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Topical, inspirational, angry or amusing – we consider all relevant comment

# PERSPECTIVES



## 1 My employer cares, but how important is my health to me?

PHIL RUSSELL, Vinci Facilities

Health is high on the agenda in the construction and FM industries. Employers have a duty of care, which means that they should take all reasonable steps to ensure our health and well-being. And men's health is a real issue.

The Men's Health Forum clarifies the problem: one man in five dies before 65; men are more likely to die early of circulatory disease and there is a 37 per cent higher risk of dying from cancer; 67 per cent of men are overweight; four in five suicides are men; and men are more likely to smoke than women, drink at hazardous levels, and eat too much of the wrong things.

In construction (data includes FM) the suicide rate is higher than any other industry, with a death every two days. Both sectors employ an ageing workforce; over half of employees are 45 or over and at least half of these are men. And this is the group that's hardest to get to.

From the launch of Mates in Mind, which aims to raise awareness of mental illness across 100,000 workers over the next year, through to an annual gathering of 300 business leaders as part of the Health in Construction

Leadership Group, employers are engaging differently with their workforces, often using comedy to overcome scepticism and the 'it's not going to happen to me' mentality. But how much responsibility are we taking?

### "MEN ARE RELUCTANT TO TAKE TIME OFF"

A Men's Health Forum survey says men are reluctant to take time off, especially for mental health issues. A third wouldn't take time off for blood in their urine, 40 per cent would ignore an unexpected lump, and 42 per cent would ignore chest pain.

The most common cancer in men is prostate cancer – 25 per cent of all male cancer cases – that's 40,000 new cases a year and the second biggest killer of men.

I have prostate cancer – discovered by reading about England rugby player Andy Ripley, who died of it in 2010. After treatment my chances of survival after five years have been greatly enhanced because I acted quickly.

Employers must continue to engage their workforce and we as employees must listen.



## 2 Workplace dress codes: time for a makeover?

CHRIS PHILLIPS is a partner at Loch Employment Law

In June 2017 a woman claimed she was sacked from her bar job in Hull after refusing to wear a bra. The bar denied the allegations, saying no one had been dismissed, but the woman said she had been let go after inappropriate sexual remarks were made.

In January 2015 Nicola Thorp was dismissed from her London office job for refusing to wear high heels. She began a petition calling for reform of workplace dress codes. Six months and 150,000 signatures later, the government said: "Company dress codes must be reasonable and must make

was to determine whether it should be lawful for employers to require female workers to adhere to stereotypical standards of appearance.

The Equality Act 2010 regulates such issues of discrimination in the UK. Although it aims to eliminate discrimination, indirect discrimination for example, where a particular workplace practice is imposed, can be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

But many female workers are still pressed to wear high heels and certain types of clothing, calling into question the act's effectiveness.

ACAS has also produced guidance on appearance at work. While it may not have strict legal status, it is seen as a benchmark of best practice.

British Columbia in Canada has passed a Workers' Compensation Act that stops employers setting gender-based footwear requirements.

The UK still has some way to go before it can show a truly acceptable face of good practice in the workplace.

*This was co-authored by Meghan Vaillancourt, a graduate of Queen's University, Canada, and was originally published on [internationalworkplace.com](http://internationalworkplace.com)*

### "MANY FEMALE WORKERS ARE STILL PRESSED TO WEAR HIGH HEELS"

equivalent requirements for men and women."

This lacklustre response prompted the Commons' Petitions Committee to investigate. Its report, produced with the Women and Equalities Committee, revealed that women still face discrimination, direct and indirect, at work. Its main aim