Toolbox talk

Mental health and looking out for a mate

Notice, ask, listen, point to help, check in

10 minutes

For: Everyone on site: workers, apprentices, supervisors and managers

Why it matters

Anyone can struggle, and on site people often keep it to themselves. You don't have to be an expert to help a mate open up. Samaritans say asking someone directly if they are suicidal can protect them.

Key points

1. Notice changes: going quiet, not answering messages, angry, or sleeping or eating differently.
2. Watch for talk of feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless, or drinking to cope.
3. Money worries, loneliness and bullying can all weigh people down.
4. Ask: 'How are things? You don't seem yourself.' Ask twice if you need to.
5. Listen more than you talk. Pauses are fine. You don't have to fix it.
6. It's OK to ask directly about suicide. It won't put the idea in their head.
7. Point them to help: Construction Industry Helpline 0345 605 1956 or text HARDHAT to 85258.
8. Check in again in a day or two. Look after yourself too.

Sources: Samaritans: Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts; Samaritans: How to support someone you're worried about; NHS: Help for suicidal thoughts; Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity: 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline; Samaritans: Myths about suicide.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/mental-health**

Toolbox talk

Mental health and looking out for a mate

Do

- Pick a quiet moment, like a brew or a drive between jobs.
- Use open questions such as 'How's that making you feel?'
- Take what they say seriously.
- Encourage them to call a helpline, NHS 111 or their GP, and offer to help.
- Call 999 if you think someone is in immediate danger.

Don't

- Don't tell them to 'man up' or that others have it worse.
- Don't jump in to fill a silence or rush to fix it.
- Don't judge or add your own view of what's wrong with them.
- Don't give up if they say 'I'm fine' the first time.
- Don't carry it alone. Talk to someone you trust about how you feel too.

Ask the group

- What signs might tell you a mate on this job isn't OK?
- What would make it easier for you to ask someone how they really are?
- Who on this site could you go to if you were struggling?
- Where are the helpline numbers on this site, and could you find them quickly?

If it goes wrong: If someone is in immediate danger, call 999. For support any time, call the Construction Industry Helpline on 0345 605 1956 (24/7), text HARDHAT to 85258, or call Samaritans free on 116 123; more help at tradefoxapp.com/mental-health.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____ Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

Sources: Samaritans: Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts; Samaritans: How to support someone you're worried about; NHS: Help for suicidal thoughts; Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity: 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline; Samaritans: Myths about suicide.

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Attendance register

Mental health and looking out for a mate

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

Scan for the latest version of this talk online ›

Go further: Mental health support for construction workers on Tradefox

Sources: Samaritans: Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts; Samaritans: How to support someone you're worried about; NHS: Help for suicidal thoughts; Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity: 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline; Samaritans: Myths about suicide.

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Quick check

Mental health and looking out for a mate

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. Does asking someone directly about suicide put the idea in their head?

- [ ] Yes, so never ask
- [ ] No, it can give them permission to talk
- [ ] Only if they are young

2. Which of these could be a sign a mate is struggling?

- [ ] Going quiet and not replying to messages
- [ ] Arriving on time
- [ ] Asking for a brew

3. What is the Construction Industry Helpline number?

- [ ] 0800 111 999
- [ ] 101
- [ ] 0345 605 1956

4. Your mate opens up. What is the most helpful thing to do?

- [ ] Tell them what they should do
- [ ] Listen and take them seriously
- [ ] Change the subject

5. When should you call 999?

- [ ] If you think someone is in immediate danger
- [ ] Only if they ask you to
- [ ] Never for mental health

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. No, it can give them permission to talk

Samaritans say talking about suicide doesn't put the idea in someone's head and can help them open up.

2. Going quiet and not replying to messages

Being distant, not replying and avoiding people are signs Samaritans say to look out for.

3. 0345 605 1956

The Lighthouse Construction Industry Helpline is free and open 24/7 on 0345 605 1956.

4. Listen and take them seriously

Listening and taking it seriously helps more than trying to fix the problem.

5. If you think someone is in immediate danger

If someone is in immediate danger, call 999 for an ambulance.

Sources

- Samaritans: Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts
  https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/supporting-someone-suicidal-thoughts/
- Samaritans: How to support someone you're worried about
  https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/how-support-someone-youre-worried-about/
- NHS: Help for suicidal thoughts
  https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/help-for-suicidal-thoughts/
- Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity: 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline
  https://lighthousecharity.org/
- Samaritans: Myths about suicide
  https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/myths-about-suicide/

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

TRADEFOX

Toolbox talk 10 · Site poster
Last reviewed 25 November 2026

Ask twice. Listen. Point to help.

1. **Notice when a mate's not right**
2. **It's OK to ask directly**
3. **Helpline 0345 605 1956, 24/7**

Talk to someone, free and confidential:
Construction Industry Helpline **0345 605 1956** (24/7)
Text **HARDHAT** to **85258**
Samaritans **116 123** · In an emergency call **999**

Mental health and looking out for a mate toolbox talk
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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. Samaritans: Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts

Warning signs, asking directly, listening and staying in touch; key points and quiz.

https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/supporting-someone-suicidal-thoughts/

S2. NHS: Help for suicidal thoughts

Immediate danger and urgent help; emergency box and Do/Don't.

https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/help-for-suicidal-thoughts/

S3. Lighthouse Charity: Construction wellbeing support

Existing construction helpline and HARDHAT support details; key point 7 and site posters.

https://lighthousecharity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/All-About-Us-May-2025.pdf

S4. Samaritans: Contact a Samaritan

Existing Samaritans contact details; emergency box.

https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/