# Bromsgrove runner Joe Baker takes on daily 5km challenge to spotlight construction industry suicides



A Bromsgrove man has embarked on a remarkable challenge, running 5km every day throughout May to raise awareness of mental health issues specifically within the construction industry. Joe Baker has chosen to support Project 7,000 - The Lost City, a campaign that sheds light on the concerning statistic that approximately 7,000 construction workers have tragically taken their own lives over the past decade. This poignant project illustrates the scale of the issue, suggesting that if these individuals had banded together, they could have constructed an entire city.

Baker, who has openly discussed his own struggles with mental health and addiction—especially during the isolating months of the pandemic—aims to convey a powerful message: it is perfectly acceptable for men to talk about their feelings and seek help. The stark reality is that the construction sector grapples with disproportionately high rates of mental health issues, with one in five workers affected, as highlighted in various studies. This alarming trend underscores the urgent need to dismantle the stigma surrounding mental illness, facilitating greater awareness and support for those in need.

Statistics reveal the severity of the mental health crisis within the construction industry. A 2020 CDC report noted that the suicide rate for men in construction jobs stood at 49.4 per 100,000—a figure nearly double that of other civilian occupations. This disparity raises critical questions regarding the underlying factors contributing to such a high rate of suicide among construction workers. Various organisations, including the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention, are actively engaging in efforts to address these challenges, with initiatives aimed at fostering open discussions and comprehensive support systems.

Despite increased efforts to tackle mental health issues in this sector, the suicide rates continue to climb. Reports indicate that construction workers are almost four times more likely to die by suicide than those in other professions. The reasons for this distressing trend may reside in a multitude of factors including high-stress working conditions, often long hours, and a culture that traditionally prizes stoicism, making it difficult for individuals to voice their struggles. Efforts led by organisations such as Mates in Mind and the Mechanical Contractors Association of America aim to implement robust mental health support structures and promote extensive awareness programs.

Upcoming events, such as the Construction Suicide Prevention Week in September 2024, exemplify the industry’s commitment to addressing these pressing issues. Activities during this week will focus on raising awareness and encouraging an environment where employees feel safe discussing mental health. The integration of educational campaigns and resources is essential to breaking the silence surrounding this vital topic, paving the way for construction workers to receive the support they desperately need.

Joe Baker’s efforts, alongside these wider initiatives, reflect a growing recognition within the construction industry that mental health is a critical issue that can no longer be overlooked. With increasing awareness and continued advocacy, there is hope that the tragic statistic of 7,000 can be transformed into a rallying point for change—a call for solidarity and support for all those affected by mental health challenges.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdr5z7kmrnzo), [[4]](https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/09/09/suicide-in-construction/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdr5z7kmrnzo), [[2]](https://underthehardhat.org/mental-health-and-construction-the-silent-killer/), [[5]](https://www.britsafe.org/safety-management/2023/mental-health-in-construction-building-the-next-storey)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://underthehardhat.org/construction-suicide-prevention-week-an-industry-wide-effort-to-save-lives/), [[6]](https://www.pmmag.com/articles/105329-breaking-the-silence-on-mental-health-awareness-in-the-construction-industries)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.constructiondive.com/news/construction-industry-suicide-prevention/424738/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdr5z7kmrnzo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://underthehardhat.org/mental-health-and-construction-the-silent-killer/> - This article discusses the high suicide rates in the US construction industry, noting that they are three times higher than the national average. It highlights that one in five construction workers suffer from mental health issues and emphasizes the need to change the stigma around mental health to facilitate greater awareness and support for workers struggling with mental illness.
3. <https://underthehardhat.org/construction-suicide-prevention-week-an-industry-wide-effort-to-save-lives/> - The article covers Construction Suicide Prevention Week, an event held from September 9-13, 2024, aimed at addressing the alarming mental health challenges in the construction industry. It highlights the high suicide rates among construction workers and the efforts of organizations like the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention to raise awareness and provide support.
4. <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/09/09/suicide-in-construction/> - This blog post from the CDC discusses the high suicide rates in the construction industry, noting that in 2016, the suicide rate for men in construction and extraction occupations was 49.4 per 100,000, almost twice the total suicide rate for civilian working men. It also mentions the need for more research to understand why people in the construction industry die from suicide at a higher rate compared to other industries.
5. <https://www.britsafe.org/safety-management/2023/mental-health-in-construction-building-the-next-storey> - The article addresses the 'silent epidemic' of poor mental health in the construction industry, highlighting that workers are nearly four times more likely to take their own lives than those in other sectors. It discusses the increase in suicide rates despite the growth in mental health support available and the efforts of organizations like Mates in Mind to raise awareness and provide support.
6. <https://www.pmmag.com/articles/105329-breaking-the-silence-on-mental-health-awareness-in-the-construction-industries> - This editorial discusses the rising suicide rates among construction workers and the importance of breaking the silence on mental health awareness in the industry. It highlights the efforts of organizations like the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) to raise awareness and provide support, including the public release of a suicide prevention video.
7. <https://www.constructiondive.com/news/construction-industry-suicide-prevention/424738/> - The article discusses the high suicide rates in the construction industry and the efforts of organizations like the Carson J. Spencer Foundation's Working Minds initiative to raise awareness and help companies implement effective suicide prevention efforts. It highlights the release of the 'Construction Industry Blueprint' to guide managers and executives in improving mental health and suicide prevention efforts.