



Awards 2014 Case Study

Award Winner

Health & Safety Award

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership - Specialist Estate Services
Designed for Life: Building in Wales

Every building site presents workers with a medley of potentially dangerous scenarios, so health and safety will always be found at the top of the agenda on any construction project.

And whilst, as it should be, the focus is on ensuring every individual gets home safely at the end of their working day, the health and safety equation inevitably includes a cold economic factor. For every death on site, there is a cost to the industry of more than £1.5m, and each reportable injury equates to £23,000*.

With these stark facts as a background narrative to the working lives of the thousands of skilled and unskilled workforce engaged in construction in Wales, it is unsurprising that presenting a virtually clean bill of health at the end of a project is a great relief.

In the case of one major health sector framework in Wales, this track record applies to not just one of their projects in the past year, but nine. With more than 1.6 million operative hours worked and just a single reportable accident (RIDDOR), it is an achievement that has been recognised by Constructing Excellence in Wales with the CEW Award for Health and Safety 2014.

The Designed for Life: Building for Wales framework is managed by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Special Estates Services (NWSSP-SES). The framework is for all construction projects in the health sector in Wales with a contract value exceeding £4million and a programme of works worth around £268million.

During 2013/14, the average accident frequency rate (AFR) for those nine projects was just 0.03, a vast improvement on the KPI target threshold of 0.46 and on construction industry average AFR of 0.58 at the start of the framework in 2006. This, according to Iain Worby, head of Designed for Life Building for Wales, represents the difference between the one reportable accident they had on site and the national average for the number of hours worked, which would have been a very much higher eighteen reportable accidents. Most importantly, considering the busy, occupied sites involved, there were no reportable accidents associated with staff, patients or visitors on any of the nine projects.

These results are a triumph for the framework and everyone involved, but also set the bar exceptionally high for the industry in Wales, demonstrating the importance of responsibility for safety at all levels of the business. Nevertheless, no matter how successful a scheme's safety record, complacency is never an option, maintains Iain Worby: "Accidents will inevitably happen but our job is to minimise them. There is enough demand on hospital services without exacerbating the situation. We want to build hospitals, not put people in them."

Projects ranged from relatively uncomplicated - in health and safety terms - green field new builds, to the extremely challenging rewiring of an occupied

district hospital, with patients' lives dependent on electrical appliances working without a hitch. The desire for consistency across the framework, no matter what each individual project involved, led to a thorough partner vetting procedure that proved one of the keys to the extraordinary performance right across the Designed for Life building framework. Nothing was left to chance during the selection process which led to the appointment of BAM Construction, Interserve Construction and Laing O'Rourke Construction as main contractors.

The adoption of Safety Schemes in Procurement (SSIP) was used as a qualification hurdle for the framework, but NWSSP-SES found the high variance in certification put limitations on the reliability of the scheme against Construction (Design and Management) (CDM) Regulations 2007 and Approved Code of Practice.

Consequently, a SSIP member – Safety Management Advisory Service (SMAS) – was appointed to evaluate health and safety applications against NWSSP-SES's own competencies and standards during these procedures, a move that proved 'invaluable' in Iain Worby's opinion. Early supply chain partner involvement (ECI) from the inception of each project, with the adoption of KPIs relating to health and safety as one of the core framework objectives, helped focus all parties on the issues involved throughout the process. Individual health boards, with their own CDM co-ordinators, were active clients responsible for Stage 2 Health and Safety process for their own projects and reporting to their own boards.

Best practice and lessons learnt so far on this framework, including the rigorous vetting exercise and adopted processes which have resulted in tangible outcomes, have already been shared with the formulation of a standard pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) template for all public sector bodies across Wales. This has also been adopted by NHS Scotland for their construction frameworks and shared with major capital schools frameworks within Wales.

The health and safety record of the Designed for Life: Building in Wales framework bodes well for the future of the region's construction industry, demonstrating the standards that are achievable. "It's a better industry to join than when I first started," concludes Iain Worby.

- The Health and Safety Executive publication 'Costs to Britain of workplace fatalities and self-reported injuries and ill health, 2010/2011

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