

Construction coalition leads the way in mental health revolution

[Thursday 18 July 2019, 09:00 GMT] Two years on from its launch, industry-leading coalition Building Mental Health (BMH) has announced delivery of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England training to over 1,600 people in the construction sector. This comes at a time when the suicide rate for low-skilled manual construction workers is **three times** higher than the national average for male suicide.

Since July 2017, BMH has coordinated the training of over 140 MHFA England Instructor Members, who have gone on to train over 750 people in the industry as Mental Health First Aiders, with a further 800 trained in mental health awareness. MHFA England was chosen to deliver this programme as the country's leading provider of workplace mental health awareness and skills training.

Funded by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the initiative aims to train a further 144 MHFA England instructors, with ambitions to deliver training to tens of thousands more staff across the sector in the coming years.

Geeta Nathan, Head of Economic Analysis at CITB, said: "CITB is pleased to see the success of this vital industry collaboration on one of the most important issues facing the construction sector today – the mental health and wellbeing of its workers.

"The delivery of mental health training to 1,600 people in the construction sector will have a positive impact on individuals, families and communities in England. However, more work needs to be done to shape culture change and ensure construction workers do not suffer stigma, or in silence, anymore. CITB will strive to expand on the excellent mental health training underway."

As a cross-industry framework, BMH has connected with organisations including ACAS, the CITB, the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS), Construction News, Build UK, the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity and Remploy, as well as a number of leading construction firms and mental health organisations. The group's vision is to enable all parts of the construction sector to access mental health support by providing awareness and training and putting in place structures and systems of support.

Commenting on the group's work, Martin Coyd OBE, one of the founders of Building Mental Health, said: "With this fantastic collaboration, we have been able to create a

charter and an industry-wide framework to begin tackling the mental health crisis in the construction sector.

“We want everyone in the industry to recognise that training provided by Building Mental Health partners is critical to tackling the industry’s mental health crisis - and that these efforts will only be successful if we all work together.

“Our focus is on preventing mental illness, promoting good mental health, and making sure the right guidance is there when people need it most. Training is a key part of this and thanks to our work with Mental Health First Aid England, 1,600 people across the industry now have the awareness and skills they need to better support their own and others’ mental health.”

Simon Blake OBE, Chief Executive, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England said:

“Every day 15 people take their life in this country, and every day two of these 15 are construction staff. We simply must do more to protect and promote mental health in the construction industry.

“Initiatives like Building Mental Health are helping firms to take huge strides. Thanks to this coalition’s ambitious training programme there is more mental health awareness, more understanding and more frontline support in construction than ever before.”

Alongside the BMH training programme, CCS and the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity have launched the *Construction Industry Helpline*. This provides 24/7 advice on occupational health and wellbeing, emergency financial aid and support on legal, tax and debt management matters. So far over 400,000 contact cards have been distributed nationally to promote the helpline.

In addition to this, construction software firm Coins and the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity have led on the development of the [Construction Industry Helpline app](#) which provides information, advice and guidance on wellbeing topics including stress, anxiety, depression, anger and suicidal thoughts.

BMH is also encouraging construction firms to sign up to [The BMH Charter](#), with over 300 signed up so far. This commits organisations to promote education, awareness and understanding of mental health and mental ill health, to provide access to Mental Health First Aid England training, and to recognise and accept education and training provided by other BMH partners.

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About Building Mental Health

- Building Mental Health (BMH) is a [framework](#), borne out of a cross industry group created with contributions from clients, contractors, specialist sub-contractors, designers, trade associations, trade unions, regulators, training bodies and mental health organisations.
- The purpose is to provide a flexible and consistent framework to enable all parts of the construction sector to access mental health support, provide awareness and training and put in place a structure and system to support people working in and around the construction industry.
- BMH encourages organisations to sign up to The BMH [Charter](#) and [Framework](#), which are based on concepts of; providing awareness for all, training front line champions, training and supporting Mental Health First Aiders, mutual recognition across the sector so that there is just one national framework.
- The BMH [Framework](#) and [Charter](#) also support organisations to align with the objectives of the *Heads Together Workplace Wellbeing Strategy*, the Government's *Thriving at Work Review* and the Government's *Industrial Strategy - Construction Sector Deal*.
- Building Mental Health also provides resources including the free to download [Toolbox Talk – The BMH TBT](#)

About Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England is a community interest company (CIC), established in 2009.
- MHFA England training is the mental health equivalent of physical first aid training and provides participants with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support, be that self-help, an Employee Assistance Programme or professional services.
- To date over 400,000 people in England are trained in MHFA England skills.
- The core principles of MHFA include: spotting the signs of a mental health issue, helping to prevent issues from getting worse and giving confidence in helping someone who is experiencing an issue.
- MHFA England has a vision to improve the mental health of the nation and to normalise society's attitudes and behaviours around mental health by developing the skills we need to look after our own and other's wellbeing.
- More information about MHFA England and its courses can be found at www.mhfaengland.org or by emailing info@mhfaengland.org.