

Occupational health in construction

B&CE



Research findings

For people,
not profit

Occupational health in construction research findings

Improving construction workers' health

After acquiring Constructing Better Health (CBH), we set about getting to grips with the problems of occupational health in the industry. And how it can be consistently managed to improve the work-place health of construction workers.

To understand what the industry needs from an occupational health scheme, we engaged with you, the industry, as well as Occupational Health Service Providers.

We held

- Forums and in-depth interviews with larger employers and industry representatives
- Online surveys with employers
- Meetings with Occupational Health Service Providers (OHSPs)

And this is what you told us...

We found there's a ripple effect...

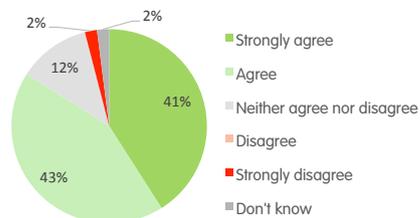


● Lack of understanding and clarity – at the heart of the problem

We've learnt that there is a massive lack of understanding of what occupational health is and how it should be operated in the construction industry. Employers look to providers for guidance, but providers don't understand what the construction industry needs, and are seen as missing knowledge about the complex risks involved in construction. There is a consensus within the industry that help is needed with occupational health implementation.

"It's all generic stuff. We need something specific for our industry. Construction is different, it's a moving world. A workplace today is a different workplace tomorrow or even this afternoon." (Quote from forum.)

More needs to be done to improve the implementation of occupational health in the industry



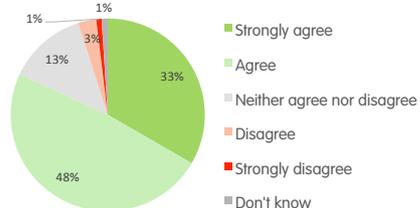
● Inconsistency – bred from the lack of understanding and clarity

With no one set of standards used consistently, employers are interpreting what is needed differently. This causes a lack of co-ordination in their approach to occupational health management.

Employers want a clear and easy way to comply – with clarity and guidance on what health tests to carry out based on risks and hazards rather than the current job role system.

"The problem is when subcontractors are working for principal contractors: they all have different requirements. As a subcontractor we are trying to keep up with all the different requirements, which is a nightmare!" (Quote from forum.)

Health assessments should be based on risks and hazards rather than job profile



● Inefficiency – caused by inconsistency

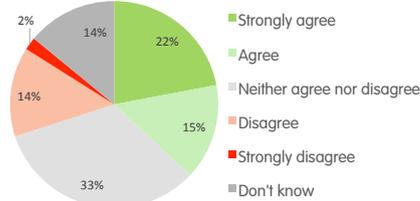
Many employers are investing unnecessary time and resources setting up their own in-house solution to suit their company – rather than adopting an industry-wide standard approach, resulting in:

- too much administration and time spent
- too many medicals – often unnecessary

Employers need a guide to choosing the right occupational health scheme. But provision is spread among various providers, with no clear leader appearing to specialise in the construction industry.

"When it comes to occupational health, different people need different things... You need a way of making sure that whatever you give each person is relevant. If it's not relevant, then you're either spending money when you don't need to, or equally, you might not be doing something which you should be doing." (Quote from forum.)

There are too many health checks by multiple employers



● Poor outcomes – driven by inconsistency and inefficiency

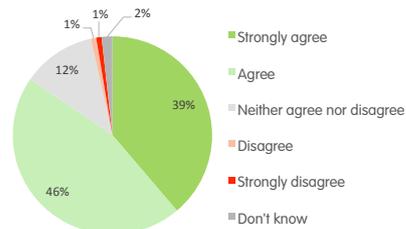
Duplicate medicals and the lack of a portable health record means workers aren't getting a consistent and effective oversight of their health.

The industry and its workers want an effective way to spot the signs and symptoms of ill health at an early stage to prevent future health issues. But there is no national database in place for generating intelligence to monitor long-term trends and pre-empt health issues.

This means the construction industry lacks the framework to drive improvements for workers' health.

"Managed well, improvement in occupational health should be a benefit to all and not merely another box-ticking cost on employers." (Quote from forum.)

There is a need for industry-wide data to be analysed to spot health trends in the industry



What the industry told us they need

→ Understanding and clarity

- Ability to raise occupational health awareness and manage risks by having simple, straightforward education, advice, guidance and best practice

→ Consistency

- National industry standards for consistent management of work-place health
- Engagement with the industry so any new occupational health model becomes the expected way of working
- The model should improve the way occupational health is managed, empowering the whole supply chain
- A standard potentially based on risks rather than job roles – providing minimum health surveillance to monitor the health of workers exposed to specific health risks

→ Efficiency

- A clear, simple model that complements existing occupational health plans in place
- A menu of health checks to cover these risks as a minimum
- Help employers understand the value of occupational health services and to become better buyers
- A cost-effective solution that removes duplicate health checks and administration

→ Good outcomes

- A portable health record containing 'need to know information' and owned by the worker
- Occupational health data analysts can monitor centrally held clinical data to identify long-term health trends and pre-empt health issues for the benefit of the industry.
- An approach so both employers and workers see the benefits of taking part

What we should be targeting



Conclusions – any new health solution should:

- Outline the minimum standard requirements employers need to comply – acting as a 'first line of defence'
- Provides a minimum standard model across the industry, based on risks rather than job roles – health surveillance monitoring the health of workers exposed to specific health risks
- Manages additional risks and raises awareness by providing education, support, guidance and best practice advice
- Contain a worker owned, portable health record containing 'need to know' information
- Allows for the standard model to evolve to include enhanced occupational health and wellbeing offerings

Through solving the problems for employers, the solution will deliver improved health for construction workers

Our next steps:

We're discussing with the construction industry a long-term solution for employers and their workers. Keep an eye out throughout 2017 for further updates from B&CE.



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