

Effective emergency service employee health and wellbeing support

Mark Thomas & Kelly Patterson
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

'1 in 3 people in the blue light services will experience a mental health problem in any one year and are less likely than the general public to seek help or support'

(MIND Research)

Occupational Health

- Full time Occupational Health Team - 5 days a week
- Employee Assistance Programme 24/7
- Referrals to CBT/Counselling
- Service Chaplain
- Firefighters Charity
- Health Promotions
- Stress Risk Assessments

Our main challenge was trying to change a culture...



Mental Health First Aid

- The MHFA courses are aimed at those people without specialist mental health training who might encounter mental health issues in their work
- MHFA – 6 trainers -2 full day course to qualify as a Mental Health First Aider 23% of our workforce have been trained as Mental Health First Aiders including all Senior Officers and Authority Members
- Mental Health First Aid is now an element of every recruit firefighter course
- MHFA Lite - 1/2 day introduction to mental health awareness – Approximately 40% of the workforce have received this training with the aim to train all staff in a minimum of MHFA Lite
- Youth MHFA – 2 OH staff are now instructors of the Youth Mental Health First Aid programme. Delivery for our young people for example Princes Trust and Cadet Team Managers

Critical Incident Stress Management

- MFRS recognise that personnel are likely to be exposed to potentially traumatic incidents
- After we scoped for 12 months, CISM was implemented in 2013

'A service critical incident is any situation faced by personnel that may cause them to experience unusually strong emotions which could possibly affect their ability to function either at the scene/in work or later on'.

- **Stage 1:**
- **Stage 2:**
- **Stage 3:**



MIND Blue Light Programme

Libor Funding...

- After phase 1 – further funding was made available
- Wirral MIND was successful so we created a Merseyside Blue Light Services Mental Health Strategy
- Time to Change Pledge
- Network of Blue Light Champions
- Joint video of blue light staff plus a fire specific video – our people talking about their own experiences

Mind blue light joint emergency service film -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSSst4JR19E>

Merseyside Fire Service Film -

<https://vimeo.com/214152661>

Password: merseyfire

Family Liaison Officers

- The main role of the FLO is to act as the main point of contact between the bereaved family and the Service
- Communicate with the family, build trust and provide emotional and practical support
- Be able to signpost the family towards Service departments or external organisations that may be able to offer extra support
- Our Lead FLO is a qualified counsellor and specialised in bereavement support. The Lead and Deputy coordinators receive external training to a suitable level regarding the complex issues involved in traumatic response and bereavement. The process is complemented by the Service Chaplain.



Cheshire and Merseyside Suicide Reduction Partnership

- The Network was established to ensure that suicide reduction activity does not get overlooked or slip off the agenda during the reshaping of the public health sector
- Developed further as a Public Health Priority
- One of the regional groups commissioned by Public Health to develop and deliver a local Suicide Reduction Action Plan (SRAP)
- Employee/community – Suicide Safer Fire Stations will lead to suicide safer communities

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Fire service champions mental health

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Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigh, Senior Occupational Health Officer & Psychologist Therapist Kelly Pottorign and Group Manager Mark Thomas at the House of Commons during the launch of 'A Happy, Healthy Workplace'.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) is leading the charge in raising awareness and championing mental health within the fire and rescue community. The mission

EMERGENCY SERVICES
A global in fire protection

Novoc
Protect what matters.

PRE-DESIGNED EPOXY COATED STORAGE TANKS
FOR THE FIRE SPRINKLER & FIRE-FIGHTING INDUSTRY

TRAIN FOR EVERYONE BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

NFFPA GET FIRE PROTECTION TRAINING



Outcomes

- Reduction in long term sickness by over 50% since 2014/15
- Staff survey results 2018
- Out of 864 replies:
 - 85% consider they have benefitted from support through our Occupational Health Team
 - 89% stated that in general their health was good
- Winners of National Positive Practice in Mental Health
Mental Health And Wellbeing of Staff Award
- Government paper
'A happy, healthy workplace. Workforce wellbeing, recruitment and retention in mental health services'

The future

- National Suicide Prevention Alliance members
- Suicide Training online and ASIST training
- Workplace Wellbeing Charter (renewal)
- Mental health assessments as part of the firefighter two yearly health screenings
- Working with Liverpool Samaritans
- NFCC MH sub group – leading 2 work streams:
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Mental health training

Thank You

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