

TOOLBOX TALK



Talking about Mental Health

Background The Building Mental Health Alliance is a network of construction industry representatives who have joined forces to promote better mental health within the construction industry. This ToolBox Talk is a useful guide for employee sessions promoting mental health conversations in the workplace. The BMHA encourages construction employers to talk openly about mental health, signpost support available and to actively train employees on Mental Health First Aid.

Session Objective:	To highlight the causes of poor mental health and promote awareness of signs that a colleague, friend or family member may be struggling. To signpost the support available and to encourage positive and open conversations about mental health.
What is a Toolbox Talk:	A toolbox talk is a short presentation and discussion to a workforce on a single aspect on health and safety. It's an informal gathering that can happen on site with employees and subcontractors.
Resources:	<p>If you're in a suitable location, you may want to show a video but feel free to share the link by email or instant message after your toolbox talk.</p> <p>You don't have to play all 3, you could do a different one when you revisit this toolbox talk again.</p> <p>BMHA Training Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS01H9b-7Lo</p> <p>Crossrail Training Video: https://youtu.be/REm7Hp6wc0c</p> <p>The Lighthouse Club Training Video: https://youtu.be/qRXx4Vn1lkY</p> <p>This list isn't exhaustive, lots of charities and organisations have great resources including other ToolBox Talks.</p>
Time:	This session is designed to promote discussion, it can take 10 minutes in smaller groups or up to 35 minutes if the additional video resources are used.

Reassure and Explain This session is to prompt conversations about looking after our mental health. What we talk about today will stay confidential if someone opens up or asks a question. If anyone would like more information or some support in confidence, please reach out after the session. We will also signpost some places where you, your colleagues, friends, or family can get confidential support.

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Set the scene

- ▶ Safety is paramount in construction, so too is the health and wellbeing of those who work in it.
- ▶ 'Every single working day in the UK two construction workers take their own life' – Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity.
- ▶ Talking about mental health is a good first step to challenge the stigma about mental health.
- ▶ This session is to help you and us to understand the causes of poor mental health, learn to recognise the signs of mental health issues and how to help both yourself and others.

Why construction?

ASK What is it about working in construction that can cause stress and anxiety?

- ▶ Uncertainty of work and pay
- ▶ Travelling to where the work is
- ▶ Cold, dark and damp working conditions
- ▶ Early starts and long days
- ▶ Rising costs
- ▶ Physical strain on the body

ASK What can trigger low or poor mental health?

- ▶ Addictions such as alcohol, gambling, drugs
- ▶ The stress and stigma of physical health problems
- ▶ Relationships and family
- ▶ Work stresses
- ▶ Finances

Recognising the signs

Construction workers are surrounded by health and safety signs every day such as 'wear a hard hat', 'caution overhead power', 'visitors must sign in'... but the signs someone is struggling with their mental health won't be an obvious warning. An individual may not even realise that they need help.

ASK What signs might a colleague show if they're struggling with mental health?

- ▶ Quiet and not themselves
- ▶ High/Low Moods
- ▶ Snappy or grumpy
- ▶ Exhausted/tired, sleeping in
- ▶ Signs of alcohol or drug abuse
- ▶ Talking about ending it, life isn't worth it or questioning whether they can go on
- ▶ Panic attacks

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Showcase examples

(you can play these videos or share them afterwards)

Here's a video that really highlights the signs you might notice if someone is struggling.

- ▶ [BMHA Training Video](#)
- ▶ [The Lighthouse Club Training Video](#)
- ▶ [Crossrail Training Video](#)

ASK Would anyone feel comfortable starting the conversation with someone in that situation?

If you were the individual struggling with mental health, how could you approach someone to talk?

How to start a conversation:

1. Ask Twice (Are you really ok?)
2. Listen (be present and make sure you're in a suitable place)
3. Be Kind (show empathy and support, putting yourself in their shoes)

How can you help:

- ▶ Find a good place to talk
- ▶ Listen
- ▶ Reassure them
- ▶ Just be there
- ▶ Signpost them to help and support
- ▶ Encourage them to talk

Mental Health First Aiders

Acknowledge if your employer or construction site has Mental Health First Aiders, be sure to let people know who they are or ask them to say a few words during the session.

For construction employers - Mental Health First Aider training is available from a variety of organisations such as The Lighthouse Club and Inspire in Northern Ireland.

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Where to get help

The Lighthouse Club

The only construction mental health charity (UK and Ireland)
Free and confidential helpline, counselling, and financial support in critical situations. Dedicated support advisors who are experienced working with those in the construction industry.

- ▶ **Helpline Northern Ireland and UK:** 0345 605 1956
- ▶ **Helpline ROI:** 1800 939 122
- ▶ **Text and chat service:** Text HARDHAT to 85258 (NI and UK) or Text HARDHAT to 50808 (ROI) for free and confidential guidance and support via text.
- ▶ **Download** the Construction Industry Helpline app on Google Play or Apple App Store.

The Samaritans

- ▶ **Helpline:** 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org for advice or download the Self-Help app.

Lifeline

- ▶ **Helpline:** 0808 808 8000
- ▶ **Visit:** www.lifelinehelpline.info

For mental health support services in Northern Ireland

- ▶ **Visit:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-services>

Posters and Signs

Encourage posters to be placed in welfare rooms, toilets etc and prompt your colleagues to take a photo of support line numbers so they have it to hand when they need it.

Close

Today is the start of a conversation to show that it's ok to experience a problem with your mental health, just as much as we can experience problems with physical health.

Sadly, too many people in construction can't see a way out and end their life; we want to do all we can to support the people around us and get them the support they need.

Remind your group where they can get support from.

