



Is your construction company / site interested in hosting or attending a free workshop that focuses on creating a mental fitness culture, which can actively promote and support men's mental health and resilience, and reduce the risk of suicide?

If so, then please read on ...





Overview of CAIRDE

CAIRDE is an initiative spearheaded by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI - www.mhfi.org). It targets the construction industry in Ireland as a setting to create and embed a whole organisation mind fitness culture, which can actively promote and support men's mental health and resilience, and reduce the risk of suicide.

CAIRDE is part of the Programme for Government in the Republic of Ireland, and is funded by the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention, the Department of Health and the Irish Research Council (IRC). The National Centre for Men's Health (within South East Technological University - SETU) has coordinated the research and evaluation aspects of this project, and supervised two PhD students (on the IRC Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme) who researched the evidence base / developed the content for the interventions. A wider range of stakeholders - including construction industry and Trade Union representatives - also helped to inform the practical development of the programme.

The Need for CAIRDE

Compared to other occupational groups, construction workers are considered particularly vulnerable to mental ill-health and suicide. While there is often a focus on health and safety in the construction industry, research has found that these workers are six times more likely to die by suicide than from a workplace accident¹. Indeed, in high income countries - such as the USA and Australia - suicide rates among male construction industry workers are twice that of men working in other industries^{2,3}.

Ireland is not immune to this phenomenon. During the economic recession, the construction industry accounted for 1,039 recorded deaths by suicide between 2008 and 2012⁴. In a review of approximately 300 suicides in the Cork region alone, during the same time frame, 42% were among those who had worked in the construction industry⁵. More recently, in 2019, it was estimated that 10% of all suicides in Ireland were among construction workers⁶.

A significant risk factor for suicidal behaviour among construction workers is their reluctance to seek help for mental health difficulties. Therefore, it is crucial to raise awareness about the issue of suicide in this sector, to reduce the stigma associated with mental ill-health and help-seeking, and to connect construction workers to the most suitable help available to them.

While some programmes have been successfully implemented in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, no such suicide prevention programme was being rolled out in Ireland to date. To meet this need, the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) commissioned the Men's Health Forum in Ireland to develop a similar programme for the Irish construction industry. This resulted in the development of a bespoke suicide prevention programme for the local construction sector titled 'CAIRDE' (**C**onstruction **A**lliance to **R**educe **S**uicide).

Aim of CAIRDE

CAIRDE seeks to reduce suicide stigma, enhance knowledge around suicide, and encourage help-seeking and help-offering in the construction industry. Critically, it recognises the needs of key gatekeepers / sign-posters on building sites, and the crucial role that they can play in reducing suicide in their workplace. It was inspired by the 'MATES in Construction' model in Australia - which offers an industry solution to an industry problem.

There are two primary interventions within CAIRDE:

1. General Awareness Training (GAT) - targeting the whole of the construction worker population. This is a relatively short - maximum 90 minute - workshop.
2. Connector Training - targeting anyone on building sites who has a health, safety or managerial responsibility. This is a full day programme.

Focus of the CAIRDE Interventions

The GAT programme seeks to enhance mental health literacy among construction workers, with a view to increasing their knowledge, improving their help-seeking / help-offering intentions, and reducing the stigma associated with mental health and suicide. A secondary aim is to encourage the uptake of suicide intervention training (especially Let's Talk About Suicide) among construction industry workers.

The 'Connector' programme seeks to give participants the knowledge, skills and confidence to effectively engage with construction workers around their mental health issues, and to signpost them to the most appropriate supports available to them. Participants are also encouraged to undertake further suicide intervention training (such as Let's Talk About Suicide, safeTALK and ASIST).

These two models are based upon evidence gleaned by the CAIRDE team from an extensive period of systematic reviews, on-site surveying, focus groups with stakeholders, and a co-production engagement process with the construction sector in Ireland.

Development Process

To date, CAIRDE has ...

- Established a working relationship with the MATES in Construction team in Australia.
- Identified key partners and allies across all areas of the construction sector.
- Formed a Stakeholder Group.
- Developed a CAIRDE brand.
- Secured research and evaluation support at both PhD and Post-Doc levels.
- Refined the consultation methodology / questions and obtained ethical approval.
- Negotiated buy-in from a large and diverse range of construction sites.
- Consulted with stakeholders on the potential challenges and barriers.
- Developed multi-lingual Survey Information Sheets and Questionnaires.
- Administered the survey to almost 1,700 male construction workers.
- Ran the survey with 650+ apprentices in the construction sector.
- Conducted qualitative interviews with male construction workers who have had suicide ideation.
- Completed a further survey - this time with young apprentices.

- Undertook two systematic reviews: (i) the 'active ingredients' of mental health promotion and suicide prevention programmes in male-dominated industries; and (ii) the stigma surrounding men and mental health.
- Hosted focus groups with construction site managers to explore: challenges around supporting and offering help to employees; specific difficulties within the industry; and what has worked / would work well.
- Completed one-one meetings with a small number of managers, to explore their preferences in more detail.
- Organised Co-Design Workshops, which explored training modes and how best to integrate and develop this work into the Irish construction industry context.
- Used the evidence gathered to formulate the content for the training programmes.
- Developed and tested bespoke content and resources for the workshops.
- Recruited construction sites to host workshops.
- Piloted the 'Connector' and 'GAT' workshops.
- Conducted pre/post surveys with participants, and also sought qualitative feedback from 'Connector' participants.
- Analysed the data received to inform and shape future developments.
- Rolled-out the refined programme in a broad range of settings.
- Produced and published a series of academic journal articles.

Publications

Published journal articles to date have included ...

- Prevalence and associated risk factors for suicidal ideation, non-suicidal self-injury and suicide attempt among male construction workers in Ireland: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE1.pdf>
- Workplace Interventions Targeting Mental Health Literacy, Stigma, Help-Seeking, and Help-Offering in Male-Dominated Industries: A Systematic Review: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE2.pdf>
- Mental Health Stigma Reduction Interventions Among Men: A Systematic Review: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE3.pdf>
- 'You Have to Make It Normal, That's What We Do': Construction Managers' Experiences of Help-Offering: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE4.pdf>
- The Development of the CAIRDE General Awareness Training: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE5.pdf>
- Factors influencing the mental health help-seeking behaviours of construction workers in Ireland: perspectives from managers: <https://mhfi.org/CAIRDE6.pdf>

CAIRDE During 2026

During 2026, the CAIRDE project is seeking to ...

- Engage a wider range of construction sites across Ireland (especially outside of the Greater-Dublin region) to host the CAIRDE programme or attend existing workshops.
- Roll-out either/both of the two workshops (GAT and Connector) on host sites.
- Receive feedback from participants (in order to fine tune the format, content and delivery method) to make it more appropriate and effective moving forward.
- Offer follow-on assistance to key staff on sites (when appropriate) to explore how the learning from the workshops can be built upon in their local setting and carried forward after the workshop(s) has ended.

How to Get Involved

The GAT and Connector Workshops are offered free-of-charge to any site that would like to host them or to attend an open registration session outside their site. Companies who are interested in hosting their own workshops are asked to ...

- Recruit the participants.
- Provide a suitable room for the workshops to be held in.
- Offer (at least) refreshments to participants.

MHFI will, then, arrange a facilitator(s) to attend sites to deliver these programmes on a mutually suitable date. In terms of the number of participants in each workshop ...

- To make it economically viable for the facilitator to attend, GAT workshops need to have a minimum of 20 participants, but there is no upper limit. However, as these are short inputs, ideally two workshops would be run on the same site on the same day.
- The Connector workshop needs to have a minimum of 12 participants. However, there is also a recommended maximum of 25 participants - to ensure that sharing of experience in the group can be maximised.

Find Out More

For more information or expressions of interest, contact Colin Fowler from MHFI at
Tel: +44 751 9945261 | Email: colin@mhfi.org

Bibliography

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