

# Mental health matters from day one - our research findings



The start of any new job can be tough. But new recruits in our emergency services are facing traumatic situations for the first time. They need support from day one.

Our Blue Light Programme research shows why mental health support is so important from the start and throughout someone's 999 career.

## Our research areas 2016 to 18

- New recruits .....
- 999 call handlers .....
- Resilience course .....
- Impact on the public

## Our key findings

### Mandatory support is needed from the start

New recruits told us they can find life in the emergency services tougher than expected. They don't always feel prepared to deal with the difficult things they see and hear for the first time.

Our research shows:

- new recruits want every new member of team 999 across England and Wales to receive mandatory mental health training, to help them cope with day to day stress and difficult situations. For search and rescue volunteers this might be included as part of their induction.
- new recruits who took our pilot training were more aware of how to take care of their mental health afterwards and were more likely to ask for help if they needed it.

### Training and support needs to be accessible and relevant to all

Training and mental health support on offer at any stage of someone's career needs to be made accessible to all the relevant staff and volunteers.

Our research shows:

- demands on resources mean staff can't always be available for mental health and wellbeing training. Services need to find ways to make sure everyone who could benefit from training is able to attend.
- supervisors have an important role to play in supporting staff wellbeing. But competing demands mean they don't always have the time. Services need to invest in making sure supporting staff wellbeing can be an integral part of a manager's day-to-day role.
- new recruits and call handlers face specific pressures and need training and materials that are appropriately timed, targeted and accessible.

## Staff can learn healthy ways to cope with distressing things

Building the emotional resilience of staff and volunteers at any stage of a career can help them to stay well in a challenging environment.

Our research shows:

- emergency services staff who took part in our revised resilience course showed significant improvements in mental health awareness and confidence to manage their mental health.
- our training and support has given line managers and trainers more confidence in supporting staff and helped blue light staff feel better able to respond to difficult situations.
- to help create lasting change, there needs to be practical investment, as well as commitment, passion and enthusiasm, at all levels within the emergency services.

I'm only new. If I start saying I'm suffering with really bad mental health problems then they might get rid of me before the end of training.

You can learn all of the techniques to get on scene but nothing can prepare you for how your body and your mind are going to respond in that situation.

## 10 actions we can all take

Whether you work in the emergency services or support those who do, there are things we can all do for better mental health in team 999.

- 1 Consider the unique and diverse environments that emergency services staff and volunteers operate in when designing and delivering training and support services.
- 2 Promote an organisational culture that emphasises the mental health and wellbeing of blue light staff and volunteers.
- 3 Use the learning from our research and evaluation to make sure that training and support is accessible to all staff and volunteers.
- 4 Demonstrate a commitment to staff wellbeing from day one by making mental health training mandatory for new recruits and providing space for them to reflect with their colleagues.
- 5 Invest in line manager training to help supervisors feel more confident and better support their staff.
- 6 Maintain and support a strong network of Blue Light Champions who can raise awareness of mental health and help to reduce stigma.
- 7 Invest in building the resilience of emergency services staff and volunteers so they can keep themselves well in a challenging environment.
- 8 Consider the wider benefits to the public of initiatives to improve the mental health and wellbeing of emergency services staff and volunteers.
- 9 Help staff to understand how important it is to look after their own wellbeing by providing support that is targeted and relevant.
- 10 Download our Blueprint Pack to learn more about how to embed staff wellbeing support into core business practice.

## Get involved

Download our full research findings and recommendations at [mind.org.uk/bluelightdayone](https://mind.org.uk/bluelightdayone)

Contact us at [bluelight@mind.org.uk](mailto:bluelight@mind.org.uk)

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