

Tackling mental health on our construction sites

Situation

Although mental ill-health is sadly a universal challenge across all UK workplaces, its negative impacts within the construction industry have become undeniable. In 2020, a Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) report found that 97% of construction workers had felt stressed, 87% had experienced anxiety and 70% had experienced depression over the past year.

The human cost of mental ill-health cannot be ignored with suicide rates amongst construction workers at 3.7 times higher than the national average. Tough deadlines, working way from home, basic accommodation and long working hours are some of the factors we know that affect this industry, and as a responsible business National Grid wanted to support contractors working on our construction projects.

Our approach

National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) developed a contractor Mental Health Standard in a bid to develop a systematic approach to integrate health and wellbeing into projects. The purpose of this standard is to provide a comprehensive list of requirements that are expected from those working on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission to embed mental health considerations in everything they do. These requirements have been developed in partnership with our Tier 1 contractors in accordance with *BS ISO 45003:2021 Occupational health and safety management – Psychological health and safety at work – Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks* and are entirely consistent with National Grid's ambition to create a working environment that will ensure our construction activities have a mental health record that is no worse than the industry norm.

Outcomes

From summer 2024 the Mental Health Standard has been piloted across key new infrastructure sites in collaboration with our contractors and our colleagues. It will continue to be rolled out across projects within Electricity Transmission and Strategic Infrastructure, the goal is for mental health to become a site safety standard and an embedded systematic part of our safety culture with consistent evaluation. A template is also being developed that can be used to quickly stand-up mental health provisions for smaller, shorter projects.

