



Wellbeing at Mears

What was the challenge?

The pandemic has been hard on all of us. But it has also provided a timely reminder to companies of their obligations to their employees and ensuring that they play a role in everyone's well-being and prioritising the mental and physical health of our colleagues.

Looking after ourselves and each other has never been more important.



What did we do?

Work is a big part of anyone's life and we truly believe it is one place where people can turn to when they need help. At Mears we are constantly evaluating our contribution in the following areas:

- ▶ **Having a good work/life balance**
Ensuring that we are providing the opportunities for our colleagues to work as flexibly as possible and to fully support colleagues to maintain the best possible balance.
- ▶ **Helping people at home as well as at work**
Many of our colleagues are working from home more often – we need to ensure that this doesn't alienate people and they have the right structures and support.
- ▶ **Having a positive, safe working culture for all**
A safe and positive culture should be the basis of everything we do. A company where we can come to work without fear of illness or injury and one which has a caring culture which values all colleagues.

▶ **Opportunities for career development**

Through appraisals, feedback and training opportunities Mears should be letting our workforce know how we value their contribution and provide positive feedback and encouragement for their future within the company and beyond

▶ **Going above and beyond for our workforce during the pandemic**

We have always tried to do things differently at Mears.

▶ **We want to be a workplace that brings people on and stands by them when things are tough.**

At the start of the pandemic we immediately agreed to pay sick pay from day 1, which went against Government guidelines that stated that it should be paid from day 4. That was just the beginning.

The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) estimates that there are approximately 520,000 units of retirement housing (including some degree of support or care) in England.

What were the outcomes?

We took an early decision to create the Mears hardship fund which has a ring-fenced budget for colleagues to apply to. For those who were furloughed we removed the Government cap of £2,500 (which would have affected anyone earning over £30k p.a.) and supported our lowest paid by paying 100% to those earning under £20k p.a.

We created a central Covid management group to receive and process new guidance from the Government and to ensure that the guidance was quickly turned into new policy for Mears and communicated and understood, amongst our workforce.

During the pandemic we reviewed and amended our mental health and wellbeing policy to ensure that it stood up to the greatest crisis of our working lifetimes. Our Mental Health Steering Group ran awareness campaigns and from our Executive Board down our daily slogan to every single one of our colleagues was “Let’s keep talking.”

Mears have a huge package of commitments, including training over 1000 members of staff on how to support people’s mental health and wellbeing.

We created a new awards process - #mearsamazingpeople – which relies on our colleagues nominating one another for going above and beyond the call of duty. By the end of 2020 we had received over 1000 nominations.

