



MENTAL HEALTH AND APPRENTICESHIPS

CITB CASE STUDY

Background

The CITB is the Industry Training Board for the construction industry. CITB works with employers and colleges to encourage training and create a safe, professional and fully qualified workforce. CITB supports over 12,000 apprentices nationally and is graded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

CITB places great importance on inclusion and equality. Suicide is now the leading cause of death among men in Britain, with many deaths thought to have been preventable if men felt able to seek help when they needed it. In a male-dominated profession, CITB knows that promoting positive mental health and wellbeing is key to supporting its apprentices.

John Watson – Quality Manager at CITB explains why he thinks they need to be more open about mental health. [CITB podcast 1](https://youtu.be/DSY2dWtNTqs) (<https://youtu.be/DSY2dWtNTqs>)

Supporting apprentices with mental health needs:

- **Recruitment, induction and initial assessment.** All apprentices are encouraged to be open about any mental health and wellbeing needs they may have. Only a few apprentices declare mental health needs at application but all apprentices are asked at recruitment, in induction and at the first review after 6 weeks.

John Watson explains that the chance to talk about mental health needs 'never stops and never closes'. He also explains that staff are trained to spot signs of mental health needs in apprentices and as a result feel more confident to talk to apprentices and support them.

Nathalie Collins – Apprenticeship Officer explains how she works with apprentices. [CITB Podcast 2](https://youtu.be/u7EMj2rH43Q) (<https://youtu.be/u7EMj2rH43Q>)

- **On programme support.** If mental health needs are identified then a plan of support is put in place. This is done with the apprentice involved and no assumptions are made about what will work to support that apprentice. From the plan, reasonable adjustments may be put in place. This might include changes to work pattern or changes to college attendance. Nathalie Collins gives an example of reasonable adjustments: [CITB Podcast 3](https://youtu.be/3y1u_n2aH-A) (https://youtu.be/3y1u_n2aH-A)

Some apprentices find the college aspect of their training more stressful, particularly the maths and English, but great efforts are made to contextualise all learning and not to reinforce previous experiences of failure. Support in the workplace is very important, all apprentices are assigned a mentor and close attention is paid to the support provided. It is equally important that success and the achievement of milestones are celebrated. John Watson feels that it really helps to build confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

- **Assessment and completion.** Support is given to apprentices during assessment; this might include extra time, scribes or someone sitting with them. Building up confidence prior to assessment and maintaining motivation if apprentices need to re-take assessments is important.
- **Dealing with issues and distress.** Occasionally apprentices, employers or college staff raise concerns about an apprentice. Nathalie Collins provides an example of how she dealt with a situation [CITB Podcast 4](https://youtu.be/l7tcZgSOs-M) (<https://youtu.be/l7tcZgSOs-M>)

Whole organisational approach

- All staff have access to training in mental health awareness, how to spot signs of mental distress and also in use of language in supporting apprentices to be open about mental health and to build wellbeing.
- Case studies are collected and scrutinised to review how apprentices were supported and what lessons can be learnt for the future. Data is analysed to ensure that retention and achievement rates are as high for apprentices with mental health needs as they are for others.
- Policies such as safeguarding but also a wellbeing policy ensure that all staff and managers know what to do and consistent support is provided across the organisation. Managers are available at all times so that Apprenticeship Officers can discuss cases and the action they need to take.

- All staff are provided with a booklet of sources of support that they can refer apprentices to, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and FRANK. Apprenticeship Officers also build up their own local knowledge of organisations that they can refer people to.

Nathalie explains how she referred one apprentice to music therapy [CITB Podcast 5](https://youtu.be/bw4knCEvjs) (<https://youtu.be/bw4knCEvjs>)

Employer Engagement

As an Industry Training Board CITB, as part of their service, provide help to employers so that they are able to support their apprentices with mental health needs. It is seen as an essential service not merely a 'nice thing to do', as it improves retention and success. CITB reports that most employers are extremely positive and supportive when involved in supporting their apprentices.



**'CREATE A CULTURE
THAT IS OPEN'**