

One in two motor trade workers suffering with mental health and wellbeing

Motor trade organisations have joined forces with the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Working Minds campaign to tackle work-related stress in the motor repair trade ahead of Christmas.

Ben, a charity that supports people who work or have worked in the automotive industry, has revealed one in two workers in the automotive sector have struggled with their mental health and wellbeing in the past 12 months, while 50% of those involved in the industry are likely to have been dealing with stress, worry or anxiety, low mood or depression. Ben has also seen a 190% rise in people using their benefits counselling service and accessing their financial guidance.

HSE, together with Working Minds campaign partners Ben, the National Body Repair Association (NBRA), the commercial Vehicle Body Repair Association (VBRA) and the Independent Garage Association (IGA) are promoting how to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health across the sector.

During the winter months, Ben sees an increase in enquiries and cases as many people tend to spend more time indoors and have less interaction with others, negatively impacting their emotional wellbeing. The charity says enquiries also come from people who are suffering with financial issues as they see an increase in their bills, which can also lead to poor mental health.

Ellen Plumer, Head of Outreach, Health and Wellbeing at Ben, said: "Each year thousands of people come to Ben with mental health issues as their primary concern. From results of latest survey of those in the automotive industry, one in two workers have struggled in the past 12 months. Stress is the most common issue, followed by anxiety and poor sleep.

"Work life balance and high workload are the biggest drivers of workplace stress. If it's not addressed and goes on for a long period of time, it can turn into an issue. We know there is a strong link between money worries and mental health.

"If you're struggling with money, then you're likely to be stressed and anxious. It's really important for employers to understand that all areas of a person's life impacts health and wellbeing. Work is a big part of life so it's important to make people feel like they matter, are heard and feel supported."

The latest figures from HSE show there were an estimated 914,000 cases due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety for workers in Great Britain in 2021/22. That's an 11% rise from the 822,000 cases in 2020/21. An estimated 17 million working days were also lost to work-related stress, depression or

anxiety in 2021/22, which covers more than half of all working days lost due to work-related ill health across the same period.

Research from the regulator has also found that those who work in motor vehicle repairs, the wholesale and retail trade, had a significantly higher workplace injury rate in 2021/22 compared to most industries. HSE's Working Minds campaign was launched last year and is aimed specifically at supporting small businesses by providing employers and workers with easy to implement advice and tools to help them recognise and respond to the signs and causes of stress and support good mental health in the workplace. The law requires all employers to protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

There is an economic benefit to employers supporting staff's mental health. Figures from a [Deloitte report](#) show employers can see a return of £5.30 on average for every £1 invested in mental health, while the total annual cost of poor mental health to employers has increased now by 25% since 2019, costing UK bosses up to £56 billion a year.

Liz Goodwill, Head of the Work Related Stress and Mental Health Policy Team at HSE, said: "We're calling on employers in the automotive industry to ensure that recognising and responding to the signs of stress becomes as routine, as managing workplace safety. Bosses in the automotive industry should hold regular catch-ups with workers and their teams."

"Working Minds helps employers to follow 5 simple steps based on risk assessment. They are to **Reach out** and have conversations, **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress, **Respond** to any risks you've identified, **Reflect** on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it **Routine**. It needs to become the norm to talk about stress and how people are feeling and coping at work."

Guidance, risk assessment templates and talking toolkits to help employers spot the signs of work-related stress and prevent issues before they become a problem, can be found through HSE's Working Minds campaign:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

To find out more information about Ben and to access their services visit: <https://ben.org.uk/> or call their helpline on 08081 311 333.

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click here: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

[Fire authority fined after firefighter breaks both legs](#)

A fire authority has been fined after a firefighter was trapped underneath a car in a training exercise, breaking his legs in more than a dozen places.

The firefighter was setting up a simulated road traffic collision with colleagues at Stockton Fire Station, South Road, Stockton on Tees on October 19 2020 when the incident happened.

The crew had attempted to put a car on its side to perform a 'roof flap' procedure in which the roof structure is removed to allow greater access.

Hydraulic spreaders were used to raise the car off the ground. When the spreaders had reached their widest and had tilted the car as far as possible, the crew tried to push the car the remaining way on to its side.

While doing this, the car fell back down towards them, hitting the firefighter and trapping him underneath the car chassis, causing serious injuries to both his legs, including fractures to his left fibula and tibia, an open fracture and dislocation to his left ankle, and 12 fractures to his right leg and foot.

He was in hospital for two weeks.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the authority had not assessed the risks posed by the activity and therefore failed to implement a documented safe system of work.

Cleveland Fire Authority, of Endeavour House, Queens Meadow Business Park, Hartlepool, pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £600 with £7,304 costs by Teesside Magistrates' Court on December 7, 2022.

HSE inspector Clare Maltby said: "All organisations have a duty to risk assess their work activities and implement appropriate safe systems of work.

"This is a reminder to all fire authorities that pre-planned drill exercises should be assessed and the hazards identified and the risks controlled."

Notes to editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. www.hse.gov.uk

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>
 3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
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[Company fined after worker contracts blood infection](#)

A company has been fined after an employee became seriously ill when he contracted a blood infection while working at a lake contaminated with sewage.

He was working for Adler and Allan Ltd, a supplier of environmental risk services, during a clean-up operation at a lake near Churchbridge, Cannock, Staffordshire, in June 2019.

Dead fish had to be cleaned out of the lake after it was contaminated with sewage when a nearby pipe burst.

The employee worked at the lake for two weeks before contracting Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) and became seriously ill.

The infection led to the man having a rash across his whole body meaning he had to limit contact with his family. His kidney and liver also had to be monitored. He was given antibiotics and did not make a full recovery for around four months.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found there was a serious risk of ill health to employees at the site as there were inadequate hygiene provisions in place to suitably guard against bacteriological and pathogen infection.

During around the first two weeks of the job, there were [no on-site toilets or welfare units available to the company's employees](#). This led to workers using a local supermarket to wash and go to the toilet.

There was also a lack of supervision at the site, with the company also failing to conduct a suitable risk assessment and implement an appropriate system of work.

Adler and Allan Limited of Station Parade, Harrogate, Yorkshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety Act 1974 and Regulation 20(1) of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. The company were fined £126,100 and ordered to pay costs of £43,494 at Cannock Magistrates' Court on 29 November 2022

HSE inspector Lyn Mizen said: "This serious ill health matter could have been avoided if the clearly foreseeable risks and dangers had been appropriately

controlled and managed, right from the outset.

“Portable welfare units can be easily sourced and are clearly needed for heavily contaminated work situations such as this.

“HSE will not hesitate to hold duty holders to account if they fall short of appropriate welfare standards.”

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2. HSE guidance about the provision of welfare facilities in workplaces can be accessed here – [Welfare at work – Guidance for employers on welfare provisions \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://hse.gov.uk/welfare-at-work)
3. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

[Company fined after fall leaves grandad with life-changing brain injuries](#)

The wife of a man left severely disabled by a workplace accident says he is a “stranger in her husband’s body”.

Sue McFarlane’s partner John suffered life-changing brain injuries falling 2.5 metres from a delivery vehicle to a concrete floor at the vehicle parts company where he worked.

John, 57, a dad of four and grandfather of three, was in a coma for 24 days. He had a fractured skull, fractured ribs, a broken collar bone, and broken and dislocated fingers.

Sue is now John’s registered carer. He can never work or drive again and is classed as 80% disabled.

She spoke after Autoneum Great Britain Ltd, which employed John at its site in Stoke-on-Trent, was fined £30,000 over the accident on 5 June 2018.

Sue, 57, who lives with John in Newcastle-under-Lyme, said: "Not only has the accident had a devastating impact on his life but a devastating effect on all those around him, none more than his children, stepchildren, grandchildren, the whole family.

"He will never be the John we all loved before this happened, just a shell of what he once was."

Before John fell, he and a visiting driver had climbed on to the top deck of the delivery vehicle at the Autoneum site and were trying to move a pallet, which had moved while being transported, towards the open edge where it could be reached by a forklift truck.

The banding they were using to move the pallet by hand snapped and John fell to the concrete floor.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Britain workplace regulator, found that whilst a risk assessment was in place it was not suitable and sufficient and there was no safe system of work for unloading vehicles or dealing with pallets that had moved in transit.

Employees had not been adequately trained or instructed and supervision and monitoring was not adequate to identify the risk that existed.

Autoneum Great Britain Ltd, of Stanley Matthews Way, Trentham Lakes, Stoke on Trent Staffordshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974 and was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £10,126 costs at Cannock Magistrates Court on December 2, 2022.

Sue said: "John has received life changing injuries from his workplace accident. He is not the man I married, but a stranger in my husband's body.

"He set off for work for the day and didn't come home for nine months, and even then it was to a different house as we had to move, as he couldn't have managed the stairs in the old house.

"John was the nicest man. He had lots of patience, he'd give you anything and would do anything he could to help you. Now he has no patience at all, he's grumpy all the time, and is obsessive about things.

"He is as good as he's ever going to be, there's nothing that can be done that's going to bring him back. He doesn't really understand what's going on, he thinks that if he gives himself a smack on the head he'll wake up.

"He can walk and he can talk, but it's difficult. He doesn't remember things. He has no short-term memory at all and has lost about 21 years of his memory.

"John doesn't really understand what's going on. It's so hard for the whole family, for everyone. His sons have lost the man who was their dad."

Falls from height caused the deaths of 174 workers over the past five years, representing 26% of all work-related fatalities.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Acting Principal Inspector Andrew Johnson said: “Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country.

“The risks associated with working at height and safe systems of work to control the risks are well known.

“Employers have a responsibility to devise safe methods of work and to provide the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to their employees and others working at their site.

“Had that been done, the life changing injuries Mr McFarlane has sustained could have been prevented.”

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[Engineer jailed for illegal gas work](#)

A plumbing and heating engineer has been jailed for 20 weeks after carrying out illegal gas work.

Peter Read, who traded as A.C.E Plumbing and Heating in Portsmouth, was contracted to install a new gas central heating boiler for a customer in January 2020.

A few days later the customer experienced problems with the boiler. On inspection by an engineer on the Gas Safe Register, the installation did not meet current standards. Further repair work was then required by a Gas Safe Registered engineer to ensure that the installation was in a safe condition.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Peter Read was not competent to carry out gas work and not on the Gas Safe Register at the time he carried out this work. Mr Read had previously been prosecuted by the HSE in April 2016 and had been found guilty of carrying out unregistered

gas work. He was fully aware of his legal responsibilities when carrying out gas work.

Peter Read of Seafield Road, Portsmouth, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 3(1) and 3(3) of the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations 1998 and section 22 of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was handed a custodial sentence of 20 weeks at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court on 2 December 2022.

HSE Inspector Karen Morris said: "Peter Read continued to carry out gas work while he was not competent to do so and while not Gas Safe Registered.

"He has shown a blatant disregard for the law and continues to put people at risk despite previous enforcement against him by the HSE. His actions have not only caused considerable stress for the customers concerned but have also resulted in additional financial outlay required to put right his poor-quality work.

"I would like to take this opportunity to remind anyone who needs gas work doing to make sure they check that the engineer has the right skills and is registered with Gas Safe Register. This is very easy to do and by law, anyone working with gas must be listed on the register."

Find out more about the [Gas Safe Register](#) and for more information on gas health and safety visit HSE's [website](#).

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2. To help ensure the highest standards of gas safety are met and to prevent injury and loss of life, all gas work in domestic premises must be carried out by people who have been properly trained and are registered Gas Safe engineers. HSE will not hesitate to take enforcement action against people who break the laws surrounding gas work which are in place to protect the public. We would encourage anyone who is asking for gas work to be done to make sure they check the engineer has the right skills and is registered with Gas Safe Register. Homeowners can ask to see the engineer's Gas Safe Register identification card which contains key information. Further information about gas safety can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm>
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>