



# Impact Report

## 2024



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**Trigger warning:** The following content contains mention of suicide and mental ill-health, please bear this in mind when choosing when and where you read our 2024 Impact Report.





# Foreword by Kevin Myers

**My first year as Chair of the Board of Trustees for Mates in Mind has been one of both continuities, change and growth for the charity. I would firstly like to thank Steve Hails for his leadership as Chair since the charity was established, and for his willingness to stay on as a Trustee to ensure we have the benefit of his experience. We also welcomed two new Trustees in July. I am grateful for the continued time and commitment that all our Trustees give to Mates in Mind.**

I would also like to thank the British Safety Council (BSC) for their ongoing support for the charity.

It has been a year of change within the organisation; Sam Downie started in February as the new Managing Director (MD), and benefitted from a thorough handover from Sarah Meek, who did so much to lead the team through the pandemic.

Awareness of mental health issues has increased significantly within our communities, the construction industry and other higher-risk sectors, since Mates in Mind's inception in 2017. Increased awareness leads to changing needs and expectations from our current and prospective Supporters. We have already benefited from Sam's breadth of experience in change management and developing charities strategically to achieve their potential.

Sam has supported the Board in reviewing and updating the charity's vision, mission and need, so that it effectively reflects and responds to developments in our target sectors.

This change has been reflected in a refreshed offer to Supporters, with the introduction of our Champions subscription, for organisations who want to take the lead in the provision of mental health support through their supply chains.

While the first quarter marked a period of transition, we initiated significant strategic work aimed at improving performance and developing and retaining relationships. We also explored opportunities to enhance our offerings to Supporters while raising our profile. We continued to work on several high-level projects, including the Tier 1 research in partnership with Warwick University, the New Hospitals Build Programme, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory Group, and a BSI Workshop for the Suicide Prevention Standard.

During the second quarter, we celebrated several notable achievements: April saw record-breaking subscriptions and renewals for Supporters. Additionally, we secured a new contract with CITB to fund Supporter Lite for 100 SMEs and micro businesses hosting apprentices.

In June 2024, we hosted the Mates in Mind Impact Awards, where we celebrated with our runners-up and winners. They expressed their gratitude for the event, which has helped them to feel like they are part of a supportive community. Three new team members joined the team during the year, bringing our total staff count to ten. Team growth was an important area as we prepared to implement our plans for sector development and increasing impact, particularly within the construction sector.

September and October are our busiest months for events, with World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September and World Mental Health Day on 10 October. This year was no exception as we hosted webinars, spoke at events, and participated in panels and podcasts. The team attended or hosted a total of 23 events in these two months.

During the third quarter our MD attended UK Construction Week in Birmingham, where she chaired and participated in panel discussions at the invitation of CITB, and Design and Build. On 17 October we partnered with MAD World for the inaugural Make A Difference Construction Summit featuring five panels of leaders and influencers from across the construction sector. We explored the current challenges, necessary changes, and the next steps to create a sector that is good for workers' mental health. Additionally, Sam spoke at key events with CONIAC, the London Health and Safety Group, and the Women in Construction Awards.

Our marketing and communications continue to strengthen. In total, we achieved 115 appearances in trade publications and e-newsletters. Notably, this included a blog published on the HSE website, which was also shared through their newsletter and social media. We received good coverage across construction media, as well as six transport and one security outlet. During 2024, 12 media outlets proactively reached out for exclusive articles. In October, we were recognised as a runner-up in the apprentice category at the London Construction Awards, highlighting the work we have initiated in the apprenticeship sector.

Our fundraising continues to go from strength to strength, with the recruitment of a corporate fundraising manager and support for individual fundraisers. The team has developed strong fundraising performance and profile raising and aims to build on this next year. The growth in fundraising enables us to further increase our charitable outputs and impact.

The end of the year focused on the development of our three-year strategic plan for 2025-2027. We started by creating a summary strategy document and a Theory of Change to guide our prioritisation and setting of performance indicators. 2025 promises to be a year of development and growth for the charity, which has ended 2024 with exceptional levels of support through fundraising from current Supporters and new connections.

**Kevin Myers**  
Chair of Trustees  
Mates in Mind



# Mates in Mind

## Our Vision

Positive mental health in and through work.

## Our Mission

Supporting organisations in higher risk sectors to create environments and cultures that promote positive mental health because everyone matters.



## Who We Are

Established in 2017 by the Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) with the support of the British Safety Council, Mates in Mind exists to improve the mental health and wellbeing of workplaces across the UK.

Mates in Mind is a leading UK charity advocating for and addressing the stigma of poor mental health. We work collaboratively with employers across construction, transport and logistics, farming and agriculture, fire and security and other related industries, to be the change that is needed to improve mental wellbeing in the workplace.

## Why We Do It:

- In March 2024, over 1 million people were waiting to access mental health services<sup>1</sup>.
- There were 0.8 million workers suffering from work-related stress, depression, or anxiety (new or long-standing) in 2023/24<sup>2</sup>.
- 16.4 million working days were lost due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety in 2023/24<sup>2</sup>.
- Stress, depression or anxiety made up 46% of work-related ill health in 2023/24<sup>2</sup>.
- Fewer than one in ten (6%) men said that they would discuss their mental health struggles with their employer<sup>3</sup>.
- When asked what would improve your wellbeing, 75% of respondents to a Randstad survey said training about mental health, resilience, and stress management<sup>4</sup>.
- A third of construction workers live with severe levels of anxiety<sup>5</sup>.
- The economic cost of mental ill-health including, business costs of sickness absence, 'presenteeism' and staff turnover, has been estimated to be £110bn in 2022<sup>6</sup>.

# Our Year in Numbers

**323**

Supporters

**259**

BEAMATE Text Users

**93**

Training Sessions

**1,824**

People Trained

**21,486**

Portal Downloads

**10,824**

Awareness Day Resource Downloads

**£263,000**

Fundraised

**22,564**

Social Media Followers

**70,403**

Website Users

**86**

External Events Attended

**135**

External Article Appearances

**15**

Blog Posts

# Building a Community

We work with key stakeholders, including contractors, procurement frameworks, supply chains and policymakers to achieve our vision and reduce the number of workers reaching crisis. Our work has continued to expand in 2024, with our network now reaching across many different sectors including: construction, transport and logistics, fire and security, farming and agriculture.

Our ever-expanding community of Supporters are leading their sectors by providing comprehensive and effective mental health interventions for their workforces. They continue to work towards the reduction of stigma, building environments that encourage and support difficult conversations, prevent crisis and ensure work is good for workers' mental health.



Supporter, Wilson James, added our logo to their van.

## Improving Wellbeing Support in the Workplace

Our Supporters are encouraged to start their journey by completing an organisational assessment to identify where additional support is needed to improve their internal mental health and wellbeing provisions and ensure they are legally compliant. This is reviewed by our team of dedicated Support Managers to assist Supporters to enact effective change.

An additional benefit of the assessment is that it enables our teams to track the evolution of our Supporters throughout their Mates in Mind journey, creating a consistent framework to identify and analyse the charitable impact of our work.

**Supporters: 323**

**New in 2024: 55**

**Renewed in 2024: 60**

**Number of employees within Supporter organisations: 178,115 (estimated)**

**66%** of organisations who completed our organisational assessment progressed to a green award in 2024 from their initial assessment.

**83%** of organisations who completed our organisational assessment received an improved grading in 2024.



# Building a Community

## Training and Education

Tailored, expert training is an essential pillar of our framework. We are creating environments for long-term cultural change by ensuring Supporters and their workers have the necessary knowledge and confidence when addressing mental health. Our team of experienced trainers offer a wide variety of educational opportunities to help everyone understand their roles and responsibilities in managing workplace wellbeing.

**Total number of training sessions delivered: 93**

**Total number of people trained: 1,824 (estimated)**



Start the Conversation training at Mace.

## Training outcomes

**73%** of attendees felt much more comfortable talking about their own mental health and wellbeing.

**85%** of attendees felt much more or somewhat more confident approaching a colleague if they felt concerned for their wellbeing.

**89%** felt more aware of externally available support services.

**68%** felt much more or somewhat more confident identifying and managing stress within their teams following Mates in Mind training.

**91%** felt the training improved their understanding of their role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of those around them.

## Online Resources

Our online Portal is available for Supporters to access our mental health resources, templates, toolbox talks, signposting guides and awareness day campaigns, designed to build cultures of openness around wellbeing and mental health. We also make some of our awareness day content available for free on our website, to ensure it is accessible to all organisations that would benefit from it.

**Total items downloaded: 21,486**  
**(1.2 times more than 2023)**

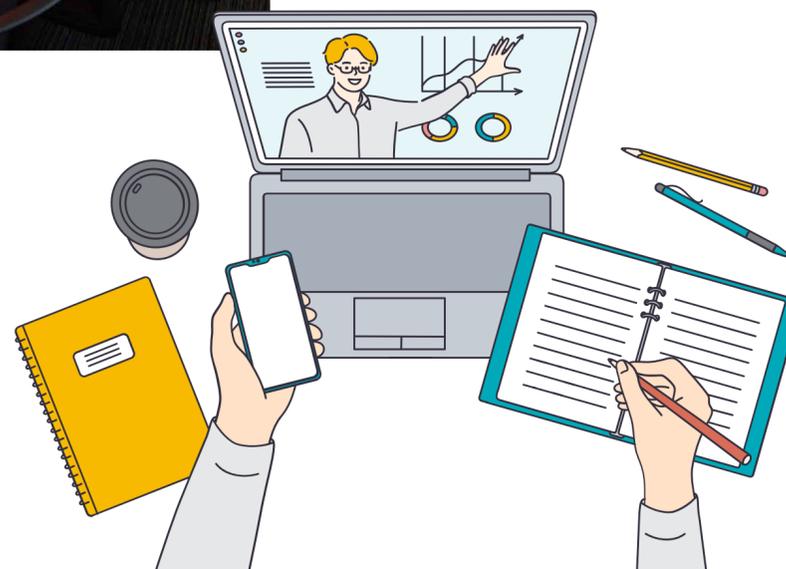
**Views: 161,723**

**Active Users: 70,403**

**Number of awareness day campaigns: 11**

**Awareness day downloads: 10,824**

**3.8 times the level of engagement in 2023**



# Building a Community

## Time to Talk

Between October and December 2024, Fischer Fixings UK released a 5-part video series, 'Time to Talk', in collaboration with Mates in Mind, where our Senior Support Manager Recheal Valderama sat down with workers in the construction industry to share unapologetic, honest stories of real people in construction and their experience with their mental health. The videos have accumulated 76,017 views and 2,352 watch hours across the Fischer Fixings UK YouTube channel, showing viewers that it's okay to ask for help when you need it.

**“By sharing their journeys, we hope to reach those who may feel alone in their struggles and show that support is available – and that no one has to face it alone.”**

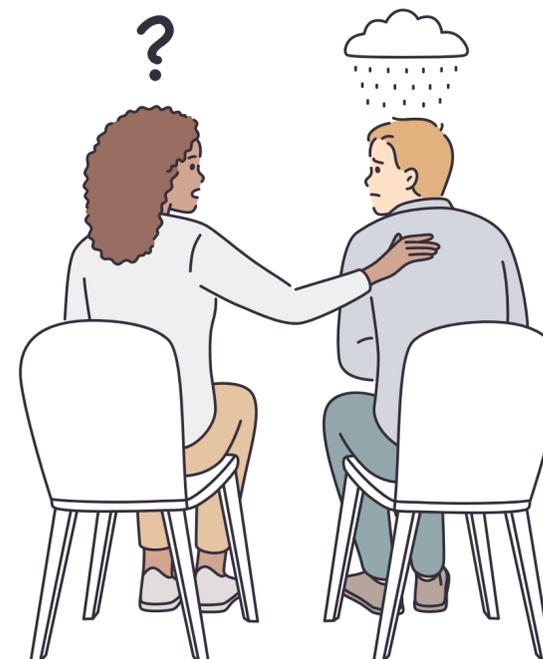
[Fischer Fixings UK](#)

**“The work you do is nothing short of fantastic, thank you for Recheal’s time, expertise and support.”**

[Fischer Fixings UK](#)



Recheal Valderama interviewing trades people as part of the Fischer Fixings UK video series.



## Providing Immediate Support

We are proud to have partnered with Shout to provide support for anyone in distress, through a 24/7 text service. Users can text “**BEAMATE**” to **85258** to access support from trained volunteers.

**Number of BEAMATE Users:**  
**259 (Almost quadruple the 57 users in 2023)**

**Number of Conversations: 370**

**36.9% of messages to BEAMATE discussed low mood or sadness**

**31.4% of messages to BEAMATE discussed stress or worry**

# Building a Community

## Supporter Spotlight – ADT Workplace

“We joined Mates in Mind in 2019 after attending a Working Well Together presentation. Our team became aware that mental ill-health was a growing problem in the industry and decided to begin our journey to becoming part of the solution, starting with our own workforce. We did not have wellbeing provisions at the time and knew that introducing new training was an opportunity to share important messages about managing mental health.

We began by enrolling staff on Manage the Conversation training, we felt a ‘top-down’ approach would be the most effective method to make a long-term institutional change. We then began to deliver Start the Conversation training to office-based staff and have since gone on to provide it to contractors and operatives on-site, aware that the latter is the most at-risk demographic in our workforce. Through this, we have also encouraged our staff to use the website resources available to them, utilising print resources and posters to promote the Mates in Mind Portal.

We have also completed the Mates in Mind organisational assessment, which has helped to introduce further wellbeing initiatives.

We have found that once our trainers are in front of operatives on-site, participants have begun to talk more openly and have demonstrated a desire to engage in difficult conversations. The most effective training format for our team has been informal sessions, focused on teaching those on-site that the content does have a tangible benefit to them and their teams. Our aim is that the training will enable people to recognise signs in their colleagues, who they are working with regularly, and give them the confidence to call out changes when they see them. We hope that colleagues will continue to meaningfully ask one another, how are you?

We have felt cultural shifts on-site, receiving feedback from participants of the training that it has become a reliable source of information to take into their lives, professionally and personally.”

adt workplace

## Supporter Feedback

A review of the assessment data provided by our Supporters in 2023 identified that:

- **44%** did NOT have a mental health action plan.
- **56%** said their employees had NOT been provided with general mental health awareness training in the past two years.
- **57%** said line managers had NOT received mental health awareness training to recognise the signs of mental ill-health.
- **81%** did NOT regularly assess employee stress and mental health.



Recheal Valderama being interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live.

After working with us, our Supporters have said:

**“At Mammoet one of our core values is ‘take care’ this particularly relates to taking care of our people as our most important asset. We will continue to utilise feedback provided by Mates in Mind to improve the delivery of our mental health plan.”**

[Mammoet](#)

**“Since becoming a Mates in Mind Supporter, we have already noticed a positive shift within our workforce. We have noticed open conversations and discussions around the topic of mental health have become more frequent creating an environment where employees feel safe to share their experiences.”**

[City Demolition](#)

**“For any employer seeking advice on how to provide available support and guidance to their employees on mental health, mental illness and mental wellbeing, Mates in Mind are a fantastic charity that are always there to assist. They also provide the essential contact details, ...for immediate help and assistance. Remember, you are not alone.”**

[KY MEP Limited](#)



2024 Best Workplace Mental Health Team Award winner announcement.

# Empowering a Culture of Change

## Expanding Into New Sectors

Since our inception in 2017, Mates in Mind has worked closely with the construction industry. As our work has evolved, our expertise has gained broader recognition, leading to interest and engagement from a range of sectors seeking our support.



WHC Hire Services announcing their corporate fundraising partnership.



Lindsay Ewer delivering training at Derwent London Plc.

## Transport and Logistics

Randstad's 2023 'Health and Well-being in the Workplace' report found that 27% of logistics workers surveyed had taken time off work due to unmanageable stress or mental health conditions in the previous 12 months, and 19% of respondents were planning to leave the profession in the next 12 months because of it<sup>8</sup>.

This year, we were proud to establish a transport and logistics roundtable with sector leading organisations to explore the needs and gaps in service for mental health in this sector. To supplement this work, our team designed and distributed a thorough survey to understand the current barriers faced by those working within the industry, particularly HGV drivers, which will remain open until 2025 – to ensure our service is entrenched in the needs of our community.

## Welcome Break

We had the opportunity to collaborate with Welcome Break for the month of December, to share resources with people accessing their facilities. We know that the festive season can have a significant impact in this sector, with increasing workloads and even longer hours spent isolated through work. To share our resources and support, in collaboration with Welcome Break we launched a campaign that included a QR code poster, these were placed in their toilets across the country and linked anyone who scanned the code to essential mental health resources, receiving 170 engagements.



One of our posters in the Welcome Break toilets.

# Empowering a Culture of Change

## The AgriWellbeing Alliance

The Farm Safety Foundation found that 95% of UK farmers under the age of 40 rank poor mental health as one of the biggest hidden problems facing the industry today<sup>7</sup>.

At Mates in Mind, we recognised a growing concern for the mental health of farmers. By reaching out to experts within the industry, we discovered parallels between the stressors and pressures faced in agriculture and those within the construction sector.

Our discussions with industry leaders identified groups of ‘accidental counsellors’ – individuals within the farming sector who, in the course of their own work, find themselves offering emotional support to farmers in need. They often lacked the confidence and training to effectively support their peers. To address this gap, we have utilised our expertise in workplace mental health to provide training and education, empowering these workers to confidently offer support, as a ‘mate’, to their colleagues.

This led to the creation of the AgriWellbeing Alliance, a collaboration with The Crown Estate, Mates in Mind, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors (NAAC), Agrii, IOSH Rural Industries Group, Farm Safety Foundation (Yellow Wellies), and the Farming Community Network (FCN).

We are currently in the research stage of a project with Harper Adams University, working closely with the AgriWellbeing Alliance to gather valuable insights into the mental health challenges faced by those in the farming sector. The study will deepen our understanding of ‘accidental counsellors’ and the interventions that would better equip them to provide support when faced with someone in crisis. We have developed and distributed a comprehensive questionnaire, for a range of farming professionals, including land agents, agronomists, and agricultural contractors. This survey will capture their perspectives on the mental health concerns within the sector, as well as their experiences and attitudes toward supporting the mental wellbeing of their peers.

The results of the research will be analysed and published in 2025.

## Supporting SME’s and Sole Traders

In 2024, Mates in Mind launched the Supporter Lite programme, a tailor-made offer for micro-organisations and sole traders. Our Champion Model enables large organisations to reach down their supply chain and ‘champion’ the mental health of smaller organisations, by providing them with access to the Lite programme.

This new programme provides tools and resources to support the mental wellbeing of small teams to enable them to build safe and supportive working environments. They have access to a variety of resources including bitesize training videos and a tailored organisational assessment.

The aim is to increase access to mental health resources for a diverse range of businesses.

## Supporting the Future Workforce

The Mates in Mind ‘Apprentice Programme’ was developed to deliver training to college tutors, students, apprentices, and their employers, increasing their awareness of mental health and their confidence to start these difficult but crucial conversations.

In 2024, Mates in Mind were approached to expand the programme and develop bespoke mental health awareness training to a new demographic of college students who were attending practical work experience placements. The programme was split into 2 sessions, a 90-minute information delivery and discussion session, and a 60-minute recap and reflection session.

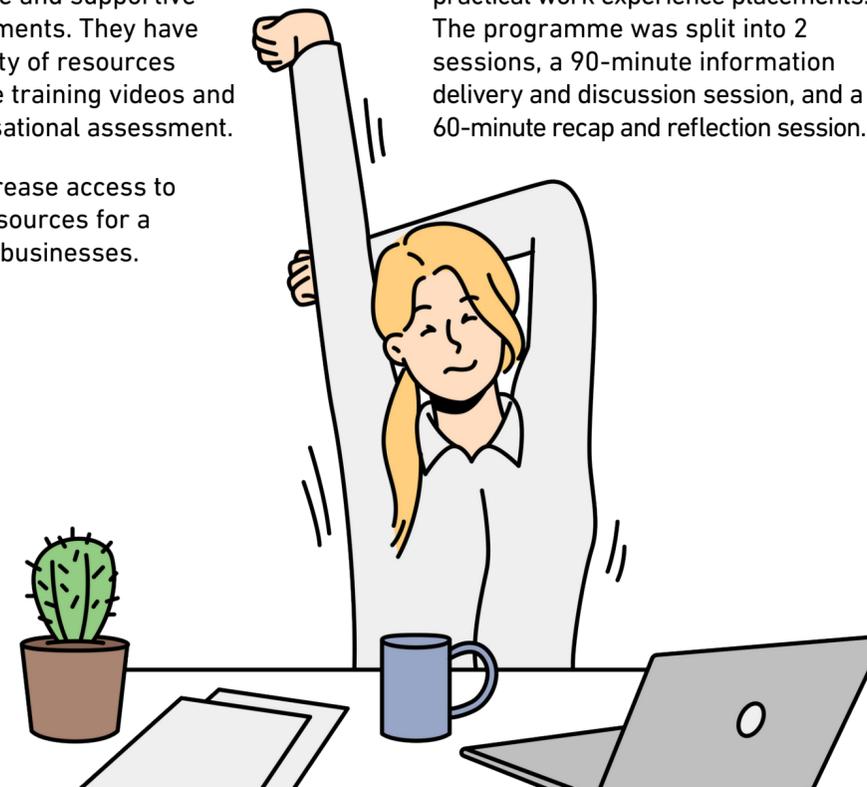
### Programme outcomes:

- **100%** of individuals knew the distinction between mental health and mental illness.
- **100%** of individuals reported that they could explain mental health to another person.
- All individuals reported that they felt that they could talk to someone if they were struggling.
- **67%** felt that they could spot the signs that someone else was struggling.
- **100%** of individuals reported feeling confident in approaching someone that they believed to be struggling and the reasons they gave for this included:

*‘Because I am not afraid of expressing myself.’*

*‘It’s important to help those around you.’*

*‘It’s important to reach out.’*



# 2024 Impact Awards

**The Mates in Mind Impact Awards recognise and celebrate our Supporters' contributions to improving mental health within their workplaces and across the wider sector.**



2024 Impact Award trophy.

## Our 2024 Winners

### The Wiles Award

Winner: Logan Price, MPB Structures

### Mates in Mind Champion Award

Winner: ADT Workplace

### Best New Supporter Engagement Award

Winner: Danaher & Walsh Civil Engineering

### Best Workplace Mental Health Team Award

Winner: ADT Workplace

### Best Mates in Mind Fundraising Initiative

Winner: Gary Evans, Keller UK

## From Our Patron – Michelle Wiles

"I attended the Mates in Mind Impact Awards in June with my son, Tom. It was such a great evening, reinforcing how important these awards are for individuals and communities far and wide. Tom and I were overwhelmed to meet everyone who attended this special evening, and to have the opportunity to present 'The Wiles Award' in memory of Chris.

The award recognises those who go above and beyond in their efforts to help others, champion the importance of positive mental health, and spot the signs when someone could be struggling, which could save a life.

Now, in the fourth consecutive year of the 'Wiles Award,' it was an honour to share this moment and award Logan Price from MPB Structures, the winner, with a high commendation to Tracy Williams from Mace Group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every individual who took the time to nominate themselves or others, helping to spread the message that awareness and prevention are key to addressing the stigma of mental health in the workplace."



Michelle Wiles (patron) and son Tom Wiles at the 2024 Impact Awards.

# Events

To share our charitable vision and mission with as many organisations as possible within our key sectors, we attended a series of public and private events. The aim was to create more conversations around workplace mental wellbeing and managing the mental health of your workforce. In 2024, we had the privilege of being involved in a series of award ceremonies, presenting at industry events, co-organising the first ever MAD Construction Summit, appearing on podcasts and getting involved in our Supporters' conferences and fundraising events.

**Total events attended: 68**

**Award Ceremonies: 8**

**Podcast Appearances: 3**



Laura Howdill with Steve Cole (Group Supply Chain and Construction Director, WHSmith) at the WHSmith conference.

## Fischer Fixings – UK Construction Week

We had the pleasure of joining Fischer Fixings UK for three days (1-3 October) at UK Construction Week in Birmingham. Our Support Manager, Lindsay Ewer, started conversations about mental health and shared how to break down the stigma surrounding mental wellbeing within the construction industry. Our Managing Director, Sam Downie, and one of our Ambassadors, Peter Kelly, also had the opportunity to talk to the event attendees about how to engage key members of the construction industry with mental health resources and improve wellbeing throughout the sector.

Lindsay set up a whiteboard at the Fischer Fixings UK stand for anyone to write their thoughts on the stressors and pressures that they face in their work that could be contributing to the high suicide rates within the construction sector. They highlighted concerns including long hours, tight deadlines, job insecurity and physical demands. These are very real pressures faced by our Supporters, and Lindsay was able to engage on the ground with people and support them in talking about the challenges they face through work. We know that talking about these pressures is essential to tackling the stigma and lays the foundations for long term change.

All profits made by Fischer Fixings UK from product sales at UK Construction Week were generously donated to Mates in Mind.



Fischer Fixings UK stand at UK Construction Week.

**“We were proud to have Mates in Mind with us, starting crucial conversations around mental health in the workplace.”**

**Fischer Fixings UK**

## Construction Week

# Fundraising with Mates in Mind

**We have had some incredible fundraisers taking on challenges and organising events in 2024. We would like to give a massive ‘thank you’ to everyone who supported our mission this year. Here are two brilliant examples of the types of challenges our dedicated fundraisers take on:**



Vinci Facilities fundraising event.

**Fundraising Total: £263,000**

**Our fundraising guide was downloaded 98 times in 2024.**

## Annual Dornan Fundraiser

“After we lost our colleague, Eoin Skerrett, to suicide seven years ago, we established an annual football tournament in his memory to fundraise for Mates in Mind. Such a significant loss has continued to have a huge impact on our team, he was a competitive man who loved football, so a tournament has been an excellent way to continue honouring Eoin.

We have organised five football tournaments in support of Mates in Mind, this year’s event turned out to be the most successful in the tournament’s history, raising £13,000 and bringing the estimated running total to £25,000. Five-a-side teams pay a £500 membership fee to participate, helping to raise funds in support of Mates in Mind and to cover the cost of the event, this year there were a whopping 16 teams, a total of 80 players across the matches.

The football tournament has become a source of great generosity and a positive, hopeful way for our team to remember Eoin. This year, Eoin’s parents were able to attend the event and spend time with his colleagues.

The event has become a staple in the Dornan calendar, anyone joining in on the day is welcome to bring family and friends to join other activities and participate in a raffle. We encourage spectators to donate using donation buckets or through a dedicated JustGiving page. The event has created a strong sense of community, united with a shared purpose to raise money for change and remember Eoin.

We joined Mates in Mind as a Supporter in 2019, providing Start the Conversation training with our team, and circulating it among their sites. We have continued to engage with Mates in Mind training regularly and Start the Conversation has become a foundational aspect of our induction process, aspiring to have all new employees undertake it. We have even set a challenge for 2025: 90% of employees will be trained in Start the Conversation by the end of the year.”



Dornan Engineering fundraising football event in memory of Eoin Skerrett.



# Fundraising with Mates in Mind

## A Year's Challenge with James

"In 2024, I decided to go alcohol free for 12 months in support of Mates in Mind. This challenge wasn't just about making a sacrifice, but also talking about the messaging around alcohol and mental health; I think most of us would drink more than the recommended amount in the typical week, often without a second thought.

I was inspired to raise funds for Mates in Mind, having lost three friends and colleagues within construction to suicide, including Chris Wiles. I was already familiar with the great work of Mates in Mind, sharing messages around mental health across the industry I am proud to work in. I decided to take on the challenge to raise awareness and say, "it's alright not to be alright", we all need to know who to turn to, who to talk to, when life throws you a curveball.

I was able to raise £2,000 across the year, which made me feel like I was making a difference, I had so many people supporting me along the way. It was great to raise money to support the mission of the charity, but it was also about having conversations about mental health. I hope that, during the challenge, these conversations will have positively impacted someone.

I know that it can be difficult to say, "I want to talk about how I'm feeling" but without talking, something simple can escalate. Particularly in construction, we need to do what we can to remove barriers to support. It's not easy but it's all about how we talk about it and manage it. Building the culture to allow anyone the freedom to talk and seek the support and ability to discuss any issue they may have and clear visibility on who to turn to.

It was great to work with the Mates in Mind team, they engaged with social posts throughout the year and checked-in on my progress regularly. It felt good to raise awareness of the fact, you don't need to be drinking – there is support. It was an enjoyable year; it was personally rewarding going through with a challenge; we can all do things we didn't think were possible. Anyone can come up with a creative challenge, if you've got a fundraising idea, just make it happen."



James went alcohol free for a year to fundraise for Mates in Mind.

**"I decided to take on the challenge to raise awareness and say, "it's alright not to be alright", we all need to know who to turn to, who to talk to, when life throws you a curveball."**



# Campaigning for Change

**In 2024, we continued to contribute towards and develop commissioning guidance that will enable institutional change, and create organisations that are proactive and preventative, supportive and responsive.**

**As an organisation working with a diverse range of higher-risk sectors, we are compelled to collaborate with sector leads and researchers to develop industry standards that both protect and support all workers, connecting into groups to ensure we continue to broaden our access.**



Sam Downie speaking at the Get Construction Talking Summit.

## Tier 1 Working Group

Mates in Mind are a founding partner of a Tier 1 research group to collaborate on the development of a 'Joint Code of Practice', a 7-dimension framework for mental health within construction, including a pack that would identify recommendations for good practice for each dimension, highlighted with supporting case studies. Various working groups have been approached to provide relevant case studies, with the intention to align this work with a framework being produced in parallel by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Tier 1 Research Group includes representation from Mates in Mind, Construction Leadership Council (CLC), Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG), Tier 1s, our Supporters and their supply chains, and the University of Warwick. It has also been opened out to Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), On the Tools and wider stakeholders.

After partnering with the University of Warwick to conduct research into the triggers of poor mental health in the construction industry, the Tier 1 group is now utilising this data to run focus groups with managers and operatives on sites, to better understand their needs. The results of this research will be analysed and developed into 2025.

## British Standards Institution (BSI) Suicide Prevention Standard

Our Managing Director, Chair of Trustees and Support Manager, Gabrielle Taylor, have been involved in the development panels for a Suicide Prevention Standard, which will provide a consistent approach to suicide risk and mitigation, in the UK and globally.

Engaging in this work enabled our team to share our expertise and learn from other subject matter experts, ensuring our resources are aligned with best practice. Our team has had the privilege of representing the experiences of our Supporters and advocating for guidance that responds to their needs.

## Health in Construction Leadership Group (HCLG) Drug and Alcohol Steering Group

Mates in Mind were invited to contribute to a set of sub-groups established by the HCLG to identify the risks associated with workplace drug testing, and the organisational responses to negative and non-negative results.

These groups have been exploring the types of test kits being used, what is being tested for and how these results are handled on-site. Currently there are no standardised rules on how organisations are expected to manage positive testing. Suspensions can vary from 1 month, to 3 months, to a lifetime.

Mates in Mind have also been exploring the risk of non-negative testing, another area where there is no standardisation for organisational response. A non-negative test does not mean you have tested positive, but it also does not mean you are negative; it does mean that you are unable to work, leaving operatives stuck in limbo. In many cases, you would be asked to leave site with no guarantee of when you can return. The uncertainty, financial pressures, and anxiety this causes can contribute to the exacerbation or creation of mental health problems.

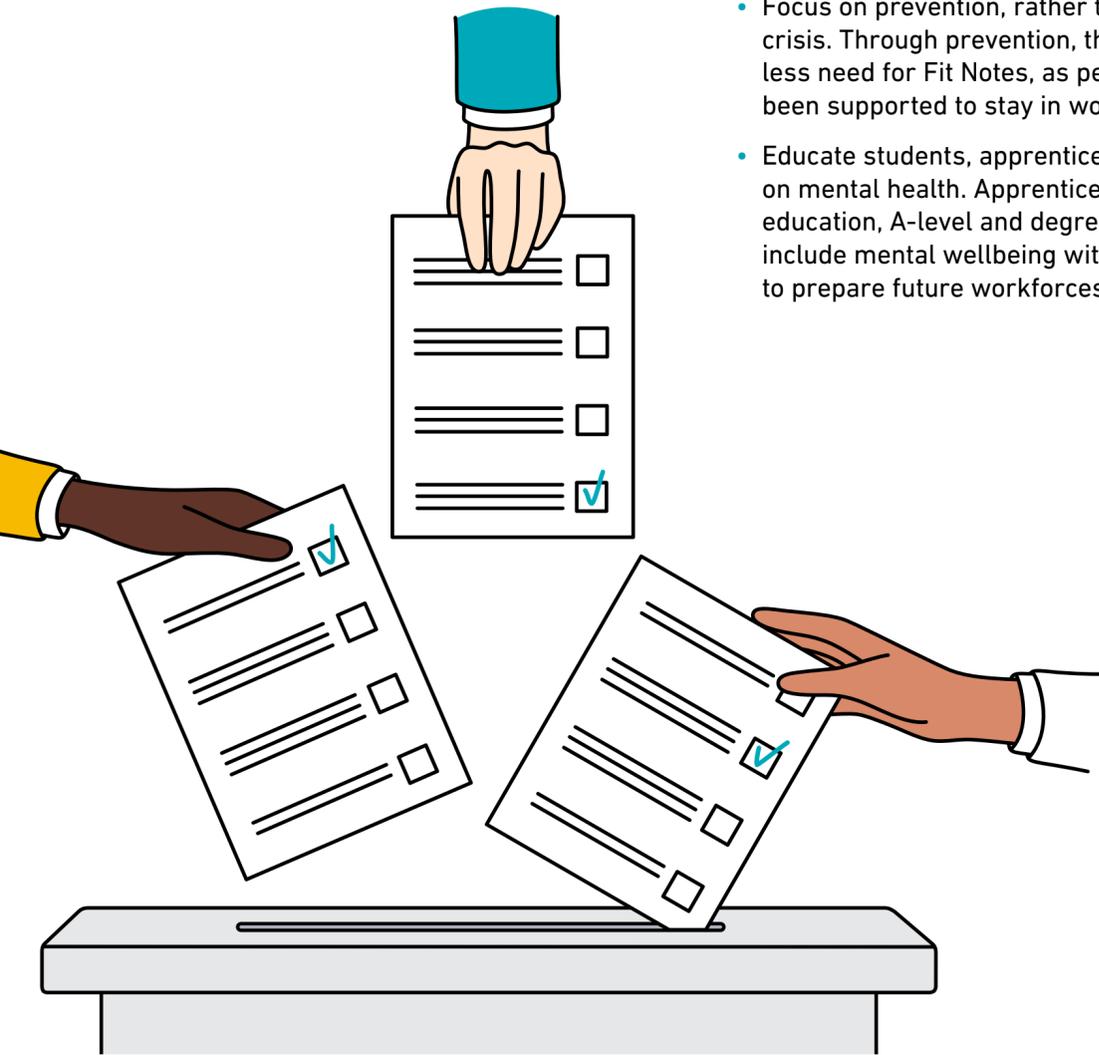
We are continuing to use these discussions as an opportunity to raise questions of how, as a community, we can more effectively provide support to people struggling with substance misuse and other addictions.



# Campaigning for Change

## Fit Note Consultation

In July 2024, our team responded to a call for evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions who were looking at reforming the fit note process in order to support those with long term health conditions to access timely work and health support.

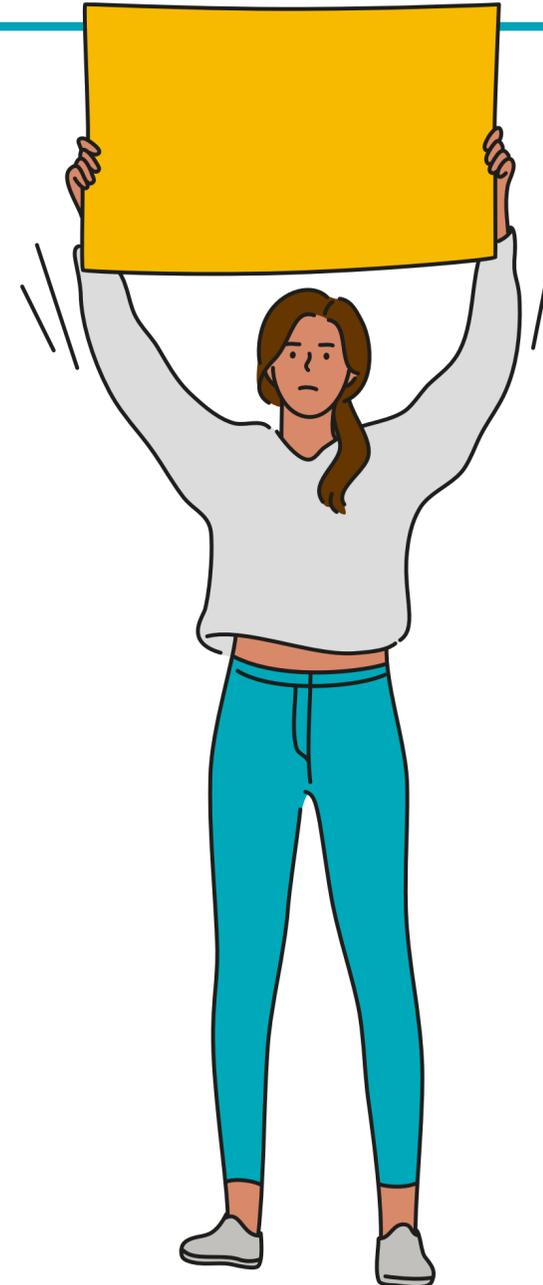


### Our recommendations:

- As part of the Fit Note review, we would encourage mental health to be a prominent part of the practitioner provision. Practitioners should provide employers with relevant guidance on how to support the individual both in and through work.
- Focus on prevention, rather than point of crisis. Through prevention, there would be less need for Fit Notes, as people will have been supported to stay in work.
- Educate students, apprentices and workers on mental health. Apprenticeships, further education, A-level and degree courses should include mental wellbeing within the curricula to prepare future workforces.

- Collate data to identify common risk factors and successful outcomes. We would like to see a process for requiring organisations to record and report on actions taken to support workers, starting with a conversation before returning to work to discuss role adjustments and phased return to work (if applicable), followed by regular meetings to discuss progress and outcomes.
- Ensure there is sufficient support available at the point of need. Providing tailored support as soon as it is needed is key to supporting individuals back into work.

It is essential to ensure people return to work safely, with the right mental and physical support, and relevant job adjustments. Using our own research, we highlighted that by providing organisations with more guidance, training and resources on how to spot the signs of mental ill-health, create positive mental health in and through work, build a culture of prevention, start the conversation, and signpost further support, more lives can be saved.



## Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM) Consultation

In September 2024, we contributed to the development of Project OSCAR (Occupational Stress Consultation and Research), developed by IOM, Affinity Health at Work, Institute of Employment Studies (IES), and the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) and funded by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). We responded to their call for evidence by answering their three key research questions:

- 1. Prevent and mitigate: What primary and secondary control measures or interventions show efficacy for preventing and mitigating work-related stress (WRS)?**
- 2. Define and label: How is work-related stress assigned and/or labelled, by individuals, organisations and medical professionals?**
- 3. Implement: What are the enablers and barriers to organisations effectively controlling WRS risk?**

At Mates in Mind, our work is focused on primary interventions – with the aim of preventing individuals reaching the point of crisis. We do this through working with organisations to create a culture of prevention. We recommend that organisations educate, train and support all employees (whatever their contract, plus subcontractors) across the whole workforce to ensure everyone has the skills, knowledge, tools and confidence to talk about mental health, and to ensure there is a continuous and comprehensive solution in place so that no-one reaches crisis point and mental health awareness becomes everyone's issue.

# Campaigning for Change

## Make A Difference Construction Summit

In October, Mates in Mind had the opportunity to partner with MAD World Construction Summit to lead a day of panels with a key theme of 'driving excellence in workplace culture, employee health and wellbeing'.

The panels included:

- Where we are now and what needs to change.
- How to support mental wellbeing across supply chains.
- What does excellent organisational mental wellbeing look like?
- The importance of supporting future workforce mental wellbeing.
- How to build mental wellbeing in and through work.

This was an opportunity to bring together the sector to discuss the issues the industry faces, share experiences and interventions that work, providing attendees with practical tips and solutions they can take back and implement in their own organisations.



Panel discussion at the inaugural MAD Construction Summit.



**“MAD World is delighted to partner with Mates in Mind for the inaugural ‘MAD World Construction Summit’ and offer the construction sector a dedicated event to address the specific and unique challenges faced by the sector regarding mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.”**

**Mark Pigou, MAD World Founder.**

**“Quick visit to London today for the **Make a Difference: Construction Summit**, so inspiring to be in the same room as so many people committed to making positive change to improve the mental health & well-being of people in the construction industry. Thank you, Sam Downie and all the team at Mates in Mind, for creating a space for such open dialogue and sharing of best practice.”**

**Attendee**



# Campaigning for Change

## Haringey Framework

Our team have been involved in producing a framework with Haringey Council, to record and measure the tangible impact of mental health interventions in the construction sector. The London Construction Programme (LCP) have produced a 'Mental Health Selection Questionnaire', guided by the Mates in Mind organisational assessment; to analyse construction mental health provisions, contractors are also asked to provide a detailed plan which is then assessed.

Through their partnership with Mates in Mind, LCP are acting as a link between companies and direct access to mental health resources. Utilising our programmes, they have committed to ensuring that every organisation under their jurisdiction has direct access to the tools they need to make long term, preventative change.

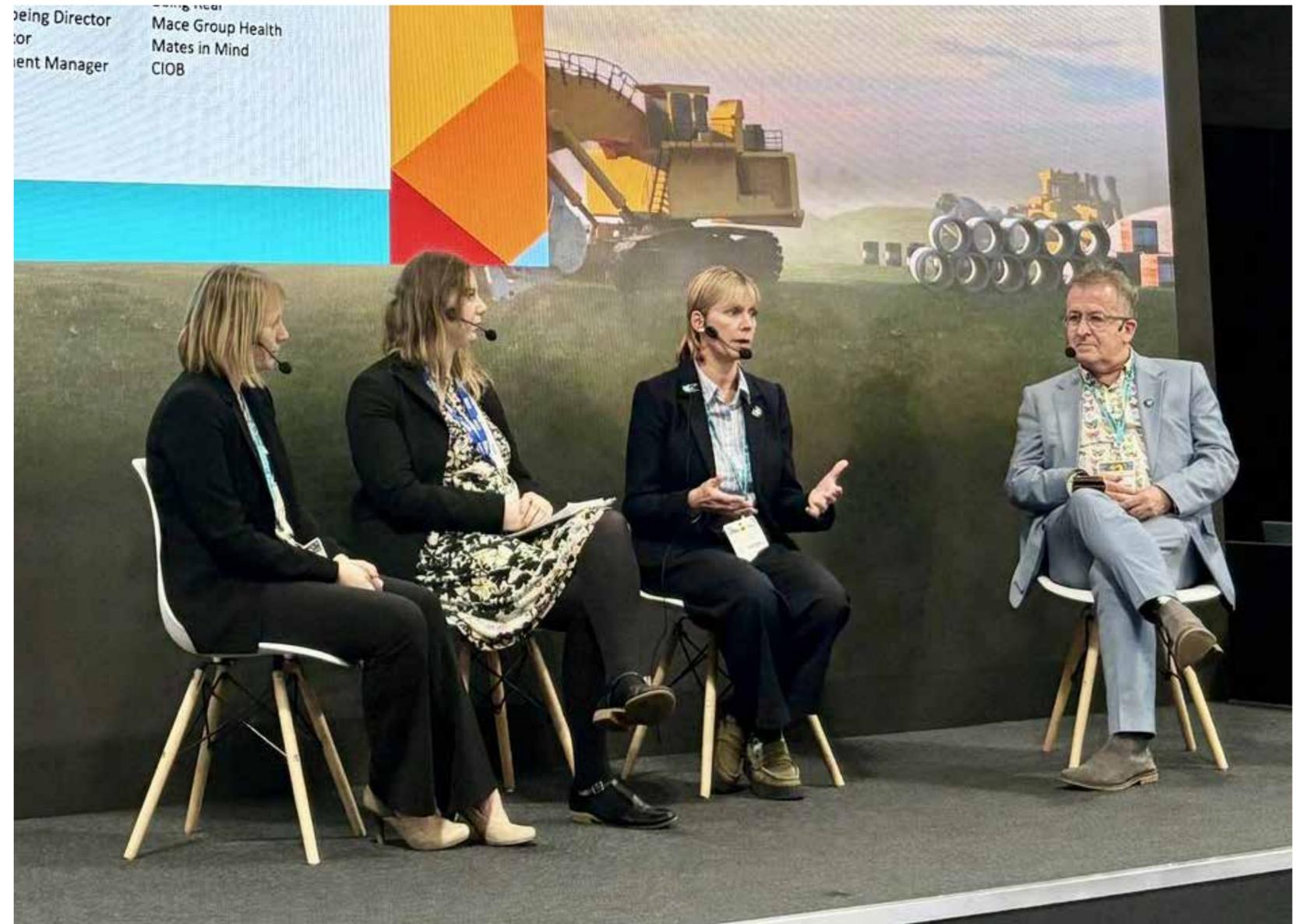
## Our Ambassadors

To disseminate our work throughout the sectors we work in and to ensure we are empowering workers, we have developed the role of Mates in Mind Ambassadors. We began trialling this role in 2024, to create a community who can advocate for and represent Mates in Mind from an informed position. We believe that collaboration is the mode through which long-term change can be affected, identifying and promoting effective change agents within our Supporter and partner organisations is one of the ways we are broadening our impact.

Our Ambassadors include, Peter Kelly, who previously worked with Mates in Mind, and Paul Duffy. They began their roles by co-chairing panels at the Make a Difference Summit and have gone on to represent the charity at events throughout the year, including Peter hosting a session on the Main Stage at UK Construction Week.

*"I was incredibly humbled and grateful when Mates in Mind asked me to represent them as an Ambassador. I have huge respect for the work Sam and the team do on a daily basis in trying to change perceptions on mental health and illness, both in the working environment and life in general. Being asked to represent Mates in Mind as an Ambassador at the Make a Difference Summit was a great honour for me personally. It allowed me to share my experiences in the construction industry and with mental illness. I believe that sharing lived experiences of mental illnesses can be educational to those who know less on the subject and empowering to those who suffer in silence for fear of stigmatisation. The construction industry has a long journey ahead in terms of statistically improving its workers mental health but with people like Sam and the team leading the way I feel very hopeful that the future will be brighter."*

**Paul Duffy**



Sam Downie and Peter Kelly (Ambassador) at the UK Construction Week.

# Looking to the Future

**Going forward, Mates in Mind will continue to work to improve policy, practice and systems to ensure positive mental health in and through work. In 2025 we will focus on access and participation, identifying and addressing how we can propel inclusion and fair employment across our sectors, looking particularly at neurodiversity, English as a second language and literacy rates.**



The Mates in Mind team at the 2024 Impact Awards.



We will carry forward our aim to expand our work into sectors we know are experiencing high levels of mental ill-health, including the continuation of our transport and logistics survey, the official launch of the AgriWellbeing Alliance and expanding our network of Supporters into new areas such as renewable energy.

Our work will also include the expansion of our 'Ambassadors' role to include 'Advocates', creating a role for those who want to support the charity through volunteering days and engage with charitable work through a lower time-commitment. Advocates will be supported and equipped to represent the charity and to share our work.

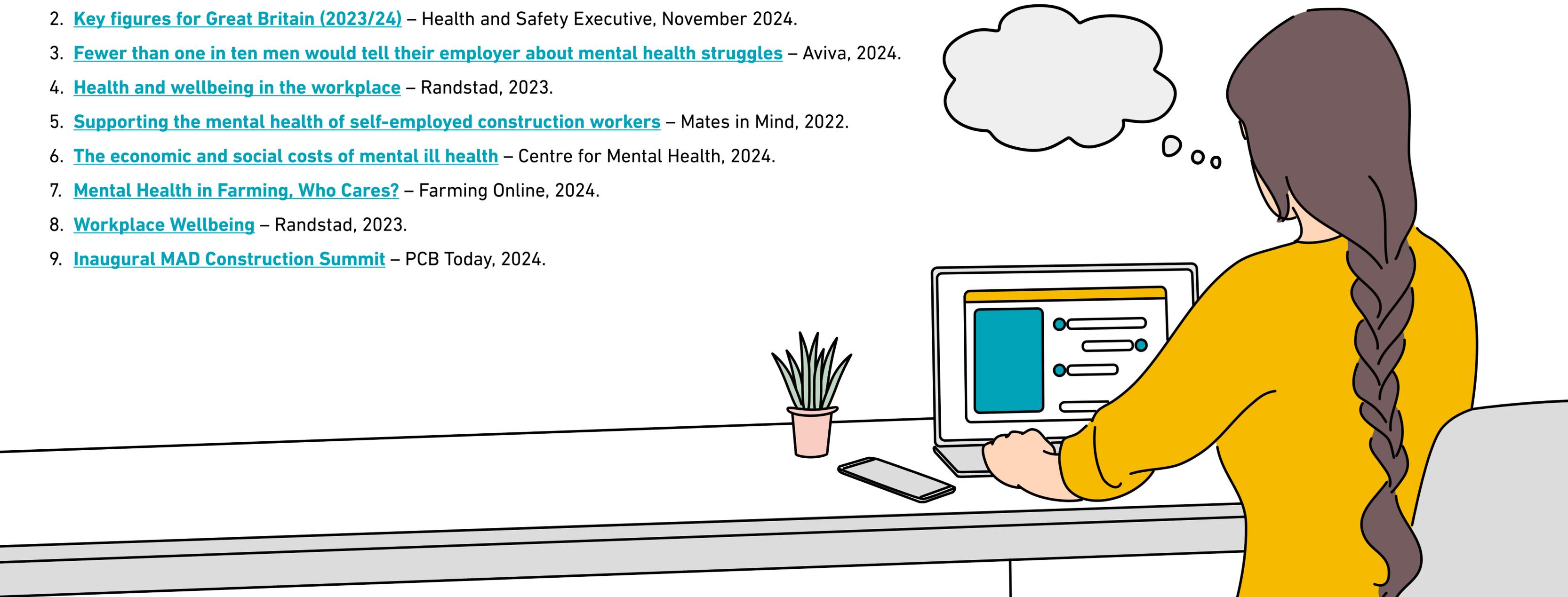
We will continue to work with our community to identify gaps in support and the changing needs of our Supporters; supporting organisations in higher risk sectors to create environments and cultures that promote positive mental health, because everyone matters.



Sam Downie announcing the winners at our 2024 Impact Awards.

# References

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4. [Health and wellbeing in the workplace](#) – Randstad, 2023.
5. [Supporting the mental health of self-employed construction workers](#) – Mates in Mind, 2022.
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