



Wellbeing Initiatives and Chronic Ill Health in the Workplace



Please Participate!



If you have
QUESTIONS, write
them in the chat
box



Join
Mentimeter to
contribute to
the session



SLIDES will be
distributed
afterwards

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session you will:

- Recognise the benefits to all of an employee wellbeing programme
- Identify the key components and stages of an effective employee wellbeing programme
- Appreciate how chronic illness relates to wellbeing
- Consider a range of health and wellbeing initiatives to include in your programme, or add to your existing programme

Why This Session?

- The average rate of employee sickness absence (7.8 days per employee), is the highest for over a decade (CIPD)
- 76% report stress-related absence - mental health remains the most common focus of wellbeing activity (CIPD)
- The number of working-age adults in the UK with chronic, long-term health conditions is at a record high, with nearly 4 million people in employment reporting a work-limiting health condition (The Health Foundation 2026)
- Chronic ill health and mental health share a bidirectional relationship, where long-term physical conditions increase the risk of mental health issues (like depression and anxiety), and poor mental health can increase the risk of developing chronic physical diseases (National Institute of Mental Health)

Why Construction?

- 79,000 construction workers suffer from work-related ill health (HSE 2024/25)
- 82% of UK construction workers experience mental health problems at some time in their career due to work-related issues. (IGPP)
- The sector loses 2.2 million working days annually due to injury and ill health, with 82% of these days lost to chronic ill health rather than immediate injuries

Causes of long-term health issues:

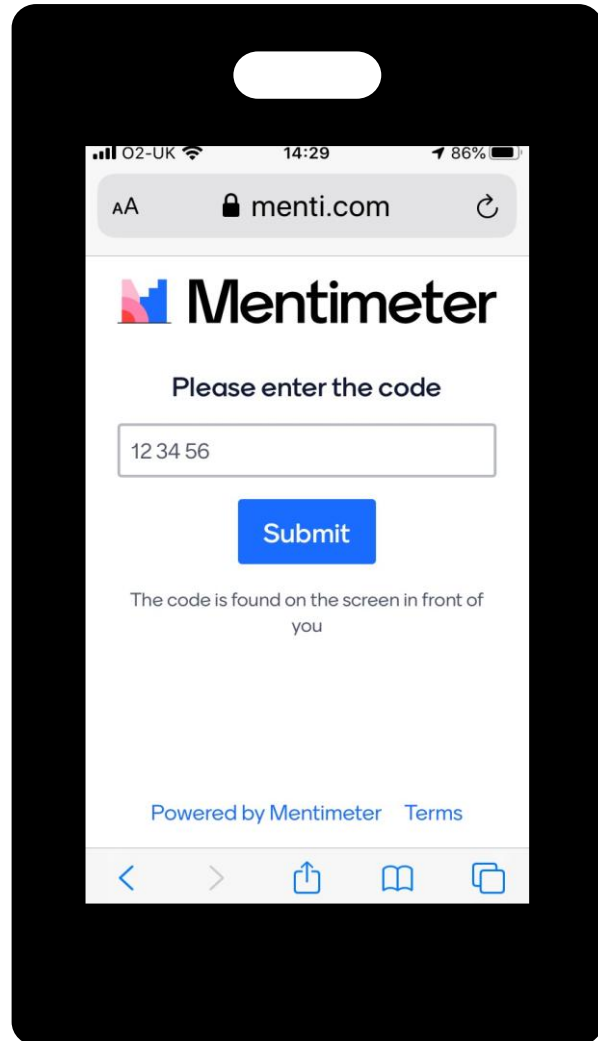
- **Respiratory Diseases (Dust Exposure)**
- **Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs):** Manual handling, heavy lifting, and repetitive tasks cause of long-term back injuries
- **Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS):** Regular, long-term use of vibrating power tools causes nerve damage
- **Noise-Induced Hearing Loss:** Extended exposure to loud machinery
- **Mental Health Issues:** High levels of stress, depression, or anxiety are common, contributing significantly to long-term ill health



Benefits of Employee Wellbeing

- *Increased productivity*
- *Reduced sickness absence*
- *Improved employee retention*
- *Attract and retain clients*
- *Help employees balance work and life*
- *Fulfil duty of care*





Open Mentimeter

1. Go to www.menti.com in a new browser or tab on your phone or computer.
2. Enter the menti code when you see it on the slide or hear the trainer read it out.
3. Don't disconnect from the session, you will still need to hear the trainer



The Chronic Illnesses Support Group



Where it all began!

It started with a blog.

**It developed into a
dedicated support group.**

**We began informal regular
meetings.**



INTERNATIONAL ME/CFS AND FIBROMYALGIA AWARENESS DAY

To mark 12 May, the Chronic Illness Support Group Network is holding an awareness week commencing 11 May. Every day, we will be posting real-life stories from our members and interesting facts about the conditions

**ME/CFS affects
up to 404,000
people in the UK**

**Fibromyalgia
affects around 1
in 20 people**

Wear purple and post individual or team pictures to our VIVA Engage page any day during our awareness week

**Let's flood the
CISG page purple!**



The benefits of the CISG

A place for members to share their experience of having a chronic illness.

A place to raise awareness, promote understanding and visibility of chronic illnesses.

A place to form new ideas and help influence policy.

A place to advocate for the Company's benefits.



Come and join us
**At the Chronic
Illness Support
Group (CISG) event**

Find out more about
chronic illnesses

Understand how colleagues
with Chronic Illnesses cope
with life and work

Chat with CISG members
and other NH Networks

**Guest
speakers**

**Mindfulness
session and
chair yoga**

**Talk and Q&A
from Occupational
Health and Health
Assured**

**Crafting
activities**

**Market stalls
from other
NH networks**

02 October 2025
10:30-15:30 hrs

Snow Hill, Birmingham
Online join-in available

Register to attend the event in person
or online by using the QR code on the right.
Any question reach out on our email address below



 chronicillnesssupportnetwork@nationalhighways.co.uk

How has the Group evolved?

We evolved from the Fibromyalgia Support Group into the Chronic Illness Support Group.

We formally established ourselves as a Network.

We held our first annual hybrid meeting in October 2025.

We run both open and closed meetings for meetings for members and non-members.

We hold regular awareness days to promote understanding and visibility.

Our Group Committee has expanded, alongside continued growth of our membership.

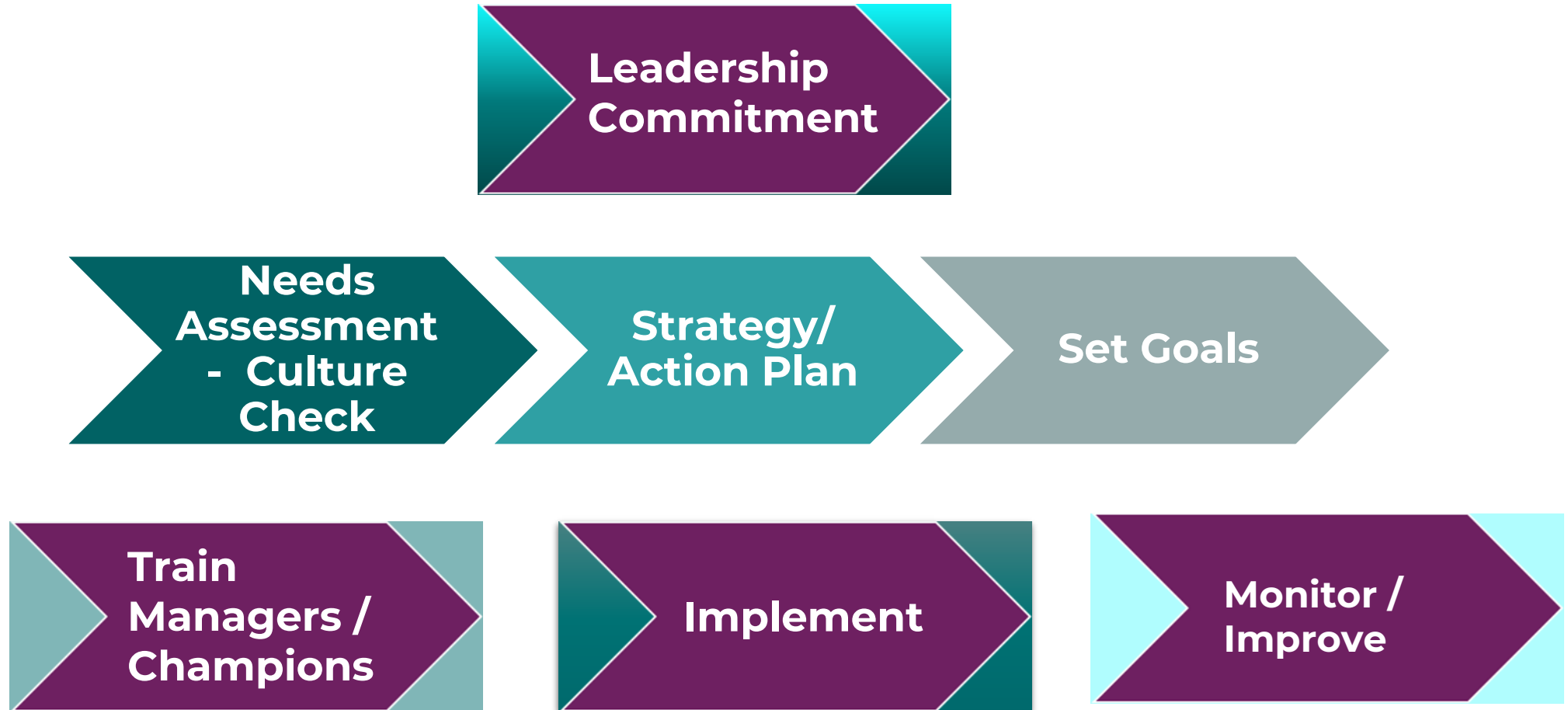
We have a dedicated social media platform to connect and engage our community.

We collaborate and share best practice with other National Highways Networks.

We work closely the Inclusion and Diversity team.

- **the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative** to help staff recognize and support drivers with invisible, chronic conditions at service areas and on the network.
- **AccessAble to create 360-degree virtual guides** for motorway service areas to help disabled travelers, including those with chronic pain or mobility issues, plan their journeys and locate facilities.
- **A dedicated advocacy service (via POhWER)** is available to assist individuals with health conditions or disabilities in making complaints or raising concerns about the road network.
- **Safety and Infrastructure – Home safe and well and "Road to Zero Harm"**: These initiatives aim to ensure no one is harmed while travelling on the network, with a focus on improving accessibility for vulnerable road users.

Implementing a Wellbeing Programme



Seven key areas of employee wellbeing



Health



Good work



Good lifestyle choices



Social life



Personal growth



Values



Financial wellbeing

Source:
CIPD/
TestGorilla

- **Physical health** - Health promotion, healthy eating, exercise, health checks, health insurance protection, managing disability, OH support, EAP.
- **Physical safety** - Safe working practices, safe equipment, personal safety training.
- **Mental health** - Stress management, risk assessments, training managers in managing mental ill health, OH support, EAP.



Mental Health: The Facts

- **82% of UK construction workers experience mental health problems due to work-related issues. Two workers take their own lives every day** (IGPP)



- Create a supportive culture
- Provide mental health resources - MH First Aiders / Champions
- Promote work-life balance and address overwork
- Support employees recovering from mental illness
- Reduce stigma and encourage peer support
- Encourage physical activity
- Implement a mental health policy
- Incorporate mental health into performance expectations

- **Working environment** - Consider working areas, open and inclusive culture
- **Good line management** - Effective people management policies, training for line managers
- **Work demands** - Job design, job roles, job quality, workload, hours, job satisfaction, work-life balance
- **Autonomy** - Control, whistleblowing
- **Change management** - Communication, involvement, leadership
- **Pay and Reward** - Fair transparent remuneration practices, non-financial recognition



- Providing workout classes at work or subsidised gym memberships
- Having bike parking and changing facilities to encourage taking a bike to work.
- Standing desks
- Walking meetings
- If there is a canteen, offer healthy choices.
- Weekly/monthly cooking or recipe clubs
- De stigmatize healthy behaviours



- **Employee voice** - Communication, consultation, genuine dialogue, involvement in decision making
- **Positive relationships** - Management style, teamworking, healthy relationships with peers and managers, dignity and respect



- **Career development** - Mentoring, coaching, performance management, performance development plans, skills utilization
- **Emotional** - Positive relationships, personal resilience training
- **Lifelong learning** - Performance development plans, access to training, mid-career review, technical and vocational learning, challenging work
- **Creativity** - Open and collaborative culture, innovation workshops

- **Fair pay and benefit policies** - Pay rates above statutory National Minimum/Living Wage, flexible benefits scheme
- **Retirement planning** - Phased retirement (three-or four-day week), pre-retirement courses for people approaching retirement
- **Employee financial support-** offering debt counselling, signposting to external sources of free advice (for example, Citizens Advice), access to independent financial advisers



- **Leadership** - Inclusive leadership, clear mission, health and wellbeing strategy, corporate governance, building trust
- **Ethical standards** - Dignity at work, corporate social responsibility, community investment, volunteering
- **Inclusion and diversity** - Valuing difference, cultural engagement, employees & manager training





Home Safe and Well

FEEDBACK



<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/suppliers/health-safety-and-wellbeing/home-safe-and-well/>

- The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a simple tool for you to voluntarily share that you have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent – and that you may need a helping hand, understanding, or more time in shops, at work, on transport, or in public spaces.

<https://hdsunflower.com/uk/>

Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it is not there



Resources



Public Health
England

[Workplace health needs assessment - GOV.UK](#)



[Mental wellbeing guide for small businesses](#)



[BITC Wellbeing at work toolkits](#)

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