

Wates Group's 'We're Safer Together — Lead the Change!' Strives for Zero Harm

Wates Group

Best Learning Program Supporting
a Change Transformation Business Strategy
November 2018



Company Background



Headquarters	Surrey, United Kingdom
Year Founded	1897
Revenue	£1.62 billion
Employees	3,897
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	UK
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Wates Group is one of the leading family owned, construction, development and property services businesses in the UK, specializing in maximizing value for customers in the public and private sector with an uncompromising focus on safety and quality. Other services include maintenance services in the social housing sector and a range of property services to a portfolio of clients which spans sectors including banking, retail, distribution, sport and leisure, pharmaceutical, legal, financial, media, airports and the public sector.
Industry	Construction, development and property services
Stock Symbol	N/A
Website	www.wates.co.uk

Budget and Timeframe

Overall budget	£500,000
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	Two: Debbie Crew, head of talent and resourcing; and Laura Stevens, learning and development business partner.
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Eight: John Dunne, group health, safety, environment and quality director; Anna Bond, group internal communications manager; plus six senior leaders on the design steering group.
Number of contractors involved with implementation	One learning solution provider, Lane4, had a team of eight people.
Timeframe to implement	Six months from design to pilot in July 2016.
Start date of the program	Nov. 8-9, 2016, first workshop.

Business Conditions and Business Needs

We're Safer Together — Lead the Change! is a transformational learning program that empowers Wates Group leaders to create a culture to drive its zero-harm health and safety strategy

About Wates Group

Established by Edward Wates in 1897, Wates Group is one of the largest private family-owned construction, development and property services companies in the UK. Today, the group employs around 4,000 people and works with more than 10,000 supply chain operatives and partners to successfully deliver projects throughout the UK.

Wates' overarching corporate vision is: "To be the most trusted partner in the built environment, safely delivering high-quality services, products and investments on time and on budget, every time."

Figure 1: 2017 Strategy



Source: Wates Group

A Landmark Commitment to Zero Harm

With a record on health and safety that already placed Wates in the top 10 among the 35 UK's largest contractors, Wates could have chosen to maintain the status quo. Instead, in 2016, Wates family shareholders, the board of directors and the executive committee signed up to a five-year strategy to reach a sustainable "zero harm" working environment by 2020.

This would require a fundamental cultural shift — a huge step change, whereby everyone in the Wates Group has their part to play. This whole-company approach has been branded as: "We're Safer Together — Zero Harm."



Group Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Director John Dunne explains, “Our core belief is that ‘above all, it’s about people’ and working safely is our top priority. Our ambitious goal of zero harm by 2020 and our investment in a learning program to support it, reflect the seriousness with which we take the safety of our own employees, others who work for us and the communities we work within. In putting these beliefs into action, we maintain an uncompromising desire to be a beacon of excellence within the construction industry.”

The zero-harm strategy is founded on the fundamental principle that accidents are preventable and workers on construction sites should have the same likelihood of going home unharmed at the end of the day as their office-based colleagues.

The following measurable outcomes will demonstrate that Wates’ zero harm strategy has been successfully implemented by 2020:

- Zero fatalities to workers or third parties affected by Wates’ work.
- Zero permanently disabling injuries.
- Zero cases of new long-term harm to health.
- Eliminating the realistic likelihood of serious harm.
- A ceiling lost time injury rate of 0.10 across the group (this reflects the proportion of workers having an accident resulting in lost time during their working life).

Identifying the Need for a Transformational Change

When Dunne joined Wates in 2015, he gave himself 100 days to talk to people across the business to understand their perceptions of safety and attitudes to what is and is not acceptable before presenting his vision for safety to the Wates executive committee. Dunne’s data-gathering informed the development of a holistic safety strategy.

He says, “Listening to everyone I could, from receptionists to project managers, I explored how we could make a true step change, a transformation whereby accidents and workplace-induced illness are regarded as a preventable and unacceptable exception, not a fact of life. These discussions informed our thinking as we began to formulate our zero-harm strategy and the ‘We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change!’ learning program to support it.”

A fundamental part of this approach is to spot, challenge and take action on “weak signals,” seemingly minor concerns that, if ignored, could go on to cause a major issue. As



well as physical hazards, this could be behavior such as a failure to attend safety training or a distracted employee.

Overview

The Launch of ‘We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change!’

To reach the goal of a sustainable zero harm working environment by 2020, Wates recognized this would require a fundamental shift in its culture, attitudes and behaviors. This is known as the “We’re Safer Together” culture. Recognizing that this is the responsibility of everyone within the organization, Wates developed a leadership program called “We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change!” in 2016 to empower their leaders to drive the “We’re Safer Together” culture and to equip them to own and lead the change in culture across the business.

“Our mission is to ensure all our leaders exhibit the right behaviors, challenge inappropriate ones, breakdown the construct that ‘accidents are inevitable’ and above all create an environment where we eliminate the realistic likelihood of serious harm.”

The program is aimed at the entire Wates leadership population as the optimum way to lead the change within the organization and create traction across the business. All Wates senior leaders are being equipped to exhibit the right behaviors, challenge inappropriate behaviors, overturn the passive mindset that accidents are inevitable and, above all, creating an environment where the likelihood of serious harm is eliminated.

By the end of March 2018, a total of 490 leaders, including some key supply chain partners, have been on the program. It has involved core leadership skills and understanding leadership identity, as well as looking at traditional models of health and safety and exploring what needs to change in Wates’ environment. Leaders, including the executive committee and members of the Wates family, fully participated in the same way as other delegates.

With everyone having an important part to play in executing the zero-harm strategy, the learning program has been designed not only for leaders with direct construction site responsibility, but for all Wates leaders across the group, including enabling functions such as HR, finance and IT.



“As a delegate on the ‘We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change!’ program, my key takeaway was that we *all* play a part in working toward Zero Harm.” — **Simon Page**, cost planner

Promoting Industry-Wide Best Practice

Engaging with the Wates core supply chain is critical to achieving the zero-harm objectives. To create a shared mindset, Wates has invited leaders (at a similar level) from its 20 key partners in the supply chain to join the program and funded their participation. These include representatives from the top UK supply chain companies in the industry.

“I left the workshop challenged and enthused — a great two days! We are proud of our partnership with Wates and value it highly. We are determined to be the supply chain partner who matches Wates’ standards and to help in raising the bar on health, safety and wellbeing.” — **Lee Jon Newman**, chief executive officer, Elliott Group Ltd.

It would be difficult to find a program with a more compelling purpose than saving lives and eliminating injuries, but this is exactly what the “We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change!” program set out to do. Halfway through the five-year timescale, Wates is already well on track to achieving its ambitious outcomes for zero harm (see Measurable Benefits section for full details).

A stand-out result is the reduction in lost time injury rate (LTIR). In 2016, the LTIR indicated that one in four workers would have an accident resulting in lost time during their working life, a year later this rate had dropped to one in 10 — better than halving the rate.

Design of the Program

A safety Program with a Difference

The core purpose of the program is to ensure that leaders thoroughly understand the zero-harm strategy and have the knowledge, skills and behaviors to go out into the organization and create the right environment for zero harm. Leaders are instrumental in taking Wates where it wants to be by 2020: a sustainable £2 billion business, renowned for delivering quality projects, on time, on budget and safely.

Debbie Crew, head of talent and resourcing, explains the thinking behind the program design and the choice of collaborative delivery partner, “We could have picked an off-the-

shelf program focusing on behavioral safety — they do exist — equally, we could have gone down the pure leadership development route. We wanted our program to reflect Wates’ business and culture.

“The result was a bespoke and blended solution that met our aim of delivering a behavioral leadership program with a strong safety message. We had to take our leaders on a journey to understand and be inspired with what they needed to do differently — to equip them to drive the strategy and be aware of the ‘shadow’ and influence they cast as a leader.”

A Collaborative Design Process

Wates chose consultancy firm Lane4 from six potential training partners to help create a truly impactful and thought-provoking program. Crew says, “Lane4 offered us the best of both worlds: a leadership program with a clear focus on safety. Their proposal showed that they’d listened carefully to what we told them and that they had quickly grasped our objectives. They worked with us collaboratively and demonstrated that they are as passionate and excited about fulfilling our 2020 vision as we are. It’s been a meeting of minds. We particularly value the fresh thinking and new leadership concepts that Lane4 has brought to the business in helping Wates to be the best.”

Figure 2: Design Timeline

Need identified	Provider Selection	Discovery sessions run	Design Group sessions	Pilot takes place	First ‘live’ workshop held
February 2016	March-April 2016	June 2016	June 2016	July 2016	November 2016

Source: Wates Group

In 2016, a design steering group was formed of six senior leaders from different parts of the business.

These leaders nominated 14 people, a representative cross-section of the target population, to form two focus groups in the North and South of the UK and to take part in “discovery sessions” — focus groups to help inform the program design with a diversity of opinion and input and ensure it addressed the right issues in the most relevant and



appropriate way. These participants went on to champion the program among their colleagues.

The discovery sessions identified leadership behavioral enablers to support the transition to zero harm (role-modeling, being approachable, having the courage of their convictions, including stopping work on-site if necessary) and the barriers (no common language around safety between operational sites and office-based commercial teams, over-reliance on email and cumbersome processes).

Following the discovery sessions, seven specific learning objectives for the program were clearly defined:

- Achieve a shared understanding of the zero-harm strategy.
- Increase understanding of the “leadership shadow” and how leaders shape culture through the example they set in behaviors, attitudes and language.
- Identify where leaders can have the greatest influence in driving a “We’re Safer Together” culture.
- Build the knowledge and skills to support and challenge around safety, without being a safety expert.
- Raise awareness of the part everyone plays in creating a safer, higher performing environment.
- Conduct effective coaching conversations, giving skillful feedback respectfully at all levels.
- Identify personal “bold commitments” linked to the zero-harm strategy with measurable and tangible outcomes — the actions delegates would take or behaviors they would model post-program to drive a compelling vision of zero harm with their people.

Collaborative design between Lane4 and Wates progressed with Lane4 involving expert associates to contribute to the safety elements of the program, as well as drawing on their expertise in behavioral change and performance psychology. A pilot then was held in July 2016. This was extremely useful for testing out program content and delivery methods to ensure the objectives were achieved. Some small amendments were made following this to ensure the key messages were regularly anchored back to the business context and aims.



Meanwhile, senior company leaders were kept up to speed and involved throughout, especially the chief executive officer and the chief operations officer.

The First Workshop

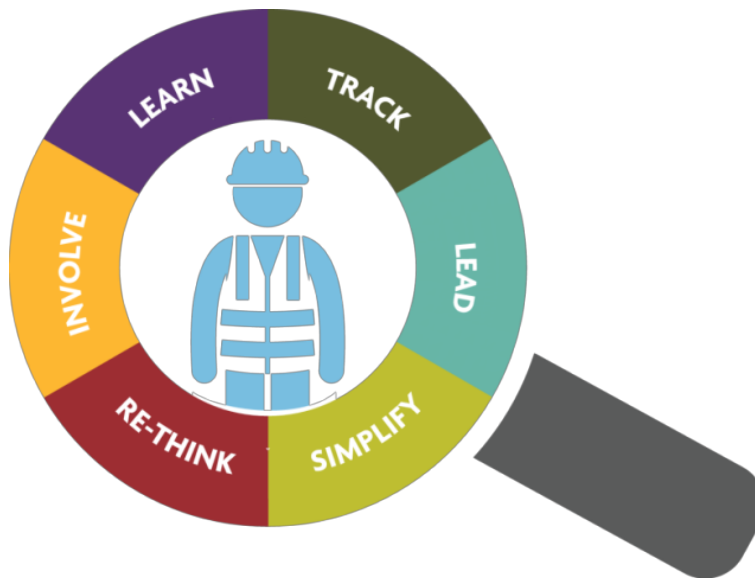
The first We're Safer Together — Lead the Change! two-day workshop was held in November 2016 for leaders from across the business. The program was structured around the six pathways to zero harm that underpin the Wates vision for a sustainable zero harm working environment:

- **Lead** — Every leader commits to zero harm and inspires their people to make it happen.
- **Simplify** — Wates makes sure its systems and processes help people and do not hinder progress.
- **Re-think** — Wates takes a look at what it does with fresh eyes and it challenges the status quo. Wates re-engineers how it does things to eliminate risk.
- **Involve** — Wates engages everyone who works for the company, contributing to zero harm in everything they do.
- **Learn** — Wates seeks out and shares what works well, the company adapts it for our its environment and embeds it as “what we do.”
- **Track** — Wates identifies where it can improve and how to close the gap. Wates sets out what success looks like.

Seren Trewavas, principal consultant at Lane4, comments, “Safety is a culture not a process. Working with the Wates team, we designed and subsequently delivered an exciting workshop that would nurture a culture where Wates people at all levels and in all areas of the business can take collective responsibility and speak out without fearing the consequences.

“You do not get safety just by focusing on safety processes: safety is an output when you create a culture of uncompromising quality. A high-performance culture and a safety culture are inextricably interlinked. This is why, with our expertise around high-performance cultures, the partnership worked so well.”

Figure 3: Six Pathways



Source: Wates Group

“The main learning I took back to the business from the workshop is that zero harm isn’t about having a written set of rules. It’s a collection of small changes that we can all make, no matter who we are. If it doesn’t look right, speak up and call things out! It’s about cultural change.” — **Amy Lilley**, group business reporting manager

A Joined-Up Strategy on Safety

Throughout the program design and development, Dunne and Crew worked closely with the Wates communications lead, Anna Bond, to ensure the program was wholly aligned to the “We’re Safer Together” communications program and internal marketing campaign designed to promote the zero-harm strategy and raise awareness of key health and safety issues.

For example, the toolkit and all materials for the program use the same branding as the internal communications and marketing campaign.

Figure 4: Internal Poster Campaign and Toolkit Front Cover



Source: Wates Group

Delivery of the Program

The “first wave” of the program was rolled out from Q4 2016 through to Q1 2018 so that by the end of March 2018, a total of 490 leaders, including some key supply chain partners, had gone through the two-day workshop in groups of 20. Leaders, including the executive committee and members of the Wates family, fully participated in the same way as other delegates.

Delegates were guided by a core team of seven Lane4 trainers, led by Seren Trewavas:

- Seren Trewavas — Program lead and principal consultant.
- Andrew Wyatt-Sames — Facilitator/consultant.
- Charlie Unwin — Facilitator/consultant.
- Steve Shale — Facilitator/consultant.
- Owen Toms — Facilitator/consultant.
- Will Bordill — Account executive.



- Chris Hemsall — Client director.
- Claire Broomby — Client services manager-operations and logistics.

The venues were chosen to reflect a high-performance environment:

- Twickenham Stadium — Home of England Rugby.
- Loughborough University — A UK center of academic and sporting excellence.
- A hotel in Stamford Bridge, Southwest London — Home to Premier League football club Chelsea Football Club.
- A hotel located opposite Old Trafford Stadium — Home to Premier League football club Manchester United Football Club.

A Powerful Blend of Theory and Practice

The workshop is designed to inspire action, behavioral change and reflection, offering an ideal combination of safety best practice and practical leadership.

Delegate Darren Eccleston, Work Winning director for Wates, says, “It wasn’t just another health and safety course, with a checklist of regulatory dos and don’ts. It was about behavioral safety and winning hearts and minds. Using examples from a whole range of industries, for example the Piper Alpha oil rig disaster, overcame any defensiveness along the lines of ‘It couldn’t happen at Wates.’”

He adds, “The program has created a common language around safety, reflecting our shared experience on the workshop. As members of my team have attended, it has kept what we’ve all learned alive, reinforced constantly by the zero-harm communications campaign we see every day. You hear people talking about ‘broken windows’ (a method of policing in New York City) and ‘weak signals.’ As an industry, we can be focused on reacting to the big, obvious things — someone on a scaffold not wearing a safety harness, for example — and overlook the many seemingly minor things that eventually build up into a cavalier attitude, which we need to tackle and stamp out.”

Each two-day workshop begins with a “contracting for success” session to build a sense of connection among the group of delegates, establish the ground rules for communications and address expectations and concerns. Management theory is blended with the etiology — or causes — of accidents. At every stage throughout the two days, delegates are encouraged to reflect on the new concepts they have learned and apply them to their own day-to-day management practice.

“Having responsibility for many directly employed on-site operatives, I am taking home from the workshop the learning that it’s the small things that make a BIG difference.” — **John Pitts**, operations director

Encouraging Reflection

Delegates’ “homework” takes the form of preparing for a challenging conversation and considering how they would fulfill their bold commitments to eliminate risk. They are equipped with an engaging “toolkit,” comprising materials to support every topic covered on the workshop. Integrated with the zero harm communications and internal marketing campaign, it shares the same branding.

The toolkit draws on Wates’ and Lane4’s experience and learning from other industries to expand on thinking around the safety culture. It includes prompts for reflection, which is at the heart of the learning process and links experience and knowledge. Delegates are encouraged to think carefully and critically about their experiences and make adjustments based on their reflections. In short, to be smart about the way they learn and make their learning last over the long term.

Changes made after running the pilot and feedback from delegates on the early workshops brought adjustments to the timings, with more/less time being spent on a topic according to its value and impact with delegates. However, the core content remained constant as delegate feedback proved the program offered the right mix of theory and practice in leadership and safety.

Here are just some of the topics that translate the six pathways into actionable behaviors:

1. Track — Don’t Walk By

Wates identifies where it can improve and how to close the gap. Wates sets out what success looks like.

In identifying gaps, leaders need to understand, identify and respond to weak signals.

This pathway helps delegates to:

- Understand what a zero-harm safety culture really is.
- Identify how accidents can happen and the consequences.
- Use safety principles such as (not an exhaustive list):

- Bird's accident triangle, which reveals that for every major accident, there are 600 near-misses. It illustrates how it only takes so long before near-misses result in an incident.
- Heinrich's Domino Theory, which states that accidents result from a chain of sequential events and can often be linked back to a problem in the process in the office environment — hence the need to regard safety as a “whole company” issue.
- The Swiss Cheese model (the cumulative act effect), whereby if random weaknesses in defense line up, there is a risk of the threat of an accident becoming a reality.
- Identify weak signals and take action. Delegates study how in the 1990s the New York City Police Department cracked down on violent crime by nipping misdemeanors such as broken windows in the bud.
- Understand the concept of the “bystander effect.” This shows just how easy it is to follow the crowd and sign up to the unspoken rule of not speaking out or intervening. Several powerful videos illustrate the bystander effect and also confirmation bias, whereby we see what we expect to see.

The New York City case study – Broken Windows

Delegates are invited to read a short précis of the New York City case study. It explores the epidemic theory of crime and how little things can make a big difference. Discussion highlights the importance of addressing weak signals and not being afraid to intervene and challenge the accepted view of: “That’s the way things are here.”

2. Re-Think — Challenge Respectfully

Wates takes a look at what it does with fresh eyes and it challenges the status quo. Wates re-engineers how it does things to eliminate risk.

To eliminate risk of harm, we need to assess multiple factors, such as practical, financial, behavioral and perceived risks, to reach an informed decision or course of action.

Through the Harvard Business School's Carter Racing exercise, delegates understand and practice risk identification. They also practice, explore and understand potential tensions between commercial and safety concerns.

This pathway focuses on:

- Understanding and practicing risk identification.
- Exploring and understanding potential tensions between commercial objectives and safety concerns.
- Being bold in their commitments to eliminate risk.
- Making the right decisions.

“The car-racing exercise revealed how bias affects decisions around risk.” — **Ruth Lane**, bid manager

3. Involve – Ensure High Quality, Collaborative Dialogue

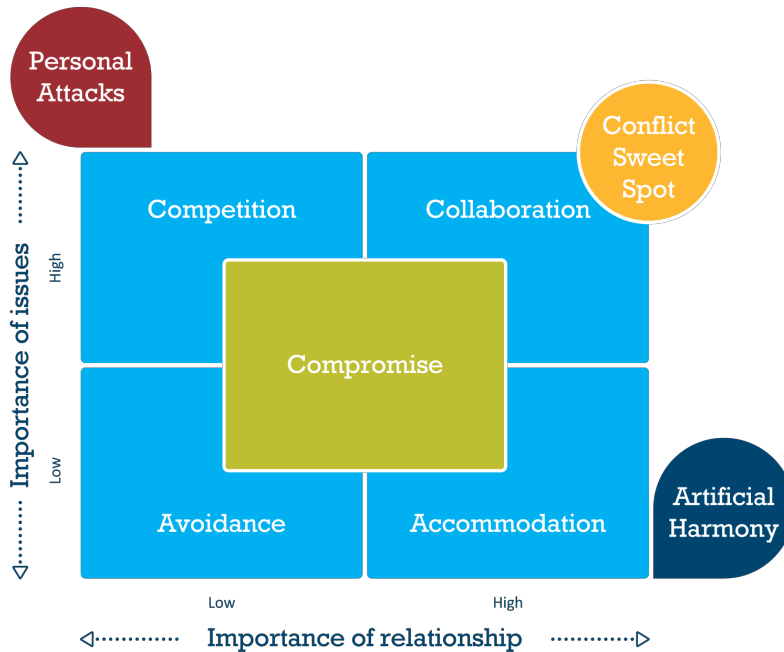
Wates engages everyone who works for them, contributing to zero harm in everything they do.

To lead change and drive the “We’re Safer Together” culture, it is important to have collaborative conversations where all views are represented and there is a good balance of advocacy and inquiry.

This pathway looks at:

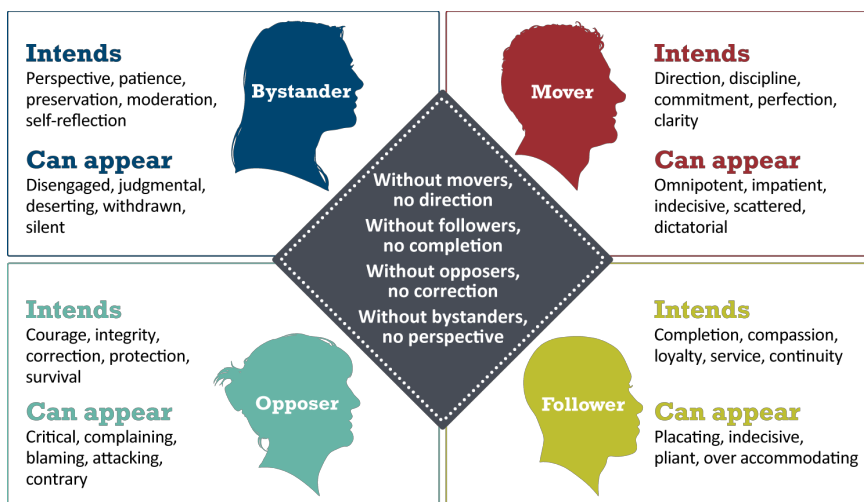
- Understanding the importance of having collaborative conversations.
- Bringing conflict into the open and dealing with it to enhance engagement.
- Understanding how to use collaborative planning tools.

Figure 5: Thomas Kilmann Conflict-Handling Model



Source: Wates Group

Figure 6: Kantor's Four Players



Source: Wates Group

Delegates are encouraged to consider how biases identified in the previous section can be mitigated through working collaboratively with colleagues who, with differences preferences and styles, can provide checks and balances.

They are introduced to the idea of 'constructive conflict' and invited to review the conversations they had in the Carter Racing exercise using the lens of the Kantor's 4 player model. They are also encouraged to give one another feedback.

4. Lead – Role-Model High Safety Standards

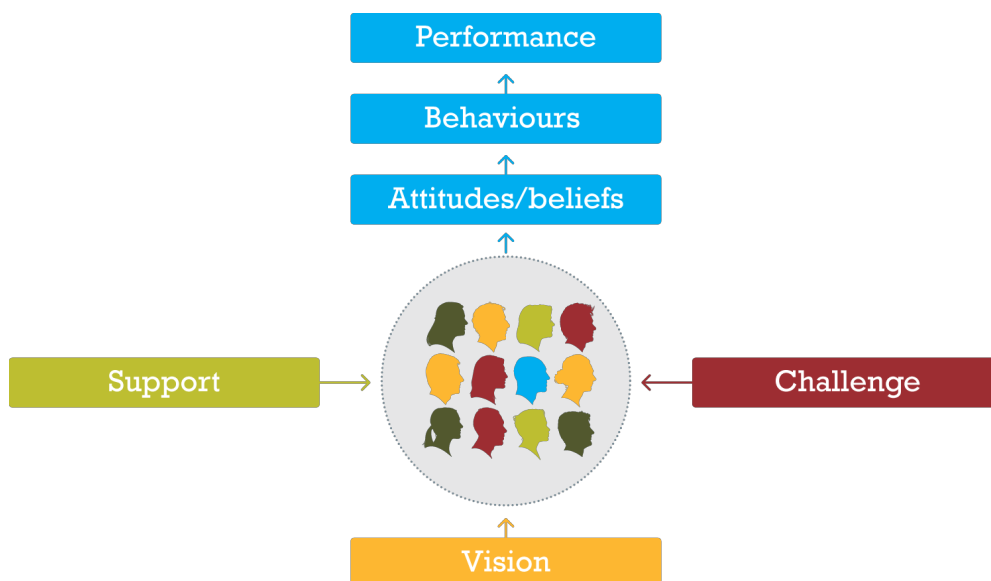
Every leader commits to zero harm and inspires their people to make it happen.

Leaders in high performance environments see their role as creating the conditions for people to excel and fulfil their potential. They demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors, which provide people with vision, support and challenge.

This pathway helps delegates to:

- Understand the importance of role modelling and the leadership “shadow” they cast in everything they say and do and how they influence those with whom they work.
- Identify how to influence attitudes and beliefs around safety instead of a “policing” approach.
- Be clear on how to provide vision, support and challenge to achieve a zero-harm culture.

Figure 7: High Safety Standards



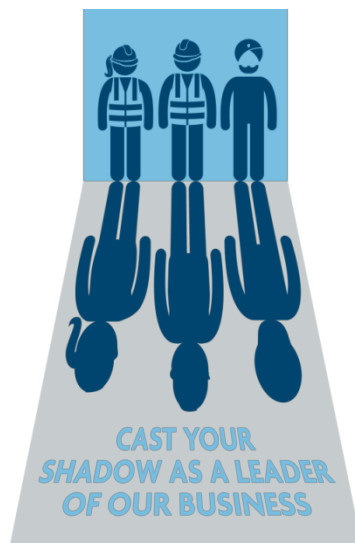
Source: Wates Group

Delegates work with actors to explore how a leader can influence attitudes and beliefs around safety. Two actors use a process called “forum theater,” where they enact a conversation between a senior leader and a site manager with a casual approach to health and safety.

The lead actor encourages delegates to coach him on how to replay the conversation in a way that would engage the manager and influence his beliefs around safety. These behaviors are then related back to Lane4’s model of vision, support and challenge.

Secondly, the delegates split into two groups with an actor in each group. The delegates are invited to take part in a one-to-one conversation with the actor to practice a safety-related conversation they are going to have in the workplace. The actor and the other delegates contribute insightful and helpful feedback.

Figure 8: Be a Business Leader



Source: Wates Group

“Having been through the workshop, I now understand the power of the ‘shadow of a leader’ that I cast within the business and the importance of demonstrating positive beliefs and attitudes.”

— **Richard Turton**, principal design manager

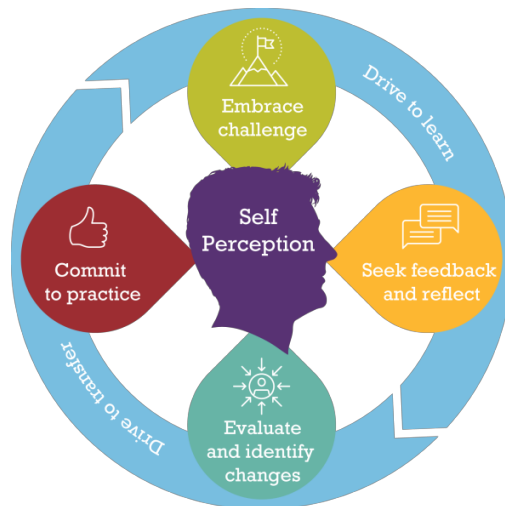
5. Learn – Drill Down to Root Cause of Failure, Celebrate and Share Successes

Wates seeks out and shares what works well, the company adapts it for its own environment and embeds it as “what we do.”

Leaders must be adaptable, resilient and have the learning agility to make the step change required to create the mind sets and environment for a “We’re Safer Together” culture.

This pathway covers understanding the importance of a learning mindset and learning about resilience, change and agility as based on Lane4’s model for learning mindset.

Figure 9: Learning Mindset.



Source: Wates Group

Delegates take part in an interactive challenge that on the face of it seemed impossible: balancing nine nails on the head of one nail as a self-supporting structure. As the delegates’ frustration grows and they start to question whether it’s feasible, it is revealed to be possible and delegates are encouraged to persist. Once a group achieves the task, the importance of beliefs to behavior is explored; in this case, whether we think we can do something and that it is possible.

Delegates are challenged to what extent they believe zero harm is possible and what impact that may have on their behavior and the performance of their teams.

6. Simplify – Communicate Simple, Impactful Messages

Wates makes sure its systems and processes help people and do not hinder progress.

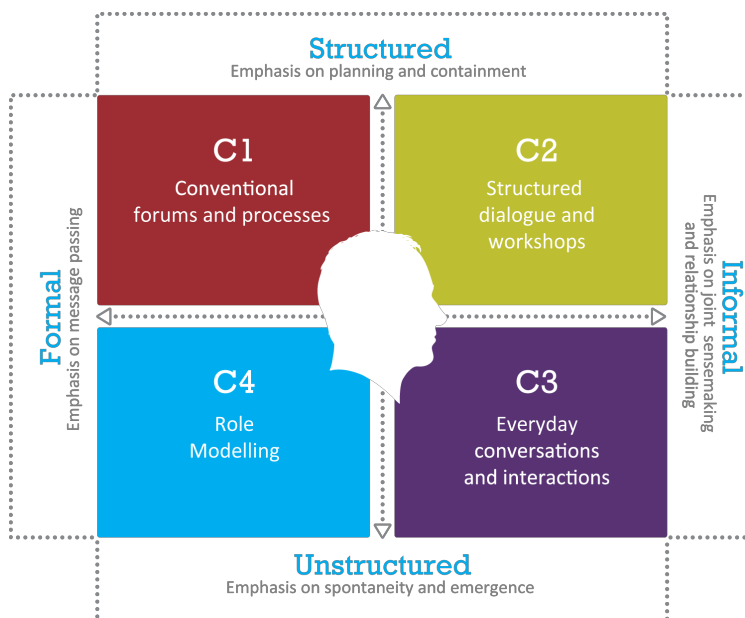
The leader is critical in shaping and communicating the process for change. Through the delivery of clear and simple messages that engage effectively with stakeholders, leaders can better lead the transition to a “We’re Safer Together” culture.

Through this pathway, delegates:

- Understand different channels to get their message across.
- Explore and use simple frameworks such as storytelling to communicate zero harm authentically and engage their people at an emotional, as well as an intellectual, level.
- Apply the framework of the three levels of engagement — understand, care and can — to help others achieve.

Using Lane4’s communications framework, delegates are encouraged to think about where they consciously focus their efforts and identify opportunities in each quadrant to communicate zero harm.

Figure 10: Communicate Simple, Impactful Messages



© Lane 4 Management Group Ltd/Chris Rodgers Consulting Ltd

Source: Wates Group

The framework is recreated in larger scale on the floor and delegates move around the quadrants physically to represent their thinking. They then are introduced to the power



of storytelling and encouraged to build on their “safety moment” story told at the beginning of the program to convey the message to their teams about what zero harm means to them.

“It’s natural for us as human beings to share our experience, but the trainers really brought home the power of storytelling when we use our negative and positive experience as leaders to bring situations to life. I now use storytelling to influence behavior — it can have a massive impact.” — **Richard Shroll**, managing director for Residential North

Change Management Efforts

Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles

It was extremely important that the We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change! program was a worthwhile investment of time, money and effort. The program team worked hard to ensure key stakeholder engagement, commitment and buy-in.

There were initially a few skeptics who did not believe in the value of having external input (“Not invented here.”). Furthermore, there was the logistical challenge of releasing senior leaders, some involved in multi-million-pound projects, for two full days in an industry where profit margins are tight.

Subsequent feedback and hard metrics around safety proved the added value of the program (see Measurable Benefits). In brief, key health and safety metrics have all seen huge improvement.

The following feedback also shows how the program has overcome natural reluctance from busy delegates to take time out from “the day job.”

“As the workshop approached, I looked at my schedule and asked myself if I could really afford the time. What could it give me that I didn’t already know about our Zero Harm strategy? I was so close to cancelling, but I know Wates invests its money wisely and has a real ambition to change the industry for the better. As it turns out, I was surprised at just how good this program is. The workshop was about breaking down barriers, changing attitudes, identifying issues, having meaningful conversations and not being afraid to make bold commitments.” — **Ricky Martin**, commercial manager



“I was in the first group to attend the workshop and, frankly, I regarded it as an unnecessary overhead. I had far too many other things to be doing to spare the time. We dedicate one day a month to safety training, so a further two days seemed excessive. I wasn’t looking forward to it at all: it didn’t fit my learning style (I prefer learning on the job) and I detest role-play!

And my verdict? The workshop was absolutely invaluable! The way that the Lane4 trainers put it all across was pitched at exactly the right level. They challenged us without patronizing or belittling. They got their message over clearly and they made us think.” — **Dave Nott**, key account director, construction

Visibly Alignment to the Business Strategy

Having the program so clearly linked to the core business strategy of zero harm has made a big difference to engagement with it. This has been highlighted by aligning course materials to the strong brand identity of the highly engaging “We’re Safer Together” internal communications campaign which was designed to promote the zero-harm strategy and raise awareness of key health and safety issues.

In a recent internal communications survey, 98% of employees from across the business knew of the We’re Safer Together campaign (sample size 1,600).

Creating a culture where everyone is on board with the need for continuous improvement has meant that the changes arising out of what leaders learn on the program (for example, the importance of recognizing “weak signals” that can build up into a major issue — and not being afraid to take action) are now accepted as “the way things are done” at Wates. The changes required for continuous improvement in health and safety are managed and become embedded within the organization.

“Zero Harm isn’t about having a written set of rules. It’s a collection of small changes that we can all make, no matter who we are. If it doesn’t look right, speak up and call things out! It’s about cultural change.” — **Amy Lilley**, group business reporting manager

Senior Level Commitment

From establishing the zero-harm strategy with the firm ambition of taking an already strong record on safety to industry-leading heights, to being involved in the design of the program, to participating in the workshops just like any other delegates, senior leaders have sponsored and cheered on the program throughout, from inception to delivery.



“I was impressed that everyone did the course — the CEO, the Wates family. ... It showed real commitment to the zero-farm strategy.” — **Darren Eccleston**, Work Winning director

Measurable Benefits

Wates has tracked the impact of the We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change! program very closely right from the very start: from gathering on-the-spot feedback from each workshop, to collating substantial evidence of what people are now doing differently in the business.

All outcomes have been subjected to rigorous monitoring and measurement. Group Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Director John Dunne comments, “Our safety metrics, such as on accident frequency and time lost through injury, are currently the best in the industry and I put this down to the We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change! program.”

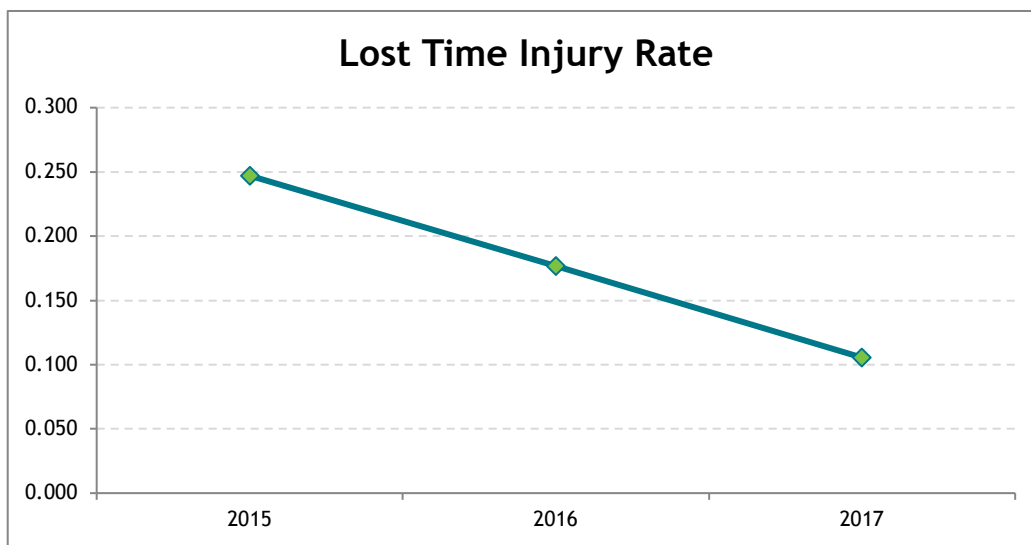
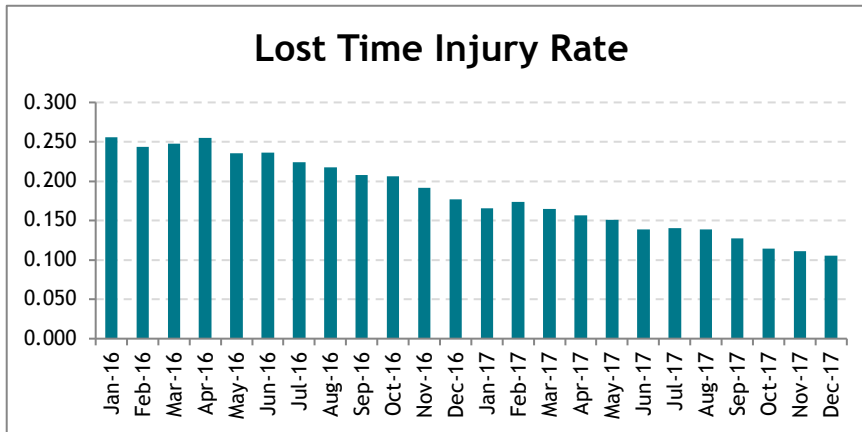
The Direct Impact on Health and Safety

The evidence in the two graphs that follow supports Dunne’s overview: they show at a glance that the lost-time injury rate across the Wates Group has improved month by month, year on year, during the lifetime of the program:

In 2016, the lost-time injury rate (LTIR) indicated that one in four workers would have an accident resulting in lost time during their working life. By 2017, this rate had dropped to one in 10.



Figure 11: Lost Time Injury Rate



Source: Wates Group

For many years, managers going on-site have been encouraged to submit stop/go cards to the health, safety, environment and quality team to highlight concerns and weak signals around safety or, conversely, to identify and promote good practice.

Figure 12: Stop/Go Cards



Source: Wates Group

Since launch, there have been more than 120,000 observations reported. The annual percentage of positive observations has risen year on year, from 31% for 2016 to 36% for 2018.

As a result of the success of the cards, Wates has just developed and launched a StopGo app to make reporting an observation even easier in the future and giving quicker access to the reports and data.

An Investors in People Milestone

In December 2017, Wates was re-accredited as an Investor in People Gold Standard for the third consecutive three-year period.



Since 1991, Investors in People has set the standard for better people management. The internationally recognized accreditation is held by 10,000 organizations across the world.

The standard defines what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results. Based on 26 years of leading practice, the Investors in People Gold Standard is underpinned by a rigorous assessment methodology and a framework which reflects the very latest workplace trends, essential skills and effective structures required to outperform in any industry.

The re-accreditation report arising from this independent external benchmark underscores the success of the work to make the zero-harm strategy part of the way things are done at Wates. We're Safer Together — Lead the Change! was identified as a

key contributing factor in driving culture and behavior during the Investors in People review:

“The strongest areas of performance related to empowerment, values and creating sustainable success. The clarity of vision for a sustainable future and a strong values-based approach to engaging people in achieving excellence are notable strengths. These are exemplified in the way that Zero Harm has been successfully promoted and embedded within the culture.”

Embedding the Right Behaviors Business-Wide — the Role of Bold Commitments

It is important to understand the impact of the program on long-term behavioral change. Here are two examples of the astounding impact on the business of developing a culture of “bold commitment” around safety:

The construction business identified “work at height” and “cranes and lifting” as aspects of their work that required action. The impact of this bold commitment is that it has helped to reduce accidents related to falling objects by 25% in 2017 and accidents relating to cranes and lifting by over 50%.

The lessons learned have been shared with the rest of the group and similar bold commitments made for 2018 by several businesses.

In 2016, Wates launched the visiting managers report. This encourages all managers visiting a construction site, both Wates and external (clients, supply chain partners, etc.) to engage with the workforce, assess whether behaviors on site matched Wates’ standards and highlight good practice and behaviors. All senior managers were given a target of completing at least one visiting managers report a month.

Over 1,000 visiting managers reports have been completed, their findings fed back to the construction sites, good practice shared and any issues addressed.

Dunne sums up the impact that the program has had on Wates’ working practices, “I have seen, first hand, the impact of the program in the reaction to the single accident we had in the first quarter of 2018. Although some employers might regard the incident — a cut hand — as relatively minor in the scheme of things, it sent shockwaves round the company. That’s a huge turnaround in attitude from when I joined Wates in 2015, when the typical response to our ambitious 2020 strategy on safety was ‘We’ll never get there.’”

According to delegate Richard Shroll, managing director for Residential North, “For me, the shadow that a leader casts was one of the most important aspects of the workshop. When you're charging around the business and making decisions, you don't always have time to be mindful of how your actions influence others and role model good behavior. The ‘bold commitment’ I made on the We're Safer Together — Lead the Change! Workshop was to stand shoulder to shoulder with the program team on Zero Harm and back them all the way.”

Overall

Delegate Feedback

At the time of this case study, 22 out of 26 planned two-day workshops have taken place, attracting feedback scores of between 8.4 and 9.7 out of 10 and averaging an extremely high 9.2 out of 10.

In terms of qualitative feedback, the initial responses to the program captured at the end of every workshop include:

- “I was struck by how the smallest things can have the biggest impact.” — **Andy Riggs**, head of Government Sector
- “I really do believe the program is a game-changer on our journey to Zero Harm by 2020.” — **Derek Lincoln**, contract manager
- “Really engaging and powerful. I'm convinced it will help us on the Zero Harm journey.” — **Scott Camp**, commercial director
- “The two days really helped to clarify and provide me with the ability to focus on the next step.” — **Luke Kennedy**, project director
- “The workshop made a big impact on me and how I can influence change.” — **Lawrence Baxter**, construction manager

Reflecting on the difference that the program has had to date, and continues to have, Wates Group Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Director John Dunne says, “How do you eat an elephant? No, not one bite at a time — you invite the whole village. That's what we've done with safety: we've invited our whole village of Wates senior leaders and our partners to help us. In doing so, we've moved from safety being ‘not my problem’ to being everyone's opportunity.”

Cascading the Program through the Organization

Wates Group saw turnover increase by 9% to £1.62 billion for the year ending December 31, 2017, putting it on track to achieve its goal of becoming a £2 billion business. The company is now keeping the momentum going and building on the program's success.

During 2018 and 2019, a total of 800 of the next tier of managers will embark on an adapted one-day version of the program. Launching in June, this is known as We're Safer Together — Drive the Change!

Delegates will typically be managers of medium-to-large projects, function managers and others managing a team and/or coming into direct, day-to-day contact with the supply chain.

Dunne says, "The next phase will be so important. We started We're Safer Together — Lead the Change! for the senior leaders who create the environment in getting us to Zero Harm by 2020. We are now working with the accelerators, the managers who are 'out there' every day and work in difficult circumstances, often with a transient workforce. We want to support them in understanding how the business needs to change. Again, we'll be inviting their counterparts from the supply chain to drive change industry-wide — it's going to be really impactful."

Once again, senior sponsorship will be a key element and this has been taken into consideration in creating a launch video featuring Dunne and senior leaders who have 'graduated' from Lead the Change! program.

Sharing Best Practice with the Wates Partner Ecosystem

As mentioned earlier, representatives from the supply chain have actively participated in the two-day workshops:

Describing the experience, delegate Steve Govier, chief executive of Bourne Construction Engineering Limited, says, "I enjoyed the course immensely. It was superb, thought-provoking, informative, challenging ... in short, probably one of the best I have ever attended. Congratulations on a fabulous initiative."

In addition, a number of half-day "Start Right" conferences were held at the start of 2018 for Wates partners in the construction business, using elements and key messages from the workshops to engage partners in the company's vision of safety.

Through these events, around 200 Wates supply chain partners have now been inspired to drive the right behaviors, bring their own partners on board and spread best practice in the industry in order to support the implementation of the Wates zero-harm strategy.

In Conclusion

Paul Rowan, Group HR director, sums up the value the program has brought to the business to date:

“At Wates, the health and safety of our people is, and always will be, our No. 1 priority. Our We’re Safer Together — Lead the Change program is a fundamental part of this and has been a key driver to the improvements we have made to our health and safety record and in achieving what is currently the industry’s leading performance in this area.

“The program remains pivotal in embedding the right behaviors at every level throughout our organization so that our people have the confidence to challenge; to stop works when things don’t look or feel right; to innovate; and to seek the solutions to put things right. Only by truly empowering our people to do this, will we achieve Zero Harm.”

Figure 13: Commitment to Zero Harm



OUR COMMITMENT TO ZERO HARM

Wates family shareholders, our board of directors, and ExCo, have signed up to a long-term strategy that aims to achieve a Zero Harm culture within Wates by 2020.

Our commitment is steadfast.

Our future success in growing a £2bn business relies on delivering quality projects, on time, on budget, and safely.

Safety is, and will always remain, our number one priority: the safety and welfare of our people can never, or be taken for granted.

Everyone, regardless of job title, has an important part to play in ensuring our Zero Harm strategy and we all have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of our colleagues, our site operatives, and of the people within the communities in which we work.

By working together and looking out for one another, and by having the confidence to challenge behaviours and act whenever we feel something doesn't look or feel right, we will achieve Zero Harm.

OUR GOAL IS SIMPLE. TO MAKE SURE BY EVERYONE GETS HOME SAFE AND SOUND AT THE END OF THE DAY.

James Wates, CEO, Chairman

Andrew Davies, Chief Executive

WE'RE SAFER TOGETHER ZERO HARM

OUR MISSION

TO ACHIEVE ZERO HARM THROUGH CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN OUR HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES; AND TO CREATE A CULTURE WHERE PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED TO LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER BY PROMOTING AND CHAMPIONING THE RIGHT BEHAVIOURS TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE, AND HAVING THE CONFIDENCE TO CHALLENGE WHEN THEY ARE NOT.

MEET OUR CHARACTERS

Our campaign features many characters that help illustrate our key health and safety messages.

WE'RE SAFER TOGETHER

Underpinning our strategy for Zero Harm is our 'Safer Together' campaign. Conveying a single, simple message that reinforces our belief that everyone has a vital role to play in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of one another. And that, in looking out for one another, we will achieve Zero Harm. A range of campaign materials, all PPE and toolboxes, will now carry our Zero Harm badge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AS TO HOW YOU CAN ORDER YOUR CAMPAIGN MATERIALS, PLEASE VISIT OUR COMPANY INTRANET: /SAFERTOGETHER

HOW WE DEFINE ZERO HARM

Zero Harm means four or outcomes. It is also an uncompromising characteristic in the way we behave and do business.

It starts with how we design our risk and plan our projects, in such a way that we eliminate any significant risk of harm. And it follows through to how our sites and working areas are set up so that they are as low risk as our office environments.

BY ADOPTING GOOD BEHAVIOURS AND BY LISTENING AND TAKING ACTION: TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE A ZERO HARM CULTURE.

By communicating through sharing observations and having the confidence to challenge behaviours and actions that have the potential to cause harm, we can eliminate risk.

Source: Wates Group



About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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- Systems Evaluation

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- Assessment
- Survey
- Process Integration

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