

THE NEW NORMAL > > >

It's been 7 weeks now since Boris Johnson announced the official government lockdown and everywhere we turn we are seeing signs that the demolition industry, true to form, is adapting in the face of adversity and some semblance of normality (albeit with additional Safe Operating Procedures and extra precautions for a COVID-secure workplace) is showing signs of returning.

Naturally, it seems that demolition men and women are problem solvers, the COVID-19 challenge and all that it entails further demonstrates the collective demolition generosity of spirit. We are hearing positive news of sites returning to work but what does that mean for the people who work there?

How normal is our new normal?

A few things that seemed almost inconceivable a few weeks ago have become normal and in fact it is more likely eyes will be rolled and words muttered at people walking outside in small groups, or not wearing a mask and gloves, than those that do. It has also been widely debated about cleaner air, work life balance and the general impact of the human race on our planet earth.

I'm sure we could all think of a few positives that accompany the onslaught of bad news whether you are finding a few extra minutes or even hours to spend with your children, face time with loved ones or time to pursue a new home type hobby you could never squeeze into your hectic schedule.

It is likely that some site people have returned, keeping each other very much at long arm's length while others continue to work from home or from an office with a skeleton staff. And let us not forget those who have no work to return to.

As of last night, Boris confirmed that construction firms that have not already reopened are urged to return to work - but what does this mean for the people who work on site?

Sure, one thing we are very good at is responding, adapting and putting measures in place in the physical health arena and COVID-19 is a great example of that. But.... if we rewind only a matter of weeks, we, as an industry, were challenging ourselves and trying to address the other epidemic blighting the UK Construction Sector that is Mental ill-health.

Each person faces individual challenges and those could look like:

- **Fear of contracting COVID-19**
- **Financial strain**
- **Death of, or separation from, loved ones**
- **Access to basic essentials (ie: food and clothing and adequate shelter)**
- **Risk of other disease based on availability of treatment**
- **New fears and anxiety regarding contact with others, travelling to and from work, refusing work based on perceived dangers**
- **Loneliness often leading to sadness, that can lead to acute anxiety, that can lead to depression.**

The list is possibly endless.

It is well documented that human connection is a significant differentiating factor in a person's overall health and wellbeing so spare a thought for all the people who are trying their best to stay afloat and adapt to their 'new normal'

One thing is for sure, we are all in this together and the NFDC continues to drive the Health and Wellbeing agenda even from afar and so please keep a look out for available virtual and online training which will be coming soon.

This time unlike any other in our generation provides us the chance to stop, take stock and decide what from our 'new normal' becomes our future.