



Our Blue Light

Mental health support for our
emergency services staff
and volunteers – one year on

Blue Light Programme
mind.org.uk/bluelight

 **mind**
for better mental health

The Blue Light Programme

Mind wants everyone with a mental health problem to get both support and respect.

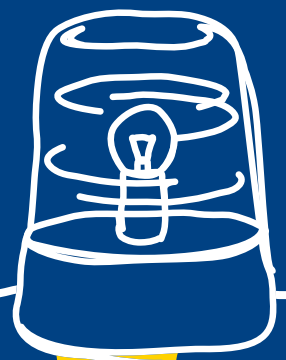
That includes the people who serve in our police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services. These individuals operate in some of the toughest workplace environments, often exposed to traumatic situations. They are more likely to experience mental health problems than the wider workforce. But they are also less likely to seek out or receive good mental health support.

Our Blue Light Programme shows it is possible to reach emergency services teams with support tailored to help them deal with the unique pressures they face. Demand for our resources and activities has been enormous, despite previous evidence showing those in emergency services can struggle to reach out for help and support.

As a result, thousands of staff and volunteers across England's 999 services are now:

- Actively challenging mental health stigma at work
- Learning more about mental health and why it matters
- Making positive changes to help them stay well for work

The programme's first year, funded by £4 million from Libor funds, has served as a pilot, helping us learn what works best. One year on, we're sharing progress, celebrating what individuals and teams within the four emergency services have achieved with our support, and looking to the future to see what else needs to be done.



Welcome to our one year on report

In March 2015 Mind launched the Blue Light Programme with the knowledge that 9 out of 10 emergency service staff and volunteers in England had experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health at some point. Our research showed the need for specialist and independent support with mental health in the sector was huge.

One year on, thousands of staff and volunteers across our police, search and rescue, fire and ambulance services in England have actively challenged mental health stigma, learnt more about mental health and made positive changes in their approach to wellbeing with our support, as this report shows.

But many are at the start of their journey - demand for our independent information and support from around a quarter of a million members of the emergency services across England continues to increase, with budget cuts and changes in the way the sector works. Our most recent research shows that nearly two thirds (63 per cent) had contemplated leaving their job or voluntary role because of stress or poor mental health.

We know that real change takes time and there is still much more to be done so that all of our emergency services, in both England and Wales, can get the support that they deserve. But one year on, we have come a long way together in making a real positive change towards mental health in the emergency services already.

Thank you to everyone that has helped to make that change a reality and for your continued support. Together we can work towards a future where mental health and physical health are treated equally within the emergency services.



Paul Farmer

Paul Farmer
Chief Executive, Mind



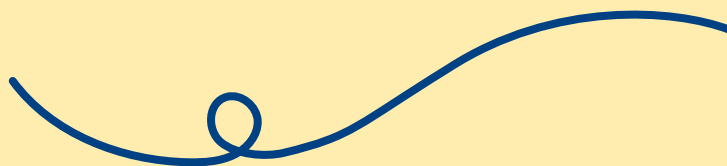
We had a conference about mental health in our organisation a couple of years ago and we all heard a brave manager talk about a person he managed who had had a very difficult period of his life which resulted in severe depression. As his line manager he admitted his feeling of being ill equipped to deal with it and a desire to try and ignore it – he felt he didn't know what words to use and his fear that opening up the subject could leave him inadequate in his response or even somehow make it worse. He finally sought advice from HR and others and started to feel able to support effectively, resulting not only in a better outcome for the individual but also a difference in how he felt about his role as manager and his approach to mental wellbeing.

It was a moving and profound telling of a very familiar story which most people can recognise. Lots of fire services have been working hard at improving wellbeing and mental health but with the opportunity to work with Mind and other blue light services we have seen a step change for many services in recognising their desire to do more to tackle the stigma of mental health and take real action to change culture and support to staff.

The tools and support that the programme has provided has created a new platform for the debate and for our ability to change the lived experiences of people with anxiety, depression and other mental health problems in our organisations. We pledge to continue the work, not least because the pace of change in the next few years will require that we help our staff cope and thrive with the resulting differences in how they work.

On behalf of the Fire and Rescue services, and I'm sure the other emergency services too, I wish to offer our sincere thanks to Mind who have made such an excellent contribution to the wellbeing of our employees.

Ann Millington
Chief Executive, Kent Fire & Rescue Service
Blue Light Programme Advisory Panel Member





I remember walking back into work, after 11 months, feeling that I had no right to be there, no right to wear the uniform and no right to call myself a Police Officer. It was a job I had wanted to do since I was a kid, but it had destroyed me. In my mind, I was completely worthless, a failure as a father, a husband and a friend. I had never heard anyone talk about their mental health at work before so I believed I was the only one. The thought of actually speaking up at work, and people finding out, terrified me.

The Blue Light Programme changed everything. It gave me the encouragement and support to talk about my own mental health and the response has been truly overwhelming. Once I spoke up, others did too. I soon realised I was not alone. That fear I had of being the only one couldn't have been further from the truth. Colleagues I'd have never imagined could be affected; strong, resilient individuals told their own stories.

Not only has this challenged the stigma around mental health, but also challenged the stigma I had placed upon myself, seeing my own depression as a sign of weakness.

Talking and being open about your mental health is so incredibly powerful. It has made me realise I am anything but a failure and still have so much to give. It reminds me that I am only human, trying hard to do a difficult job.

**Sergeant Ed Simpson, North Yorkshire Police
Blue Light Champion**



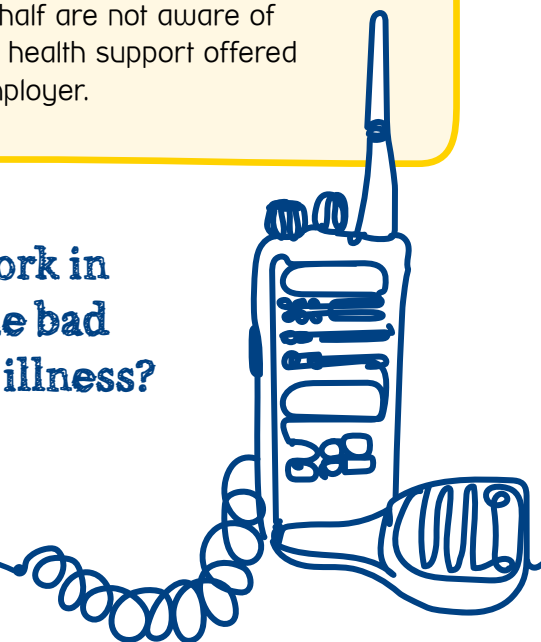
Mental health in the emergency services

We know emergency services teams face unique pressures and challenges that can affect them both at and outside work. To help us design a programme that would make the biggest difference to these teams, we asked thousands of staff and volunteers about mental health problems within the blue light services.

What we learned

- People who work or volunteer in emergency services are more likely to experience a mental health problem than the wider workforce.
- Almost nine out of 10 (88%) say they have experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health while working for blue light services.
- Emergency services staff are less likely to take time off work if they have a mental health problem, compared to other workers.
- They work hard to prevent their mental health problems affecting their performance, but this can come at a large personal cost, including relationship breakdown and effects on physical health.
- They are just as likely to seek help with feeling mentally unwell from a colleague as from their GP. More than half (58%) said they would cope by isolating themselves.
- Focus group participants said they would often report in sick with 'flu' rather than discuss their mental health problems, fearing the stigma associated with mental health.
- 71% think their organisation does not encourage them to talk about their mental health – a much more negative result than for the wider workforce.
- More than half are not aware of any mental health support offered by their employer.

How stupid is it to think that people who work in the blue light services, who deal with all the bad things in society, are immune from mental illness? We are not, and there is no shame in that.

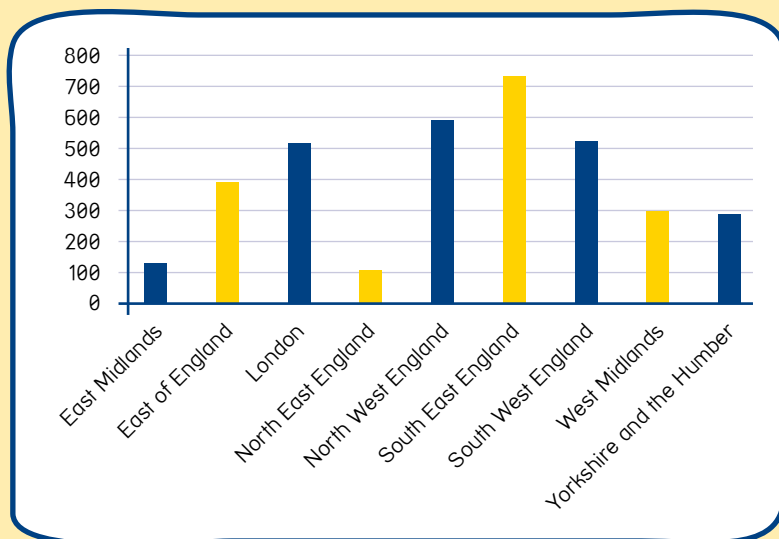


About our research

Our independent research took place between December 2014 and January 2015.

It included:

- An online survey of 3,627 emergency services staff and volunteers throughout England, representing 1.5% of the entire blue light workforce.
- Nationwide focus groups bringing together people from police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services to discuss mental health needs and support.



Different services, different needs

Our research showed differences between the four blue light services in terms of their experiences and views on mental health and support available. It was important to understand these differences, as it has helped us plan and tailor our activities to match the particular needs of each service.

Ambulance

- Ambulance workers gave the lowest rating to mental health support provided by their employer, compared to the other emergency services.
- 91% have experienced stress and poor mental health at work.
- They are more than three times more likely than the wider workforce to identify problems at work as the main cause of their mental health problems.
- They are more likely to seek help from a colleague than from a GP.

Fire

- 85% of people in the fire and rescue services have experienced stress and poor mental health at work.
- They are twice as likely as the wider workforce to identify problems at work as the main cause of their mental health problems.
- 37% think that colleagues would treat them differently – in a negative way – if they spoke about a mental health problem at work.
- They are more likely to seek help from a GP than from a colleague.

Police

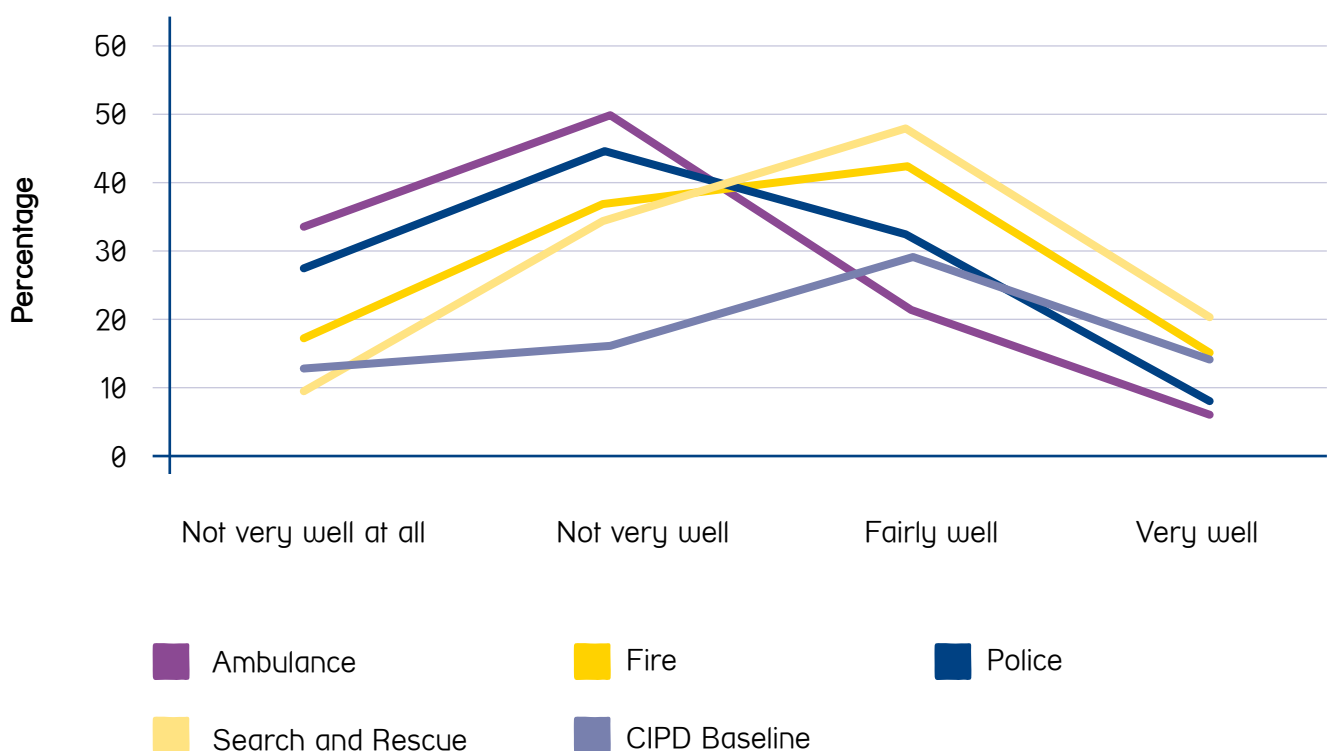
- 90% of police personnel have experienced stress or poor mental health while working within the service, and 61% have had personal experience of mental health problems – highest of all blue light services.
- Compared with other emergency services, police personnel are more likely to report that their mental health has affected their performance.
- They are less likely to seek support from colleagues if they feel stressed or low.
- But they are more confident than those in other services to spot signs of a mental health problem in a colleague.

Search and rescue

- Staff and volunteers in search and rescue services initially reported better levels of mental health and support than other blue light services.
- However, search and rescue staff and volunteers are 50% more likely to say that problems at work are the main cause of their mental health problems, compared with the wider workforce.
- Fewer than one in four (23%) think colleagues would treat them differently – in a negative way – if they spoke about a mental health problem at work. This is lower than for the other emergency services.
- They are just as likely to see help from a colleague as from a GP.



In your opinion, how well does your organisation support employees who experience mental health problems? (Base 3,168)



Staying well for work: the Blue Light Programme

Our research shows that people who work and volunteer in the emergency services are more likely to experience a mental health problem than others. They are also less likely to turn to existing sources of support and help, or to take time off.

Our Blue Light Programme has been designed to tackle this high level of mental health need. We've drawn on our experience and expertise in high-quality mental health support, and talked with emergency services staff and volunteers about how to design support that will suit them. From this, we've developed a range of activities and ways to support people, tailored to the particular needs of police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services. These activities have been the focus of this programme.



Challenging stigma

The stigma surrounding mental health issues makes it harder for people to talk about their own mental health problems, or to seek support.¹ We've recruited 'Blue Light Champions' – ordinary emergency services team members prepared to challenge stigma and press for greater recognition and understanding of mental health at work. We've also promoted the Blue Light Time to Change pledge as a way for organisations to show their commitment, and brought together champions, HR staff and others to help change perceptions of mental health and of people who experience mental health problems. See page 12.

Accessing information

Our Blue Light Infoline has been set up just for emergency services staff, volunteers and their families. It's provided confidential, independent and practical support, advice and signposting to help hundreds of people manage their mental health and stay well for work. Meanwhile, we've been inundated with requests for information booklets tailored to each of the four emergency services, on topics ranging from managing stress and anxiety to supporting a colleague with their mental health. See page 17.

1. Time to Change Attitudes to Mental Illness 2014 Research Report

Building resilience

The best way to deal with an emergency is to stop it happening in the first place. Emergency services workers know this better than anyone. Our resilience course provides people with simple ways to cope better with the stresses and strains of everyday life, making it easier to deal with difficult situations at work or home without becoming unwell. More than 500 people have participated so far, with one calling it ‘life changing’. See page 21.

Boosting workplace wellbeing

Having an understanding of mental health, and knowing how to manage your own mental health and support colleagues with theirs: these are crucial skills for everyone at work. We’ve provided in-depth learning opportunities about managing mental health and wellbeing, through bespoke online webinars and face-to-face training for line managers. Demand has been huge, with more than 5,000 managers participating in training. See page 25.



Staffordshire Police pledge signing

Improving support pathways

From advice on fire alarms to responding to 999 calls, our emergency services keep us safe through a mix of education, prevention, and help at the scene. In the same way, long-term mental health support combines many different elements: from challenging stigma and building resilience to signposting to support when there’s a problem. We’ve begun to use all we’ve learned from this programme to combine elements of support in ways that respond to the unique pressures faced by emergency services workers, to ensure they get access to the right support at the right time. See page 29.



Delivering the Blue Light Programme

Mind, the mental health charity, is responsible for delivering all the activities of the Blue Light Programme, working with our partners. The programme was funded during 2015/16 by a £4 million Cabinet Office grant using LIBOR funds. It currently runs in England only.

Following the success of our first year, we’d like to see the programme continue so all our emergency services teams get the support they deserve – find out more on page 31.



Our reach

Over 5,000

people participated in line-manager training

Online booklets accessed more than

16,000 times



Peer network event Leicester



North Yorkshire Police pledge signing

Over 2,800

people signed up to receive our newsletter



Merseyside Fire and Rescue pledge signing

54

blue light employers

+ 9

national associations

signed the Blue Light Time to Change pledge



441

emergency service staff registered to be Blue Light Champions



Police Treatment Centres pledge signing



Greater Manchester Police pledge signing

70 reviewers

have shaped the design of

31 publications

and submitted

117 reviews

1,800 calls

to the Blue Light Infoline



British Transport Police pledge signing

300,000+

information resources disseminated

80

Blue Light Champions trained to become peer supporters

364

people have registered to view our webinars



Over 113,000

hits to our web pages



City of London Police pledge signing

450+

attendees on our resilience face-to-face courses and

105

participants on our online courses

132

staff representing

75

Blue Light employers participated in peer leaning networks



Peer network and Champion event Tyne and Wear

Changing minds: challenging stigma and discrimination

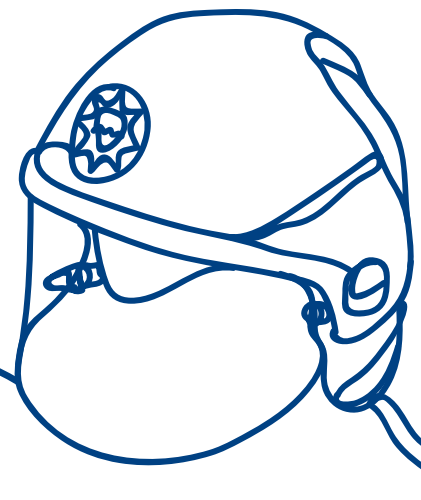
Challenging stigma and discrimination is key to addressing people's mental health needs. For the Blue Light Programme, this means helping change the culture in emergency services workplaces, so people feel more able to talk about their mental health and seek support. We've drawn on our nationally-recognised Time to Change campaign, run in partnership with Rethink Mental Illness, to design and deliver activity that raises awareness of mental health problems and changes attitudes.

Our reach

- An incredible 441 emergency services staff and volunteers have registered to be Blue Light Champions. It's encouraging that so many people want to take action at work to raise awareness of mental health problems and challenge stigma.
- So far, 54 Blue Light employers and nine associations have shown their commitment by signing up to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge. Pledging includes creating an action plan detailing tangible activities senior staff and others will undertake to tackle mental health stigma within their organisation.
- More than 130 staff representing 75 blue light employers have participated in peer learning networks. So far these have taken the form of events where staff share and learn from each other's approaches to staff mental health and wellbeing.

Under the banner of the Blue Light Programme, I talk to new recruits. I tell them my story and hope they see that it's completely natural to feel upset with what they will encounter as police officers, and that it's ok to talk about it.

Because talking with a colleague, friend or family member might help process how you are feeling and prevent it from becoming that seed which grows and grows and one day erupts - like it did with me.





Blue Light Champions

These are people who challenge stigma and promote understanding of mental health, raise awareness of support available, and influence to create a more positive workplace culture that promotes mental wellbeing. We support Champions with resources, workshops and guidance to carry out this role – whether it's running a drop-in event for staff between shifts, or presenting ideas to the senior management team.

Many Champions have personal experience of mental health problems, though this is not a requirement. The range of experiences and perspectives of our Champions is a big plus when it comes to challenging stigma.

We aimed to recruit 200 Champions in the first year of the Blue Light Programme. After being inundated with interest, we've so far recruited 441 individuals from across police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services. Champions tell us that the idea people don't want to talk about mental health is a myth – they just need safe places to do this.

When Champions have spoken out about their personal experience of mental health problems, they've found their courage is contagious, with people coming to them to share their own experiences. People tell us becoming a Champion has fostered a positive sense of wellbeing.

It was great to hear from other services tackling similar issues and how they have overcome problems in challenging stigma.

The Blue Light Time to Change pledge

We've learned from our nationally-recognised Time to Change programme, run in partnership with Rethink Mental Illness, that asking people and organisations to make a public pledge is a powerful way to commit them to challenging stigma. The Blue Light Time to Change pledge is a way for an employer to show they are committed to stamping out stigma and discrimination in their workplace. So far, 54 organisations and nine national associations have signed the pledge.

This declaration, though powerful, is not enough on its own. Each pledge is backed up by an action plan detailing tangible activities the employer will deliver to demonstrate their commitment. These plans must meet criteria including senior buy-in, and a commitment to reviewing all policies that impact on mental health and wellbeing. Action plans detail practical steps to promote a positive culture around mental wellbeing, where people can talk about their mental health and access support, without fear of discrimination.

The pledge is not an accreditation or quality mark. Different organisations are at different points with developing and delivering their action plans, and we recognise change does not happen overnight – it will take years to embed anti-stigma measures across and within services. We've also learned that one size doesn't fit all, and we've developed specific resources and materials to support search and rescue services, to reflect the particular ways these organisations operate.

Peer networks

We've supported Blue Light Champions, and others who care about promoting a mentally healthy workplace culture without stigma, like HR staff and team managers, to come together to share ideas, practice and learning. Many participants are from organisations that signed up to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge.

Our peer networks are a way of building on people's enthusiasm for the Blue Light Programme and for driving and embedding change back at work. They've helped us learn more about what other kinds of support staff need to create lasting, positive change. So far 132 staff from 75 organisations have attended network events, and we're grateful to the 10 services who have showcased their good practice so others can learn. We're building on this interest by setting up a LinkedIn group, providing even more opportunities for people to connect and share information and experiences.

Since I have spoken out, other colleagues including senior officers have told me how they went through that 20 years ago or whatever it was. It's comforting to know that I'm not the only one, that people do get through it and progress. But although there's a big welfare network in place at work, there's nothing specifically for mental health and I'd like to get that in place. I want to get other people talking about it.



Blue Light Champions at Emergency Services Show

Our Blue Light

Becky, police

I stumbled across the Blue Light Programme, and I thought: this is great – here is a reputable charity doing stuff externally to try and help the services.

The programme has definitely raised awareness, and that is the feedback I've had from senior management too. The top ranking officer in our local area wrote to me saying they were really grateful; that I had made a huge difference, that people were getting more support, and that there was more awareness and less stigma.

It takes a long time to change a culture. For a long time the perception from police officers, and probably from the public as well, has been that the police shouldn't experience mental health problems – that they should be stronger than that – we are human beings, and we have mental health problems the same as everyone else.





Well-informed: empowering people with information

Trustworthy and accessible information empowers people to manage their own mental health and make more confident choices about accessing support. We know blue light teams and their families want sources of information they can trust, that recognise the specific pressures arising when you or a loved one serves in the emergency services. Our bespoke range of information and signposting services draw on our experience of what works, and are designed with blue light staff and volunteers, and their loved ones, in mind.

Our reach

- We've distributed more than 300,000 information resources to the emergency services – more than double our original target. Our online booklets have been accessed more than 16,000 times and downloaded 4,800 times.
- Since we launched our Blue Light Infoline, we've had 1,800 calls. Demand for this service is continually increasing.
- More than 2,800 people have signed up to receive the Blue Light Programme newsletter, while our Blue Light Programme web pages have received over 113,000 hits.
- 76 people from across all four emergency services have directly helped improve the quality of our information and support, becoming involved at the development stage of a range of our resources, from information booklets to webinars.

Information resources

We've developed accessible information booklets on:

- Managing mental wellbeing
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Seeking help for a mental health problem
- Supporting a colleague with a mental health problem
- Supporting someone's mental wellbeing (for family members)

Each appears in four different versions, tailored to the particular needs of people working in police, fire, ambulance, and search and rescue services. They were developed with the input and guidance of emergency services representatives, and friends and family, and we're grateful to everyone who shared their stories so we could include case studies relevant to each service.

These booklets are available on our website, and within information packs that also include display materials promoting the Blue Light Programme. More than 300,000 booklets have been distributed so far – vastly exceeding our target of 100,000 and providing strong evidence of the demand for this kind of information.

Reviewing material has highlighted to me how effective Mind is at providing key information and valuable support and I personally felt empowered in assisting them. I felt that my contributions and opinions were valued and I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to provide a little help to a large and essential programme.

Our Blue Light reviewers

All our information booklets – in fact, everything we've produced directly for emergency services workers, including our workshops and webinars – have been developed in partnership with staff and volunteers from across the services. This is vital to the quality of our support – by involving representatives from our target audiences, we are more likely to produce information, training and resources that feel relevant and helpful.

Our panel currently has 70 reviewers representing all four services, and so far their reviews and comments have informed and improved the content of 31 separate resources or services.

The Blue Light Infoline

This is a source of free, confidential, independent and practical support, tailored to the needs of blue light workers and their families. Our advisors can be contacted via a dedicated phone number, text message or email.

We've had 1,800 calls so far, with each month showing an increased take-up compared with the last. This mirrors our experience of running other helplines at Mind – the service takes time to establish, but then continues to grow year after year.

I work as a crime scene investigator for the police and often deal with horrific scenes and attend graphic post-mortems, so shall be sharing the booklets with my colleagues and other CSI friends around the country.



East Midlands Ambulance Service pledge signing

Our Blue Light

Simon, search and rescue

I took part in the resilience course and the content was pitched and tailored for blue light services. It encouraged me to be more aware of my own mental health and showed me that there were other people just like me who I could talk to and understand. It's made me understand how to support colleagues more than before too.

When it comes to mental health, I say don't be silent and don't try and deal with it on your own. There's still work to be done but we are getting there, now we know what's out there and with the support from Mind and the UK government I do believe things will be better in the near future.





Ready to cope: Building resilience and staying well for work

When we learn simple ways to cope better with the stresses and strains of everyday life, we're more likely to deal with difficult situations at work or home without becoming unwell. Our resilience course is aimed at emergency services team members who are currently well and not experiencing a mental health problem. We provide a collection of tools and skills that help participants cope with whatever life throws at them, including the unique pressures that come with their blue light roles.

Our reach

- 100% of participants said they would recommend our resilience course to a colleague.
- More than 450 people have attended our face-to-face courses, while a further 105 have participated in our online courses.
- We've had feedback to say the course is 'life changing' and has even impacted on action taken by staff in their roles.

Helping blue light staff and volunteers build resilience

Our six-week course was organised and delivered by nine local Minds, supported by other trainers, in locations across England. In designing the content we drew on Mind's experience in mental health wellbeing and resilience, and combined this with input from emergency services staff with first-hand experience of mental health problems.

Participants have been extremely positive about the course, which looks at how to manage and deal with a range of everyday issues, from stress and anxiety to difficult emotions like anger. By finding better ways to deal with these challenges, there is less danger of them developing into more serious mental health problems.

While our courses have been aimed at people who are currently well, we've also helped would-be participants who showed signs they may be experiencing a mental health problem by signposting them to more appropriate sources of support.



Devon and Cornwall police pledge signing

I have left this course with a refreshed view towards the rest of my life and career. For that reason, I would absolutely recommend it wholeheartedly. I am now better at managing stress.

Learning what works

We've run the course so far as a pilot, and we want to make sure we evaluate robustly. We've partnered with the University of Oxford's Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma to ensure we learn as much as possible.

One aspect we wanted to test is whether it's better to be trained in person or online. Most participants have been allocated either a face-to-face or an online course, so we can compare the two approaches and their results.

While all participants have said they would recommend the course to a colleague, one challenge has been in persuading employers to allow staff to 'stand down' so that they can take part, and to prioritise resilience alongside other training and development topics. We've also found we've had to be flexible on session timings, offering morning, afternoon and evening sessions to help people make or find the time to attend.

I can't recommend this course highly enough and it is invaluable. It is helpful for someone in the emergency services to understand the problems of stress and I think a lot of people are under stress without realising it and this course has given me the tools so I can recognise those signs and find a way of dealing with them.



Our Blue Light

Lorna, fire service

The driving force behind signing the Blue Light Programme pledge and creating this informal support network was to generate more open discussion about mental health and wellbeing.

The creation of the Blue Light Champion network and the desire to get people fully involved and speaking openly about their mental health has been a key aspect of the services pledge. There has been an overwhelmingly positive reaction to this and it has proved to be a great success.

Having people tell their own stories is seen as a key tool in educating others about the realities of living with a mental health problem, whether your own or a friend or relatives. The reality being that we all have mental health.

Such enthusiasm from senior management towards the pledge helped to fuel the drive behind the overall cultural shift within the service, which has seen immediate benefits. The key point was to recognise that workplace performance is directly linked to service personnel wellbeing.





Workplace wellbeing: Looking out for colleagues and ourselves

Knowing how to recognise signs of mental health problems in yourself and others, and helping colleagues deal with everything from stress to returning after time off – these are essential skills for every blue light workplace.

We've developed face-to-face training for line managers and online webinars to help emergency services staff and volunteers stay well for work.

Our reach

- More than 5,000 line managers have attended our half-day training in managing mental health at work. Demand has been very high, and the feedback really useful, with some employers wanting to extend the training to more managers.
- Hundreds more from across all four services – police, search and rescue, fire and ambulance – have watched our online webinars.

Training for managers

Our half-day line manager training in managing mental health at work has been delivered by 20 local Minds across England. This training was developed with input from emergency services team members, so it would be tailored and relevant to participants.

During each session, participants cover topics like anxiety, depression and stress, workplace triggers, and supporting colleagues with a mental health problem, including how best to help them while in work, if they take time off and when they return. The course also includes how to promote wellbeing within a team.

Demand for training has been high, and participants have given us useful feedback. We're evaluating the content and feedback from trainers and participants to find out how we can improve.

We have just finished the first Line Manager masterclass. I just wanted to say how well it went down with our staff. We consider it to be a huge success and there is considerable appetite to run another session.



Online learning: our webinars

The Blue Light Webinars are a series of short online films specifically designed for emergency services staff and volunteers, and available on the Mind website. The webinars focus on three key areas:

1. Mental health awareness
2. Looking after your mental health
3. Managing mental health at work

Each film features people from our emergency services sharing their own experience of mental health problems. Webinars two and three appear in four different versions – one each for police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue, so that we can explore the topics from each service's perspective.

To date, 364 people have viewed the webinars, with a good spread across the four services. We've been pleased to see that the films are popular within search and rescue services: because they can be accessed when it's convenient, it's easier for volunteers to find time to watch them.



North East Ambulance pledge signing

I have had some powerful personal testimonies about journeys through anxiety and depression. Many people have said they felt this learning environment was safe for personal disclosure.



Our Blue Light

Esmail, ambulance

A colleague who had experienced mental health problems for many years took his own life which had a devastating effect upon me but also spurred me on to help others who are suffering silently.

At work I often take on more than time permits, which inevitably takes its toll and ultimately ends up with my mental health deteriorating. I often hear of colleagues who have said the same as they too feel the pressures of cutbacks and ever increasing workloads which is not only physically but mentally exhausting.

Being involved with the Blue Light Programme has also given me some solace to know that I am helping others which in itself makes me feel good - a sense of achievement.

There is no shame or stigma attached to experiencing mental health problems, it's just the same as breaking a bone. We are not super humans and we are just as prone to illness as anyone else if not more.

We see people experiencing mental health problems everyday through work and we are no different from anyone else just because we work for the emergency services.





Strongest together: combining support in pathways that promote mental health

We're delivering lasting improvements that will make it easier for staff and volunteers in emergency services to take care of their mental health, and to access and receive support when they need it. We're using what we've learned over the programme's first year to continue strengthening the links between blue light employers, local communities and existing mental health help and support.

We want to provide a 'pathway' with the right types and levels of support at every step, using approaches people in emergency services say they are most likely to be open to, such as turning to colleagues for help rather than medical professionals.



Metropolitan Police pledge signing

Our reach

This is work that is in its early stages, allowing us to learn from and build on the success of our full range of Blue Light Programme activities:

- We're training 80 Blue Light Champions to become Peer Supporters, able to help colleagues by talking about mental health problems and signposting to local sources of support. Our independent research has found people in emergency services value peer-to-peer support over other sources, and all our trained Peer Supporters have lived experience of mental health problems.
- We're developing Blue Light Mental Health Networks. We will commission four networks initially, bringing together all the emergency services in each locality and providing funding for them to work together with their local Mind, with a focus on keeping staff and volunteers well for work.
- We've found that for many emergency services team members who have experienced a mental health problem, there could have been more support in place earlier that would have helped them take positive action to stay well. We're evaluating what's worked best in our resilience course, so we can develop a programme of targeted resilience information and support that can be applied in each network area.

Building connections: Emergency services and local Minds

Our reach

Local Minds have been essential to our face-to-face training, and to helping establish supportive local mental health networks:

- 20 local Minds have delivered free line manager training to blue light employers in their areas. This half-day workshop covers topics like anxiety, depression and stress, workplace wellbeing, and supporting colleagues with a mental health problem. See page 25 for more on our line manager training.
- Nine local Minds delivered our resilience course to staff and volunteers from all the emergency services in their areas. This six-week course is aimed at helping individuals deal with all that life throws at them without becoming mentally unwell. See page 21 for more on our resilience course.
- Four local Minds are helping set up our first Blue Light Mental Health Networks. Each network brings together all the emergency services in one locality, providing funding for them to work with each other and with their local Mind over the long term, with a focus on keeping all their staff and volunteers well for work. See page 29 for more.

One of our strengths as a national mental health charity is our network of more than 140 local Minds, including over 120 who deliver mental health services in areas across England. We work together in partnership, nationally and locally, to provide excellent mental health services to everyone who needs them.

Local Minds have played a central role in the delivery of the Blue Light Programme, using their knowledge of locally-available mental health support, and their expertise in training in mental health and wellbeing, for the benefit of emergency services in their areas. They've also worked alongside our national team to develop the framework for our Mental Health Networks and our training courses.





Where now: ongoing mental health support for our emergency services

March 2016 marks one year since the Blue Light Programme launched. As this report shows, thousands of team members across our police, search and rescue, fire and ambulance services have already played a powerful role in:

- Actively challenging mental health stigma at work
- Learning more about mental health and why it matters
- Making positive changes to help them stay well for work

Meanwhile, more than 100,000 staff and volunteers have benefited from our information, support and resources, accessed via our website and digital communications, our printed information booklets and our events.

We've reminded employers that the mental health of their staff and volunteers is their responsibility, and given them tools to help them carry out this essential duty for everyone who serves with them.

All our activity is being robustly evaluated by independent partners, so we can measure and understand the impact of our work so far, and shape what good support for blue light services can look like in the future.

Continuing the change

A Cabinet Office grant funded the first year of the Blue Light Programme, allowing us to pilot a number of activities and learn what works. Now, Mind is committed to continuing a further programme of work to embed our support for emergency services teams across England:

Challenging stigma

- Services who have signed up to the Blue Light Time to Change Pledge will have the opportunity to benchmark themselves against other employers with our Workplace Wellbeing Index, and to receive ongoing support from Mind.
- Our Time to Change programme, run in partnership with Rethink Mental Illness, will continue to offer the Blue Light Time to Change pledge.
- We'll help employers recruit and support more Champions.

Information

- Our Blue Light Infoline will continue to be available to staff and volunteers and their families.
- Our range of information booklets on mental health topics, tailored to each of the blue light services, can still be ordered from our website mind.org.uk

Resilience

- We'll further develop and refine our resilience course to take into account what we've learned during our first year.
- This course will then be provided within the four pilot Blue Light Mental Health Networks, and will also be available for services outside these areas to purchase.

Workplace wellbeing

- Blue Light employers can purchase our line manager half-day training, delivered by local Minds.
- Our full range of webinars will continue to be available for people to watch for free at mind.org.uk

Support pathways

- We're commissioning four pilot Blue Light Mental Health Networks, bringing together all the emergency services in one locality with their local Mind to take up and share support and resources.
- We'll continue supporting our new Peer Supporters, individuals with lived experience of mental health problems who listen to and support colleagues, and who can direct them to further sources of help.

We're talking to the Government and potential funders to secure longer-term funding so that great mental health support for emergency services teams remains a priority. If you'd like to help, find out more at mind.org.uk/ourbluelight



Maintaining momentum: Our Blue Light

There's been extraordinary demand for our Blue Light Programme resources and support. Even so, many individuals and workplaces are only at the start of their journey towards better mental health for themselves and their teams. It's clear the need for our support will not decrease in the coming months and years, especially as emergency services go through significant changes and budget cuts.

Today we have received some devastating news about the death of a firefighter from [a nearby] Fire & Rescue Service, our staff are obviously upset ... Whilst talking to staff and ensuring their welfare the Blue Light Programme and Mind was highlighted to me, I feel that it is so relevant and can provide a valuable tool for people, not just for this specific situation.

Our Blue Light

Real, lasting change takes time. Long-term funding for activities would mean that everyone in our emergency services could get the support they deserve.

So far we've focused our efforts in England. But we're also committed to developing ways that emergency service staff and volunteers in Wales can benefit from Mind's specialist, independent mental health services. We are working with other organisations to develop a way to make sure Welsh emergency services can get the support that they need too.

If we can create lasting change by continuing to provide and strengthen support to blue light staff and volunteers in England and Wales, it means the benefits of the Blue Light Programme could also reach beyond individuals and organisations into the communities they serve too.

Together we can build a better 999 service for everyone for the future – for all those who work and volunteer in our emergency services, and for the local communities they support and are part of.



What you can do

Here's how you can help keep the momentum going and grow the movement for better mental health in our emergency services. Need more inspiration? Go to mind.org.uk/ourbluelight for even more ideas.

As an organisation

- Keep mental health on the agenda at team meetings and one-to-ones, and in your HR and organisation development plans and budgets.
- Sign up to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge at time-to-change.org.uk and benchmark against other employers in our new Workplace Wellbeing Index (coming soon – find out more at mind.org.uk/workplace).
- Find out if there's a Blue Light Mental Health Network in your area, and get involved – or start your own.
- Keep supporting Champions who work or volunteer in your organisation, and make sure all the support you offer is well publicised, especially for new staff.

As an individual

- Take care of your mental wellbeing and be kind to yourself and others – we have lots of resources and advice especially for blue light teams at mind.org.uk
- Talk to someone about your mental health, especially if you're worried about yourself or someone else – we're all human, and anyone can experience a mental health problem.
- Find out what support is available to you. Speak to a Champion or Peer Supporter in your workplace, or contact our Blue Light Infoline: call 0300 505 5999 / text 84999 / bluelightinfo@mind.org.uk

Whoever you are

- Use social media to build your knowledge and share best practice. Stay in touch by following Mind, blue light staff and bloggers, and the #mybluelight hashtag.
- Find out how to support the Blue Light Programme and continue the movement for better mental health in our emergency services. Visit mind.org.uk/ourbluelight to see what you can do.



Thank you

I can strongly recommend becoming a Blue Light Champion and although it helps, lived experience is not a pre-requisite. The team and other Blue Light Champions have been inclusive, supportive and inspiring. They have made me feel valued and listened to.

The above paragraph was written by one of our Blue Light Champions in a recent blog and for me sums up exactly why the Blue Light Programme is so important. We know that those who work within our emergency services do an incredibly tough job and are twice as likely to experience a mental health problem. However, the Blue Light Programme has shown us that if we listen to the needs of emergency services, develop and deliver interventions that meet those needs and really place value on the importance of mental health, we can start to make a real difference. And we have.

I have had the pleasure of leading the Blue Light Programme, working alongside a passionate and dedicated programme team, but we would not have been able to succeed without the overwhelmingly positive engagement from emergency services staff and volunteers across the board. You can see from this report just how much that engagement has achieved.

So from me, and the rest of the Blue Light Programme team, we would like to thank you for supporting Mind in developing and delivering this programme. There is still a long way to go but together we have started to make a difference.

**Faye McGuinness,
Blue Light Programme Manager**



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- Our Blue Light Champions
- Pledged organisations
- All our Blue Light reviewers
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- Dr Clare Lennie
- Frankie Westoby
- Colleagues from the College of Paramedics, College of Policing, Chief Fire Officers Association, Association of Ambulance Chief Executives and UK Search and Rescue.
- Our evaluation partners
- Our local Mind delivery partners
- All our scoping survey respondents and focus group participants
- Other LIBOR funded partners; Fire Fighter's Charity, Police Treatment Centre, Police Rehab Centre and the Ambulance Services Charity
- The Home Office



Some of the Blue Light Programme team

Our team: Faye, Joanna, Ruth, Hannah, Robyn, Lina, Runa, Cat, Helen, Libby, Sharon, Clare, Harriet W, Alice, Krithika, Harriet H, Madeleine and Lisa.





Cheshire Constabulary pledge signing



We're Mind, the mental health charity.

We're here to make sure anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support.

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