

Leadership and worker involvement toolkit

Bricklayers taking ownership of health and safety (H&S) in Allgood Services Ltd



Key successes:

- Pictures help convey H&S messages to bricklayers and spark discussions in toolbox talks.
- Supervisors have more confidence to question unsafe working with site managers.
- Bricklayers now make H&S decisions themselves or with supervisors and suggest improvements to management.
- High H&S standards mean that Allgood is a valued subcontractor and has been nominated for a H&S award.

Who are Allgood Ltd?

- Allgood Ltd are bricklaying contractors, carrying out brick and block laying works for clients such as Bovis Homes, Taylor Wimpey and Kier Group.
- The company was established in 2001. There are currently around 20 sites/ projects in operation.
- The company currently employs around 130 members of staff, mostly subcontractors. Approximately 80% have on going employment with Allgood.

Why Allgood used the Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit (LWIT)

Management in Allgood are committed to protecting worker H&S. This commitment is shown through: achieving high standards set by principal clients to win work and to become accredited with health and safety assessment schemes which are members of the Safety Schemes in Procurement Forum; funding eight supervisors on the Site Supervisors Safety Training (SSST) course to develop their competence to manage H&S on site; carrying out H&S inductions, training and pre-task briefings so that workers understand how to work safely; a 'STOP work when unsafe ethos' and learning from accidents/incidents.

"We do instil that... we need you to go home every day to your family...that takes precedence over everything. Then we start work, then we start the quality, then we start the deadlines..., but paramount is H&S".

(Project Manager, October 2013).

Whilst management are committed to improving H&S, the same positive attitudes were not held by workers back in August 2012. Working for different clients had also created inconsistencies in acceptable behaviour on site. Allgood used the LWIT (Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit) to:

1. Increase responsibility and ownership of H&S amongst bricklayers; and
2. Develop a distinctive 'Allgood' way of managing H&S, ensuring high standards are consistent across all sites and clients.

HSE/HSL and Bovis Homes supported Allgood in using the toolkit over a 14 month period as part of a research programme looking at how LWIT was being applied by small construction companies.



Allgood Services Limited



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Which steps of LWIT did Allgood use and why?

■ Step 2 - The Health and Safety Diagnostic Tool (HSDT)

The Director completed the HSDT at the outset of the research (August 2012) to understand how well developed Allgood's overall approach to H&S was. Results showed that the company had reached a high standard in H&S and constantly strives to improve standards on site. Nevertheless, worker engagement was identified as an area where improvements could be made. Supervisors promote good H&S on site through fortnightly toolbox talks, yet these were not wholly effective in engaging all workers with H&S matters.

"It's being able to...hone that [toolbox talks] down into...something that is relevant to us...and means something to us". (Director, October 2013)

There was a need to grow a shared responsibility between workers and managers for decisions about H&S.



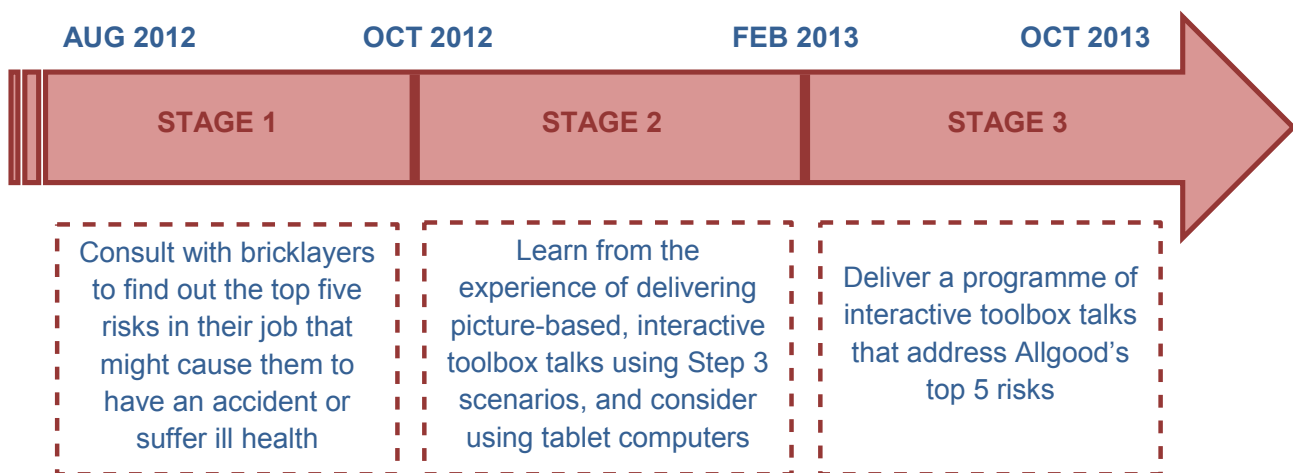
■ Step 3 – Make it Fit with What You Do

Step 3 of LWIT was used to develop Allgood's programme of toolbox talks. Management recognised the need to put H&S information across in a simple way to prevent workers from "switching off" during toolbox talks and to quickly digest key messages. The picture-based scenarios in Step 3 were considered a useful starting point.

"We generally used them [Step 3 pictures] and...changed them a bit in the wording of our toolbox talks".
(H&S Administrator, October 2013)

How did Allgood use toolbox talks to involve bricklayers in H&S matters?

Allgood focussed on developing their programme of toolbox talks over the 14-month research period to encourage two-way discussions between management and bricklayers of H&S issues. The initiative consisted of three stages:



Stage 1: The H&S Administrator developed and administered a short questionnaire to all bricklayers asking them for their top five risks and to rank them in order of importance. The top five risks across the company were: (1) scaffold; (2) housekeeping; (3) manual handling; (4) Slips, trips and welfare; and (5) Weils disease.

Stage 2: The H&S Administrator produced a series of bite-sized toolbox talks targeting specific risks identified by bricklayers from Stage 1, focusing initially on the top three risks (scaffold, housekeeping and manual handling). Pictures from Step 3 were used to support the key points that supervisors needed to get across to workers. Being targeted at specific risks meant that toolbox talks were shorter and could be delivered more frequently (weekly as opposed to fortnightly on some sites).

Allgood trialled the delivery of a toolbox talk on one site using a tablet computer following feedback from the workforce that this would be a more practical way to deliver them allowing quick access to risk assessments on site. Supervisors also felt that it might encourage workers to absorb the key information through visual media rather than reading paper documents.

Stage 3: Bite-sized toolbox talks have been developed for the top five risks identified by workers. Where applicable, pictures from Step 3 have been included. Allgood is in the process of replacing pictures with their own site pictures (e.g. hazards or poor practice encountered by supervisors).

What challenges did Allgood encounter along the way?

■ Getting all supervisors to carry out regular toolbox talks

Management commented that it was difficult at first to encourage up to 20 supervisors to carry out toolbox talks on a regular basis. Two things helped: firstly, making it clear to supervisors that the new toolbox talks are quicker to deliver and more interactive than previously; and secondly, giving the H&S Administrator the responsibility for getting in touch with and encouraging supervisors to deliver frequent, interactive toolbox talks.

■ Use of tablet computers on site to deliver toolbox talks

The trial was not successful due to practical constraints associated with using tablet computers within large groups, e.g. difficulty for all operatives to see, unsuitability for certain locations (by a ditch, near a scaffold, etc.). As such, supervisors generally do not use the tablets to deliver toolbox talks.

“If it’s about Weil’s Disease...we’ll take them by a ditch and if there’s a crisp packet or a bit of rubbish I’ll do the toolbox talk there because you can physically see what I’m talking about...with a tablet... you have to go into a room...pass it around and it doesn’t seem to get the point across as much”.

(Project Manager, October 2013)

Allgood plan to revisit this and adopt a gradual roll out process rather than a sudden change from paper to tablet, given the IT preference amongst younger, newer workers.



What has changed in Allgood since using the LWIT?

- Supervisors and bricklayers are involved in H&S decisions and are supported to make some decisions themselves. Completing the HSDT for a final time (October 2013) showed a shift from mixed attitudes towards H&S and repeatedly having to tell bricklayers what to do (back in August 2012) to them making decisions themselves or jointly with supervisors and feeding back ideas for improvement to management. Workers are “no longer paying lip service to H&S” (Director, October 2013) but are taking it seriously. They freely express their views on site as they know that they will be listened to by management. This improvement was thought to be a result of using the LWIT to revise the content and delivery of the toolbox talks.

“Our operatives on site have become over the last six months more aware of their own H&S and that of others whilst working on site, they are more proactive when it comes to pointing out any problems... on our Site Safety Reports...there is always a little note on the bottom, e.g. scaffolding needs attending to.”
(H&S Administrator, October 2013)

- Bricklayers now pay attention in toolbox talks, discuss and quickly grasp H&S messages

Supervisors have learned that delivering toolbox talks in short sessions (targeting particular risks) on a more frequent basis stops workers from becoming overwhelmed with H&S information. Pictures and videos also help workers to quickly grasp key messages and encourage them to discuss these with supervisors on a one-to-one basis. Workers now better understand risks on site and are therefore in a position to readily identify unsafe situations, stop work and raise these to management.

“Asking the guys on site what their opinion on things is ...like doing that simple top five task was a way of them coming back to us and telling us what they were worried about and then us actioning the toolbox talks... they felt we were listening to them. They’ll come back to the [Director] and say, “No, I’m not working on that site... because that isn’t right...they wouldn’t have done that before.” (H&S Administrator, October 2013).

- Supervisors carry out regular toolbox talks and take decisions to stop work when unsafe

Over the past six months, management have not had to chase supervisors to confirm delivery of toolbox talks. Supervisors have become more confident in telling site managers that they will not carry out tasks that they consider to be unsafe. For example, refusing to lift steel sections by hand and stopping work until a crane had been provided. As one supervisor said:

“I know that it’s within my right to stop work that may lead to injury or ill health, and management will support my decision.” (Site Supervisor, February 2013)

Has changing the delivery of toolbox talks helped the business?

■ Allgood's good practice is noted in site meetings

Improvements to the delivery of toolbox talks have been noted during site meetings organised by principal contractors. Allgood was previously one of the companies listed as not keeping up-to-speed with toolbox talks. Bovis Homes have also commented that the company's housekeeping is better than it used to be.

"You don't want to be the person who is named and shamed in the Site Managers meetings... constantly having to play catch up all the time."
(Director, February 2013)



■ A reduction in reportable injuries under RIDDOR

Despite the change in RIDDOR (from three to seven days) and Allgood effectively doubling its number of employees and subcontractors between 2009 and 2013 (from 85 to 140 direct staff respectively, and from 6 to 12 subcontractors), the number of reportable injuries under RIDDOR has fallen to zero (see Figure 1).

"Less grit in eyes as workers are wearing glasses, and hand cuts on site have gone down as workers are wearing their gloves." (Director, October 2013)

■ Repeat business is being generated due to high H&S standards.

Allgood is now in a stronger position to win large contracts by being known to have good H&S systems and procedures in place. Kier and Taylor Wimpey want the company to become a regular subcontractor. Through word-of-mouth, Cambridge and Huntingdon Colleges asked Allgood if they would take on four of their apprentices in 2013. The company is also being put forward for a ROSPA Award (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).

■ Increased confidence and competence of site supervisors

There has been a transition over the past two years through the use of the LWIT and putting supervisors through the SSST course. Supervisors are now more assertive with principal contractors and freely put their points across during site meetings on H&S matters.

"[Site supervisor] is a lot more confident and...concise how he gets his words over now...he's like, "No actually, I've asked you several times, that's not been done, we shouldn't be working there...let's get the site right and then we'll do it". They've got a lot more confidence now to be able to...say that, even the people who were a little bit shy will come out and say what they feel now". (Director, October 2013)

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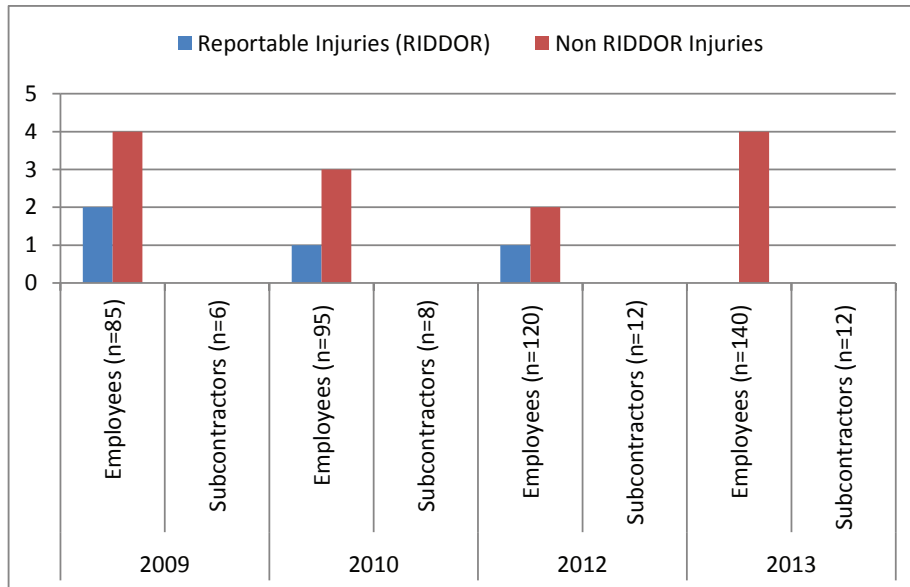


Figure 1. Decline in reportable injuries between 2009 - 2013

How did LWIT help Allgood to:

■ Increase ownership of H&S amongst bricklayers?

Through using the LWIT, Allgood has seen a step change in worker involvement, bringing H&S to the forefront of everyone’s minds. The company has worked hard to educate workers about H&S risks, and involve them in selecting appropriate controls.

“We have done a lot of the toolbox talks around the top five risks the guys on site were worried about, [they] felt that we had taken their concerns on board...reappraising the toolbox talks in line with those risks.” (H&S Administrator, October 2013)

Responsibility for H&S is now shared between the Director and supervisors with evidence of bricklayers thinking proactively about safety before they start work, and having greater confidence to raise issues.

“I used to dread a hot summer because my phone would be constantly going... “so and so has not got his vest on”, etc., and this year it was great...I hardly had any phone calls.” (Director, October 2013)

■ Achieve consistent standards across sites?

Allgood has made good progress with ensuring that its high H&S standards are upheld across sites, largely achieved through developing its own package of picture-based toolbox talks. In fact, other clients have commented on how good these are and are looking to do something similar themselves rather than reacting to each different client’s demands or shortcomings on any given site. Involving bricklayers in the selection of PPE (e.g. safety glasses) has also led to consistent use of the required PPE for different jobs across all sites, which projects a uniform and professional image for the company.

“You walk on a site; you see exactly who works for us.” (Director, October 2013)

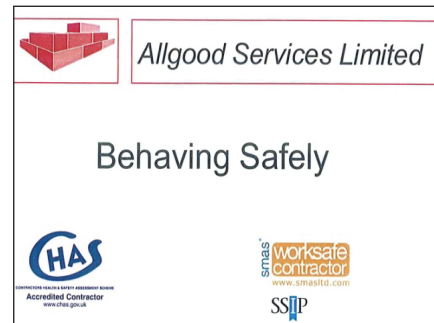
How does Allgood plan to keep up these high standards?

■ Refreshing the toolbox talks

Allgood are keen to maintain the current high standards of H&S and plan to keep up the momentum by updating the content of toolbox talks, including site pictures of Allgood-specific hazards. The top five risks exercise will be repeated with operatives periodically and toolbox talks adapted accordingly.

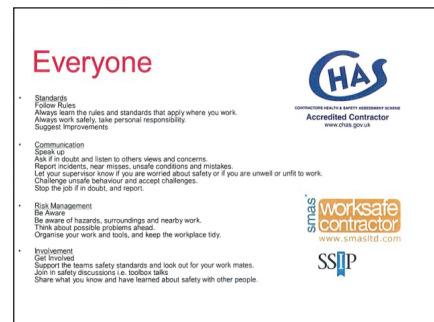
“[We will] most certainly be measuring our results on a regular basis, i.e. staff morale, site safety, and encouragement for operatives to discuss any problems that they may have with regards to H&S on site.”

(H&S Administrator, October 2013).



■ Adopting other LWIT practices

The company is also quick to adopt the good practices that they come across from other companies. For example, developing a pocket sized prompt card for all operatives that lists the do's and don'ts from method statements (see Figure 2). Bricklayers have noticed these, and are using them on site. Management are also thinking about using other tools in the LWIT, e.g. developing Safety Observation Cards.



■ Repeating the HSDT periodically

Management found the HSDT very helpful as it made them stop and really think about the way things are. They plan to use the tool periodically to help steer planned activities.

“It's a good tool...it does make you look at yourself honestly.” (Director, October 2013)

A final word from the Director of Allgood....

“Good H&S is making my life easier...I can now sleep easier at night knowing that workers are more aware of H&S issues and that they are taking proactive steps to avoid accidents/incidents. Responsibility for H&S is now shared and does not rest with me alone...The biggest thing for me is that everybody's attitude has changed, and I feel a lot more confident that we are doing a better job and the best job we can at the minute.”

The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business and productivity. Developed by the construction industry's Leadership and Worker Engagement Forum, Hosted by HSE 04/12