

# CASE STUDY

## EMCOR UK: CREATING GOOD JOBS THROUGH OPEN DIALOGUE

In January 2021, EMCOR UK, in association with a BITC initiative, launched a Mental Health Charter to encourage all employees to openly discuss mental health and wellbeing issues at work and to proactively encourage access to the education, help and support available. This initiative is succeeding in opening up the mental health conversation and stimulating action across the organisation.

### Introduction

In November 2020, as part of its wellbeing strategy, an ISO 27500 gap analysis was conducted of EMCOR UK's human-centred approach and, in collaboration with HR, existing hygiene factors and a suite of leading and lagging HR metrics were reviewed. It was recognised that mental health is intrinsically linked with physical, financial, and social wellbeing. Further, in the facilities management (FM) business, it is also the number one reason for absence. It was realised that more could be done.

The Mental Health Charter was tailored to promote inclusivity and challenge stigma as well as demonstrating a commitment to decent work for all. It is built around a combination of business pledges on key areas such as promoting an open culture; active listening; curiosity and connecting with others; encouraging work-life balance and demonstrating empathy and flexibility. These values are complemented by employee pledges such as recognition that wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, looking out for each other, and committing to participating in individual mental health education and improving awareness.

**"IT IS OUR COMPANY-WIDE COMMITMENT TO A BETTER WORLD AT WORK."**

### The solution

The Mental Health Charter has enabled EMCOR UK to commit to a way forward and show exactly what it is striving towards. The company understands from past experience with wellbeing initiatives that the key to success is to ensure that what it says and does is authentic. This is driven by visible leadership, accountability and the right tone from the very top.

Much like company policies and procedures, to achieve its purpose the Mental Health Charter had to be clearly communicated and supported throughout the business – laying the foundations for it to be brought to life by the actions of its people.

Following the launch, EMCOR UK people responded by sharing their stories and stoking up the mental health conversation – with a 'Wellbeing Pledge Tree' created where individuals could make their own personal commitment. The Mental



Health Charter was used as the launchpad for a host of other initiatives which link back to its specific collective pledges.

## Pledge: Engage with mental health education

RESPOND training was provided to help line managers and supervisors spot mental health warning signs both in themselves and in colleagues, signpost the right support, and improve their own resilience. Training has already been completed by all executive and operational leaders and is rolling out across the account leadership teams. A partnership was also recently established with the Zero Suicide Alliance which offers free training courses on how to have difficult conversations regarding suicide and gives individuals guidance on what to say.

## Pledge: Improve awareness and show empathy

Sponsored by the Chief Executive, EMCOR UK is participating in the 'This Is Me' national campaign. Wearing the green ribbon is a visual symbol of mental health support and empathy, and encourages the sharing of stories of personal experience. This reflects the shift towards bringing your 'whole self' to work and shows that everyone is human, fallible, and sometimes in need of support.

## Pledge: End stigma

Menopause awareness sessions have moved mountains on transparency, openness, inclusivity and breaking down workplace barriers. Delivered by an external business psychologist, these online group sessions have brought a hidden subject into the open and helped to enhance understanding. Resources have also been provided, including a menopause toolkit, information sheets and news stories.

## Impact

Measuring the effect of workplace mental health interventions is difficult to do accurately. However, one of the key aims of the Mental Health Charter was to inspire action to address the issue of

absence as a direct result of stress or poor mental health.

Excellent progress has been made so far.

- EMCOR UK staff at various levels have completed 626 hours of RESPOND resilience and mental health awareness training since Nov 2020, including 150 managers and supervisors.
- 84 participants have attended the Menopause for Managers online session.

**"REALLY INFORMATIVE AND HONEST, AND I'M JUST ENJOYING THAT THESE VERY IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS ARE FINALLY HAPPENING IN THE WORKPLACE."**

- 55 women and 15 men have watched the Menopause Awareness webinar to date and the response has been extremely positive.

**"I LOVED HOW IT CREATED A SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND INFORMATIVE SPACE FOR EVERYBODY TO SHARE PERSONAL INSIGHTS. I FELT INSPIRED THAT THIS CONVERSATION WAS HAPPENING, ESPECIALLY AS I HAVEN'T HAD EXPOSURE TO THIS BEFORE. IT MADE ME FEEL EMPOWERED AS A YOUNG WOMAN."**

- Absence due to stress/mental health has fallen by 20.3% (since Jan 2019) and by 4.2% from March 2020 onwards (reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Average days lost per employee per year is 29. The current absence days lost per employee for the rolling year is 9.4 (capped for 12 months) (compared to the FM sector average of 38)

## Call to action

If there is one thing EMCOR UK has learned on its mental health and wellbeing journey towards creating a better world at work, it is that it's not about a single initiative or action, or a single

person or department. Improving the response to workplace mental health issues and making real and lasting progress, can only be achieved when all are in it together and act on their collective responsibilities.

The Mental Health Charter has been a significant step forward for all and continues to fuel the conversation and stimulate action on mental health.

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