Poor mental health can affect any one of us at any time. In fact, one in four of us will experience a mental health problem each year, regardless of our background.

HBF is working to help employers understand mental health issues and how they can best support their employees.
Increasing Mental Health Awareness in Home Building

Poor mental health can affect any one of us at any time. In fact, one in four of us will experience a mental health problem each year, regardless of our background. The home building industry is, of course, not immune to the challenges of mental ill health. On the contrary, the scale of mental health problems within the construction industry makes for sobering reading, with two construction workers taking their own lives every working day.

Mental health problems are understandably distressing for the individual concerned. However, in some cases, this already difficult experience can be compounded further through knock-on effects which detrimentally impact that person’s relationship with their family, friends and employer.

As an industry, we need to work collectively to support our workforce. We have a responsibility to provide a culture in which people feel comfortable to admit that they’re not ‘ok’, to ask for help and know where to turn for advice and support without fear of judgement.

This is why HBF launched its Mental Health Awareness Campaign with Lighthouse Club, the construction industry charity, in March 2019. Together with our members we are working to raise awareness of mental health problems, train people to spot the signs that a colleague may be struggling and better signpost the help available such as the Construction Industry Helpline.

Mental health is complex and the challenges facing our industry are not something that can be ‘fixed’ overnight. However, we can all take steps to help those in need, no matter how small. It’s time to start talking.

Stewart Baseley, Executive Chairman, Home Builders Federation

A message from Lighthouse Club

HBF and its members have donated over £120,000 this year to ensure that the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity continues to support our construction workforce in need.

Last year, 69% of the occupational groups seeking financial assistance from the Charity were directly related to home building including; bricklayers, ground workers, plasterers, dry liners, roofers, scaffolders, carpenters and plant operatives.

HBF are working with the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity to raise awareness of the support available and deliver positive change within the industry. This is being achieved not just through generous donations, but home builders of all sizes across the country are also pledging their commitment by signing a mental health charter and ensuring that they develop a positive mental health culture within their organisations. Many are also purchasing helpline posters that are displayed on site and helpline cards that are distributed to the workforce to ensure that workers know where to turn to if they need support.

Two construction workers take their own life every working day in the UK and 20% of all time off work is reported as being related to stress, anxiety or depression. This simply isn’t acceptable. We are morally obligated to do everything we can to change these horrendous statistics, not only to help our existing workforce but also to encourage new talent into the industry.

Without the support of HBF and its members, we simply wouldn’t be able to provide the charitable services that are so desperately needed by our construction workforce and their families. Our mission is that no worker should feel alone in a crisis and we now have momentum behind a number of mental health initiatives to help us achieve that. But there is still a long way to go before we remove the stigma associated with talking about poor mental health and bringing about a significant cultural change in our industry.

If you would like to find out more about the charity’s work, visit www.lighthouseclub.org.

Bill Hill, CEO, Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity

What are the wider consequences?

1) **Employers**: poor mental health is costing employers between £33 billion and £42 billion a year.* The greatest cost comes from reduced productivity among people who are at work but unwell, which costs businesses twice as much as sickness absence relating to poor mental health. Approximately 400,000 working days are lost annually to stress, anxiety and depression.

2) **The economy**: mental ill-health is costing the UK economy between £74 billion and £99 billion per year.*

*The Stevenson/Farmer Review of mental health and employers, Thriving at Work, 2017
How is the home building industry tackling this?

While the industry has worked hard in recent years on health and safety initiatives to ensure workers are safe physically, an overwhelming 88% of people working in the sector believe more mental health support is needed.

In March 2019, HBF launched its Mental Health Awareness Campaign supported by Lighthouse Club, the construction industry charity dedicated to delivering financial and emotional support to the construction community and their families. Since the launch HBF has driven collective action across the house building industry.

Over 50 developers have pledged their support for the campaign and have collectively donated £120,000 to Lighthouse Club and its services. HBF and its members are also undertaking action in line with the Building Mental Health Framework to increase awareness of mental health across the industry. Action includes:

- Signing the Building Mental Health Charter
  This first step sets out a commitment to supporting the mental health of employees and tackling the stigma associated with mental illness. Over 40 members have already signed the Charter.

- Delivering toolbox talks
  Through these interactive sessions companies are raising awareness of mental health issues with their employees and educating them on the possible signs of stress, anxiety and depression. These talks have enabled employers and employees to start an important conversation about mental health at work and to break down the stigma.

- Offering mental health awareness training
  These training days allow managers, foremen, supervisors and others to receive in-depth training about understanding mental health and identifying the warning signs of deteriorating health in employees and allowing pre-emptive measures to be taken.

- Developing Mental Health First Aiders
  A number of our members have already committed to establishing and maintaining a healthy ratio of certified Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) to workers and contractors on site. MHFAs can play a vital role in helping to build a positive mental health culture and support network both at a site-level and within the company itself.

- Signposting support
  Members are taking steps to ensure employees know how to access help, including their company’s Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and the confidential 24/7 construction industry helpline, run by Lighthouse Club. Posters and cards promoting the helpline and App are provided in social spaces in offices and across construction sites.

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- Galliard Homes ‘Take a minute’ campaign supports employees mental health
  Galliard Homes used Mental Health Awareness week to launch their ‘Take a minute’ campaign across all its sites and offices. Activities included financial well-being sessions, health check-ups, mindfulness workshops and high impact work outs.

- Barratt Developments
  Redrow
  - The Mind Your Head mental health awareness campaign was launched at Redrow’s Building Responsibly Conferences in March 2019.
  - All managers will be attending a one day mental health awareness session, starting in October. This will be followed by a bespoke one day session for directors in November.
  - A ‘Toolbox Talk’ has been developed for use on site. This will be rolled out in October with drop in sessions being offered on site from November.
  - Over 200 people signed up to become a Mental Health First Aider – over 100 have been trained so far, with dates to train remaining employees by year end.

- Telford Homes
  Telford Homes has two highly successful mental health weeks to help raise awareness amongst its employees, provide support for workers in the industry, and to eradicate the stigma of mental illness. Activities included wellbeing sessions such as mindfulness and yoga and workshops in head office with speakers from organisations such as the Samaritans, MIND, BUPA and the Lighthouse Club. They also set up manned stalls on all of their sites promoting the Construction Industry Helpline, helped operate on site to download the Construction Industry Helpline app and mandated that all operations construction staff attended a mental health briefing session delivered by a trained Mental Health First Aider.

- Home Builders Take Action - Case Studies
  Galliard Homes
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  Barratt Developments
  Health and Wellbeing Calendar
  A Health and Wellbeing desk calendar was launched in 2018 and again in 2019 to assist in implementing a health and wellbeing culture and to encourage employees to think about their overall health. The calendar is based around 12 key themes and linked to national health and wellbeing days, and provides hints and tips as well as practical information.

  Telford Homes
  Telford Homes has presented its importance at HBF’s Policy Conference. The Group Managing Director closed the weeks and subsequently has presented its importance at HBF’s Policy Conference.

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Next steps

HBF and its members are continuing to promote good mental health in home building, including on awareness days such as World Mental Health Day.

We also aim to reach more subcontractors through the campaign, to ensure that all employees across the industry are aware of where to turn for help should they need it.

Get involved now and be part of the solution by visiting [www.hbf.co.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.hbf.co.uk/mentalhealth) or get in touch with us directly on the details across.

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