

Beyond hard hats: Prioritising mental health for a safer construction culture

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Imagine a construction site with people hard at work, where the sound of machinery drowns out the conversations of the workers. Beneath this façade of productivity and hard graft lies a silent crisis: mental ill-health costs businesses in the construction sector an estimated £56 billion annually, with many workers suffering in silence, fearing stigma and judgment from their peers.

A recent report by construction social media company, On The Tools, showed that the construction industry has one of the highest rates of suicide among all sectors, with construction workers being four times more likely to take their own lives than the national average.

According to the Lighthouse Charity, which is dedicated to the emotional, physical, and financial wellbeing of the UK construction workforce and their families, two tradespeople take their lives every working day in the UK and Ireland. These alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for a cultural shift towards prioritising mental health in this demanding industry.

At Marsh McLennan, **we believe that mental health is not just a personal issue but a critical organisational concern** that directly impacts safety, productivity, and employee retention in the construction sector.

By fostering a supportive environment and implementing proactive mental health initiatives, organisations can not only enhance the well-being of their workforce but also drive sustainable success in an industry that is the backbone of the UK economy.



The construction industry in the UK is facing significant challenges when it comes to mental health, with a growing number of workers reporting issues related to stress, anxiety, and depression



Long hours
and high
demands



Job
insecurity



Stigma
surrounding
mental health



Lack of
support
systems



Physical
demands

Half of all UK construction workers, or 1.5 million people, have worked in a dangerous environment while suffering poor mental health and close to 700,000 suffered injuries, according to [research from business insurer, QBE](#), a figure that is alarmingly high compared to other sectors. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) reports that work-related stress accounts for more than 50% of all work-related illnesses in the industry, with anxiety and depression being the leading causes of long-term sickness absence.

The impact of poor mental health in the construction industry is far-reaching, affecting not only the well-being of individual workers but also operational effectiveness.



Consequences for workers

Workers in the construction industry facing mental health challenges are not just battling personal struggles; they are also navigating a landscape fraught with risks that can endanger themselves and their colleagues. Studies reveal that these individuals are significantly [more likely to be involved in workplace accidents](#), highlighting the urgent need for awareness and support.

Mental health issues can impair communication among team members, leading to misunderstandings and safety oversights that can have dire consequences on-site. Furthermore, the pressure to cope can drive some workers toward [substance abuse](#), further compromising safety and well-being.

Ignoring these mental health concerns not only jeopardises the lives of workers but also exposes construction firms to compliance and legal issues, as failure to address mental health can result in non-compliance with health and safety regulations.

We must recognise the interconnectedness of mental health and safety, fostering an environment where support and open dialogue are prioritised to protect both workers and the industry's integrity.



Consequences for organisations

The emotional toll of poor mental health can also lead to [decreased productivity](#). This decline in performance not only affects individual workers but can also disrupt team dynamics and project timelines, ultimately impacting the overall success of construction projects.

Workers grappling with mental health issues are more likely to take time off, leading to disruptions in workflow and project delays. Higher turnover rates are another critical concern. When organisations fail to address mental health issues, they risk losing valuable talent.

The construction industry stands at a pivotal moment where a cultural shift towards prioritising mental health and well-being is not just beneficial but essential. To create a sustainable and productive workforce, organisations must foster an environment where mental health is openly discussed, valued, and supported.



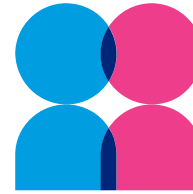
A call to action

While the statistics surrounding mental health in the construction industry are alarming, they also serve as a call for action and transformation. The urgency of addressing these issues cannot be overstated; however, it is equally important to recognise the potential for positive change that lies within our reach.

Imagine a future where mental health is prioritised in the construction industry — a future where workers feel safe to express their challenges, seek help, and support one another. Every construction organisation and individual has a vital role to play in fostering a culture that prioritises mental well-being.

In this vision, construction sites are not only places of physical labour but also environments that nurture mental resilience and well-being and pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

Together, we can build a healthier, more sustainable construction industry. The time for change is now, and with collective effort, we can work towards a brighter future where mental health is as integral to our work as safety and productivity.



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This free tool:

1. Hosts an inventory of evidence-based health and wellbeing best practices
2. Reveals national norms to validate current strategies
3. Guides strategies to improve outcomes and measure progress over time.

Click to see how the [HERO Scorecard©](#) could help your company.



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Each business has its own specific needs, as does each employee. Additionally sub-contractors might have requirements specific to their circumstances. We appreciate that each business will need their approach assessed.

Reach out to your Marsh McLennan representative for more information.