



The Value of Creating a Culture of Trust

Insights from the Built Environment sector

Insights

Our research highlights a clear opportunity to better align policy, culture and lived employee experience, particularly for psychological and menstrual health conditions.

Physical health challenges are well-supported, with the highest levels of confidence raising issues (68%). Provision for these challenges is also strong, and this sector had the lowest number of respondents who reported “no support” (17%).

However, there is further scope to increase support for those in the sector experiencing mental health, menstrual, and neurodiversity-related challenges, where support is more fragmented. Confidence to raise issues was lower (45%) and up to 39% reported no support. Employees facing these challenges experience a greater impact on their career and represent a higher risk of attrition.

Presenteeism is a crucial but largely hidden issue for the sector, with 79–85% continuing to work while impaired, and tasks taking 1–2 hours longer for a third of employees across all conditions.

Culture is a key driver of confidence. While 21% strongly feel safe discussing mental health challenges, experiences of psychological safety are often influenced by individual relationships rather than being consistently embedded across organizations. As a result, there is a significant opportunity to unlock productivity across the sector.



Only 21% of those in the sector feel confident discussing mental health challenges

Insights

Although mental ill-health is a pervasive challenge across UK workplaces, there is growing recognition of its impact within construction and increasing focus on addressing it. Our survey reinforced this, highlighting mental health as the most significant risk factor in the built environment and contributing to an annual absence of 24.7 days – the highest of any sector*

More than half of respondents (53%) reported a negative impact on career progression stemming from mental health challenges, while 42% had left a role due to mental health. The survey also identified opportunities to strengthen support provision across the sector. While policies and frameworks are increasingly in place, up to 39% reported no support for menopausal or menstrual challenges, while 28% reported no support for mental health.

There is an opportunity to improve the consistency of their implementation and impact. Organizations such as [Beard Construction](#) are demonstrating good practice through standards like ISO 45001, providing examples the wider sector can build upon.

Encouragingly, there is strong recognition of the value of workplace wellbeing standards. 76% in the sector believe they are valuable, however 66% say current provisions do not enable them to remain at work effectively. This highlights a clear opportunity for organizations to enhance support.

**compared with healthcare and food, drink, retail and trade*

Suicide rates amongst construction workers are 3.7x higher than the UK national average



Key takeaways

1. Clear hierarchy of support

Physical health is firmly embedded - 68% of employees feel confident approaching their employer. However, other areas lag behind: Mental health (50%), Neurodiversity (45%) and Menopause (51%).

This gap reflects a systemic imbalance in how different health needs are understood, prioritized and normalized.

2. Culture is just as important as policy

76% of employees believe wellbeing standards are valuable and 40% say they are very familiar with workplace wellbeing policies. But beneath this, trust remains fragile.

Only 21% strongly agree they feel safe discussing mental health challenges and 33% say they do not feel safe discussing their neurodiversity.



3. Presenteeism and the cost to productivity

79% of employees continue working with mental health challenges and menopause-related challenges. 85% continue working with neurodiversity-related challenges. Productivity is significantly impacted – a third report tasks taking 1–2 hours longer when their wellbeing deteriorates

4. Support is inconsistent

A third reported no support for mental health challenges. That number rose to 39% for menstrual and menopausal health. This creates inequity between employees, a perception of unfairness and unpredictability and reliance on individual managers.

5. Disconnect between support and outcome

Most employees recognize the value of wellbeing policies, but two-thirds say that the support provided does not enable them to continue working effectively. Organizations need to shift from measuring policies and programmes, to confidence, performance and retention.



The role of workplace wellbeing standards

The modelling makes clear the value of workplace HW support and identifies the premium available if employees are confident that they can come forward and that help would be on offer.

Creating an environment in which employees feel confident about support on offer and comfortable coming forwards is not achieved simply by an employer telling them they should feel this way. True confidence – and therefore the associated premium – requires more than just words or tick-box exercises. This is where workplace wellbeing standards, such as those published by ISO or BSI, have a critical role to play.

Crucially, such standards are practical and clear guides, flexible enough to align to different types of workplaces and different employee and employer experiences.

Importantly, while many workplaces will have these in place, these may not always be visible or explicitly communicated to employees. Generally, employee familiarity with standards (generally, as opposed to specific ISO or BSI standards) was limited, yet once, employees felt they would be valuable in creating confidence.

	DE	UK	US	Total
Very familiar	39%	42%	49%	57%
Heard of them, but not sure what they include	38%	42%	36%	38%
Not familiar at all	19%	14%	12%	26%

Table 9: Familiarity with workplace wellbeing standards / best practice guidance implemented by your employer

	DE	UK	US	Total
Very valuable	35%	44%	52%	40%
Somewhat valuable	38%	38%	34%	36%
Neither valuable nor invaluable	17%	10%	5%	12%
Not very / not at all valuable	6%	6%	5%	8%

Table 10: Perceptions of value of workplace standards / best practice guidance for employee wellbeing and performance

Conclusion and key insights

A clear and consistent narrative emerges linking workplace confidence and availability and awareness of support with improved productivity outcomes. While everyone has moments where their physical or mental wellbeing are not optimal, the support they receive at these moments from their employer could be the difference between them needing merely a brief moment to recuperate or a protracted absence or even exit from work – impacting not only the individual but the organization and wider society.

Lower confidence to approach employers with HW challenges and lower expectation of accessing support is consistently associated with higher productivity losses, driven by longer periods of absenteeism and a higher presenteeism risk. From the research we can draw the following conclusions:



Build confidence that support is available

We all have times when our health or wellbeing impacts our ability to work. But our research shows that confidence in how this will be handled at work is critical - and has real economic impact. Employees who feel less confident approaching their employer tend to have bigger productivity losses, from both more time off and greater presenteeism. Low confidence also means employees are more likely to leave their job or take long periods of leave when health challenges arise.

This means that having support on offer is not enough. Going further to remove stigma and ensure employees are comfortable talking about ill-health or wellbeing challenges and reassured that they will receive support is vital.

Early intervention can translate into long-term gains

Employees who feel less able to approach their employer are more likely to experience extended absences or job separation. This suggests problems escalate when issues are not raised or support is not forthcoming. As a result, low confidence not only amplifies day-to-day productivity losses but also contributes to more severe and sustained disruptions to workforce participation. Thus, employers do have the power to shape outcomes even if the fact someone is unwell is out of their hands, by prioritizing early intervention.

This requires a mindset shift, towards long-term thinking. Supporting employees with health and wellbeing challenges may feel like an outlay beyond an employer's direct obligations, but only when viewed from a short-term perspective. As our data makes clear, there is a not insignificant potential premium to be gained, but it must be seen as an investment in the future.

Structured provision can move the dial

Employers generally want to do the right thing, but, currently, support remains inconsistent. This is especially the case looking beyond physical health, as many workers report receiving no support at all when needed. Yet where clear workplace support is in place, it brings identifiable benefits. In these cases, absence is lower, showing that structured provision, often underpinned by formal health and wellbeing standards, can help build confidence and reduce productivity losses.

HW workplace wellbeing standards and related workplace provision represents an effective lever for reducing productivity losses associated with HW challenges, while also improving overall workplace responsiveness and resilience.

Generating the confidence premium

Ultimately, most employees want to be productive and contribute to a company's success, especially on arrival in a role. They do not want to be impeded by health and wellbeing challenges. Similarly, most employers are well-meaning and genuinely want to support the health and wellbeing of their team. But they are facing competing priorities, a changing world of work, and ongoing political uncertainty. Truly delivering health and wellbeing support and generating that premium can feel daunting.

For employers looking to foster greater confidence among employees, strengthening workplace provisions via HW standards is a practical means of building employee confidence, signalling that an organization is prepared and willing to offer support.

This is where standards can be a vital tool to build a culture of trust.





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