

## PRESS RELEASE

### England Rugby Joe Marler creates mental health YouTube video for van and truck drivers as part of CALM Driver campaign

- **Men's mental health is a significant issue:** 75% of all UK suicides are male and suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45
- **Van and truck drivers are a key demographic who are likely to have poor mental health:** Statistics from the ONS show that the suicide rate for van drivers is 25% higher than the national average and 20% higher for truck drivers
- **20,000 CALM Driver information packs produced** for businesses to support commercial van and truck drivers and over half have already been taken up
- **Yodel, JM Hall Couriers, Murphy Group, Bott and the Road Haulage Association (RHA)** have already pledged their support

**19th November 2020, London, U.K.** – Every week 125 people in the UK take their own life and 75% of all UK suicides are male. In particular, men under 45. Statistics from the ONS show that the suicide rate for van drivers is 25% higher than the national average and 20% higher for truck drivers.

At the same time, van and truck drivers of all ages are prone to poor mental health due to unpredictable journey times, traffic congestion, tight deadlines, a high workload, and lack of social interaction which could exacerbate their mental health problems.

Today on International Men's Day, the **CALM Driver** campaign launches - a collaboration between Driving for Better Business, the government-backed Highways England programme, and the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) to help those who drive for work.

As part of the campaign, England Rugby player Joe Marler produces a video message aimed at UK van and truck drivers to support them during these challenging times.

Meanwhile, Driving for Better Business has produced 20,000 driver information packs for employers to place in their vehicles. The packs contain a flyer and stickers to go inside commercial vehicles, making drivers aware of CALM's free and confidential helpline and webchat for anyone who needs to talk about the issues they are facing.

To help promote the packs to employers, Driving for Better Business commissioned award-winning comedian and mental health advocate John Ryan to write and produce a short video "Man v Van"

using humour to impress on drivers that checking their own mental health daily is just as important as checking their vehicle.

The CALM Driver campaign has already secured the support of both large and small fleets and courier companies. Out of the initial production run of 20,000 packs, over half have already been ordered by businesses whose staff drive for work, such as Auto Electrical Services and Yodel which has ordered 5,500 vehicle packs for their drivers.

Other supporters of the campaign include the Murphy Group, Bott, and JM Hall Couriers – one of Amazon’s largest delivery service providers. CALM Driver also has the backing of the Road Haulage Association – the UK’s only trade organisation dedicated to road freight transport – which is promoting the initiative to its members.

CALM Driver campaign and resources, including Joe Marler’s video and John Ryan’s video are available here: <https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/calmdriver>

Commenting on the campaign, Simon Turner, Campaign Manager, Driving for Better Business said: *“With a surge in online retail, there have been increased pressures on drivers to fulfil these extra orders, making their journeys longer and with even more time alone. These working conditions can increase the likelihood of mental health struggles and suicide. Supporting drivers’ mental health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, isn’t just morally the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense, helping to keep operations running smoothly, and drivers safe and healthy.”*

Joe Marler, England Rugby player said: *“I’ve struggled with my own mental health for the last few years, and it got particularly dark in the last 18 months. That is why I wanted to get involved in this project, to help others who feel the same as me, and try and help them understand that it’s ok to struggle, and that they are not alone with these feelings. I’m much better than what I was. When I opened-up to my wife about my struggles it made me feel so much better to get it off my chest and share the issues I was having. The more I’ve spoken openly with my friends and family about my issues the stronger I’ve felt. It’s strong to be open and honest about how you feel, it’s not a weakness in the slightest. The weakness is not being there for your loved ones and vice versa.”*

Mark Cartwright, Head of Commercial Vehicle Incident Prevention, Highways England said: *“Drivers who get behind the wheel when they are exhausted, unwell or distracted by personal issues are less effective and more likely to be involved in an incident; the importance of mental health cannot be underestimated. We urge anyone in this situation – and business leaders - to seek out the support available and we’re grateful to Driving for Better Business and CALM for highlighting this important issue.”*

Simon Gunning, CEO, CALM said: *“There are 18 deaths by suicide every day in the UK. 75% of those are male, and suicide remains the single biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK. That is unacceptable. We all go through tough times, whether it’s the breakdown of a relationship, losing a*

*job, financial worries, or going through a bereavement. And now more than ever It's important to know that checking in on yourself and those around you can make a huge difference."*

*"CALM has always been present in places where mental health issues often go unrecognised or ignored, we open up the conversation to everyone, we move it forward, tackle taboos and, crucially, stop people from reaching crisis point. That's why we're delighted to working with Highways England and Driving for Better Business on the CALM Driver campaign to help people who drive for work. By opening the door to the millions of van and truck drivers up and down the country we can continue to play an important role in challenging the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide, and take another step forward in creating long-term cultural change."*

ENDS

Notes to editors:

**About the CALM driver campaign:** Highways England and Driving for Better Business have teamed up with CALM to help drivers get through tough times. The CALM Driver campaign enables employers to provide support information to their drivers so that they know there's someone here, every day, to help if they're struggling. To get support, drivers can visit [www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/CALMdriver](http://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/CALMdriver).

Highways England and Driving for Better Business have also created and funded 20,000 vehicle packs containing a simple flyer together with discreet stickers to go inside commercial vehicles, so drivers know where to turn.

**About Joe Marler:**

Joe Marler is a professional rugby union player and a CALM ambassador, promoting men's mental health.

Joe Marler's video to drivers is available here: <https://youtu.be/6DPb1Wml01o>

**About John Ryan:**

John Ryan is an award-winning comedian, writer, and men's mental health advocate. John has worked in community care for 10 years and he is trained in mental health first aid.

John believes that if you can make people laugh, they will listen and learn. With this belief, he co-founded ['Happy to Health You'](#) – a mental health initiative that uses humour and the arts to engage

hard to reach groups. John has developed comedy routines to address mental and physical health for many different business sectors.

In 2011, John created a short documentary about a women's prison – entitled 'Beyond Prison' – which won him the Scottish Mental Health and Arts Film Festival Award. He later worked to destigmatise mental health in the armed services, winning another award from the Royal Society of Public Health for his work in helping military personnel open up about their mental health. John is a published author in the Journal of Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology on how comedy can boost mental wellbeing.

John Ryan's video is available here: <https://youtu.be/sypET4JEhpK>

**About Driving for Better Business:** Driving for Better Business is a government-backed Highways England programme to help employers in both the private and public sectors reduce work-related road risk, decrease the associated costs and improve compliance with current legislation and guidance.

It aims to improve awareness of work-related road risk, employers' duty of care and employees' responsibilities to bring about a radical change in how organisations think about work-related road risk. The programme's mission is to improve the levels of compliance for all those who drive or ride for work and to demonstrate the significant business benefits of managing work-related road risk more effectively.

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