

Most Inspiring Employee of the Year

Winner

Carl Wales,
Wates Group



This category recognises an individual who has inspired their workplace by breaking stigma around mental health and growing awareness of how a workplace can focus on positive mental health

 Carl Wales joined property developer Wates in 2009. In 2014, he became the Safety, Health and Environmental Manager for its Smartspace property business. He is responsible for developing business unit action plans and strategies that support the Wates Group's overall strategy to achieve Zero Harm.

As a parent bereaved by suicide, Carl is an ambassador for Papyrus, a charity for the Prevention of Young Suicide. He also acts as a plenary speaker for MHFA England instructor training programmes. As well as being one of Wates' first Mental Health First Aiders, Carl qualified as a Mental Health First Aider Instructor in 2020 and is also an ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills) trained member of the Wates wellbeing network.

Carl has more than 30 years' experience in the construction industry and has introduced innovative and creative solutions to support the company's many health and wellbeing programmes, including its suicide prevention campaign. Carl is a frequent speaker on suicide and mental health, and was a significant contributor to Kent Business School's (KBS) Collaborative Forum Scoping Report on 'Implementing Suicide Prevention in Construction & Trades' which was published in 2021. This went on to Carl initiating and developing a



Carl works tirelessly to build suicide-safer communities

further piece of work with KBS, Papyrus, Universities UK, Zero Suicide Alliance, and Aberdeen University to supervise a PhD student research and paper, *Mapping suicide in the English higher education system: A collaborative approach*. The outcomes of this research will be shared within the construction industry. Over the last five years, Carl has also – often independently – delivered over 30 talks and training sessions, engaging with, over 600 individuals. He has also spoken publicly as an interviewee on local independent and national BBC Radio, developed a video with

Cambs and Merseyside Youth Association, and championed the public health directive 'Let's keep talking'.

Sharing his story

Since losing his son Rowan to suicide in 2016, Carl has channelled his grief and suffering into helping others by sharing his story and raising awareness of the issues surrounding poor mental health. Sharing such personal experiences is extremely painful, yet Carl does so without hesitation to help prevent the loss of another life. He does this by challenging people to talk about issues they would otherwise avoid. Using his own experience, Carl does this calmly through videos, blogs, training sessions, webinars, speaking forums, at educational and community events, and as an interviewee on local and national broadcasting stations / magazine programmes.

Through his work with Papyrus, Carl has developed a partnership between the charity and Wates. He regularly delivers awareness sessions to colleagues and the wider communities – in fact, anywhere he can reach an audience. In these sessions, Carl encourages people to improve their understanding of suicide, so as to avoid anyone saying "I wish I had known more". He gives them the ability to spot the signs and support loved ones, and to create the ripple of hope – to go away and do something to support suicide-safer communities, talk to someone, share information and inform others.

In addition, Carl helps to raise funds for Papyrus to enable it to carry on its life-saving work. He is always looking for ways Wates can help contribute to suicide-safer communities. Most of this work is done outside of Wates and in Carl's own time.

Personal testimonials from staff members tell how Carl's interventions have helped them recognise warning signs of suicidal behaviour in friends and family, signpost them to support and save lives. Carl's work has been recognised with awards both inside and outside Wates. Carl is never too busy to make time for others; he is hard working, selfless, and an inspiration to everyone who has the pleasure to know him. ■

Highly Commended

- Sally Orange
ARMY CADET FORCE
- Tamara Chisanga
OGILVY



Judges' comments

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Thank you for sharing your personal experience, to raise much needed awareness of suicide prevention, to prevent loss of life. It's a tough subject but, coming from a place of authenticity and vulnerability, enables these conversations to happen, and they are incredibly important.

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Huge impact both within his workplace and beyond. Tackling a subject that scares many people in a matter-of-fact way to give people the confidence to have important conversations.