

Who are Blue Light Champions?

A Blue Light Champion is an employee or volunteer in the emergency services, who takes action in the workplace to raise awareness of mental health problems and challenge mental health stigma.

Why do we need Blue Light Champions?

We all have mental health just as we have physical health. We know that one in four people in the UK will experience a [mental health problem](#) in any given year. But our independent research shows that the estimated quarter of a million people who work and volunteer in the emergency services are even more at risk of experiencing a mental health problem than the general population, but are less likely to get support.¹ In an independent survey commissioned by Mind of 671 Blue Light personnel, 96% said that people with a mental health problem experience stigma and discrimination.²

But I loved my job and that was the frustrating thing; I couldn't tell anyone because of the stigma at work. For many people, if you've got depression, anxiety or stress then you're weak, you're a 'sicknote', everyone gets stressed and tired, that sort of thing.

Zoe, Police

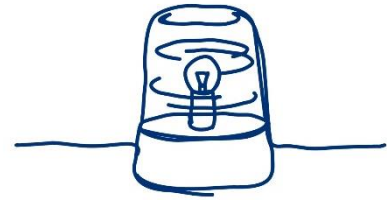
Blue Light Champions are essential in challenging stigma and increasing understanding of mental health in the emergency services. The Blue Light team at Mind supports Champions by providing them with resources for the workplace, support in carrying out the role, and workshops.

Who can become a Blue Light Champion?

Anybody who is a current employee or volunteer working in the Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance or Search and Rescue services can become a Blue Light Champion, whether or not you have personal experience of mental health problems. You can be working or volunteering within any role, at any level within your organisation.

¹ From Mind's independent research of 3,627 Blue Light personnel, January 2015.

² From Mind's independent research of 671 Blue Light personnel, January 2015.



Anyone can experience a mental health problem. In any given year mental health problems will affect one in four of us, so it's reasonable to assume that each one of us will know at least one person in our workplace, family, or wider social circle who has experienced a mental health problem. Blue Light Champions may or may not have their own personal experience of mental health problems³ or have supported someone who has personal experience of mental health problems⁴, like a family member, friend or colleague. The role is open to everyone and bringing together people with different perspectives and experiences is a really important way to challenge the stigma around mental health problems.

If you are motivated to positively and constructively challenge mental health stigma, we'd love you to join the growing network of Blue Light Champions.

A great Blue Light Champion is

- Passionate about finding ways to positively and constructively challenge mental health stigma and promote wellbeing at work.
- Motivated to improve your colleagues understanding of and attitudes towards mental health.

Becoming a Blue Light Champion is a voluntary role and there are no limits on how many Blue Light Champions an organisation, department or team may have.

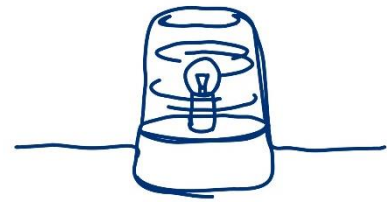
You may like to find out more about the role if you:

- Care strongly about challenging the stigma, discrimination and negative stereotypes associated with mental health problems.
- Have time to take on some anti-stigma activity (this can be as little or much as you would like or are able to do).
- Are willing to engage colleagues constructively and positively when taking action to challenge mental health stigma. For example, helping people understand how they can look after their mental health and wellbeing and that of their colleagues.
- Want to spread the word about what the Blue Light Programme has to [offer in your workplace](#).

If this sounds like you, please [register here](#) to become a Blue Light Champion.

³ Anybody who has or is experiencing a mental health problem.

⁴ Anybody who has supported or is supporting someone who has or is experiencing a mental health problem.



What could you gain from being a Blue Light Champion?

- The satisfaction of helping improve attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems in the workplace.
- Helping normalise conversations about mental health and dispelling misconceptions.
- Building professional networks/contacts and sharing knowledge and experience.
- The opportunity to develop new skills such as organising events or public speaking.
- The chance to attend a workshop on Speaking Up about mental health.
- A positive sense of wellbeing from being proactive and working to a joint goal.
- Feeling empowered to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.
- Knowing you're helping ensure mental health is seen as important in your service, not forgotten or hidden away.
- Potentially being involved in changing and developing policies about how mental health issues are handled in your workplace.
- Creating a healthier environment at work, and a more positive experience for the public you support.

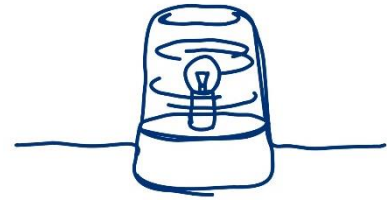
'Being a Champion for Time to Change and working closely with Mind has been one of the most rewarding things I have done, not only in my career but also my life. The act of being open about my own ill health has not only helped others through peer support but has also had a positive impact on my own.'

Wayne Goodwin, Kent Police and [Time to Change Champion](#)⁵

What do Blue Light Champions do?

As a Blue Light Champion you will raise awareness of mental health and help to break down stigma in the workplace. How you do this is completely up to you, and we encourage you to get creative!

⁵ Time to Change Champions are people with lived experience of mental health problems who campaign to end mental health discrimination in their communities. Time to Change is run by partners Mind and Rethink Mental Illness and is separate to the Blue Light Programme.



We've put together a list of suggested activities to kick-start your thinking. **Every** activity, no matter how big or small, contributes to the central goal of challenging mental health stigma.

Suggested activities

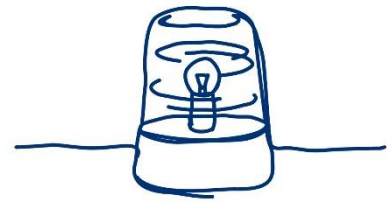
Got a few minutes

- **Information sharing** – Distribute leaflets, posters and other materials developed through the Blue Light Programme. For example, promote the [Blue Light Infoline](#) and how it can support your colleagues, their families and friends.
- **Staff intranet** - Request that the Blue Light Programme's activities and resources are advertised on your intranet pages. You could also ask that more is done to highlight the support available within your organisation to staff and volunteers, so that it is easy to access.
- **Social Media** - Ask your organisation to promote the Blue Light Programme on their twitter account, tweet using #mybluelight or start a blog. Remember, if you choose to use social media to promote the Blue Light Programme and highlight anti-stigma messaging on a personal account please ensure you consult and are mindful of your employer's policy on social media, seeking guidance and permission where necessary.

Got a few hours

- **Speaking Up** - If you have your own personal experience of a mental health problem⁶ you may wish to speak about these to an audience of your colleagues, blog or write about them, though please note there is absolutely no pressure to do so. If you don't have personal experience of mental health problems, you can find opportunities to talk to colleagues about the importance of challenging mental health stigma and promoting wellbeing. To support you in this, a number of regional workshops and resources will be organised for September and October 2015. Once you have registered as a Champion, we'll send you more information and dates for your diary.
- **Training days and inductions** - Speak to new recruits about the importance of wellbeing and mental health during staff inductions. Flag the support that's

⁶ Anybody who has or is experiencing a mental health problem.



available to them in their new workplace so that they know yours is a working environment where it's okay to talk about mental health.

- **Family and friends** – Think about how you could reach the family and friends of emergency service staff and volunteers with anti-stigma messages around mental health and details of the support available to them. For example, run outreach activities or host a Blue Light information stall at a family or community fun day.

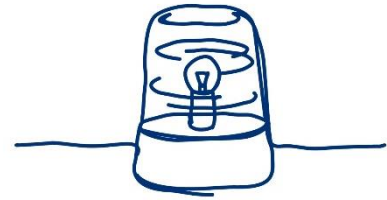
Got longer

- **Be a point of contact** – Look into setting up a network of peers who can signpost people to mental health support, wellbeing resources, and be an additional point of contact for staff and volunteers who might need to talk. Why not take a look at our information about maintaining boundaries and managing conversations in the [Blue Light Champions toolkit](#)?
- **Champion networks** – Share experiences, challenges and suggestions with other Blue Light Champions by building a network across local emergency services. You might find that you want to do activities together with other Blue Light Champions in your workplace or local area.
- **Emergency services employers' pledge** – Flag up the [Blue Light Time to Change pledge](#) to your service's senior people, support efforts to get their buy-in, and participate in the development of your service's pledge action plan.
- **Events** – get a platform at workplace events to raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing, perhaps with a table-top stand or speaking slot. Or take the lead in organising wellbeing events, using our Blue Light resources to start colleagues talking about mental health.

What support can Champions expect from Mind's Blue Light Programme team?

We will:

- Keep in contact by sending you updates of what's coming up and making sure you hear about other exciting opportunities to get involved in Blue Light Programme activities.
- Be on hand to answer any queries you have regarding the Blue Light Champion role via phone and email.



- Provide guidance, and some workshops, on subjects like speaking up about mental health problems and how to promote anti stigma messages and overcome misconceptions.
- Offer [materials](#) to promote the Blue Light Programme and specific booklets for your use within your service such as [managing mental wellbeing](#).
- Provide information to help you keep mentally well whilst undertaking activities as a Blue Light Champion, for example, maintaining boundaries.
- Provide guidance on managing conversations around mental health and how to signpost effectively.

What is the time commitment?

We want the Blue Light Champion opportunity to work for you, so there is no set time commitment. We just ask that you undertake meaningful anti-stigma activities within your workplace, being mindful that you only undertake activity that you feel comfortable with. You may do this as a one off or on a regular basis, it is up to you. If you need to stop or pause your activities for any reason, you can.

You may want to ask your Line Manager whether it would be possible to have some dedicated time within your normal working shift so that you can carry out your role as a Blue Light Champion.

How to become a Blue Light Champion

If you feel ready to become a Blue Light Champion please [register here](#).

If you have further questions or feedback please get in touch with the Mind Blue Light Team via bluelightchampions@mind.org.uk

Funded by



Cabinet Office