

2026  
FIRST EDITION

# How we create mentally healthy workplaces in construction

Joint Code of Practice on preventing and  
managing psychosocial risk in construction





The UK construction industry is facing a mental health crisis,  
with lives lost every day to suicide.

The only way we can truly change things  
is if the industry moves collectively.

This Code sets out how we prevent harm together.

• *Karl Whiteman - Executive Director, Berkeley Group, CLC Industry Sponsor* •

# Contents

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The content of The Code is a significant step change for the construction industry. It is designed as a “decision-support tool for leaders and duty holders”, helping interpretation and application of existing duties. Early adoption is encouraged however full adoption is recommended by June 2027.

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Chapter 01

# Foreword



# Foreword

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## The scale of the challenge

Mental health is one of the most significant risks facing the construction industry.

The suicide rate for men in UK construction is nearly four times the national average (*ONS, 2017*). Behind that statistic are people, families and teams who cannot afford for the industry to treat this as business as usual.

Construction is a rewarding and diverse industry. It is an excellent career choice for a wide range of disciplines and skill sets. It does, however, contain stressors that can harm the mental health of the people working in it. The Code has been written with this in mind, using specific *design principles* for our workforce demographics.

A person's mental health is complex and is affected by work and personal matters alike. Some vulnerabilities exist before people even arrive at work: shaped by background, financial insecurity, or environments where support has been limited. However, it is crucial that the hazards that exist within work itself are understood, and we eliminate or control them. This Code is a direct response to those workplace hazards.

Dean Pegg, deanpeggphotography.com



# Foreword

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## Prevention at source

The Joint Code of Practice ('the Code') is deliberately practical: it exists to help leaders, clients and organisations in the construction sector to embed a **prevention-led approach**.

It recognises a simple truth that has come through repeatedly in the evidence and consultation behind this work: that mental health harm is not an inevitable part of working in construction. It is not a problem to be managed solely through individual resilience or support after the fact. It is shaped upstream by earlier decisions and behaviours around how work is commissioned, designed, procured, planned, sequenced and led.

This is why **the Code focuses on the system, not just the individual**.

It looks at the conditions that can create psychosocial risk, and the controls that reduce that risk at source: realistic programmes, proper resourcing, reliable payment, predictable work, recovery time, worker voice, respectful behaviour and welfare designed with dignity in mind.

In other words: the Code asks the sector to apply the same discipline to mental health risk that it applies to physical safety risk. Where we identify, assess, control, monitor and improve, continuously.

Embedding the Code will enable the construction industry to create work environments designed to foster and promote mentally healthy workplaces.

Stuart Key, [stuartkey.co.uk](http://stuartkey.co.uk)



# Foreword

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## A shared commitment

Because this is a joint code, it recognises that no single organisation can change construction culture alone. Everyone who shapes construction work also shapes the conditions people work under.

**Clients** and asset owners have particular influence. They can set expectations for achievable programmes, stable design, fair commercial behaviour and psychologically safe working environments for everyone working on the project.

**Contractors** and the supply chain turn these expectations into everyday practice. They shape working patterns, welfare standards, leadership behaviours and routes for people to raise concerns before work becomes unsafe.

**Self-employed (including agency) workers** should be consciously included to benefit from the systemic change laid out in the Code. **Labour agencies** are also encouraged to adopt and apply the Code to protect and support their workers.

**Designers and consultants** can improve certainty, risk and change management, and quality, reducing pressure further down the supply chain.

**Broader sector stakeholders** such as **regulators, insurers, trade bodies, training organisations** and **worker representatives** can help align incentives, competence and assurance, so prevention becomes normal practice across the whole system.

Dean Pegg, deanpeggphotography.com



# Foreword

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## A living framework

The Code is also intended to be a living framework. It sets a clear baseline for action, while recognising that the evidence, practice and learning around work-related mental health risks will continue to develop.

The Code is written by the sector, for the sector, and has been developed to complement existing guidance and standards such as ISO45001 (Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems), ISO45003 (Managing Psychosocial Health & Safety at Work) and ISO30480 (Suicide and the Workplace).

We recognise there is already some great work taking place across the industry to strengthen mental health. The Code is a step towards greater alignment across the sector through the lens of prevention. However, despite extensive grounding research, it does not claim to have all the answers.

In a world where work is increasingly shaped by speed, technology and constant connectivity, the construction sector has a renewed reason to invest in what technology cannot replace: human-to-human connection, belonging, fairness and genuine trust, built into how we plan, lead and deliver work.

**The invitation is simple: adopt it, use it, improve it, and help the sector move forward together, in step, towards work that is healthier by design.**

Chapter 02

# Background



# Background

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## Research and consultation programme

Capturing a wide range of sector voices was central to the Code's development.

It was informed by an extensive research programme and consultation, led by the University of Warwick research team under Dr Carla Toro. This included worker focus groups, evidence syntheses, industry surveys, workshops, webinars and open calls for evidence and practical solutions.

The outcome of this research was the identification of five 'hazard clusters'.



# Background



# Background

## Not individual “weakness”

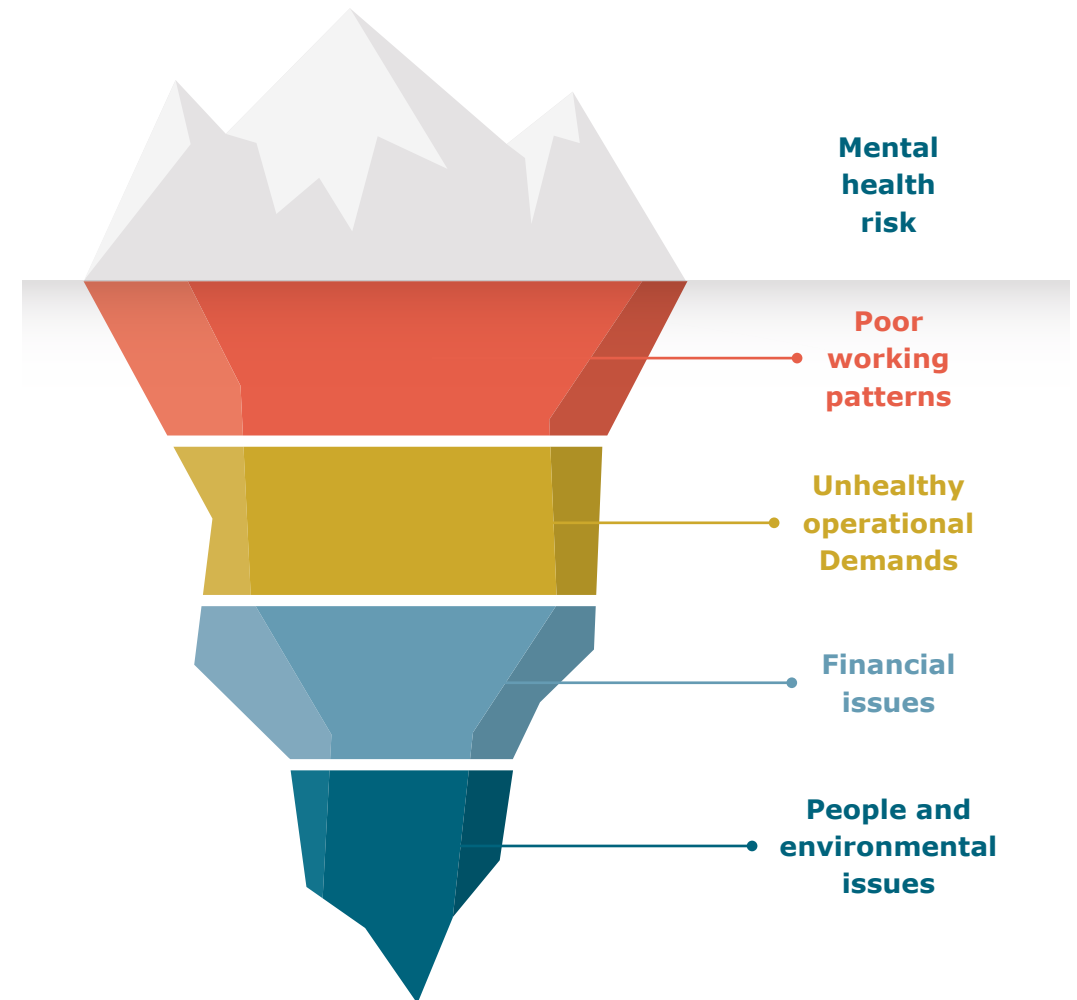
Mental health at work is often discussed as something that belongs to individuals. However, visible signs of mental distress are often the **‘tip of the iceberg’**.

Beneath them are **systematic work-related stressors** that build up: long hours, compressed programmes, poor communication, repeated change and financial insecurity. These stressors come from earlier decisions such as those during tender, procurement and planning.

## Why we go “upstream”

As systemic stressors are predictable, they can be prevented. We do not wait until people are visibly struggling before we act. In short, we take a preventative approach or “go upstream” **to stop the stressors that create harm** in the first place.

The aim is to create consistent conditions across the industry, so that **every site feels safe, fair and well managed**, regardless of who is running it or what job is being delivered.



# Background

## How we focus on prevention

Like physical health and safety, we identify hazards early, assess the risks and put proportionate interventions in place **before harm occurs**.

For mental health, this means looking at how work is designed, planned, resourced and managed. We then ask: can we eliminate the risk? If not, can we reduce it, or the harm it causes?

Industry responses traditionally focused downstream: raising awareness, encouraging people to speak up, or providing support and crisis response once mental health already deteriorated. These actions are still crucial, but they must sit alongside preventative interventions.

Evidence suggests that changing the conditions of work is likely to have a broader, longer lasting impact (*Kjærgaard et al., 2025*). **Deloitte also reports an average return of £4.70 for every £1 invested in workplace mental health, with the highest returns from early, systemic interventions (Deloitte, 2024).**

Change the work



Support the worker

<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	Where possible, we remove the source of harm before it reaches workers. e.g. we plan programmes that do not rely on routine overtime.
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Where risks cannot be fully removed, we reduce people's exposure to them. e.g. we communicate unavoidable changes of plan clearly.
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	Where people are already under pressure, we make sure support is readily available. e.g. we provide clear routes to financial advice.

Chapter 03

# Using the Code



# Using The Code

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## What this code does

This Code provides a structured, risk-based framework to help us respond to mental health risks in a more consistent and preventative way.

It aligns with **Plan-Do-Check-Act** to help you identify mental health hazards, assess and prioritise risk, take action, and monitor effectiveness over time.

It is designed to embed mental health risk into existing health and safety systems, so it can be managed with the same rigour, accountability and consistency as physical health risk. This means it becomes an integral part of how work is planned, delivered and governed.

## Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

You will see that the actions are grouped under CLIENT and CONTRACTOR so you can see the recommendations that are most applicable to your context. Designers, consultants and other stakeholders play a critical role in eliminating risk at source through their decisions and collaboration. While not explicitly referenced against each hazard cluster, they should review this document and consider how they can support Clients and Contractors to deliver improved outcomes.

- **Clients** set the tone for the whole project. They provide critical leadership and resources to manage risks well.
- **Contractors** manage delivery, planning and workforce conditions.
- **Leaders at every level** shape behaviours, expectations and culture.

In reality, risks cannot be managed by any single role in isolation. We need coordinated action across the system to make sure we create a system that promotes equality for **everyone** in the sector – including the **self-employed workforce**.

# Using The Code

## The 'hazard clusters'

The five hazard clusters and their themes form the backbone of The Code.

### Working patterns

1

**Long working hours**, poorly planned **shift patterns**, excessive **long-distance travel** and time **working away from home** create fatigue, stress and isolation. These patterns are often normalised within an "always on" culture, rather than treated as exceptions.

### Operational demands

2

Pressure is frequently embedded into projects through **unachievable deadlines**, **poor planning** and **poor communication**. When delays occur, this pressure is often transferred to the workforce, creating a sustained "catch-up" culture.

### People and work environment

3

**Limited praise or support** from leadership, **bullying and harassment** degrade a sense of psychological safety. **Poor welfare facilities** signal their basic requirement for dignity and safe performance do not matter. This impacts overall mental health.

### Financial issues

4

**Issues with payments, job insecurity** and **low financial literacy** across the supply chain create ongoing stress, particularly for smaller businesses and self-employed workers who carry disproportionate risk.

### Support factors

5

**Low mental health literacy**, **low help-seeking** and **mental health stigma** mean support is often not accessed, even where it exists. Fear of looking weak, losing work or damaging reputation can leave people suffering in silence.

The controls or interventions you will see recommended are centred around these.

# Using The Code

## Control framework

We follow a straightforward framework to manage mental health risks. You need to prioritise actions that **ELIMINATE** the risk at source as these have the greatest impact.

**Remember: a single action is rarely enough.**

Change the work



Support the worker

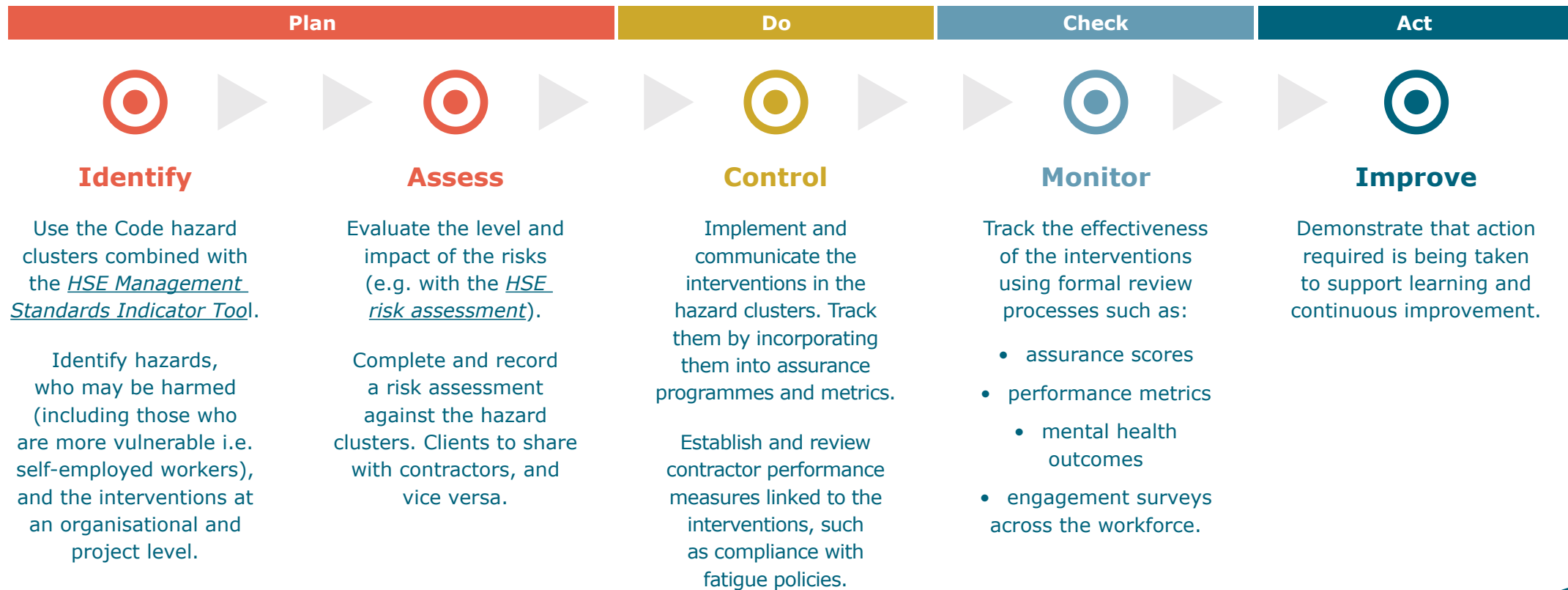
Control framework	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	<p>Where possible, we remove the source of harm before it reaches workers. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• realistic programme design</li><li>• effective planning and coordination</li><li>• sustainable working hours</li><li>• fair and stable financial practices</li><li>• positive leadership behaviours</li></ul>
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	<p>Where risks cannot be fully removed, we reduce people's exposure to them. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• line manager capability</li><li>• early identification of issues</li><li>• structured support pathways</li><li>• workforce engagement and feedback</li></ul>
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	<p>Where people are already under pressure, we make sure support is readily available. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• counselling and clinical support</li><li>• trauma response</li><li>• crisis and suicide prevention arrangements</li></ul>

# Using The Code

## The risk management process

We manage mental health risk in the same way as any other health risk, using Plan-Do-Check-Act.

This approach ensures we identify mental health risk systematically, control it proportionately, monitor it and continuously improve things.



Chapter 04

# *Working Patterns*



# Working patterns

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# Current reality

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The working patterns we see in construction can be a major driver of poor mental health. Long and unpredictable hours, excessive travel and time away from home can disrupt people's lives, leading to fatigue, stress and isolation.

These patterns become normalised in an 'always on' culture, rather than treated as exceptions. Workers often have little control over their working patterns and feel unable to push back due to fear of missing out on future work.

However, these working patterns are not inevitable. They are the result of how work is resourced and scheduled as standard in the current system so can be changed.

"I worked on a project that was 250 miles from home 12 days on 2 days off... this was **14 hour days door to door, no wonder I had a stroke.**"

"**Lower pay encourages workers to seek additional work and overtime** despite being fatigued, mentally and physically drained... **workers are not empowered to say no.**"

"Culture of long working hours leads to **fatigue, inefficiencies and errors.** I am completing this at 5:30am, having had less than 6hrs sleep."

Sample of quotes from the Warwick consultation evidence.

# Opportunity for change

In how we tender, design, schedule and resource work, we can build healthier working patterns into project delivery from the start. The effects of careful planning will be profound, as we can eliminate many risks, not just manage them.

This means planning work more realistically, setting clear limits on hours and travel, creating genuine flexibility, and challenging the norm of prioritising productivity over wellbeing. In this way, we promote a system that supports sustainable, high-quality work from a more diverse workforce.

"I can spend more meaningful time with my family and **pick my daughter up from school**. I stay more focused, motivated, and productive during my working days."



## On the ground: Rethinking Sunday travel at BAM

After workers shared that travelling on Sundays to be ready for early Monday starts was eating into family time and leaving them fatigued at the start of the week, BAM UK & Ireland took action.

A flexible arrangement was introduced, compressing supervisors' hours into four days, rotating to maintain full coverage.

Planning, handovers, and preparation were improved, leading to better organisation and stronger teamwork. As a result, motivation, wellbeing, and morale increased. Operational delivery, site performance and standards were not affected with the site continuing to receive high praise from guests.

# Hazards

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There are five main hazards that we must address:



## Long working hours

Programmes rely on long working hours and are normalised in the industry. A limited focus on rest and work-life balance means that risks to wellbeing and safety build over time.



## Shift work

Shift patterns that are not designed with fatigue in mind. Limited rest, poor rotation and long shifts disrupt sleep and recovery.



## Long distance travel

National travel is relied on, which extends the working day. Travel is not always well recognised or planned for. Rest and home life can be disrupted, leading to fatigue and personal strain.



## Working away from home

Some workers rely on working away from home for extra income. Living conditions can be poor. Long periods away can lead to relationship strain and isolation.



## Limited flexibility

Rigid working patterns can make it hard to manage life outside work. Workers may have little control over their time or ability to respond to personal needs. This can cause stress and disengagement.

# Actions we take: a summary

The research highlighted clear ways to tackle the risks and the harm caused by unhealthy working patterns.

The actions 'upstream' (those higher up towards 'eliminate the risk') will be more effective.

Remember to choose a variety, and that the number of actions you choose can 'multiply' the effects you see.



Working patterns	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	Set <b>realistic timelines, align design with resource, and engage the supply chain early</b> to remove the need for last-minute changes and acceleration.
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Plan work with clear, timely <b>communication</b> across all parties, <b>minimise late changes</b> , and ensure roles, responsibilities and information flows are <b>well coordinated</b> .
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	<b>Monitor programme pressure</b> , workload and change, <b>communicate updates</b> clearly, and support teams to <b>raise concerns early</b> if work becomes unrealistic or unsafe.



Client



Contractor

# How we build healthy working patterns from the start



## Eliminate the risk



Hours



Distance travel



Working away

### Ensure safe and efficient working hours are prioritised

- Set the tone as a client by encouraging healthy working hour interventions and structuring delivery in a way that protects the workforce.
- Have regard to the Working Time Regulations. Agree clear, proportionate guidance on working hours within contracts, supported by practical processes to manage exceptions and maintain safe, manageable workloads.

### Offer fair pay within safe working hours

- Encourage contractors to structure pay such that fair earnings can be achieved within standard hours, reducing reliance on excessive overtime.



#### Ask yourself:

Does the culture of long working hours limit the pool of workers being attracted to the sector?

# How we build healthy working patterns from the start



## Eliminate the risk



Hours



Distance travel



Working away

## Explore local labour to plan healthy working patterns

- Assess the skills pool at the location as part of early feasibility and design, and consider what early mechanisms could be put in place to boost local skills in collaboration with local stakeholders.
- During the planning stage, explore with local authorities whether extended hours are available to allow earlier start or later finish times for those with long-distance travel or carer / parental responsibilities outside of work to allow flexibility.

**Heathrow**  
Making every journey better



## On the ground: Connecting communities to careers at Heathrow

Airports offer a wide range of careers. The Heathrow Academy helps by offering programmes to build essential skills, providing apprenticeships and connecting local people to jobs with Team Heathrow partners.

It plays a pivotal role in connecting the local community to opportunities and developing a diverse skills pipeline that is crucial to future success.

**Local communities rely on the jobs** created by the airport and its supply chain.

# How we design work to reduce travel and time away



Client

## Reduce the risk



Hours



Distance travel



Working away

## Reduce reliance on travel and working away

- Design and plan to use local or directly employed workers, with realistic staffing levels. Encourage contractors to do the same. This allows workers to spend less time travelling and more time recovering between shifts.
- Require contractors to use at least 10% local workers, where competency and availability allow, to reduce long-distance travel and improve workforce stability.

Quick win

## Avoid incentivising unsafe working patterns

- Encourage approaches that limit reliance on overtime, travel allowances and lodging payments. Pay workers sufficiently so that they are not reliant on working excessive hours or being away from home.



### Ask yourself:

Do we treat long distance travel as a risk to be managed, or as an unavoidable feature of delivery?

# How we make sure work is realistic and flexible



## Reduce the risk



Hours



Shifts



Distance travel



Working away

## Make sure plans are realistic

- Make sure programmes are realistic and in line with working time rules for project management teams and site operatives, so work can be delivered within safe hours without relying on overtime or reactive changes.



# How we make sure work is realistic and flexible



## Reduce the risk



Flex

## Enable flexibility

- Have a visible and accessible flexible working and medical events policy. Provide training to managers on flexible working and the benefits of reducing 'presenteeism'. This allows workers to attend essential appointments, manage their health and remain in work without unnecessary stress.

Reduced sickness by 2 days per person, increased wellbeing, higher productivity... With no increase in cost?

**"If you aren't already having the flexible working conversation within your business, it is definitely one worth starting – I promise you won't regret it."**

- Suzannah Nichol OBE, CEO of Build UK

Find out how flexible working delivered measurable results at three construction companies.

See the [Timewise case study on page 45](#).

# How we manage fatigue and recovery



## Reduce the risk



Hours



Shifts

## Design recovery into programmes

- Encourage the building of recovery periods into programmes, treating recovery as a safety control. Protect recovery in programme governance so workers get proper rest time.
- Encourage the use of planning tools to design out fatigue (e.g., no back-to-back peak weeks, limit consecutive nights, predictable rosters and rest windows, travel time built into the plan).
- Encourage the use of programmes to highlight periods where more resource may be required in advance of it being needed to support safe delivery.

## Support switching off outside of work

- Avoid communication such as work emails and notifications outside of work hours.
- Respect time off for annual leave and non-working time.
- Recognise that some people may need support to break away from established behaviours such as leaders showing that switching off is important to them too.



### Ask yourself:

Would work be more productive and of better quality if people had more rest and recovery time?

# How we reduce the impact of long hours and travel



## Reduce the harm



Distance travel

### Consider transport options


- Look for opportunities to enable easier and more accessible travel to and from work. For example, provide shuttle buses where public transport is not available, so long or complex journeys do not increase fatigue or safety risk.

Quick win



#### Ask yourself:

Are the rest periods (when you are neither working nor commuting) sufficient for workers to recharge?

Jump to a case study 

# How we reduce the impact of long hours and travel



## Reduce the harm



Hours



Shifts



Working away

## Make sure working hours are monitored and managed

- Encourage contractors to monitor individual working hours, including travel time, and to highlight where agreed limits are exceeded, with agreed approaches in place to manage this and maintain safe, manageable workloads.



# How we build healthy working patterns from the start



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Hours



Shifts



Distance travel



Working away

## Working time rules

- Do not rely on workers opting out of the Working Time Regulations. Include clear limits and guidance on individual working hours in contracts. Have clear processes for exceptions, so total working time remains safe and manageable.
- Set trigger limits to stop people working more than the agreed / contracted hours. Build these into access control systems where possible, so excessive hours are prevented rather than only identified after the fact.

## Offer fair pay within safe working hours

- As there may be less overtime and out-of-hours pay available, factor this into pay within set working times so workers can earn fairly without working excessive hours, helping attract and retain the right people.



### Ask yourself:

Do we consider how we will manage the risk of long distance travel or working away from home? Is this included in prelims?

# How we build in safe work patterns at tender



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Hours



Shifts



Distance travel



Working away

## Build realistic plans at tender stage

- Include workforce numbers and planned working hours in tenders. Show they can be delivered within working time limits, so programmes do not rely on overtime or extended shifts to succeed.
- Price in and plan around travel at the tender stage, so travel demands are visible, managed and do not create hidden pressure on working hours.



### Ask yourself:

Do we treat long distance travel as a risk to be managed, or as an unavoidable feature of delivery?

# How we design work to reduce travel and time away



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Distance travel



Working away

## Plan around the location

- Consider the availability of local workers before you take on projects. Design and plan to use local or directly employed workers, with realistic staffing levels. This helps to reduce your reliance on long distance travel and working away.
- Upskill local communities, for example through regional apprenticeship programmes and or social value enterprises. This builds a local workforce where the future reliance on travelling labour is reduced.

GallifordTry plc



## On the ground: Project pride with local talent

At Galliford Try, highways projects prioritise using local suppliers within 50 miles to reduce travel, costs and carbon emissions. This allows more workers to stay closer to home, improving wellbeing, work-life balance and morale.

Working hours and travel are carefully managed, with working hours defined in the Construction Phase Plan and monitored through M-Site. Overtime is subject to strict approval processes.

As a result, fatigue and travel risks decreased, safety improved, and stronger local ties increased engagement and pride. Clear controls on working hours and travel ensured full compliance while maintaining high standards of safety, wellbeing, and project performance.

# How we design work to reduce travel and time away



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Hours



Distance travel



Working away

## Avoid incentivising unsafe working patterns

- Avoid creating over reliance on incentivising overtime, travel allowances and “lodging” payments. Pay workers sufficiently so that they are not reliant on working excessive hours or being away from home.



# How we manage fatigue and recovery



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Hours



Shifts

### Monitor plans and adjust carefully to reduce fatigue

- Check that hours and shifts remain safe. Make sure everyone knows what is expected, so issues are picked up early and do not turn into last-minute changes or extra hours. This should promote a culture of productivity over presenteeism.
- Strengthen consultation and communication with clients and the workforce. Make sure that unexpected events do not default to people “covering” through longer or additional shifts.

### Use rotation plans to reduce fatigue

- Create rotation plans so key workers with specific skills are not required onsite at all times. Build primary roles with deputy roles as cover into prelims, so workload is shared and individuals are not exposed to sustained long hours and the pressure of feeling indispensable.



#### Ask yourself:

Do individuals consider themselves to be a single point of failure?



#### Ask yourself:

Do we expect workers to “push through” or are we designing healthy shift patterns?

# How we manage fatigue and recovery



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Hours



Shifts

### Design recovery into programmes

- Do not just cap hours. Build clear recovery periods into programmes, treating recovery as a safety control. Protect recovery in programme governance so workers get proper rest time.
- Use shift planning tools to design out fatigue (e.g., no back-to-back peak weeks, limit consecutive nights, predictable rosters and rest windows, travel time built into the plan).
- Use programmes to highlight periods where more resource may be required in advance of it being needed to support safe delivery.

### Support switching off outside of work

- Avoid communication such as work emails and notifications outside of work hours.
- Respect time off for annual leave and non-working time.
- Recognise that some people may need support to break away from established behaviours such as leaders showing that switching off is important to them too.



#### Ask yourself:

Would work be more productive and of better quality if people had more rest and recovery time?

# How we create fairer and safer working patterns



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Hours




Shifts



Distance travel

## Avoid incentivising unsafe working patterns

- Pay workers sufficiently so that they are not reliant on working excessive hours or being away from home.



**Ask yourself:**  
Are we incentivising unhealthy working practises and creating reliance on subsistence and overtime payments?

## Consider travel as working time

- Find out how long workers need to travel to work and consider inclusion of travel time in the paid working day, beyond an agreed limit. For example, stagger the start times to allow those travelling long distances to arrive.
- Set and monitor trigger limits to stop people working and travelling more than the agreed contracted hours. If limits are breached, investigate to find out why and provide support to stop it from happening again.
- During long distance travel, provide clarity on when breaks are needed and stay over accommodation is recommended.
- Consider whether individual risk assessments are required for workers with additional needs or that are at a higher risk, such as those with more physically demanding roles or health conditions.

# How we build flexibility into delivery



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Flex

## Enable flexibility

- Engage early with clients and local authorities to discuss and agree working schedules that allow for flexible working patterns, to increase efficiency and reduce impact of the work force.
- Make flexibility a planned feature of delivery, not an exception.
- Accommodate later start times and early finish times for those with long distance travel or carer /parental responsibilities outside of work.
- If health appointments or family milestones or events cannot take place during work hours, make arrangements for people to attend them without losing pay where possible.
- Educate employees on why flexible working is important for healthy working practises.



### Ask yourself:

Would people with responsibilities outside of work such as carers, parents and those supporting others benefit from flexible start and finish times?



### Ask yourself?

Do on the tools workers benefit from the same flexibility as those in management positions?

# How we create safe and supportive living away from home



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Working away

### Set accommodation standards

- Create minimum accommodation standards that allow for full rest and recuperation, including clean facilities, bed, bathroom facilities, private space, rest areas and access to healthy food and drink.
- Set maximum distances between accommodation and site to avoid long daily commutes.
- Provide subsistence rates that reflect local costs, enabling workers to stay close to site.
- Explore the central booking of accommodation for people working away from home for long periods.



#### Ask yourself:

Do you think about the impact of the quality of the accommodation on those working away from home?

# How we create safe and supportive living away from home



Contractor

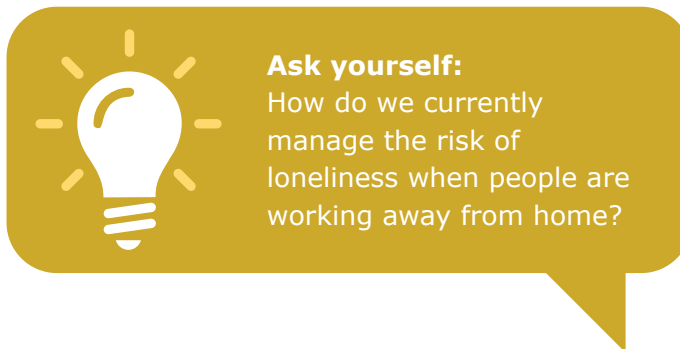
## Reduce the risk



Working away

### Consider groups that experience increased risk

- Recognise that young workers, women and the ageing workforce may need specific support, particularly when working away from home.
- Ensure accommodation is safe, secure and accessible — and that there are clear ways for people to raise concerns. This is especially important for women.



### Support connection when away from home

- Support connection and integration by providing reliable internet and IT access for contact with family and friends, alongside local information guides to help workers navigate and access the area.
- Consider shared rented accommodation to promote social interaction and avoid loneliness where possible and appropriate.
- Create opportunities for social connection with peers or through leisure facilities in the local area through organised activities or community-based groups to reduce isolation.

# How we react to fatigue and delivery pressure



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Hours



Shifts

## Monitor and respond to fatigue risk

- Monitor hours, shifts and travel times within fatigue risk assessment as leading indicators, so risks are identified before they lead to excessive hours or fatigue. You may be able to use timesheets and ESG data to do this.
- Treat regular exceeding of working hours as a safety non-conformance. Investigate the cause so that intervention to support people can be put in place.

Quick win



**Ask yourself:**  
Without visibility of working hours and travel time, how do you know if people are set up to succeed?

## Manage delivery pressures

- Plan and manage work with the supply chain, so programmes remain realistic and do not create unnecessary pressure on workers.
- When delays occur, manage expectations with clients and suppliers, to avoid pushing the pressure onto the workforce, so workers are not expected to “make up time” through longer hours or additional shifts.



**Ask yourself:**  
Are fatigue breaches and capacity measured and understood?

# How we respond to travel risks

## Reduce the harm



Distance travel



Working away

## Reduce travel burden

- Encourage public transport as a first options for those travelling long distances, where appropriate.
- Make it easy for people to travel to work. For example, provide shuttle buses where public transport is not available, so long or complex journeys do not increase fatigue or safety risk.
- Provide the option of stay over accommodation where needed to prevent long commutes after working hours.

SYSTRA



Balfour Beatty



### On the ground: Shuttle buses at old oak common

To encourage public transport use and reduce fatigue in the workforce, the Balfour Beatty VINCI Systra (BBVS) joint venture worked with Clipfine logistics to introduce shuttle buses at their Old Oak Common project.

Running from three nearby stations, the buses run regularly from 6am – 9am and 4pm – 7pm and are timed to match train departures. A live tracker lets people plan their journeys, minimising wait times.

This offering results in less tiredness from travel to and from work and provides a smoother start and finish to the working day, allowing people to decompress on their commute.

# How we support health and wellbeing away from home



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Working away

## Support health and wellbeing away from home

- Provide education and encouragement on protection factors such as sleep hygiene, exercise, time outside and social connection.
- Provide education and support on coping mechanisms that can undermine good mental health such as gambling, pornography and drug and alcohol use.
- Provide access to healthcare and wellbeing support, including GP and dental access for those unable to register locally and signpost to available employee assistance programme (EAP) services.
- Provide catering options which include balanced meals, alongside nutrition information.
- Enable physical activity and recovery by facilitating access to sports and leisure activities, including on-site facilities or subsidised local gym memberships.
- Consider setting limits for alcoholic drinks when drink and food allowances and vouchers are provided for overnight stays to promote health and encourage other options.



### Ask yourself:

Do we offer people working away from home adequate social options and health support?

# Working patterns



## Case study: Timewise construction pioneers programme

The programme piloted flexible working across site-based construction roles over one-year to test how working patterns could be redesigned without compromising delivery.

### Organisation

Timewise and Build UK, in partnership with BAM UK & Ireland, Skanska and Willmott Dixon

### Risk or problem

Traditional working patterns involve long hours, limited flexibility and high fatigue. Workers have little control over unpredictable schedules with frequent extended or weekend work. This drives fatigue, stress, poor work-life balance and increased safety risk.

### What we did differently

Flexible working was organised at a system level, rather than relying on individuals negotiating. This included:

- **team-based rostering** to share late shifts and weekend working.
- **staggered start** and finish times.
- **multi-skilled teams** (“pods”) to enable rotation and cover.
- **reviewed minimum staffing requirements** to allow flexibility outside core hours.

### Investment

Additional upfront planning time was required, including reviewing roles, rotas and staffing models, and building capability to manage flexible delivery. **No additional project cost** was incurred.

“I can’t get flexible hours to take my wife to the hospital for her cancer treatment. I have to take unpaid leave now because I have run out of annual leave and sick leave.”

# Working patterns

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## Case study: Timewise construction pioneers programme

### Outcomes

The pilots demonstrated clear improvements:

- Improved **work-life balance** and wellbeing.
- Improved **retention**.
- Reduced **absenteeism**.
- Maintained or **improved productivity** with **no negative impact on time, cost or quality**.

Workers reporting:

- excessive hours decreased from 51% to 34%.
- having enough time to look after their health and wellbeing increased from 48% to 83%.

### Return on investment

- Significant reduction in sickness absence (up to one third in some organisations) .
- On average a reduction of 2 lost days per participant or £1200 per person per year has been saved.
- Improved productivity, with some sites reporting increased output despite fewer hours.
- Reduced reliance on overtime.

This demonstrates that flexibility improves both wellbeing and performance, rather than creating a trade-off.

### Read more

[See the Timewise Construction Pioneers One Year on Report.](#)

“Working in a more agile way has **not cost me or the project anything**.

Work is still getting done and people are getting to meet their own preferences too”  
- Project Manager

Chapter 05

# *Operational Demands*



# Operational demands

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# Current reality

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Construction projects are often priced and won on tight margins, with little room for delay. This embeds pressure into the project from the start. In practice, poor planning and fragmented communication across the supply chain mean that changes, errors and knock-on delays are common.

When programmes slip or plans change, the pressure does not disappear; it is pushed down the supply chain. Workers on site are then expected to recover lost time.

Over time, this creates a constant “catch up” culture, where productivity is prioritised over safety and wellbeing, and pressure becomes a normal part of how work is delivered.

“How often do we see individuals/sites understaffed in the first seventy-five percent of a project and **everybody and their dog been thrown in at the end** in high tension environments.”

You’re **getting screamed at from the client, builder,** everyone because you’ve got to get your job done. And if they’re going to lose money over it, it’s even more stressful. [...] you’re sleeping with it in your head, get it done.

Sample of quotes from the Warwick consultation evidence.

# Opportunity for change

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We can reduce pressure and create more stability in how we tender, plan and coordinate work. By validating commercial decisions early, we can prevent many of the issues that currently drive stress on site, rather than reacting to them later.

This means setting realistic timelines, improving how information flows across the supply chain, and aligning safety requirements with how work is actually delivered.

It also means strengthening shared standards for health, safety and work design, and applying them consistently across projects. In doing so, we create a system where performance and wellbeing are not in conflict, but support each other.



# Hazards

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There are three main hazards that we must address:



## Unachievable deadlines

Deadlines are agreed before designs are complete or risks are understood, leaving little room for delays or change. **This creates sustained pressure to “catch up”**, which can push workers to prioritise speed over safety and wellbeing.



## Poor planning

Projects are planned with incomplete information and insufficient resources. Delays, design gaps and changes are absorbed by compressing timelines and increasing pressure on delivery teams. **This reactive approach can create uncertainty, rework and avoidable stress.**



## Poor communication

Information is often unclear, delayed or inconsistent across the supply chain, with multiple layers and conflicting instructions. **Workers can be left without a clear understanding** of what is expected or what is changing, leading to inefficiencies, stress and last-minute pressure.

# Actions we take: A summary

The research highlighted clear ways to tackle the risks and the harm caused by unhealthy working patterns.

The actions 'upstream', those higher up towards 'eliminate the risk' will be more effective. Remember to choose a variety, and that the number of actions you choose can 'multiply' the effects you see.

Upstream is most effective

Operational demands	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	Set <b>realistic timelines, align design with resource, and engage the supply chain early</b> to remove the need for last-minute changes and acceleration.
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Plan work with clear, timely <b>communication</b> across all parties, <b>minimise late changes</b> , and ensure roles, responsibilities and information flows are <b>well coordinated</b> .
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	<b>Monitor programme pressure</b> , workload and change, <b>communicate updates</b> clearly, and support teams to <b>raise concerns early</b> when work becomes unrealistic or unsafe.



Client



Contractor

# How we set projects up to be delivered safely



## Eliminate the risk



Deadlines



Planning

### Introduce a Programme Pressure Test before mobilisation

- Consider an independent review of programme viability before work starts to determine that it does not rely on a 'heroic effort' or unsafe demands. This means:
  - Using reliable data to test assumptions on working hours and resources.
  - Not allowing overtime as a routine assumption.
  - Mandating redesign or extra resources where timelines are not achievable, so unrealistic plans are corrected early.

### Ensure designs are well developed before committing to deadlines in contracts

- Avoid fixing delivery timelines until designs are sufficiently developed and coordinated, so delays, changes and rework do not compress programmes later.

### Set clear expectations on realistic timelines and resourcing in contracts

- Make safe delivery and realistic programmes explicit requirements in procurement and contracts, so unrealistic commitments are not built into projects from the start.



#### Ask yourself:

Are we planning this project to be delivered safely, or relying on people to absorb the pressure later?

# How we make mental health a delivery requirement



## Reduce the risk



Deadlines



Planning



Comms

## Embed mental health requirements into procurement and contracts

- Require bidders to demonstrate how they will manage mental health risks. It might include detail on how they are complying with this Code.
- Use these in KPIs and performance reviews, so mental health is actively prioritised and built into delivery from the start.

Quick win

## Encourage early warning indicators and support routes

- Consider scheduling resource review conversations into regular project reviews, so concerns can be raised early and safely. Make sure the process is available to every organisation involved in the project.
- Encourage identification where sole traders and SMEs may need additional protection or support. Encourage feedback loops so their challenges are heard early, and so practical improvements can be made to support safe and effective delivery.

# How we make expectations clear and consistent



## Reduce the risk



Planning



Comms

## Set clear, achievable roles and responsibilities

- Make sure each organisation is clear on its role throughout the project. Regularly check that responsibilities are understood, especially as the project changes and new people join the team.
- Use induction packs and targeted, inclusive support for people with additional technical or behavioural responsibilities, so expectations are clear and they are not overloaded or set up to fail.



## New Hospital Programme



### On the ground: Early alliance, better outcomes

Ahead of construction, the New Hospital Programme set up the Hospital 2.0 Alliance so Trusts, contractors and programme teams could align early and work together.

Instead of running separate mini-competitions for each hospital, contractors were allocated to schemes through one programme-wide process. This saved an estimated six to nine months of procurement time.

The Alliance used joint workshops and shared governance to agree roles, decision-making, escalation routes and how learning would be shared. This helped teams communicate earlier, spot risks sooner and reduce pressure once construction began.

# How we make expectations clear and consistent



## Reduce the risk



Planning



Comms

## Use consistent, industry-aligned health and safety standards

- Work together with the contractor, design team and the supply chain to share health and safety standards across projects, to ensure consistency.
- Avoid excessive or duplicative processes, so workers experience clear, consistent expectations without unnecessary bureaucracy or confusion.
- Ensure communication is simple, accessible and supports different literacy levels, and where necessary different languages, so information is understood and can be acted on safely.
- Use industry aligned accreditation standards for assessing competence consistently across projects.



### Ask yourself:

Are our CDM coordination, communication arrangements and feedback loops clearly understood and working in practice?

# How we treat mental health risks as project risks



## Reduce the harm



Deadlines



Planning



Comms

## Treat psychosocial risks as formal project risks

- Include risks such as late design, compressed timelines and payment delays in project risk registers.
- Assign ownership, allocate time, resource and budget to address the risks, so they are resolved in practice rather than passed onto the workforce.
- Take time to understand each contractor or consultant's business experience, maturity and support needs. Ask what would help them work well with you, and agree clear communication preferences, including format, frequency and points of contact.

## Track leading indicators of pressure and change

- Monitor indicators such as excessive hours, payment delays and programme churn. Review alongside safety dashboards and agree clear thresholds for action.
- Communicate findings clearly and regularly across the project, so emerging risks are identified early and addressed before they escalate.

# How we check programmes are safe before work starts



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Deadlines



Planning

### Introduce a Programme Pressure Test before mobilisation

- Explore getting a trusted impartial reviewer to take a 'fresh look' at the programme before work starts to determine that it does not rely on a 'heroic effort' or unsafe demands. This means:
  - Using reliable data to test assumptions on working hours and resources.
  - Not allowing overtime as a routine assumption.
  - Mandating redesign or extra resources where timelines are not achievable, so unrealistic plans are corrected early.

This will help to protect workers from unnecessary pressure, rework, extensions and accidents. The reviewer could be from any company, but must be neutral to the project objectives and goals.



#### Ask yourself:

Are we planning this project to be delivered safely, or relying on people to absorb the pressure later?

# How we make realistic delivery a contract requirement



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Deadlines



Planning

### Ensure designs are well developed before committing to deadlines in contracts

- Where possible, avoid fixing delivery timelines until designs are sufficiently developed and coordinated, so delays, changes and rework do not compress programmes later.

### Set clear expectations on realistic timelines and resourcing in contracts

- Make safe delivery and realistic programmes explicit requirements in procurement and contracts, so unrealistic commitments are not built into projects from the start.
- Build recovery time into programmes after project milestones which may require extra effort so that the workforce have enough time to rest and recover.

Quick win

### Shape the programme early

- Proactively set out the value of your early involvement with clients, contractors and design partners in creating the programme collaboratively.



#### Ask yourself:

How do we remove the obstacles to early design and programme collaboration?

# How we create clear plans, roles and communication



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Planning



Comms

## Set clear, achievable roles and responsibilities

- Define role profiles for all roles and make sure they reflect what is required in delivery.
- Use induction packs and targeted, inclusive support for people with additional technical or behavioural responsibilities, so expectations are clear and they are not overloaded or set up to fail.
- Make sure short-term planning reflects the actual capacity of people to complete the work safely in the time available, including supervisors, managers and safety representatives.



### Ask yourself:

Do we understand the capacity of our people to do what we are asking them to do? How and when do we check that this is achievable?

# How we create clear plans, roles and communication



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Planning



Comms

## Engage the supply chain early in planning

- Involve contractors and key trades in shaping programmes, so plans reflect real delivery conditions. This helps to test assumptions early so work does not become reactive.

Quick win

# Wates



## On the ground: Planning for performance

To reduce trade clashes and unnecessary pressure, Wates focus on strong work planning and sequencing throughout the project team and supply chain. Controlled pacing, proactive communication and designing out risks like manual handling result in a positive, well managed site environment.

Informal, people-centred flexibility is encouraged alongside collaborative planning and strong engagement across the supply chain.

This approach has created a calm, productive site where people feel supported to work safely and effectively.

# How we create clear plans, roles and communication



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Comms

## Create tailored communication standards

- Agree clear communication preferences across the supply chain and project team, including format, frequency and points of contact. Ask your supply chain and project team what would help them work well with you.
- Change management process must be clear and understood by everyone to support safe delivery.

Quick win

# How we make mental health a delivery requirement



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Deadlines



Planning



Comms

## Embed mental health requirements into procurement and contracts

- During procurement, require subcontractors and designers to demonstrate how they will manage psychosocial risks. It might include how they are complying with this Code.
- Use these in KPIs and performance reviews, so mental health is actively prioritised and built into delivery from the start. This helps avoid awarding contracts based on cost or speed.

Quick win

## Build supervisor capability in communication and leadership

- Build supervisors' competence in how they communicate with their team and create a psychologically safe space to discuss their capacity.
- Make sure supervisors are supported to lead effectively on site, so work is better coordinated, issues are identified early and unrealistic deadlines are challenged before pressure builds.



### Ask yourself:

Are the people managers on the project set up and supported to be successful in their roles?



# How we identify stressors before they become harm



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Deadlines



Planning



Comms

## Treat psychosocial risks as formal project risks

- Include risks such as late design, compressed timelines and payment delays in project risk registers.
- Assign ownership, allocate time, resource and budget to address the risks, so they are resolved in practice rather than passed onto the workforce.

## Track leading indicators of pressure and change

- Monitor indicators such as excessive hours, payment delays and programme churn. Review alongside safety dashboards and agree clear thresholds for action.
- Communicate findings clearly and regularly across the project, so emerging risks are identified early and addressed before they escalate.



### Ask yourself:

Do current health and safety metrics include excessive hours and payment delays? Would making these risks visible help us spot pressure earlier and better support our people?

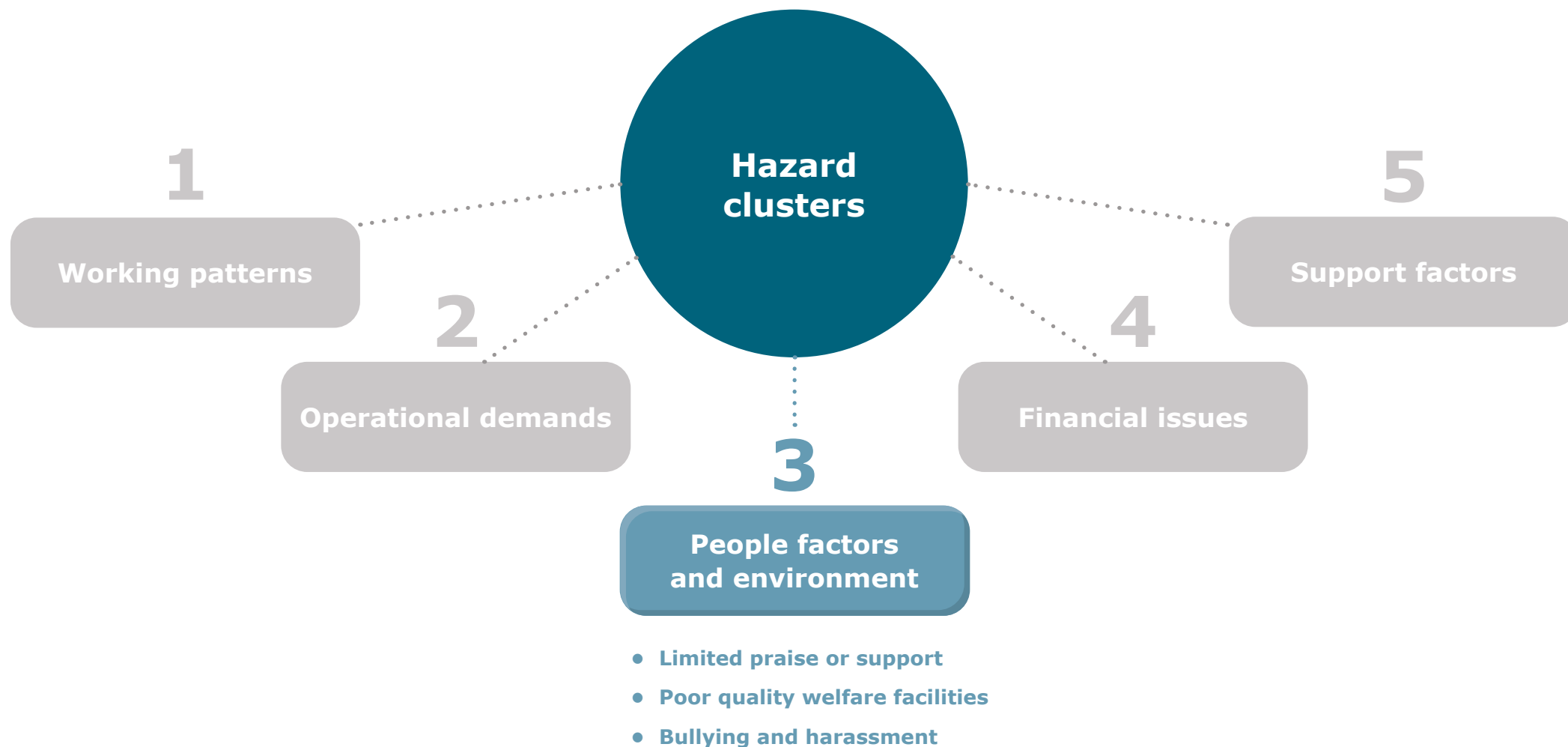
Chapter 06

*People  
factors and  
environment*



# People factors and environment

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# Current reality

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Many people in construction do not feel psychologically safe coming to work due to bullying, harassment and cliques. This can create stress and harm mental health.

However, a widespread culture of blame prevents people from speaking out or challenging inappropriate behaviour, particularly when those involved are in managerial positions, because they fear retaliation. Stigma around mental health remains a strong barrier to people reaching out for help.

Mentoring, everyday support and even simple recognition for good work are often lacking, as the emphasis on productivity can suppress caring behaviours and relationship building.

Differing standards between management and the workforce are common and can create a feeling of people not feeling valued. For example, welfare provision is often inconsistent and too often squeezed by cost pressures. Poor toilets, rest areas and site facilities send a message that basic requirements for dignity, recovery and safe performance at work are not a priority.

"Like I've seen it before in jobs, like, **you're just a number**. You're not a person."

"Praise and feedback only given at the top... the operators on the ground **do not get a thank you.**"

"They buy all these nice fancy tables for their offices and **they'll have no \*\*\* heaters in the drying rooms**, so. And every man is trying to get dry clothes."

Sample of quotes from the Warwick consultation evidence.

# Opportunity for change

In how we lead and manage people, we can create workplaces where everyone feels respected, supported and safe to speak up. This means developing leaders to model compassionate behaviours, backed by clear accountability.

It also means trusted routes for reporting bullying, harassment and conflict, with confidence that concerns will be acted on. A sense of collective identity can be built to inspire a feeling of 'one team' which is important for wellbeing. Mental health conversations can become normal, not exceptional, when leaders and peers speak openly and show that asking for support is a strength, not a risk.

There is also a clear opportunity to raise standards across every site. Consistent, well-funded welfare facilities show that people matter and support health, dignity and safe performance.



## On the ground: Wellbeing facilities at Bowmer + Kirkland

**BOWMER  
+ KIRKLAND**

Bowmer + Kirkland shared an ambition to raise welfare standards on their Fosse Park site, recognising that good facilities are central to wellbeing at work.

Their focus included creating cleaner, higher-quality welfare spaces, catering, better rest areas and environments where people could properly step away from the job during breaks.

The aim was to improve day-to-day experience on site, boost morale, and show through practical action that workers matter.

# Hazards

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There are three main hazards that we must address:



## Limited praise or support

**Workers often receive little recognition or day-to-day support.**

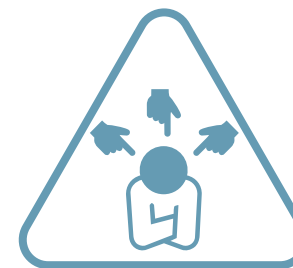
Feedback can focus more on mistakes than good work, reducing morale, confidence and motivation.

Over time, people can feel undervalued and disconnected.



## Poor quality welfare facilities

Basic welfare provision is often inconsistent and cut back by cost pressures. Poor toilets, rest areas and site facilities make demanding work harder and **sends a message that workers' wellbeing is not a priority.**



## Bullying and harassment

Some workers experience bullying, harassment, intimidation and exclusion at work. **This can create stress, damages mental health and discourages people from speaking up.** Where it is not challenged, poor behaviour can become normal.

# Actions we take: A summary

The research highlighted clear ways to tackle the risks and the harm caused by people factors and environment. The actions 'upstream' (those higher up towards 'eliminate the risk') will be more effective.

Remember to choose a variety, and that the number of actions you choose can 'multiply' the effects you see.

Upstream is most effective

People factors and work environment	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	Set clear <b>standards for respectful behaviour, welfare and inclusion</b> , and design projects so people have the <b>facilities, support and conditions</b> they need from the outset.
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Build a positive site culture through <b>strong leadership, clear behavioural expectations, recognition, group identity</b> and <b>early identification of bullying</b> or poor morale.
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	Provide <b>trusted routes to raise concerns</b> , access <b>support</b> and challenge unsafe behaviours early, while <b>responding quickly</b> when relationships, culture or wellbeing start to deteriorate.



Client



Contractor

# The welfare standards we set



## Eliminate the risk



### Set clear dignity standards for welfare facilities

- Define minimum welfare standards for dignity at work. Ask the workforce what they need, and make sure facilities allow all workers to rest, eat, wash, decompress and stay connected to others. This should include being mindful of neurodivergent workers and sensory needs such as lighting, noise and crowding.
- Provide shared parking, welfare and communal areas for client teams, management and the workforce. This helps reduce visible status divides and people can connect, building a stronger sense of belonging and mutual respect.
- Engage with the Contractor to provide access to healthy food and drink, with clean break areas away from dust, noise and work zones, so workers can recharge properly, maintain energy and return to work safer and more focused.



## Therme Manchester

### On the ground: Nourishing the workforce

At Therme Manchester, wellbeing isn't just a promise for future guests – it starts on the construction site. A commitment has been made that the team have access to balanced, nutrient-rich meals and truly support their health and long-term wellbeing.

The Nourish Box, the on-site staff restaurant, was developed in collaboration with nutritionists and chefs. It serves freshly prepared dishes that are portioned specifically with construction workers' needs in mind.

# The welfare standards we set



## Eliminate the risk



Facilities

### Require inclusive welfare to be designed in from the outset

- Require designers and planners to articulate how they have considered and will ensure worker access to inclusive welfare facilities throughout the construction lifecycle.

Quick win



#### Ask yourself?

Are you thinking about period care and bladder support for all workers when planning your welfare facilities?

# The behavioural standards we set



## Reduce the risk



Praise or support



Harassment

### Set clear expectations for respectful behaviour

- Treat culture as a delivery risk. Make sure your expectations for respectful behaviour, collaboration and engagement are clear from day one. Use project induction, leadership messaging and day-to-day practices to normalise learning, human error and speaking up, so respectful behaviours are reinforced early.
- Encourage the development of a project code of conduct to set behavioural and communication expectations and encourage a 'one-team' approach.

### Require risk assessments to include psychological safety

- Project risk assessments to include behavioural and psychosocial risks such as bullying, intimidation, conflict or excessive pressure. Mitigations should be included in project risk registers so that harmful conditions are identified early and managed before they escalate.
- Use leading and lagging indicators such as, workforce feedback, behaviour trends, or reported concerns. Gain insights by asking people how they are during leadership tours. Review the indicators alongside cost, programme and physical safety metrics, so you can see emerging risks and can take action early.



#### Ask yourself:

What impact does it have on project culture if leaders engage with the workforce with dignity and respect?

# How we reinforce positive behaviours



## Reduce the risk



Praise or support

### Recognise how results are achieved

- Recognise safe working, teamwork, mentoring and skilful people management alongside project progress through awards, milestone events and project communications, so success is linked not only to outputs, but to the behaviours that create a healthy and high-performing culture.

### Use visible moments to celebrate culture

- Use awards and recognition to celebrate achievements and the positive behaviours behind them, including collaboration, learning, speaking up and support for others, so workers see that respect and teamwork matter here.
- Align these moments to the project lifecycle, for example topping out ceremonies, so expectations are reinforced regularly at visible milestones.

### Research insight: Boost your impact with a behavioural model

When you use behavioural models such as '*SCARF*', you can amplify the impact of interventions by designing them to work with human behaviour.

For example, recognition does more than boost morale. It can strengthen motivation and psychological safety by helping people feel valued (Status), connected (Relatedness) and treated fairly (Fairness).

When recognition also highlights how success was achieved, it gives clearer signals about the behaviours the project values and wants repeated.

# How we build social support



## Reduce the risk



Praise or support

## Promote sport and shared activities

- Encourage building of project peer networks to reduce isolation to improve wellbeing and make it easier for workers to notice when someone may be struggling.
- Encourage opportunities for workers to connect. This may be through team sports, team activities or shared interests, so relationships and peer support can develop outside day-to-day work pressures.



# How we help concerns to be raised safely



## Reduce the harm




Praise or support



Harassment

## Require safe ways to raise concerns outside the normal chain of command

- Collaborate with the Contractors to recommend a clear route for workers (including self employed and agency workers) and supervisors to say when the environment or programme is no longer safe for people, so concerns are raised early without fear of blame, retaliation or harm to future work opportunities.
- Set an expectation that speaking up leads to review, support and reset, not blame.

Jump to a case study 

# The welfare standards we set



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Facilities

### Promote fit for purpose welfare through consultation

- Set clear standards for dignity at work and make sure facilities are fit for purpose by regularly asking for feedback and through worker consultation.

### Involve workers in design and improvement

- Involve workers from across your demographic to capture different needs and job roles in the design and ongoing improvement of welfare areas.

### Create facilities that support recovery and inclusion

- Provide toilets, washing, rest, quiet and connection spaces that meet diverse needs, including women's sanitation needs and the sensory needs of neurodivergent workers.
- Where practical, use natural light, greenery and better layouts to create spaces that help people recharge and feel valued, so everyone is treated equally and the workplace supports wellbeing. This can be as simple as bringing in biophilia early for site teams to enjoy that will become part of the final landscaping solution.

### Research insight: Boost your impact

You may choose to follow standards such as [WELL](#) to support your design of temporary workplaces.

Through using principles to consider the end user experience, you may be more likely to 'get it right' and amplify the impacts on wellbeing.

# The welfare standards we set



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Facilities

### Use shared spaces to build belonging and dignity

- Provide shared parking, welfare and communal areas for management and the workforce where practical, so visible status divides are reduced and people can connect as one team.
- Avoid significant differences between the quality of office and site welfare. Welfare areas should promote dignity and respect, so all workers feel valued regardless of role or employer.



## MULTIPLY

### On the ground: Restorative welfare spaces

Multiplex created welfare environments focused on rest and recovery, helping people properly switch off and recharge.

Removing work-related messaging and creating high-quality environments reduces stress and mental overload, allowing better recovery during breaks. Social interaction was improved as people felt more relaxed and less task focused.

A simple change in perspective created an environment where people want to come to work and feel empowered to give their best every day.

*For accommodation requirements see Working Patterns.*

# The welfare standards we set



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Facilities

### Create proper rest and connection spaces

- Make sure rest areas feel like rest areas. Avoid filling canteens and break spaces with work-related information, such as health and safety alerts. Instead, consider local information, social activities or other content that helps people switch off and connect.
- Provide good quality internet in welfare areas, so workers can stay connected to family, friends and home during breaks.

Quick win



# The welfare standards we set



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Facilities

“We’re embedding wellbeing into the build itself, starting with the people who are making it happen”

## Support energy through food and clean break areas

- Provide access to healthy food and drink, with clean break areas away from dust, noise and work zones, so workers can recharge properly, maintain energy and return to work safer and more focused.

## Build welfare into project planning

- Plan welfare needs from the start and review them as the project changes. Make sure facilities remain accessible, clean and sufficient throughout delivery, so welfare works in practice and supports workers at every stage of the project.



### Ask yourself:

Are you thinking about period care and bladder support for all workers when planning your welfare facilities?



## Therme Manchester

### On the ground: Nourishing the workforce

At Therme Manchester, wellbeing isn’t just a promise for future guests – it starts on the construction site. The team have access to balanced, nutrient-rich meals and truly support their health and long-term wellbeing.

The Nourish Box, the on-site staff restaurant, was developed in collaboration with nutritionists and chefs. It serves freshly prepared dishes that are portioned specifically with construction workers’ needs in mind.

# The behavioural standards we set



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Praise or support



Harassment

### Set clear expectations for respectful behaviour

- Treat culture as a delivery risk. Set clear expectations for respectful behaviour, collaboration and engagement from day one. Use inductions, supervisor briefings and day-to-day leadership to normalise learning, speaking up and fair treatment.

### Require risk assessments to include psychological safety

- Project risk assessments to include behavioural and psychosocial risks such as bullying, intimidation, conflict or excessive pressure. Mitigations should be included in project risk registers so that harmful conditions are identified early and managed before they escalate.
- Use leading and lagging indicators such as, workforce feedback, behaviour trends, or reported concerns. Gain insights by asking people how they are during leadership tours. Review the indicators alongside cost, programme and physical safety metrics, so you can see emerging risks and can take action early.

# How we reinforce positive behaviours



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Praise or support

### Recognise how results are achieved

- Recognise safe working, teamwork, mentoring and skilful people management alongside project progress through awards, briefings and site communications, so success is linked not only to outputs, but to the behaviours that create a healthy and high-performing culture.

### Use visible moments to celebrate culture

- Use milestones such as topping out ceremonies, section handovers or team briefings to celebrate achievements and the positive behaviours behind them. These might include collaboration, learning, speaking up and support for others, so workers see that respect and teamwork matter here.

### Say thank you

- Regularly offer praise and feedback for good work, either through personal communication or reward and recognition schemes.



### On the ground: Building community and connection

To promote wellbeing and strengthen team cohesion, Auburn's Managing Director introduced regular informal gatherings for project teams, creating space to connect away from site pressures.

By prioritising his attendance and engaging openly, often in an informal and hands on way, the Managing Director breaks down hierarchy and builds trust.

As a result, morale, collaboration, and communication have improved, with a stronger sense of belonging and positive impact on overall wellbeing. **People feel part of a shared team culture.**

# How we reinforce positive behaviours



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Praise or support

### Build meaningful recognition into everyday work

- Encourage managers and supervisors to use recognition that is specific, timely and visible. Build it into everyday activities such as huddles, briefings and team meetings.

### Connect everyone to the bigger mission

- Help everyone working on the project understand what they are building, who it will benefit and why it matters. Share the project vision with the whole workforce, not just leadership, so people can see how their work contributes to something meaningful. Project information, visuals and benefits could be included in project inductions, for example.



#### Ask yourself:

Would people feel more proud of working on a project if they understood the important role they are playing and the benefits the finished project will bring?

# How we support supervisors



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Harassment

### Make respectful behaviour a condition of holding authority

- Effective people leadership is a core part of management and supervisor roles. Provide skills development for people moving into these positions, and use performance management to address poor behaviour quickly and robustly. Seniority does not excuse bullying, shouting or dismissive behaviour.
- Make it clear that repeated poor behaviour can lead to removal from the role, not simply being moved to another site.

### Train supervisors and leaders to support under-represented workers

- Provide practical training so supervisors and leaders model respectful behaviour, spot poor behaviour and step in early, particularly where individuals may experience increased vulnerability due to a range of characteristics, including women, young persons and other under-represented workers.

### Research insight: Boost your impact by building a group identity

People are more likely to trust, cooperate and support those they see as part of “us” rather than “them.”

*Research* shows that when teams build a shared identity, barriers between groups reduce and people are more willing to communicate, help each other and work towards common goals.

On construction projects, this means creating a sense of one project, one team across trades, employers and job roles. Shared goals, mixed-team problem solving, joint recognition and visible project identity can all help reduce division and strengthen wellbeing.

# How we support and understand our people



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Harassment

### Recognise supervisors as a high-risk group and provide support

- Recognise supervisors as a high-risk group within risk assessments. Supervisors often face pressure from multiple directions, emotional strain, and responsibility without enough authority. Supporting supervisors can help stabilise the whole site culture. To support them, you can:
  - Provide clear escalation routes for when supervisors push back on unsafe pressure, without fear of negative consequences.
  - Involve supervisors in how progress and communication are managed.
  - Review practices such as league tables or public comparisons for unintended consequences.
  - Provide peer support networks to share challenges and solutions.

### Understand the people you work with

- Getting to know the people we work with, can help us to support them at work. Examples include, understanding drivers outside of work (such as hobbies or family) and learning and communication preferences.
- Support inclusion and integration through cultural education where appropriate by sharing information about cultural norms or practices.

# How we build social support



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Praise or support

## Promote sport and shared activities

- Building strong peer networks can reduce isolation to improve wellbeing and make it easier for workers to notice when someone may be struggling.
- Create opportunities for workers to connect. This may be through team sports, team activities or shared interests, so relationships and peer support can develop outside day-to-day work pressures.



## On the ground: The big pitch in

Creating project sports teams is a simple yet powerful way to bring people together, build friendships, and break down barriers across roles.

These shared activities boost morale, strengthen teamwork, and support both physical and mental wellbeing.

Initiatives like the Big Pitch In, created to mark The Lighthouse Charity's 70th year in 2026, provide a great opportunity to unite teams, build lasting camaraderie, and connect people across projects and the wider industry.

# Actions we take



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Praise or support



Harassment

### Set up safe ways to raise concerns outside the normal chain of command

- Create a clear route for workers and supervisors to say when the environment or programme is no longer safe for people, so concerns are raised early without fear of blame, retaliation or harm to future work opportunities.
- Make clear that speaking up leads to review, support and reset, not blame.
- Create effective engagement and consultation channels that allow all persons to have a voice to promote inclusion and equality.
- Make anonymous reporting available for people.

### Define and support acceptable behaviour

#### Quick win

- Have policies and procedures on bullying and harassment.
- Educate people on what acceptable behaviour is, this could be included in site inductions.

# People factors and environment



Facilities

## Case study: National Grid Health Hub Programme

The programme piloted a Health Hub at the Sellindge IFA interconnector site to support the physical and mental health of everyone on-site.

### Organisation

National Grid, in partnership with the University of Warwick and Murphy.

### Risk or problem

The team wanted to tackle the mental health crisis in construction by addressing the traditionally poor wellbeing facilities.

### What we did differently

A Health Hub was trialled for 6-months on site, providing practical wellbeing support during the working day. This included:

- 24-hour gym and wellbeing coaching
- Healthy canteen and food provision
- Indoor and outdoor social spaces
- TV / quiet rooms for rest and recovery
- Health awareness events
- Visible mental health information and signposting.

### Investment

Investment focused on creating dedicated welfare and wellbeing space on site, alongside staffing, facilities management and coordinated health initiatives.

“Well, in this industry it’s just unheard of. So I know that them sort of facilities are available to other walks of life, but not in construction. So, it’s about time that you know.”

# People factors and environment

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## Case study: National Grid Health Hub Programme

### Outcomes

Workers using the hub for longer, and using more facilities, reported lower anxiety scores.

Workers described improved morale, healthier lifestyle choices and feeling more appreciated on site.

### Return on investment

National Grid's Health Hub demonstrated that practical, visible wellbeing investment can improve morale, reduce barriers to healthy choices and support lower anxiety on site.

- Lower anxiety can support better concentration, productivity and safety
- On-site food, fitness and recovery facilities reduced barriers to healthy choices
- Improved morale and appreciation can strengthen engagement and retention.

### Read more

[See the report.](#)

"I think that's absolutely maximised their efforts on site, and obviously health hubs giving them something, and I think they've given the project something back as well."

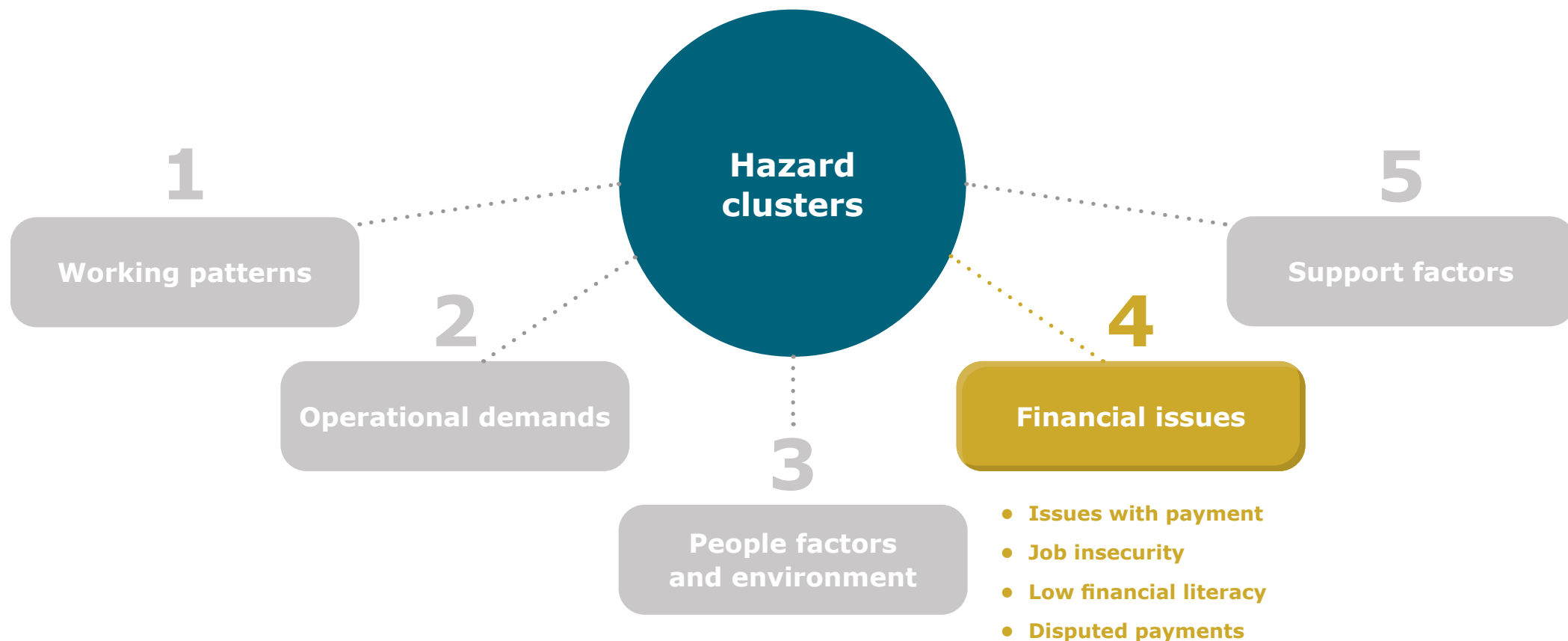
Chapter 07

# Financial issues



# Financial issues

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# Current reality

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Late payments, job insecurity, disputed payments and cashflow are a major source of ongoing financial strain, particularly for self-employed workers and those in smaller businesses. These groups can feel forced to absorb delay, rework, or extra demands to protect future opportunities, often at personal or business cost. This can create a situation where financial risk sits with those who have the least control over it.

Construction contracts may be awarded on the basis of overly ambitious pricing and programme deadlines. This may appear to save money upfront, but it can push mental health burden onto individuals. In practice, this means organisations and workers can be set up to fail from the start.

Many respondents felt existing regulations are not enforced strongly enough.

Self-employed workers are heavily relied upon, yet often face job insecurity due to the project-based nature of construction work. They may also have limited employment rights, including holiday pay and sick pay.

**In short, it is clear that the sector's business model needs to change.**

"Non-payment culture in the industry is rife and incredibly damaging."

"I've owned my company now for 9 years and not once have I had a holiday in which I haven't worked. A few days lost and it impacts but mentally but financially as well."

Sample of quotes from the Warwick consultation evidence.

# Opportunity for change

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We have a clear opportunity to create a fairer and more stable financial model for construction. We can procure work on realistic budgets and programmes, rather than lowest price alone, and hold clients accountable for financially sustainable delivery.

We can strengthen payment practices through enforceable terms, prompt payment and reliable systems that improve cashflow across the supply chain, especially for SMEs and self-employed workers.

We can also reduce insecurity through clearer protections around pay, notice periods and timelines, while offering free financial literacy support to help workers and businesses build confidence, plan ahead and manage pressure more effectively.



## On the ground: Practical financial guidance



The Crown Estate piloted onsite Independent Financial Adviser sessions at Morley House for contractors and subcontractors.

Fourteen people attended and all rated the support as “very good”.

The sessions gave people practical guidance on money worries, including one case where timely advice helped someone avoid losing their home.

By helping people feel more financially secure, this support can reduce stress and distraction, making it easier for workers to make safer, healthier choices on site.

# Hazards

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There are three main hazards that we must address:



## Issues with payments

Late payment, extended payment terms and uncertainty over when money will arrive create stress across the supply chain. Workers and smaller businesses may struggle to manage bills, wages and materials, leading to anxiety and distraction at work.



## Job insecurity

Short-term projects, gaps between jobs and changing labour demand create uncertainty. This can cause ongoing stress, push people to look further afield for work, make planning ahead harder, and hamper their ability to challenge poor conditions for fear of losing work.



## Low financial literacy

Many workers and smaller businesses have limited support on budgeting, tax, cashflow and financial planning. This can make money pressures harder to manage, increase vulnerability to debt and reduce confidence in dealing with financial problems.

# Actions we take: A summary

The research highlighted clear ways to tackle the risks and the harm caused by financial issues.

The actions 'upstream' (those higher up towards 'eliminate the risk') will be more effective.

Remember to choose a variety, and that the number of actions you choose can 'multiply' the effects you see.



Financial issues	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	Set <b>financially viable programmes</b> from the outset through <b>fair payment terms, value-based procurement</b> and <b>realistic pricing</b> , so financial pressure is not designed into the system or passed down the supply chain.
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Actively <b>monitor payment performance, cashflow pressure and workforce stability</b> , and take early action where issues emerge, while <b>avoiding reliance on unpaid overtime or unsecure working arrangements</b> to manage commercial pressures.
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	Provide <b>clear communication, support and protections for those experiencing financial strain</b> , including secure escalation routes and fair treatment, so people are not forced to absorb financial pressure at the expense of their wellbeing.



Client



Contractor

# How we create financial stability from the outset



## Eliminate the risk



Payments

### Set fair payment terms from the outset

- Establish prompt payment. The CLC has an ambition that the construction industry's standard payment terms are 30 days (*CLC, 2015*). This should be across the project hierarchy and supply chain so that everyone is paid within a reasonable timescale.
- Agree clear payment schedules before work starts, including staged payments, prompt payment on completion of agreed milestones and reasonable deposits when it is needed for materials or specialist equipment.

### Treat late payment as a material project risk

- Determine escalation routes for everyone involved in the project, if payment is not made within a reasonable time.
- Provide visible senior ownership of payment performance across the project lifecycle. Ensure they treat late payment as a material risk requiring intervention, so financial pressure is reduced across the whole project ecosystem and payment reliability becomes part of a healthy delivery system.

"Late or uncertain payment is one of the biggest stressors for small builders. It's not acceptable to leave anyone worrying about when they'll be paid, or turning up to work unwell because they feel they've got no choice.

Many tradespeople are not just completing tasks, they are also managing cashflow, handling customers and carrying business risk. Paying on time is one of the simplest ways to create financial stability, reduce unnecessary pressure and help good businesses focus on delivering quality work."

- Anna Scothern Chair, CLC Domestic RMI Taskforce

# How we create more secure and sustainable work



## Eliminate the risk



Payments



Job security

## Procure for value

- Choose value-based procurement, rejecting programmes that risk relying on unpaid overtime or could create distressed delivery.
- Require social value, technical impact, and outcomes to be weighed and evidenced in tender evaluations alongside financial and programme.
- Scrutinise tender proposals and request explanations around assumptions and exclusions. Ask questions about resource loading vs. programme.

## Provide clearer pipeline certainty

- Publish forward pipelines, phasing assumptions and longer-term work opportunities where possible to enable sector investment in skills and innovation.
- Use frameworks where appropriate to promote continuity, not repeated churn, so businesses can invest in people, skills and direct employment with more confidence.

# How we ensure stronger payment performance and job security



## Reduce the risk



Payments



Job security

### Make payment performance visible across the project

- Require visibility of payment performance across the supply chain, including lower tiers where possible.
- Use reporting, dashboards or other mechanisms to understand where delays are occurring. Review this alongside cost, programme and safety, and intervene early where issues emerge. In this way, payment risks are identified early and not hidden within the supply chain.

### Review employment protections across the workforce

- Understand the balance of directly employed and non-directly employed labour, and what protections are in place for those with less security. Include this in project performance updates, so risks linked to unsecure work are visible and managed early.

# How we create financial stability from the outset



Contractor

## Eliminate the risk



Payments

### Agree and uphold fair payment terms from the outset

- Question unclear or unrealistic payment terms. Agree clear payment schedules before work starts, including staged payments, prompt invoicing at agreed milestones and appropriate deposits where required for materials or mobilisation.

### Avoid passing financial pressure down the supply chain

- Build resilience into your contractual structures to mitigate pressure from passing on late payment to your subcontractors and suppliers. This foresight reduces the risk to you and your supply chain.
- Understand the profile and needs of your supply chain. Explore whether extra protections may be beneficial, for example weekly paid instead of monthly. In this way, smaller businesses are protected from excessive financial risk, particularly when they are least able to absorb it.

# How we act when financial pressure emerges



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Payments

### Make financial pressure visible and act early

- Track payment delays, cashflow pressure in the supply chain, and the impact of financial strain on working hours, behaviour and wellbeing.
- Monitor and publish payment performance, including across tiers of the supply chain where possible, so issues are visible and not hidden.
- Review these risks, and when pressure emerges, make sure this is escalated and management action is taken. This helps problems to be identified early so they are not silently absorbed by workers.

### Manage commercial and programme recovery well

- Make sure commercial and programme recovery plans do not default to longer hours.
- Back supervisors when they challenge delivery that relies on unpaid effort, so financial pressure is managed properly rather than absorbed by the workforce.

# How we create more secure and predictable work



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Job security

### Understand the level of direct vs. indirect employment

- Work with your supply chain to understand where additional protections are needed to promote greater job security. This could include reviewing the balance of directly employed, self-employed and agency labour.



#### Ask yourself:

Can we plan works and communicate to make sure that everyone feels a level of security at work, including agency and self-employed workers?

### Communicate workforce changes clearly and early

- Provide early warning for workforce changes to stop workers (including self employed and agency workers) from feeling the shock from work changing or dropping out.
- Encourage or mandate minimum notice periods for self-employed or agency workers to provide a level of security.
- Provide workforce changes as early as possible to ensure people feel valued and respected at work.
- Provide people with a view of future work opportunities so that they have foresight of where they will be working next to reduce stress and anxiety.

# How we create more secure and predictable work



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Financial literacy

### Provide practical financial literacy support

- Promote and signpost support on budgeting, tax, debt, pensions, cashflow and financial planning through trusted routes such as advisers, helplines or on-site sessions, so workers and smaller businesses feel more confident managing money pressures. Identify groups more exposed to insecurity, such as self-employed workers or small subcontractors.



# How we support people when financial pressure hits



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Payments

### Intervene quickly when payments are delayed

- Where payment delays arise, engage early with affected firms or workers to offer your support. Adjust sequencing, if you can, to reduce pressure and escalate to the client. These actions help prevent financial strain from turning into crisis, conflict, or unsafe behaviour.



Financial literacy

### Support financially vulnerable workers early

- If you are concerned that someone is in financial distress, act immediately. Signpost confidential advice for debt, hardship or mental health concerns, so people can access timely support.

Chapter 08

# *Support factors*



# Support factors

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# Current reality

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When barriers to good mental health persist, they can prevent people from speaking up, accessing support, or even recognising that something is wrong. This allows risks to build unchecked.

These barriers are often embedded in everyday decisions around programme, commercial pressure, resourcing and culture. Their impact is both widespread and largely invisible, which is why the focus must move beyond awareness and toward actively removing the conditions that create harm.

The industry's fragmented, multi-layered structure means workers in SMEs and sole traders may have less access to support than those in larger organisations with established employee assistance programmes.

But access is only part of the problem. Even where support exists, a deeply embedded culture of toughness stops people using it. Asking for help is still widely seen as weakness, and disclosure carries a real fear of losing work or damaging reputation. As a result, people suffer in silence.

"In a male-dominated industry in a culture where it is still seen as '**weak to speak**'... where site workers and tradespeople are seen as lesser... low mental health will continue to be a challenge for some time."

"If I went to my boss and said, I'm really struggling with the workload... and then all of a sudden, he comes to me and says, well, we're having a bit of a shuffle around in the business, **and we're going to drop you...**"

"I think it's maybe pride. I can deal with this myself. I can cope. I can cope, I can cope. But then **snap all of a sudden**, the person's not coping, do you know what I mean?"

Sample of quotes from the Warwick consultation evidence.

# Opportunity for change

In how we structure and resource mental health support, we can make help accessible to every worker, regardless of who employs them. This means investing in qualified, clearly signposted wellbeing support.

It also means tackling the barriers that stop people asking for help. Leaders who speak openly to challenge the stigma, training that challenges outdated norms, and clear accountability for wellbeing can help shift what feels normal across the industry.

Workers in SMEs should have the same access to support as those in larger organisations. Consistent, fair provision shows that mental health is a genuine priority... not just for some, but for everyone in construction.



## On the ground: Listening closely with Statom



Statom implemented a check in to routine notice and communicating emotional state asking every operative to say how they were really feeling.

While the majority came back positive or neutral, the survey surfaced a small proportion who were struggling and might never have "spoken up".

Statom responded promptly, providing site education, direct individual support, and signposting, with follow up for individuals that were struggling.

# Hazards

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There are three main hazards that we must address:



## Low mental health literacy

Mental health is not always understood or treated as a workplace risk. This can leave managers and workers unsure how to recognise distress, respond well or signpost support early.



## Low help seeking

Support can be uneven, especially for workers in SMEs, self-employed roles or transient jobs. Even where support exists, fear, mistrust and poor access can stop people using it.



## Mental health stigma

A macho, "sink or swim" culture can make disclosure feel risky. People may worry that speaking up will be seen as weakness or affect future work opportunities.

# Actions we take: A summary

The research highlighted clear ways to tackle the risks and the harm caused by poor mental health support.

The actions 'upstream' (those higher up towards 'eliminate the risk') will be more effective.

Remember to choose a variety, and that the number of actions you choose can 'multiply' the effects you see.



Support factors	
<b>ELIMINATE the risk</b>	N/A
<b>REDUCE the risk</b>	Ensure teams have access to <b>mental health literacy training</b> . Actively <b>promote conversations</b> and stories about <b>mental health</b> , especially those shared by leaders. Brief supervisors and managers on the contents of the Code.
<b>REDUCE the harm</b>	Require that <b>mental health support services are available to everyone</b> , and <b>signpost</b> this support well.



Client



Contractor

# How we increase mental health literacy



## Reduce the risk



Literacy

### Mental health awareness training

- Make sure that the client internal and external teams have access to mental health literacy training to recognise problems earlier, respond more confidently, and reduce the likelihood of issues escalating unnoticed.



Peter Devlin, devlinphoto.com

# How we reduce stigma around mental health



## Reduce the risk



Stigma

### Normalise conversations about mental health

- Actively promote conversations and stories about mental health, so stigma is reduced and workers feel more able to raise concerns before problems worsen.

### Use visible leadership to challenge stigma

- Encourage leaders and people who instruct work to share personal reflections or stories about stress, mental health or seeking support where appropriate. This ensures that modelling around mental health resiliency flows down and sets the tone.

“The professional client team sets the tone for the whole project. That starts with us having the mental health literacy to recognise risk, respond with self-awareness and empathy, and lead by example. When we put our own oxygen mask on first, we create the conditions for others to speak up, seek support and thrive.”

- Kristy Landsdown, Executive Director of Development,  
The Crown Estate

# How we empower people to seek support



## Reduce the harm



Seeking help

## Ensure everyone involved in the project can access support

- Encourage or require that mental health support services are available to everyone on a project, including professional teams, self-employed workers, agency workers and those employed through the supply chain, so support is available regardless of employer size or employment status.

Jump to a  
case study 

# How we increase mental health literacy



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Literacy

### Mental health awareness and resilience training

- Mental health awareness and resilience training to be provided to everyone working on projects and operational management teams. Workers and managers will be able to recognise problems earlier, respond more confidently, and reduce the likelihood of issues escalating unnoticed.
- Brief supervisors and managers on the contents of the Code to raise awareness of the risks and their role in identifying and responding to them early.



# How we reduce stigma around mental health



Contractor

## Reduce the risk



Stigma

### Normalise conversations about mental health

- Actively promote conversations and stories about mental health, so stigma is reduced and workers feel more able to raise concerns before problems worsen.

### Use visible leadership to challenge stigma

- Encourage senior leaders, managers and supervisors to share personal reflections or stories about stress, mental health or seeking support where appropriate, so mental health difficulties are not seen as a weakness or a barrier to career progression.

“I didn’t know what to do. I just felt like giving up. I didn’t initially seek help and instead tried to push through during an incredibly difficult time. I was unsure where to turn. Reaching out to The Silent Voices Construction Charity and **receiving their support saved me.**”

Jason Hobbs, Senior Lifting Supervisor on a large project who was assisted by The Silent Voices Charity

### Research insight: Why leaders speaking out matters

Psychosocial Safety Climate is shaped more by what leaders do than what organisations say (*Dollard and Bakker, 2010*).

When senior people share personal reflections on stress or seeking support, it signals that mental health is a real priority.

Our behaviour is strongly shaped by what high-status people around us do (*e.g. see the MINDSPACE framework*).

A leader who speaks openly about mental health doesn’t just reduce stigma for one person. They shift what feels normal for everyone watching.

# How we empower people to seek support



Contractor

## Reduce the harm



Seeking help

## Extend mental health support to all workers

- Provide mental health support services to everyone on a project, including self-employed workers, agency workers and those employed through the supply chain, so support is available regardless of employer size or employment status.

## Make support easy to find

- Promote EAPs, helplines and other support services during inductions and across site, so workers know what help is available and can seek support early. Support should be available 24/7 - and how to access it out of hours clearly communicated.

- Signpost sector-specific and specialist support. Use repeated, practical communication to help all workers understand what support exists and what to do in a crisis.

Quick win

# Support factors



Literacy



Seeking help



Stigma

## Case study: Jones Bros Civil Engineering Ltd mental health support

The programme embedded suicide awareness training, and community outreach to build a culture where no one faces wellbeing challenges alone.

### Organisation

Jones Bros Civil Engineering Ltd, in partnership with Mates in Mind and Vale of Clwyd Mind.

### Risk or problem

Suicide prevention remained a topic many found difficult to approach.

### What we did differently

Mental health support was embedded at a system level, rather than relying on individuals to seek help. This included:

- **suicide awareness training** with dedicated **awareness events**
- **“Breakfast for All” sessions** for informal, open group discussions about wellbeing on site
- **Incident Prevention Cards** to capture and recognise good practice
- sponsorship of the **D.O.R.I.S. mobile outreach service** to extend support into rural communities beyond project boundaries.

### Investment

Beyond the training and partnership costs, cross-departmental collaboration between HR, HSE, and site managers was needed to design and embed the programme.

# Support factors

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## Case study: Jones Bros Civil Engineering Ltd mental health support

### Outcomes

The programme demonstrated clear, measurable improvements:

- Improved **access to mental health resources** and normalised conversations across sites
- Improved **employee trust** in the MHFA programme, evidenced by increased uptake and feedback
- Improved **community reach** through the D.O.R.I.S. mobile outreach service with **1,473** members receiving support
- Maintained **cross-departmental ownership of mental health** as a shared responsibility

This demonstrates that proactive, structured wellbeing support improves both individual outcomes and organisational culture.

“Suicide awareness is no longer a taboo — it’s part of our proactive wellbeing agenda. In our workplace, no one must face mental health challenges alone.”

— Jones Bros

Chapter 09

*How we use  
mental health  
support roles*



# How we use support roles safely and effectively

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Mental Health support such as Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) are widely used across construction and can be valuable when they are visible, trusted and well supported. However, the evidence for their effectiveness is mixed (*Cochrane 2023*). The actions below help us to make use of Mental Health support roles safely and effectively.

## Non-medically qualified

Non-medically qualified support roles, such as line managers, caring colleagues or, if deployed, MHFAs:

- Put a clear **Mental Health Support policy or procedure** in place, including boundaries around the role and when concerns must be **escalated or signposted onwards**.
- Make sure those providing in house mental health support understand that their role is to **identify, listen and guide people to appropriate support**, not to carry responsibility for solving mental health problems themselves.
- Consider who is selected for these roles. Workers may be less likely to approach people in senior management positions, so **trusted and approachable people from across the workforce** may improve access.
- Hold **regular check-ins** with persons providing mental health support so they can discuss concerns, identify trends and receive support themselves.
- Provide those providing mental health support with access to **supervision, peer networks or trained medical professionals**, so they are not left carrying emotionally difficult situations alone.
- Clearly communicate what those providing mental health support **can and cannot provide**, and how workers can access **professional or emergency support** where needed.

Chapter 10

# Emergency plans



# How we respond in a crisis

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We must plan the emergency and trauma support before it is needed. Put clear arrangements in place for mental health emergencies and trauma events, whether they arise from a physical incident, a mental health crisis or another serious event.

## Prepare the key documentation and roles

- Document who is responsible for activating support, what steps they should take, and how workers will be helped during and after the event.
- Make sure responsible people understand the plan before it is needed, so the response is calm, timely and consistent.
- Standards such as ISO 45001 (Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems) and BS 30480 (Suicide and the Workplace) can help in the preparation of documents and emergency planning.

## Help people understand normal responses to trauma

- Provide simple education and support on the emotional and cognitive effects of emergencies and trauma, so people understand that reactions such as shock, distress, confusion or delayed emotions can be normal.
- Make it clear where people can go for help if they are struggling, so no one is left to manage the impact alone.

## Provide access to specialist trauma support

- Arrange access to trained medical or mental health professionals with experience in emergency and trauma response, so workers can receive appropriate support quickly when serious events occur.
- Make sure emergency and trauma response support is available 24/7 and how to access it at all times is clearly communicated.

If you are worried about someone's mental health, encourage them to seek support as early as possible. This may include contacting their GP, speaking to trusted friends or family, or accessing urgent mental health support through NHS 111.

If someone is at immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others, or there is a medical emergency, call 999.

Chapter 11

*Designing  
for our  
workforce*



# Our demographics

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Our workforce is made up of groups with **known risk factors**. Although not exclusively, our demographic is:

- largely male.
- self employed.
- mid-life weighted.
- more likely to include self-identified neurodivergence.
- culturally stoic.

In the coming pages, you will see that mental health risks are more likely to be **hidden and crisis led** in this demographic than in other groups.

To support greater diversity and representation, additional consideration and support may also be required for **women**, an **ageing workforce** and **younger people**, who may experience increased vulnerability in certain contexts.

The industry stressors including financial insecurity, job instability, long hours and limited support ([\[matesinmind.org\]](https://www.matesinmind.org), [\[construct-minds.co.uk\]](https://www.construct-minds.co.uk)) have a greater impact on the mental health of these groups.

Designing work around these characteristics does not only protect those most at risk. It creates a safer, healthier and more sustainable environment for everyone.

This will help us to retain and attract the best people in the construction sector.



**Ask yourself:**

Do you consider how we provide information in a way that best suits someone who is neurodivergent?



**Ask yourself:**

What practical changes could you make so women on your sites feel safer, more respected, and better supported in their daily work?

## Risk profile: Males in mid-life

Across the UK, **around three in four suicides are by men**, with a peak **in mid-life** around 50-54 ([ONS, 2024](#)) ([ONS, 2025](#)).

The risk is even higher in men **without degree-level education** ([EPPM, 2024](#)).

### Distress can stay hidden.

In male-dominated workforces with a stoic culture, the cultural norm is to “just push through”. People are **less likely to ask for help**, and **more likely to push through** stress, long hours or pain.

“Heroics” can be treated as competence, especially by long-service workers who may feel that “if I can’t cope, I shouldn’t be here.”

For mid-life workers, this can combine with strains from with physical wear, financial responsibility, relationship strain.



# Risk profile: Neurodivergence

**One in four construction workers** describe themselves as **neurodivergent** (*CIOB, 2025*) (*NFB, 2023*).

## Neurodivergent stress may be misread.

A worker may seem withdrawn, irritable or shut down, and this can be treated as a performance issue rather than a sign of stress.

Neurodivergent workers may also be **less likely to disclose**, because they worry about being seen as less capable, losing work or being excluded from teams.

Construction work can add to this pressure through unclear instructions, poor communication, changing plans and tight deadlines. These **stressors can be especially hard for neurodivergent workers** to manage.

Mulholland Media, mulhollandmedia.co.uk



# Risk profile: SMEs and self-employed

In construction, **over 99% small-medium enterprises (SMEs)** and most employ **fewer than five people**.

**37%** of the construction workforce is **self-employed** [[bcis.co.uk](https://www.bcis.co.uk)].

Workers tend to lack formal support such as HR or employee assistance programmes and training, with no formal “speak up” routes.

They rely on being paid on time, and financial pressure builds quickly. Change to timelines and scope become a personal financial risk. There is little buffer, so family time, and other important areas of their wellbeing suffer easily.

This creates **less stability and fewer safety nets when things go wrong**. As a result, **mental health risks cannot be managed at the employer level** alone, as they might be in more stable, office-based settings.

Tomasz Kozak, kozakphoto.com



# Designing for our workforce

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Our demographics heavily inform our approach to the actions we recommend in this Code. Here are just a few selected principles.

## We go “upstream”

We can protect workers by changing things “**upstream**” in the **system before issues hit** SMEs and workers.

You will see actions in The Code **reduce pressure at source** such as through realistic programmes, fair payment and clear permission to stop work patterns that depend on hidden sacrifice.

## We do not rely on “speaking up”

You will notice that in The Code we **do not lean on interventions which rely on workers to “speak up”**.

This is because disclosure is unlikely to be an early warning signal in our demographic.

## We are clear that “heroic effort” is not expected

We can protect workers by adopting a “**no silent heroics**” stance.

You will see some actions in The Code make clear that solving problems through unpaid extra effort, extended hours or personal sacrifice is not acceptable.

# Psychosocial safety climate: “The cause of causes”

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Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is about whether people believe psychological health and safety genuinely matter in their workplace. It has been dubbed the ‘cause of the causes’ of work stress.

## For workers, it matters that:

- they can see **leaders actively tackling** mental health, not just talking about it.
- psychological health is **treated as a real priority**, alongside cost, programme, quality and physical safety.
- they see **open communication** about mental health in the workplace.
- they are **involved in decisions** that shape mental health practices.

Improving the PSC of an organisation is associated with measurable improvement in mental health as well as employee engagement, absenteeism and turnover.

Due to the measurable effects of PSC, you will notice this thinking has shaped The Code and the actions we recommend.

“Believing that you are cared for really matters.

The question is not only, “Do we support people when they struggle?” It is, “Can they see we are designing work so they are not harmed in the first place?”

- *Dr. Carla Toro, Mental Health Research Lead, Warwick Medical School*

Chapter 12

# *Following the Code*



# How to follow the Code recommendations

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You can demonstrate that you have followed the recommendations by following the evidence-based approach in Plan-Do-Check-Act and integrating mental health risk management into normal business activity. You can use these questions to reflect on your progress.

## Plan

Have we identified the risks and actions?

- ✓ Completed risk assessments against the relevant *hazard clusters*, including identifying who is most at risk of harm.
- ✓ Identified the actions that are most effective in the hazard clusters in all three categories of ELIMINATE the risk, REDUCE the risk and REDUCE the harm



### Contractors:

- ✓ Define how *mental health support roles will be managed and supported*.
- ✓ Make sure *emergency plans are in place*.



### Clients:

- ✓ Ask how your project team and contractors action recommendations in the Code at tender stage. Explain it is assessed as a weighted contributor towards whether they are successful in winning the project.
- ✓ Make it a contractual requirement for all consultants and contractors, including labour agencies, to comply with your selected Code actions.

# How to follow the Code recommendations

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## Do

Have we taken proportionate action?

- ✓ Embedded mental health risk management into existing systems and processes, such as health and safety management systems, project governance, Construction Phase Plans and risk registers.
- ✓ Implemented the actions and control measures selected.
- ✓ Deployed mental health support including peer supporters and line manager capability, in line with clearly defined roles and governance arrangements. This includes setting clear boundaries and providing adequate support for people in these roles.
- ✓ Emergency plans have been briefed and communicated to all relevant people.

Stuart Key, stuartkey.co.uk



# How to follow the Code recommendations

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## Check

Have we monitored the effectiveness of our approach?

- ✓ Gathered data such as mental health metrics (for example, breaches of fatigue policies and welfare standards), success, good practice, and learning opportunities.
- ✓ Use employee engagement surveys and / or consultation to track the effectiveness of implemented control measures. These could be completed formally or informally.
- ✓ Used this data to identify emerging risks, systemic issues, or areas where actions may be ineffective or require strengthening.
- ✓ Reviewed whether mental health risk management remains embedded in normal business activity rather than operating as a standalone initiative.

Tomasz Kozak, kozakphoto.com



# How to follow the Code recommendations

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## Act

Have we taken action based on the evidence?

- ✓ Used insights from monitoring to improve the actions we take, particularly for repeated or systemic issues.
- ✓ Updated risk assessments, actions and management arrangements.
- ✓ Evidenced the actions taken and formally closed out improvement activities.
- ✓ Used learning to inform wider organisational practice and, where appropriate, contribute to broader industry learning.
- ✓ Contributed to future versions of the Code by submitting interventions, best practice or case studies to the CLC.

**Sharing your insights openly across the sector helps to evolve its evidence base and strengthen future approaches.**

Chapter 13

# *Acknowledgements*



# CLC mental health project steering group

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The Steering Group brought together representatives from construction, health and wellbeing, research, government and industry bodies to shape the direction and practical relevance of the Code.

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Murphy  
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Seddon Construction  
Sir Robert McAlpine  
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Wates Group



“Thank you for engaging with our Joint Code of Practice on psychosocial risk in construction.

Now we are aware of the scale of the issue,  
we will be judged by our actions.

We have the evidence, we have the industry behind us,  
and we have the framework. This is our moment to act.”

• *Mark Reynolds, Co-Chair of the Construction Leadership Council* •



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