risk factors. Main factors or hazards can be recognised as part of this, and can be further used to identify the current cost poor mental health is having on a business.

For those who are new to this type of risk assessment, the HSE provide templates for a variety of business sizes, as well as guidance on how to identify risks related to stress. They have categorised these into six main headings; demands, control, support, relationships, role, change. Links to the resources can be found in Appendix D Further Resources.

Following this exercise, a business can build a case, if required, for company, board or manager buy in and then look to develop a more detailed action plan or a MHWP.

2. Mental Health at Work Plan

The second step businesses should be taking is to create and implement a Mental Health at Work Plan (MHWP). This will seek to raise awareness, promote good mental health for all staff and to encourage an open organisational culture, ideally the plan will be developed collaboratively with employees. This plan should identify overall objectives for the company and break these down

into smaller tasks such as training required, campaigns and support required to improve staff wellbeing. These objectives and tasks should address the risk factors previously highlighted by the risk assessment. The actions arising from a MHWP can be supported by charities and government initiatives, including posters, online support forums and staff training.

Guidance and templates for creating MHWP's are available online. Two examples are as follows:

o Time to Change Employer Pledge
  Time to Change ask employers to pledge actions to demonstrate their commitment to making a change within the workplace. They provide an action plan template which identifies key areas for activities of change. If the pledge is taken by a company, they will also provide feedback and support on their MHWP. A link to more information on this pledge is provided in Appendix D Further Resources.

o *Thriving at Work* Guidance
  Within the *Thriving at Work* review, Annexe A provides several links and guidance to writing a MHWP plan; one being the Business in the Community Mental Health Toolkit which is a comprehensive guide for small and medium business; a link to which can be found in Appendix D Further Resources. This toolkit provides a detailed level of information and clear step by step guidance, it also supports the Time to Change Employers Pledge.

A key step in improving mental health in the workplace is ensuring that employers and employees have a clear understanding of what mental health is; including types, causes and symptoms. The implementation of a MHWP should include actions to raise awareness and start conversations within the workforce to assist with this and allow employees to access support. This can be achieved through a variety of methods which utilise existing resources online, for example:

o Campaigns - day long, week long or continuous campaigns. Examples of campaigns include Mental Health Awareness Week by the Mental Health Foundation and the Heads Together Campaign.
o Toolbox talks and presentations – These can be downloaded from websites and used on site or in workshops, for example; Building Mental Health provide videos and power points in adaptable or ready to use formats.

- o Advertisement - Time to Change offer posters, email banners and screensavers to be used in and around the workplace to create awareness.

The Federation for Small Businesses has created a hub of guidance and campaigns, including some suitable for smaller companies. Links to these resources can be found in Appendix D Further Resources.

Whilst initiating these conversations and encouraging staff to seek support is a positive change in the workplace culture, this may create the need for line managers and employees to address more specific and individual mental health issues. If required, charities can also provide training courses for line managers or to create mental health champions within the workforce. However, most courses come at a cost, it is therefore important to have an understanding of a company's investment capability.

3. Provide and Support Positive Working Conditions

Positive working conditions will support the health and wellbeing of the workforce, such as company policies and management styles which promote a good work life balance, regular breaks and provides opportunities for development. These include ensuring the work environment is adapted to address and support long commutes, extended time away from home and programme pressure demands. Employees can be further supported through constructive management, such as managing staff effectively through regular feedback sessions and reviews, providing both praise and areas for improvement.

Smaller business may also be able to individually assess their staff members to ensure management styles used were conducive to the individuals preferred working style. There are a variety of tools and resources available online to encourage these types of assessments and approach to management, however research has shown that there is a strong business case for financial investment in this area; well-trained managers will be better equipped with the knowledge and awareness to note only recognise problems, but to also manage them through prevention and ongoing support.

For line managers and individual employees experiencing issues with mental health at work, MIND offers guidance on creating Wellness Actions Plans (WAPs) which can help individuals and companies set specific targets to support their own mental health. These can facilitate tailored support for an employee to ensure the working conditions are addressing their specific needs and that they receive ongoing support within an organisation.

However, whilst individual business can make an effort to address this, it has already been highlighted that the industry is disjointed due to the high amount of small businesses and self-employed people. Therefore, there needs to be a more collective approach from the industry as a whole, potentially driven by industry bodies. With industry collaboration, companies can then seek to manage client expectations; being able to relieve pressure put on them through tight programmes, low costs and increased expectations.

Monitoring Results

Businesses can gain an understanding on the impact their investment is having on the workforce, through regular monitoring of results. It is important for any business to measure staff wellbeing to identify areas of success and areas of improvement. This ensures their approach is specifically tailored to the businesses individual needs and is the most productive and as impactful it could be. This can be achieved through reviewing staff absence levels, utilising mood trackers within the office and conducting regular surveys. The charity Mind provides a service known as the Workplace Wellbeing Index which assists companies with annually monitoring their progress. This approach of monitoring and reporting, ensures that employees are also aware of the impacts of changes and are provided with the opportunity to feedback and develop ideas themselves.

By following the recommendations above, businesses of all sizes can begin to raise awareness and develop an understanding around mental health. Employees can be consulted and engaged at all levels, leading to a more invested, happier and healthier workforce.

Further to this professional bodies have a pivotal role in best practice and supporting the industry and SME's alike. They could take a leading role by seeking to provide a central point of resources, guidance and links to ensure all information is accessible regardless of business size. If a collective approach is taken by business and supporting bodies together they will be able to overcome the challenges around mental health in construction.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Common Mental Health Problems

Descriptions have been extracted from Mind's website, for a more comprehensive list of types, definitions, symptoms and help people visit their website, a link can be found in Appendix D Further Resources.

Anxiety

Anxiety is when a person is worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which could happen in the future. If your feelings of anxiety are very strong, or last for long time, they can be overwhelming and lead to physical symptoms such as sleep problems and panic attacks.

Depression

Depression is a feeling of low mood that lasts for a long time and affects everyday life. It can lead to feelings of hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness, low motivation and exhaustion. It can affect self-esteem, sleep, appetite and physical health.

Eating problems

Eating problems are not just about food, they can be about difficult things and painful feelings which are hard to face or resolve. The most common eating disorder diagnoses are anorexia, bulimia, binge eating disorder, and other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED); but it is also possible to have a very difficult relationship with food and not fit the criteria for any specific diagnosis.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. OCD has two main parts: obsessions such as unwelcome thoughts, images, urges, worries or doubts that repeatedly appear; and compulsions which are repetitive activities that reduce the anxiety caused by the obsession.

Phobias

A phobia is an extreme form of fear or anxiety triggered by a particular situation (such as going outside) or object (such as spiders), even when it's very unlikely to be dangerous. A fear becomes a phobia if the fear is out of proportion to the danger, it lasts for more than six months, and has a significant impact on how you live your day-to-day life.

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder mainly affects mood. With this diagnosis, there are likely to be extreme periods of; manic or hypomanic episodes (feeling high); depressive episodes (feeling low); and potentially some psychotic symptoms.

Schizophrenia

This problem is constantly debated as to legitimacy but diagnosis follows symptoms such as: psychosis (such as hallucinations or delusions), disorganised thinking and speech, feeling disconnected from your feelings.

Appendix B – Outline of Questions for Discussion

1. What is your personal awareness of Mental Health, specifically recognising signs of poor mental health?
2. What training is available within your company for managers and staff in relation to mental health?
3. With regards to the workplace culture, is there an awareness of mental health amongst staff or a culture of open conversation?
4. What is the work life balance like within the company? Are good habits supported or encouraged by the business?
5. What is your awareness of the business approach towards and support for those struggling with mental health issues? Would you consider there to be a good level of management of these?
6. What are your or your company's future plans with regards to mental health and what barriers to you perceive there to be around these?

Appendix C – Detailed Survey Results

Full survey results available on request.

Survey Title

What tools are in place to address poor mental health in the construction industry?

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I am currently writing a report on mental health in construction and am keen to get some first-hand information to support my research.   In recent years, researchers have identified an increase in mental health issues. It is now understood that, in the UK, approximately one in four will experience a mental health problem each year. The construction industry has been highlighted as one of the worst industries to work in when considering our mental health. This is due to specific industry characteristics such as the long working hours, job insecurity and a 'macho' culture. A recent study by the Office for National Statistics found the risk of suicide among low-skilled male labourers, particularly those working in construction roles, was 3 times higher than the male national average. For males working in skilled trades, the highest risk was among building finishing trades; particularly, plasterers and painters and decorators who had more than double the risk of suicide than the male national average. A government report published in 2017 proposed a set of 'mental health core standards' for organisations to look to adopt to address poor mental health. I am aiming to translate these standards into a proposal for small to medium businesses to implement within their organisations. This survey will allow me to understand what action employers have already taken and identify where there may be gaps or barriers.
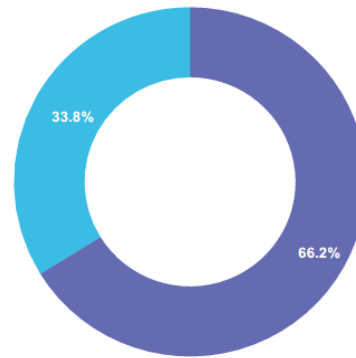
 Thank you for your time.

Q1 What is your current work status? MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered **133**
Unanswered **0**
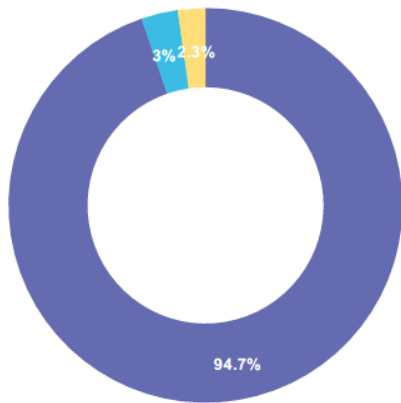
Choice	Total
Employed	126
Self-employed	4
Unemployed	0
Temporary / Part-Time	3

Q3 Please confirm your gender; MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered **133**
Unanswered **0**

Choice	Total
Male	88
Female	45
Other / Prefer not to say	0
Labourer (General)	0
Other	37

Q2 Please confirm your age range; MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered **133**
Unanswered **0**
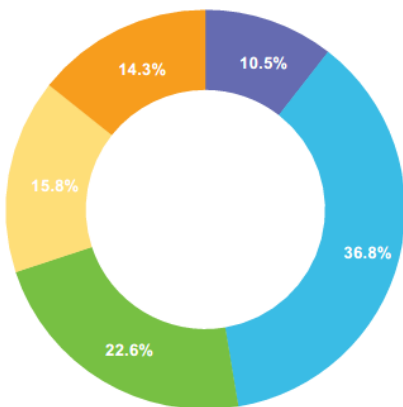
Choice	Total
17-24	14
25-34	49
35-44	30
45-54	21
55+	19

Q4 What is your job role? MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered **133**
Unanswered **0**
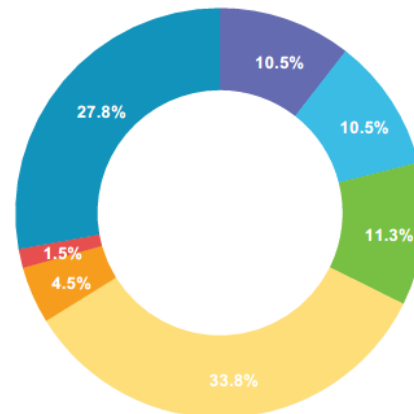
Choice	Total
Design (Architectural, MEP etc)	14
Engineer (Civil, structural, geo etc)	14
Surveying	15
Management	45
Planning	6
Labourer (Skilled)	2

Q5 What sector does your company work in? MULTIPLE CHOICE
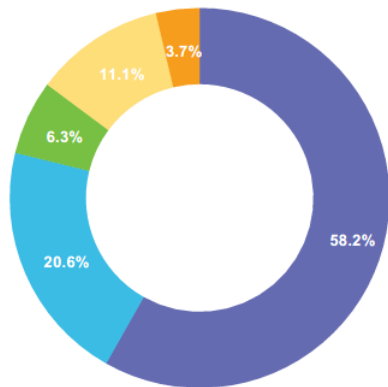
Answered 133
Unanswered 0

Choice	Total
Construction	110
Infrastructure	39
Consultancy	12
Design	21
Other	7

Q6 What is the size of your company or the company you work for? MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered 132
Unanswered 1

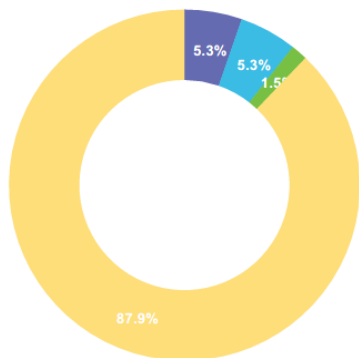| Choice	Total
Micro (1-9 employees)	7
Small (10-49 employees)	7
Medium (50-49 employees)	2
Large (250+ employees)	116

Q7 Do you consider yourself to have a mental health problem? Examples include depression, anxiety, eating disorder etc. Please provide details if you feel comfortable doing so. MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered 133
Unanswered 0

Choice	Total
Yes	46
No	74
I don't know	13

Q8 It is recommended that businesses have a Mental Health at Work Plan; this is a plan which encourages and promotes good mental health with an open organisational culture, usually by providing information and tools to employees. Does your company/employer have a Mental Health at Work Plan? If yes, please provide details below. MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choice	Total
Yes	83
No	19
I don't know	31
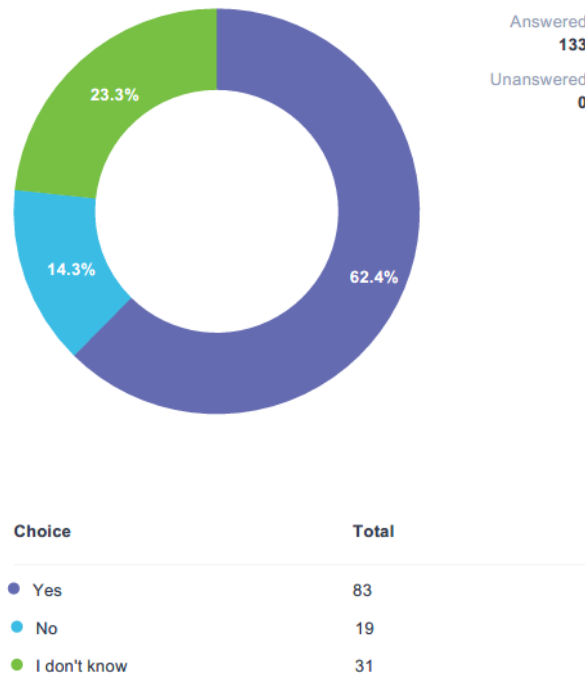
Comments:

- In house team who promote the mental health policy, training and involvement available for all and comms team who notify wider business of success stories.
- 'First aid' courses to help spot signs of mental health. Support lines and managerial support
- Offering mental health champions and a lot of fundraising for MIND. I don't feel this plan is sufficient as it doesn't amend the culture it merely deals with the issues the poor culture of construction creates.
- I believe that there is a plan in place - however equally this is both poorly communicated and implemented through the lower levels.
- There are services and people available within the Company however there is still a stigma around talking about mental health which would prevent some people from seeking help or advice.
- mental health champions
- Working in partnership with MIND and regularly shares information with all employees
- High level there is a plan, there is good practice in pockets. There is an ingrained culture that is unhelpful and even the best people to go to in times when you need them participate and perpetuate the underlying

culture. If you were in trouble you might not realise that these people would be helpful.

- Information available and mental health ambassadors appointed.
- Regular health circulars are now being distributed, which seems to be raising the profile of the issue. I also understand the company are looking to identify mental health first aiders within officers, to act in much the same way as regular first aiders.
- Intranet access to advices and support in conjunction with MIND
- I don't know the details but there are often intranet posts to help staff - but I work for a local government organisation - so not solely construction professionals
- they have over the last two years partnered with MIND and distributed literature and posters and encouraged more openness between workers, there has been mental wellbeing online surveys and we've been encouraged to complete them. Mental health champions have been nominated and trained
- Assume there is a plan, there is evidence of coordinated initiatives on mental health being actively promoted.
- Workshops, dedicated mental health champions
- I haven't heard it called a 'Mental Health at Work Plan' but the business is implementing initiatives and making training/support more accessible to employees, and is seeking to encourage a more open organizational culture
- Regular updates on the intranet and contact details are readily available.
- Energy Project and mental health helpline
- I am aware that my company are keen to help and promote good mental health but I am unsure as to whether they have a Mental Health at Work Plan.
- We and our families have access to confidential counselling and support through the business.
- My company has extensive measures in place to educate people about mental health and to support those who are struggling. There is still more that could be done, but I think we are definitely moving in the right direction.
- Company has a designated team who is able to advise on and support any mental health issues employees may experience.

n.b. not all comments are included.

Q9 Does your company/employer currently have or do any of the following;
MULTIPLE CHOICE
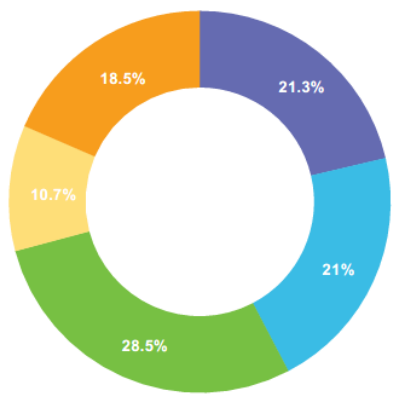
Answered **114**
Unanswered **19**

Choice	Total
A plan or guidance to improve and support physical activity	68
Encourage staff networks and social events on a regular basis	67
Have an open culture for mental health discussion (such as a campaign, ambassadors, a forum etc.)	91
Regular reviews for your well being including discussing happiness, issues, any support required, goals and work hours	34
Encourage healthy behaviours such as taking lunch breaks, getting good sleep, taking time out and having a healthy diet	59

Q10 Does your company/employer offer training or raise awareness around mental health in any of the following forms? If so, please provide details.
MULTIPLE CHOICE
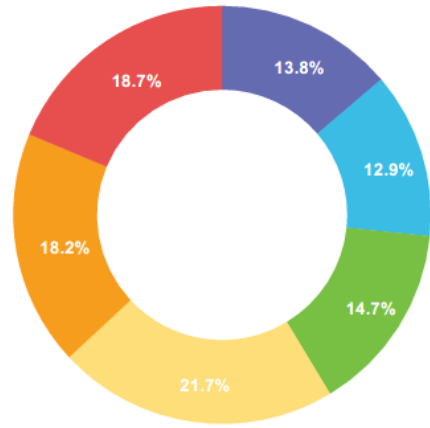
Answered **114**
Unanswered **19**

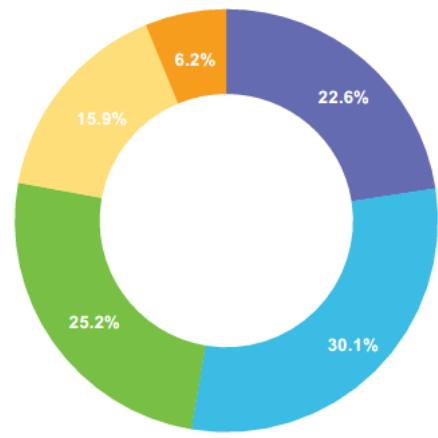| Choice	Total
Training for line managers	59
Training for employees	55
Toolbox talks	63
Emails / Newsletters / Campaigns	93
Online internal information or external support with self help tools	78
Mental Health Champions or peer to peer support	80

Q11 It is recommended that employers encourage conversations around mental health. Does your company/employer encourage conversations by making it clear in the culture, possibly during interviews, regular catch ups or workplace adjustments? MULTIPLE CHOICE

Q12 Are you aware of any support available through your place of work, if you were experiencing mental health issues? Such as; MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered
132
Unanswered
1
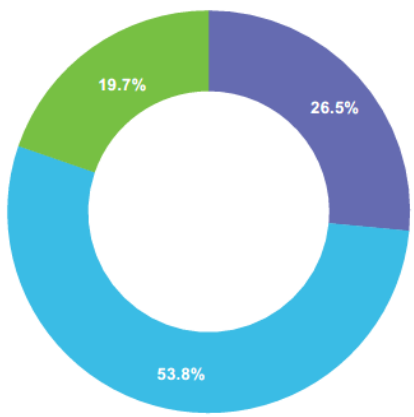
Choice	Total
Yes	35
Maybe a little	71
No	26

Answered
132
Unanswered
1

Choice	Total
Support groups or forums	51
Adjustments for managing illness (such as time off for appointments)	68
Sick leave entitlements	57
No, I am not aware or none is offered	36
Other	14

Q13 'Good work' conditions have been proven to help prevent mental health problems and support those who already have them. How well (on a scale of 1-5) do you think your company / employer does the following; SCORING
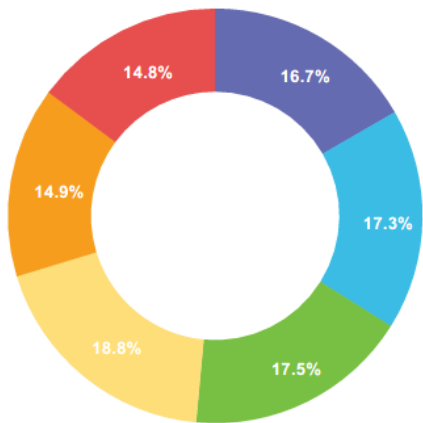
Answered 132
Unanswered 1

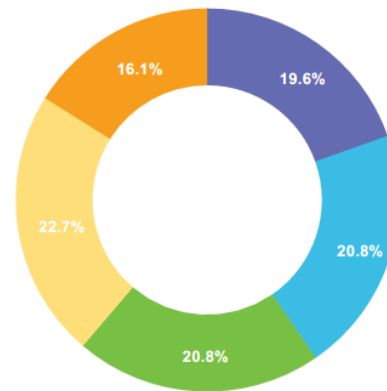| Choice	Total	Average
Promote fair pay	455	3.45
Provide job security	471	3.57
Provide good working conditions	479	3.63
Offer education and training	514	3.89
Undertake staff consultation and representation	406	3.08
Creates a sense of autonomy	405	3.07

Q14 How well supported do you feel at work through the following; SCORING

Answered 132
Unanswered 1

Choice	Total	Average
Feedback opportunities	411	3.11
Performance reviews	437	3.31
Positive management	437	3.31
Training opportunities	476	3.61
Stress management	337	2.55

Q15 Does your company/employer monitor mental health through surveys, mood trackers, open discussions or any other means? If yes, please provide details. MULTIPLE CHOICE

Answered **132**
Unanswered **1**

42.4%
57.6%
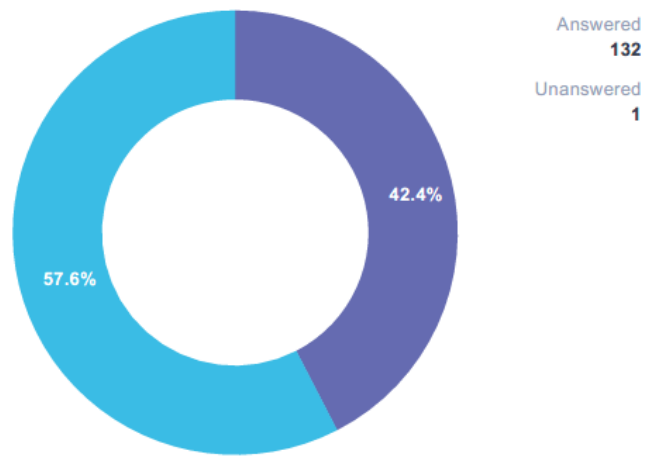
Choice	Total
● Yes	56
● No	76

Comments:
- Surveys and forum/social networks
- Through surveys and encouraging open discussions, recent forums led by people like Frank Bruno
- we have a yearly survey - Mind wellbeing one (LOR - my company) and a yearly Culture survey on the project I am on (Tideway central)
- Mind annual survey for the last two years. Thou I view it as lip service.
- There has been an annual mental health survey for the last couple of years promoted via email, iGate and Yammer. Not sure if this has been promoted on sites for the weekly paid employees. There are a growing number of mental health champions who can talk to people and signpost them to the various help options available within the company.
- I have an open-door policy and the guys know they can come to me and tell me anything
- I am under the impression that this is coming
- I believe they do on project level and with manual workforce, at senior manager level it appears you monitor yourself, if sane enough!
- TBT's and awareness training for managers

- Partly, one survey in the last year that I know of. A smaller site based level survey would provide a more accurate representation of the situation than a companywide one
- Open discussion on mental health on previous project, wellbeing advisers readily available.
- Mainly by being very approachable and providing access to support via specific personnel.
- A couple of things recently have taken place as part of a healthy eating campaign - people's general mood/sleep, etc. was also tracked showing marked improvement as a result of changing eating habits. However, beyond this and the recent Mind Wellbeing index, I'm not aware of more frequent surveys/in-house company
- Open forums and support groups are available to employees to confidentially discuss any mental health issues they may have.

n.b. not all comments are included.

Q16 Does your company/employer publish statistics on performance around mental health such as their Wellbeing Index score, sickness levels etc? MULTIPLE CHOICE

Does your company/employer publish statistics on performance around mental health such as their Wellbeing Index score, sickness levels etc?

Answered 131
Unanswered 2

22.9%
30.5%
46.6%
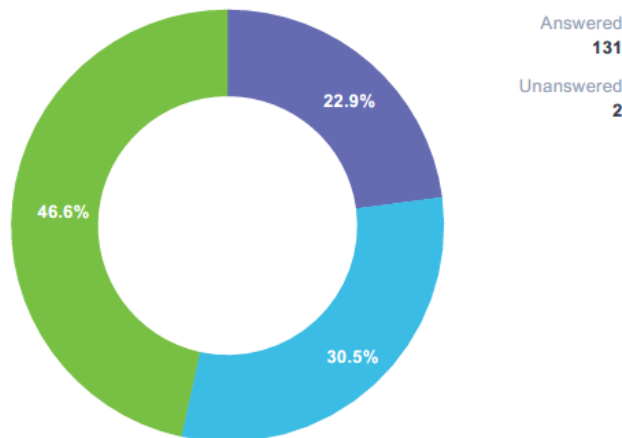
Choice	Total
Yes	30
No	40
I don't know	61

Q17 from the suggestions in the previous questions of this survey; what action do you think would benefit you and your mental health most?

o Active forums in the company, representatives, peer to peer support, more access to online tools, mental health professional on-site

o Greater formal structure which is publicized throughout the wider business to make everyone aware of the steps to go through if they require help.

o Line Managers connecting with their staff and spending more time with them rather than talking at them

o Better working environment, more focus placed on wellbeing of employees. A lot of systems in place but the culture in every day working is just not there

o Acknowledging it as a thing within the business environment.

o Health food provided at a lower cost and access to exercise facilities (e.g. gyms)

o Personal I prefer not to talk about it as it gets me down. I like to stay positive and in a positive environment I'm OK. Some things should be kept personal and professional.

o Actively engaging with employees through coaching to see what helps them de-stress and teach to grasp it and use as a tool. I don't believe people are educated to learn how to deal with stress.

o More holidays & opportunities to work from home. One of biggest causes of stress in industry is long days caused by long commuting times

o There was a forum where I could comfortably talk about my mental health, get guidance and counselling.

o Just to talk about it openly to someone who can make a difference.

o I complete culture shift, there seems to be aged techniques of management, where work life balance is not considered. Even where the policies and procedures are in place, due to the structures in the organisation managers don't feel empowered to do anything. Blame culture and lack of ability to delegate effectively all cause issues within the industry.

o Promote Mental Health within the workforce. Try and remove the stigma regarding mental health issues, particularly in Males.

o Creating and promoting a healthy work life balance, through recovery, renewal and reflection is absolutely critical. It also carries with it a side benefit or increased productivity. We are still in the dark ages in construction, particularly on the contracting front with respect of mental health awareness - I would consider this issue a 'sleeping giant' within our industry.

o

o My line manager providing more feedback on how I am doing. My work place culture being more open to mental health problems so that it is easier to discuss my own feelings. A one-to-one with a company Doctor to discuss general health (like a 'MOT') during which mental health issues could be raised.

o Working Hours and the culture around them need to change. Often hear lots about the importance of health and wellbeing, but when it comes to actions which are a fundamental shift from 'the norm' the issues become 'just a part of the sector we are in'.

o A more open and honest culture

o Despite the company having training on mindfulness and free access to counselling, mental health is not part of the everyday culture. Performance reviews do not include questions on happiness and wellbeing. Surveys on wellbeing are carried out as a separate exercise, so it just feels like statistics gathering rather than being a proactive activity related to the individuals' health.

o I have attended a couple of the mental health workshops run by Mind for managers and within these groups people feel safe to open up about their own mental health. Making everyone feel comfortable to talk is the first step and giving people the opportunity to do this in a safe environment would I think help so many people who keep their feelings bottled up. Talking I think is the first step and then promoting healthy coping mechanisms and if necessary helping to find professional help.

o Working on the culture to support mental health issues, some office bases or site locations are good at working on the environment and culture but others are not, they can take a very old school presenteeism approach to work (have to be seen to be working). I don't feel this supports mental wellbeing or productivity of the workforce

o To be reminded that you are employed for being yourself and to keep on being the best of that. Trying to fit some image of a role that you have imagined and is not necessarily what people need anyway is unhelpful. Doesn't mean not doing things you don't like but not stressing about how you do it.

o Just a continued open discussion on the issues to break down the stigma and the implementation of such things as flexible working patterns to help people manage their issues.

o Communication, independence within clear boundaries of responsibility

o Tackling the stigma of mental health issues within the culture of the business. Unsure really, there isn't a quick fix and everybody is different and has different issues.

- Staff participation with Employer to discuss and target company issues and pressure of work. Personal appraisals would also be a benefit
- have you ever had a mental health problem?
- If company's keep looking at mental health, keep up to date with modern life, have mental health champions/first aiders and remove the stigma things will improve.
- Reduction in working hours, working over 50 hours a week is not healthy.
- I am fortunate to have a fantastic line manager who has helped me cope with my depression. I am still on the journey to full recovery and I guess one thing in the back of my mind is concern that this issue marks me. I have not been able to speak to my colleagues about my issue as I do not believe this would be a positive action. I think mental health awareness is still in its infancy in my industry therefore it's something you tend to keep to yourself.
- By understanding who I am and what work conditions benefit my personal make up. Keeping me engaged and involved is a necessity in getting the best work product from me.
- For it to be taken seriously and to feel like I am supported both with mental health and things that can impact mental health negatively.
- More staff to reduce workload.... (I can dream) As mental health is a personal thing and can change hour by hour, then the current strategy of encouraging openness I think is bringing benefits, allowing people the confidence to talk about their problems, I've definitely heard more people talking about their problems at our current project than on projects in the past 10 years. But I think, especially with the shorter-term operatives that the fear of losing their position if they admit weaknesses is still a problem. For myself, I attend a men's help group, Andy's man club which has the aim of providing a safe place for men to talk about their issues and problems without fear of judgement, its great place and helped me get through some tough times in the past 18 months
- To have the initiative of regular open discussion and monitoring extended to senior management
- Ensuring that work life balance is correct and that targets, planning is meaningful
- Ability to purchase additional leave (5 days approx.) to help with covering school holidays, travel to ill parents etc.
- The opportunity to get more feedback so that performance is recognised (both good and bad) providing confidence in what you are doing is correct and/or requires further support & training to help improve.
- For projects to be correctly staffed. To promote an inclusive culture. To share the 'good' bits. Make sure all staff/workers are as far as possible are respected and treated fairly. Remove silos.

- More positive and high-profile support of mental health issues. Discussions on fatigue and also working away from home and the support around this.
- More physical activities driven opportunities at work.
- I think that the stigma which is around Mental Health should be discarded within the work place and I feel that more needs to be advertised in regard to the support that the company offers.
- Mentors for biweekly catch-up, reviews to manage stress/ workloads. Cap on overtime/ working at weekends or be open about time in hand for days off. Hire knowledgeable and experienced staff members and provide training.
- More off the record conversations with managers in order to let off any problem you may be facing without having the worry of any consequences
- More flexibility for working parents
- More flexible working and better working environments.
- I think something that other companies do it to give employees 'mental health days'. These would be limited to a set number per year, but it's an opportunity for people to call in, no questions asked, and be able to take a day. I think this would be a great idea as sometimes you need a day to just collect yourself and reflect, but I know personally (and I'm sure many others are like me) will not take time off unless I am genuinely 'unable to move' ill. I also think greater autonomy in allowing people to work from home more would be beneficial. I understand that the nature of our business means it's not possible for everyone but I don't think that should stop those who can. Naturally there would need to be some structure around it, but I think it would be good for people's wellbeing if they were able to do this.
- I work within an intimate environment, so maybe more one-to-one chats amongst staff, perhaps on a monthly basis.
- Open feedback on the work the mental health team does.
- I think more general conversation about mental health. this is happening, and understand that it develops over time.
- Keep talking about it so it keeps momentum, it could easily be just another latest campaign
- establishment of regional forums or setting up an anonymous network where communications can be held in full confidentiality. if the facilities aren't available within the company then references should be available for external resources.

n.b. not all comments are included.

Q18 Based on your suggestion in the last questions, if your company/employer was to implement this (or any of the other suggestions) what barriers do you see them coming up against?

o Cost, stigma attached to mental health, high turnover of company so difficult for consistent representation

o general stigma around mental health, I still think in a male dominated industry of people with an 'old school' mentality where men should be men it will always be challenging to engrain mental health as a key focus in day to day operation of a construction office or site

o People being open. I'm open to my employer but not to previous employers. I only open up to people I'm conformable with. I would never raise it in a job interview as I won't get the job and it's hard to provide against. When I was very ill I lost my job by opening up to it and I couldn't prove anything.

o People recognising, they have an issue that is considered a mental health issue

o Active engagement from all employees, breaking down the macho mindset is the biggest challenge I believe.

o Becoming even less competitive on smaller contracts due to high fixed costs.

o Shortage of skilled candidates means many firms are understaffed plus difficult to run a project not being onsite every day

o Fast staff turnover of sub-contractors breeds an 'us and them' culture with regards to management. Not many genuine work relationships, lack of trust for many to want to bother opening up to someone in the office/management role.

o I think the people and management within the company would treat it more as a tick box exercise as opposed to a culture shift. I also feel there would be a lack of buy-in and commercial performance will always be prioritised. As opposed to prioritising the mental well-being of the people so they are motivated to generate better commercial results and are well rested in order to come up with their best solutions.

o Natural barriers, such as people afraid to show a 'weakness', particularly from a male dominated environment

o Programme deadlines on construction sites, and old school mentality to work longer get more done, instead of work smarter and healthier and be more productive...

- Working hours in the construction industry and time to commute to and from work sites is the biggest obstacle between people having enough time to socialise outside of work, eat healthily and exercise and sleep well
- To a large extent working hours are seen as a badge of honour by a majority of workers. Changing this mind set will be difficult as its very easy to pressure people with little comments.
- Line managers are not trained to deal with mental health issues, so during personal reviews the line managers would not know how to deal with the subject.
- There may be financial implications of having more workshops, people will be taking time out of their working day and there would be costs involved in running the workshops too. The other big barrier is the people who do not sympathise with mental health issues who think the solution is to "man up".
- As per previous question. Workplace culture should be addressed and how managers respond to mental wellbeing
- Different people need different types of reassurance - for some rigid discipline is very helpful, for others it's oppressive!
- The building trade is very much still a man's world and a lot of them find it embarrassing to ask for help
- Old thinking, industry norms and in some cases construction programme requirements.
- Cost.
- Rapid changes in business structures and disposition of staff
- Minimal. Especially as an office based staff member.
- The macho culture in the industry is the barrier to improved mental health awareness.
- A glacial approach to getting items pushed through. Too many layers of HR and management to get items approved.
- Small company = Not many people to implement it (or who'd have the time to keep it implemented)
- barriers are from the perceived risk of losing their position or being judged as weak by their supervisor/ line manager. How do they know that it will be applied consistently throughout the workplace, as the line manager is pushing for a work goal and is probably under pressure to achieve this? I know as being a line manager myself as I come under pressure my empathy for those around me gets less and I have tried to pressure the desired outcomes out of sub-contractors or colleagues to achieve the programme targets set

- An assumption that senior management must already have good mental health to be operating at that level or an ability to identify and take action themselves; a reticence to acknowledge anything perceived as a weakness among those supposed to be leading teams by good example.
- Getting everyone, all staff to buy into mental health as a serious issue
- Male dominated organisation who still have less expectation to help with care issues therefore not on the radar of management. Management have ignored/rejected repeated requests year on year.
- Lots - attitudes from others in the industry, tight deadlines, old ideas within the business, fairness across the business
- There needs to be a change industry wide as there is so much pressure and competition within the industry that impacts on the staff lower down the chain. The pressure starts with the clients wanting faster, cheaper, more high spec projects so the people on the project are having to work longer hours, weekends, with little chance or time to participate in the initiatives available for staff around mental health which consequently has an impact on people's mental health.
- Client awarding contract to the lowest tender
- Lack of understanding on their behalf of stress related issues caused by pressures of work
- Stigma around mental health, especially in men. There is often little desire to talk openly about this as it is seen as a source of weakness.
- Existing perceptions or preconceptions among staff of what suffering from a mental health issue actually is. Resource - time and financial - to drive cultural change and establish better support networks.
- I can see resistance from maybe the older generation as it was not acknowledged or seen as an issue quite a few years ago and the stigma surrounding mental health would be a barrier.
- Culture, would be seen as 'not project specific'
- Financial reasons why being flexible does not benefit them
- Possible lack of participation or an aversion to a change of thinking
- I think the biggest thing is that the working from home wouldn't be possible for everyone. However, other companies in a similar position (where some employees are part of the workforce) have enabled people to work from home and it has worked well. People understand that job roles are different. With regard to the mental health days, I guess the main barrier would be how to manage it. Perhaps a trial period/working group would help to mitigate any issues.

n.b. not all comments are included.

Q19 Do you have any stories/experiences/observations about mental health or your place of work that you would like to share?

- o Stress appears to be part of the construction industry - introducing new roles to the construction industry and the reducing roles/responsibilities of existing ones does not relieve stress within a team it adds one more member of the team to worry about.

- o While construction is a macho environment I do believe it is full of close relationships amongst colleagues. My experiences have shown that I have confided in certain colleagues when I have been struggling with stress. In turn, I've been there for them.

- o Most people I work with are constantly frustrated about how under-appreciated by 'the company' they feel. Many have genuine low feelings and there is a constant chat of 'should I go and look for another employer or just stick it out' where essentially employees are constantly worried about the risk of doing exactly that.

- o Building sites/the building trade are one of the most open environments for discussion going on most smaller sites, people are far more frank and honest than in most other work environments

- o In 2016 a member of my team lost his life to mental health, whilst the immediate team was devastated the organisation didn't appear to learn anything. The terrible culture of long hours and unnecessary stress continued on the project.

- o Even though we have campaigns and awareness, in a male dominated industry such as construction and in the UK generally and especially for men this is a very taboo subject and men by their very nature are poor at asking for help when they need it most as it is seen as a sign of weakness, so they will try and deal with issues themselves and unfortunately that does not always work out well.

- o A colleague was concerned about a member of his family after one of his parents died. He contacted the Lifeworks team for some advice and they picked up on his mental health and helped both him and his family. The company supported him and gave him the time out for counselling.

- o Every time I have been off with depression when I return everyone ignores the fact that I've been off. So, no one asks if I'm ok or better. Also, now being made redundant after maternity leave and can't help but feel that my mental health issue was a factor for selection. Sad but true.

- o I attended one particular workshop with people who I had known and worked with for years. The person running it encouraged people to talk about their own experiences and people opened up about things and

events that they had struggled through without help. So many people have things going on in the past or present and a safe open forum to talk really seems to help.

o One of our colleagues committed suicide and no one I knew saw the warnings, ostensibly a happy and hardworking excellent colleague. We need to know our colleagues so we can be helpful. When we don't know what's going on our default must be kind.

o It would appear that some people become more stressed when they are forced to be away from their families all week. Being project based can prove very depressing when the company aren't flexible and prevent you from seeing your family all week.

o As the project moves on my role has transformed. The skills required are not those that I was originally hired for. since then I have had none or little mentoring or coaching. My immediate line manager is not available to provide support or direction. It becomes harder to motivate myself without some direction from my superior. This creates anxiety and doubt over my job security which then motivates me to look for other opportunities away from the company.

o Telling my manager, I have anxiety which causes physical symptoms when using the phone - being told that I sound fine anyway and that it needs to be done.

o I left two of my previous jobs as they did not support me with my mental health. They made me feel bad for taking time off and expected that after being signed off I would be better and they didn't need to make adjustments. I feel my place of work now is more supportive, but only because of my line manager. I know other people in the business that have not felt supported or able to talk about their problems and be honest about the reason they are taking time off.

o Following a serious accident on a site involving a site supervisor who fell from height and the subsequent HSE and company investigation, I found myself being unable to think clearly and make decisions as I was constantly second guessing and criticizing my work and seeing all the potential problems that could occur if I didn't complete every task to the full letter of the procedure, my judgment of the risk and hazards had been stripped and I was struggling to cope. This was noticed by the site management team and I was asked to take some time off, which was about 6 weeks. and had some counselling but this didn't help as it was concentrating too much on the accident I now realize. I returned to work on a different site and learnt form there that even with all the effort and drive I put into the site I had left they didn't really miss me and the

job got completed and that I wasn't indispensable. This has changed my attitude to work and I now try to step back and not get too anxious and stressed when the pressure is ramping up to complete tasks It took me several years to rebuild my confidence and I had several bad times when I was reduced to tears by the perceived workload and pressure I was putting on myself, writing to do lists of all the tasks I felt I needed to complete, this would stretch to several pages long and I became paralyzed not knowing what was the priority and working long hours to try and complete the tasks properly to a standard where I thought I wouldn't be criticized. I hopefully now recognize those feelings and able to stop them before they overwhelm me. But I realize I don't cope with the work pressures very well without a line manager or colleague to discuss my thoughts and decisions and reasoning with and get reassurance that I am making the correct decision, thankful so far in the last couple of sites I have had that support and things are going smoothly.

o I've experienced poor mental health issues that caused me not only to leave employment, but country, and finally to find myself in prisons and hospitals dealing with the extreme results. What we currently have is a tip of iceberg/ lip service measure of addressing mental health, a good start to open the conversation but anyone with serious mental health issues knows their career prospects are severely jeopardised if admitted - so they don't. The further their career advances and undisclosed stress accumulates the more embedded the unhealthy coping strategy becomes and the more skilful at concealing from self and colleagues.

o It seems a bit backwards as we (as a business) raise the profile of having a good mental health and instigate mental health initiatives but yet the culture of the workplace completely contradicts these. If there is a job to build then it seems to be at no cost to the people working on it. Are we supporting our staff in the right way, if we are being driven to work long hours and in stressful environments then maybe we need to be focusing more on our staffs down time that they do have and seeing how we can support them in making the most of this

o I would like my organisation to keep the spotlight on MH and to continue championing it and start to encourage our Joint Venture partners and our supply chain to do more to help their employees too - maybe more joint initiatives would help with this.

n.b. not all comments are included.

Appendix D - Further Resources

MIND Guide to mental health problems

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/

HSE Management Standards

http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

HSE Risk Assessment Templates

Small Business Example:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/perfect-cakes-risk-assessment.pdf

Medium Business Example:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/alpha-financial-services-risk-assessment.pdf

Large Business Example:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/learning-with-care-risk-assessment.pdf

Mental Health at Work Plan Templates

Time to Change Action Plan

https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-your-workplace-involved/employer-pledge/develop-your-action-plan

Thriving at Work (Annexe A)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658145/thriving-at-work-stevenson-farmer-review.pdf

Business in the Community Mental Health Toolkit

https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/mental_health_toolkit_for_employers_-_small.pdf

Mental Health Awareness Campaigns

Mental Health Awareness Week:

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/campaigns

Heads Together: https://www.headstogether.org.uk

Time to Change: https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/resources

Toolbox Talks and Presentation Materials

Building Mental Health: https://www.buildingmentalhealth.net/resources.html

CITB Equality Act 2010**:**

https://www.citb.co.uk/documents/employer%20support/fir_respect.pdf

FSB Wellbeing Hub

https://www.fsb.org.uk/standing-up-for-you/our-campaigns/wellbeing-hub/wellbeing-in-small-business-hub

Mental Health Toolkits

https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/building-mental-health-in-construction/