



Mind Bath



Buro Happold

Removing mental health stigma in the
construction industry

Who are Buro Happold?

Buro Happold are an engineering consultancy working with architects to make their vision viable.

We spoke with Sarah Slade, UK Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager, who leads on the organisation's mental health strategy.

“It used to be a male dominated industry, so there’s been stigma attached. Now companies are breaking through that wall and wellbeing is starting to become more of a priority - definitely within Buro Happold.”



How it all started

Buro Happold first started working with Bath Mind when staff voted for the organisation to be their charity of the year.

“We hadn’t had anything in regards to wellbeing before that. Obviously from a health and safety perspective we have first aiders, but we knew we had to do something with mental health and wellbeing.”

“People had gone off with work related stress, so we thought it was time to bring in some support to avoid the scenario where staff are off work for weeks.”


Bath Mind has since organised mental health training and courses for Buro Happold nationally.

Raising awareness

With Bath Mind's support, Buro Happold began to hold mental health awareness days and weeks, and organised lunchtime talks from the Bath Mind team covering topics such as resilience training for working during Covid.

Bath Mind then trained up their first cohort of Mental Health First Aiders.

“Since the introduction of Mental Health First Aid, we’ve gone on a bit of a journey. Issues were brought to light through conversations and what Mental Health First Aiders were communicating back. There seemed to be an issue with mental health and wellbeing in our offices - it’s the nature of the industry being fast paced and client driven.”



Engaging staff



In 2018 Buro Happold organised a mental health and wellbeing steering group to start coordinating activities.

They began with a survey to identify areas needing improvement - a step Bath Mind always recommends. From this survey focus groups were then set up, with numerous UK wide Zoom calls. They created an action plan to work through.


Continuing the conversation

Earlier this year Wellbeing Champions were rolled out across the teams.

“We felt Mental Health First Aiders were very much there to be used as a resource for staff, but we wanted people sat within teams to raise awareness of the other resources available as well.”

Additional resources include an intranet site, Mind ebook and wellbeing podcasts. This early intervention and prevention is a big part of Bath Mind’s approach.

“We’ve been on quite a journey, trying to get to the root cause of what’s causing work related stress, and addressing this in terms of job design and training.”



Coping with Covid

This work has been even more crucial during Covid and the national lockdowns.

“We’re very mindful of isolation, people working from home, people who may want to get away from their living conditions. We’ve been able to provide lots of resources and check in with staff. We’re also mindful of the anxiety of returning to the workplace.”



Brave and honest contributions

The response from the team has been really positive. A quarter of their 1000 strong UK team attended a mental health in conversation event delivered by Bath Mind last October.

“Staff on the call were all contributing and being brave and honest and sharing experiences and tips and advice.”

“Another session on Time to Talk Day in February, even more people came to it, and more people felt comfortable having conversations.”

1 in 6 of us experience a common mental health problem in any given week

Personal breakthroughs



For a few individuals, talking about mental health in the workplace and attending awareness sessions with Bath Mind has led them to addressing personal issues.

**1 in 4 of us will
experience mental
illness this year**

“They’ve realised, oh I have got an issue and need to do something about it. They’ve had conversations with line managers, got formal diagnosis and are now thriving at work.”

“They’re great advocates, posting over Yammer and the company intranet. One in particular has felt comfortable to finally speak out.”


Getting management on board

It hasn't always been straightforward to get buy in from senior leaders.

“Sometimes they don't always see it, they don't have their boots on the ground, working with the teams. There can be a little disconnect and they'll ask, is that really an issue? Yes, it's really an issue.”

“They're starting to see that if we look after staff then productivity follows. Inevitably more productivity leads to more profit.”

“Data is quite powerful, surveys and focus groups and UK wide conversations. Once data was there and I could evidence that, it became easier. You can say here are the issues and here are the actions to work towards to address those.”





A 2020 Deloitte study revealed that mental health issues cost UK employers £45 billion every year.

For every £1 spent on early intervention, organisations get £5 back in terms of reduced turnover and decreased sick leave.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/annual-report-2020/stories/it-pays-to-support-mental-health-at-work.html>

What's been achieved?

“What we’ve seen is more people having the confidence to have conversations about it. We’ve given out resources and encourage people to ask twice if someone’s ok. People are now more aware if someone is struggling, they can see any signs and reach out and talk and help colleagues.”



Top 3 tips from Buro Happold:

1. **Get the tangible data if you can, whether that's sickness data, exit interviews or surveys. Talk to staff - that will show you where the issues are.**
1. **From there, prioritise what you need to work on, don't try to achieve it all in one go. You have to take a priority based approach.**
1. **Let the employees have their voice - give them a platform to talk about it, whether that be the company intranet, anonymous feedback forms, or Zoom calls across teams.**

Something to try tomorrow



Focused Fridays

One of the key things Buro Happold introduced during the pandemic was focussed Fridays, with no internal meetings.

“People experienced a lot of fatigue from video calls. Focussed Fridays came into effect from September. A lot of people do appreciate it.”

Working with Bath Mind

Buro Happold recently signed up to refresh their MHFA training with Bath Mind, with their initial cohort having received Bath Mind training about 4 years ago.

They have about 30 Mental Health First Aiders across the UK currently, equipped with both the skills and the confidence to support their colleagues.

Sarah emphasises that they have a really nice mix of individuals who've stepped up to become Mental Health First Aiders, with good diversity of gender, age and grade levels across all offices.

Staff can reach out to whoever they choose, whether that's someone they know or someone they've never met, in confidence.





The trainers that Bath Mind use are fantastic and we have built great working relationships with them all! We just keep asking for them to come back.

I would highly recommend for businesses to partner with Bath Mind as they provide you with so much support and resources to help you get started or continue or workplace wellbeing strategy.



Get in touch

Contact us to find out more about how Bath Mind can support your organisation and teams with their mental health.

Email Hannah Roper at:
hannahroper@bathmind.org.uk

If you have any of your own tips to share, please let us know!

