**Construction Occupational Health case study COH04**

**The problem**

Large heavy trench blocks were used to build foundations.

**The risks**

The combination of block weight and poor posture when working in a restricted space exposed workers to manual handling risks and finger trapping.

![Figure 1: Trench block with 'handholds' and 'tongue and groove' profile](image-url)

**The solution**

Lighter trench blocks (weighing less than 20 kg) with handholds were used in place of the traditional heavier units.

**The benefits**

- The lighter blocks helped to reduce manual handling risks.
- The handholds made the blocks easier to lift and reduced the risk of finger trapping when lowered into position.
- The blocks had a tongue and groove system, which made them easier and quicker to install.
- Significant cost savings were made because the tongue and groove system improved productivity on site.

**Notes**

- The trench blocks were only suitable for straight runs.
- The handholds are only available in trench blocks, not other types of block.
- Other designs of foundation (e.g., mass concrete) would manage manual handling risks even more effectively.