



Image: West Midlands Police



The Blue Light Champions Activity Guide

Blue Light Programme
mind.org.uk/bluelight

 **mind**
for better mental health

Just signed up as a Blue Light Champion, or thinking about it? Our Activity Guide is for you

The Blue Light Programme provides mental health support for emergency services staff and volunteers from police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services across England. It's been developed by Mind in consultation with individuals from across the emergency services.

For all of us, our mental health is just as important as our physical health. 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. And you are less likely to access support.¹ In an independent survey commissioned by Mind of Blue Light personnel, 96% said they believe people with a mental health problem experience stigma and discrimination.² This is why we need you to be a Blue Light Champion.



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

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



Being a Blue Light Champion

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.

By becoming a Blue Light Champion, you're paving the way to helping your colleagues and the service overall, making it easier for people to look after their mental health and seek support when they're struggling. And there are all kinds of ways to carry out the role of Blue Light Champion.

Blue Light Champions are amazing individuals who make a huge positive difference: driving forward change internally and helping embed positive changes within the workplace, by challenging mental health stigma and starting initiatives that improve everyone's wellbeing.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you if you've signed up to be a Blue Light Champion. It's full of creative ideas and practical steps to help you decide the best way to challenge mental health stigma and to raise awareness of mental health problems and the importance of wellbeing.

It's also for you if you're considering whether to become a Blue Light Champion in your workplace. The ideas and tips in here will help you decide whether it's for you.

How to use this guide

Whether you're already active in challenging mental health stigma or are completely new to it, we hope this guide will spark ideas and support you on your journey to make them happen.

It's a big document packed with a wealth of knowledge based on what we've learned works best. But don't be daunted! Which activities you take on are up to you. Do tell us how you get on – we'd love to hear, and we can share your tips with other Blue Light Champions too.

To help you navigate your way through, we've split this guide into sections (also available as separate pdf downloads). It's up to you which activities you take on.

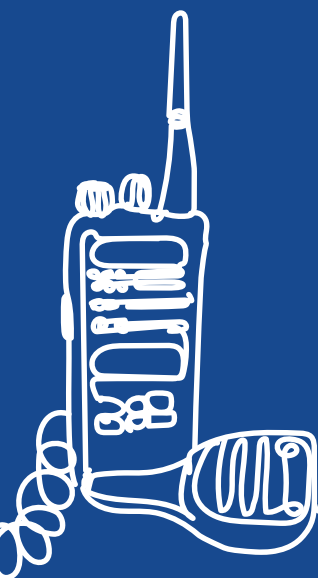


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All text in **purple** links you to more information or resources.

If you are reading this guide in print you will be able to find all resources mentioned at <https://www.mind.org.uk/bluelight>



Section 1: Supporting colleagues

Encouraging people to talk about mental health

Starting a conversation can be a powerful way to challenge mental health stigma and get people to think about their perceptions. For all of us, our mental health is just as important as our physical health. Talking helps us all recognise this and can dispel misconceptions about mental health problems and the people who experience them.

You don't need to be an expert to talk about mental health.

"I've also heard people talking about depression as though it's just an excuse to get off work. Hearing that in your work environment doesn't encourage people to be open about mental health - but talking about it helps me and others, and that's what I'm pushing for now."

Helen, Police

You could:

- Make time to ask how a colleague is doing.
- Chat to colleagues informally about mental health. You can talk about the Blue Light Programme and related support.
- Organise an event or campaign that encourages people to start talking about mental health.
- Use our resources - distribute Blue Light materials with anti-stigma facts and messages.

Speaking Up and championing a cause you feel passionately about can be very empowering. However, it's important to only discuss mental health in the workplace when you feel comfortable to do so. Don't be disheartened if you get a negative reaction. **Remember: starting the conversation is a vital step towards challenging stigma.**



How can I start a conversation about mental health?

- Talk about the Blue Light Programme and why you're supporting our work.
- Start with a fact, for example: one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year. Anyone can experience a mental health problem.
- Ask someone how they are doing, and take time to listen and engage with their response.
- If you have your own personal experience of mental health problems, and if it feels right for you, and you know how much of your story you want to share, you can talk about this personal experience with your colleagues or team.
- Talk about what helps you maintain wellbeing, relax or de-stress. Ask your colleagues what helps them.
- Use news stories related to mental health to start a discussion.
- Share some of the Blue Light Programme's findings³ from our survey of more than 3,000 emergency services staff and volunteers, which show...
 1. Almost nine out of ten respondents have experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health at some point whilst working for the emergency services.
 2. Eight out of ten respondents think colleagues would be more comfortable talking about physical health than mental health.
 3. Half of respondents are not aware of the mental health support their organisation offers.

Tips for talking

- **Think about what you want to say and when:** You don't need to be an expert to talk about mental health, but you might find it helpful to think about what you want to say in advance. It might help to say it out loud or to a friend first. This will help you hear how it sounds and notice how it makes you feel. Also think through where and when you may want to start a conversation. For example, if you want to ask a colleague how they are feeling, make sure you have time to listen to the response and are not likely to be interrupted.
- **Less can be more:** Our mental health is as much a part of us as our physical health, but the stigma surrounding mental health can make it hard for some people to talk about it. Keeping it bite sized and asking open questions can help you make headway.
- **Give them time:** Your colleague may simply not wish to engage with the subject straight away, or they might initially react in a negative or dismissive way. Give them time and this may change, even if it's not right away. And take opportunities to talk when these present themselves. If someone asks you about mental health or the Blue Light Programme, take the opportunity to have an open conversation.
- **Have some information ready:** Sometimes people want to find out more in their own time – why not have some of **our materials** to hand? The person you are talking to might have lots of questions and want more information.
- **You may get different reactions:** These could be positive or negative and may be hard to predict. Think about how you will keep to your boundaries. What parts of your story do you want to share and what do you not want to share? Have information to hand in case a colleague has questions. Your colleague may join in at first, but then become uncomfortable and change the topic – if this happens don't be disheartened. It's still helpful that the first step has taken place.
- **Courage is contagious:** Often, once the subject of mental health is out in the open, people want to talk. Your first conversation could prompt many more.

3. Mind ran an online survey to better understand experiences of mental health problems within the emergency services in late 2014. Approximately 1.5% of all emergency services staff and volunteers (3,627 people) responded.



Image: West Midlands Police

“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.”

Richard, Fire Service

“I’ve never had one negative reaction. People react with empathy, and often disclose that either they, a family member or a friend has suffered from mental illness. 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.”

Ed Simpson, Police

“Many colleagues in the team are also friends, so it felt natural to talk to them about it. No one judges me and they all trust me to do a good job. To my team mates, my mental health problems were never an issue; except when I was unwell, and in those situations they would offer support because they cared about me. They see me as someone who is equally part of the team and defined by what I do there, not by any mental health problems.”

Izzy, Mountain Rescue

And remember, the main message to get across is...

We’re all human. We all have mental health. Talking about it makes a big difference.



"In the fire service, we are exposed to some tragic, horrible incidents. But you can keep on top of those situations. The ability to talk about a problem with someone makes a world of difference. It's amazing. Just talking about it can almost release some of it out of your body. And if you keep bottling it up it will come out in the end."

Andrew, Fire Service

Help with Speaking Up

If you have your own personal experience of mental health problems you may wish to speak about these to an audience of your colleagues.

If you don't have own 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.

"If we manage to save one life it's worth it, isn't it?"

David, Ambulance Service

To support you in this, we are running a number of regional workshops. Once you have registered as a Blue Light Champion, we'll send you more information and dates for your diary.

"My advice to those who are having problems with their mental health or wellbeing would be to be as open as possible about what you are going through – it is not anything to be ashamed of. Try all avenues for help and support and keep trying until you find something that works. It can be a long, hard battle but you can come through it."

Izzy, Mountain Rescue

Key messages

As a Blue Light Champion you will be challenging the stigma around mental health in the workplace. Here are some key messages to support you in doing this.

Messages about mental health:

- We're all human and we all have mental health
- Mental health is just as important as physical health
- Mental health problems are common and can be treated
- It helps to talk about mental health, but it can take courage. Just asking 'how are you?' – and taking time to listen properly to the response – can make an enormous difference
- We all need support sometimes
- Look out for signs of unmanageable stress in you and a colleague: what could you do to take care of yourself?
- The effects of dealing with stressful situations every day can build up over time. Through their role individuals can be constantly exposed to traumatic situations, either in person or through their support for colleagues, where they need to 'stay strong' for others. This can include moving on to the next situation without knowing what happens after their involvement is over.

“We teach officers how to protect their bodies from physical harm. What we don’t do is help them to protect their minds and ultimately their mental wellbeing.”

Ed, Police

Messages specifically about the support on offer from Mind and the Blue Light Programme

- Mind has set up the Blue Light Programme to improve support for staff and volunteers who work in the emergency services.
- Mind’s research shows emergency services workers are more likely than the general population to experience mental health problems, because of the nature of your role and exposure to traumatic situations. But you are also less likely to seek support.
- Find out more about the Blue Light Programme in Appendix 1.

“I know many people who have got stress, depression, anxiety or possible early signs of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) who will not say they’ve got anything wrong with them. I want to help those people get to where I am – to tell them to move on, get treatment, keep going, don’t give up. That just because you’re ill doesn’t make you less of a person and it doesn’t mean you can’t do the job.”

Zoe, Police

Finding the words

Finding the ‘right’ language to describe emergency services staff and volunteers’ experiences of mental health problems will always be difficult. There is no one term or set of terms that everyone will agree on. We have worked together with emergency services staff and volunteers to identify words that are likely to resonate and that employees and volunteers will feel most comfortable using. The term ‘mental health problem’, as well as some of the specific diagnostic names (for example depression, bipolar disorder, etc) are widely used and understood by people outside of ‘the mental health world’, which is why we use them.

We respect that some people reject any form of label, and some don’t see their experiences as an illness or a problem at all. Conversely, we also respect that some people find their experience best understood in terms of illness, and find a medical diagnosis a useful way of talking about, and getting support for what they are going through. Within the Blue Light Programme, there are many people with personal experience of mental health problems who have diverse points of view.

We don’t see our role, or yours as a Blue Light Champion, as being to decide which of these points of view is ‘right’, or to tell anyone what language they should use to talk about their own experiences. It is up to you to choose language that you feel comfortable with and feel is appropriate. What we do ask is that you are mindful of the language you use and think about how those around you may feel about it.





Signposting to support

You may want to find out about and promote the support currently available within your service and local area so you can help people find the help they need. Being prepared with this information means you can direct your colleagues to support while maintaining boundaries and ensuring you do not take on too much.

We have created an editable list of support around mental health that you can refer to or show colleagues. Please create your own tailored version by adding to this with contact details of support offered in your service and local area such as:

- Your Employee Assistance Programme
- How to get in touch with Occupational Health
- Information available from unions and other membership bodies
- Disability support groups
- Details of external organisations, such as your local Mind
- Peer support groups within your organisation and local area
- How to access talking treatments in your local area
- Local and national helplines

[Click here](#) for editable lists of useful contacts (in Appendix 3). **Please note, this list is no longer available.**

“The doctors referred me to NHS Mental Health, who diagnosed me with PTSD. I got signed off work for about seven months. Occupational Health at work were really good and referred me for eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing therapy, using buzzers and lights. It’s bizarre but it’s amazing – it works. It was fascinating.”

Zoe, Police

Section 2: Reaching out

Organising meetings and events

Events and meetings are great opportunities to speak to people face to face, challenge myths about mental health, have discussions and answer questions. Events can take a variety of forms.

You can either organise an event yourself, ask for time to talk about wellbeing at a team meeting, or have a stand with some of our Blue Light materials.

However you choose to get mental health on to the agenda, you can use an event as an opportunity to:

- Get people talking about mental health and thinking about any stereotypes they hold about mental health problems and people who experience them.
- Bring people with different experiences of mental health together in an environment of mutual respect.
- Provide information about looking after your wellbeing and how to access support.
- Inspire people to work together to end the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health.

“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.”

Ed, Police

Top tip

Planning and running an event can be very time-consuming, so why not find out what events are going on in your organisation and see if you can join them?

Planning your event

Putting on an event takes time and can seem daunting, so we’ve put together some key points to get you started.

Before you start, you will need to decide:

Event activity

What are you going to do? Here are some ideas:

- Run an information stand for Time to Talk Day or World Mental Health Day.
- Invite a speaker from your local Mind, or another organisation or service to talk to colleagues about the impact of stigma and how to look after your own wellbeing.
- Have a drop in to start conversations about mental health; you will get more people to attend if you have a hook that appeals to who you are trying to reach, this could be a game of football, some music, a chance to socialise or refreshments such as tea and cake... the possibilities are endless.

Your audience

How many people are you expecting to attend, or aiming to reach?

This will inform most of the other things you need to plan like the size of venue, date and time that will be most suitable, and the materials and resources required.

Date and time

Avoid clashes with other events including what is happening in your organisation, cultural/religious days, school holidays and so on. Consider planning an event around dates in the [mental health calendar](#), like Time to Talk Day in February.⁴

If you are thinking of running an event in worktime, think about the time and weekday that would work best for the majority of your colleagues and how long they may be able to stay for. It may be that you want to run a drop-in event over a longer period of time so people can pop along when they are free.

Venue

The location of your event is key to getting people's attention. Sometimes the best way to engage people in a conversation about mental health is when they are least expecting it – think about where and how you could make this happen. If you are running an informal event like a tea and cake drop-in, think about places your colleagues may be passing through anyway, like a mess or lunch room or outside space where people take a break.

You want people to feel comfortable in the venue and for no one to feel forced to participate. Wherever you choose to hold your event, make sure you get any permissions required by your organisation and that your venue is wheelchair accessible, easy to get to and suitable for what you have planned.

Top tip

Try to find a venue that has a quiet place in case anyone wants to speak to you privately or becomes overwhelmed on the day.

Materials and resources

You will need materials for your event like information booklets, which can be ordered [here](#), and posters that can be downloaded [here](#), and other resources like refreshments. It's no secret that people like free things and such items can really help catch their attention.

Ask your organisation if they'll provide a small budget for your event so you can buy snacks, drinks or other freebies.



Image: West Midlands Police

Top tip

It might be hard for everyone who is interested to attend your event, so think about whether you could film parts of it, for example, the main speaker. Or write a summary of how the event went and ask for it to be featured on your staff intranet or in a newsletter.

4. The Time to Change campaign challenges mental health stigma and discrimination by getting people talking about mental health. <https://timetotalkday.co.uk/about>

Top tip

Remember that you don't always need money to get hold of resources. Think about what you can access for free. For example, your training department may have branded items such as mugs that you can give away and use as conversation starters with attendees.

Promote your event

There are lots of ways to tell people about your event and what you are up to. Here are just a few ideas:

- Staff intranet
- Flyers and posters – putting them up on staff notice boards or in communal areas
- Word of mouth – simply tell people and ask them to tell others
- Ask for it to be advertised in any staff magazines or newsletters
- Social media (e.g. ask for it to be promoted through your organisation's twitter account)

Volunteers

Planning and delivering an event on your own can seem overwhelming. You might want to look for like-minded colleagues to support running the event with you. As part of a group you can all bring time and resources, and help each other come up with ideas. Try to involve people with personal experience of mental health problems from the beginning in planning and participating in the event.

Or you could also see if you could team up with your local NHS trust, associations and support groups within your service or other voluntary sector organisations, such as your local Mind.

Budget

Whether you're planning an event to engage 20 colleagues or aiming to reach hundreds, it's a good idea to plan your budget before you start.

Take time to work out in advance:

- How much is available
- What you can afford with the amount that you have
- Whether you can get any support in kind (people donating time or materials rather than money)

Make sure you're clear about health and safety

If you are the event organiser, make sure you are clear on your health and safety responsibilities prior to the event.

Accessibility

Be as inclusive as possible. Remember, accessibility is not just about making sure people with disabilities can come to your event. You might also want to consider things like dietary needs (if you are serving food), providing support for people with mental health problems, learning difficulties, and accommodating different languages and special or other requirements, for example do you need a British Sign Language interpreter?

Top tips

When you are putting together written materials for your event, use white/off white/cream paper, a font size of Arial 14 or more, with the text aligned to the left, and avoid writing things in bold. Avoid printing text over photographs and using background washes etc. All this helps you be more inclusive.

To be truly accessible, invite people to contact you with their access needs so you can make sure you meet these on the day.

Raising awareness with new recruits: Ed's story

I've been a police officer for 15 years, and I've been talking to people at work about mental illness since 2012. Usually it's on a one-to-one basis, when it's appropriate. I don't go round saying 'Hi I'm Ed, I've got depression' – it will just come up in conversation. It's surprising how often that happens.

As I became more confident, that developed, and since February I've been giving talks about mental health to new recruits. The best place to catch people is when they join the service, at training school. So when we've recruited either volunteers or regular officers I will go and spend 15 or 20 minutes giving them a short talk on my experiences and a bit of a heads-up.

“They know there are people in the force they can talk to and it shouldn't be hidden.”

It's a good way to capture a group of people. When they are first coming into the service, it's just to give them some awareness before they start work. Because the first job they go to could be the one that affects them.

In our job people do get physically injured sometimes and it will be common knowledge within a few hours. But when people get injured through a mental health problem, like I did, it's different.

“I've not met anyone yet who has had no experience of dealing with someone with a mental health problem. Not one person.”



In the end my illness destroyed me, and it wasn't common knowledge – so the support wasn't there. You wouldn't train a cop and say: 'Go out there for six months and then when you come back we'll give you body armour and teach you how to use handcuffs.' This needs to be part of their training. It comes down to personal safety.

I don't over-egg the talks I give. I tell the recruits this is the way I am, this is where I've come from, and hopefully you can learn from that. It's not to scare them; it's just to say that they are going to see things that don't sit well with them, and that instead of letting it bubble away they should talk to someone about it.

My colleagues have always been very supportive. They tell me I should be proud of what I'm doing because it's something that needs to be done.

“They are going to see things that don't sit well with them, and that instead of letting it bubble away they should talk to someone about it.”

The recruits have told me it's been really useful. They've said it's been fantastic to have a serving police officer, a sergeant, to come and talk openly about it. It makes them feel a bit easier to know it's OK to talk about it, and should they ever find themselves in a situation they are not comfortable with they know there are people in the force they can talk to and it shouldn't be hidden. Because when it's hidden it festers.

And there are always questions from the recruits: what should I do if I'm worried about someone? How can I spot the warning signs? So they are obviously processing it. Or they'll explain about their own experiences. I've not met anyone yet who has had no experience of dealing with someone with a mental health problem. Not one person. It's just not spoken about.

It just takes people like me to stick their heads above the parapet. Once that's done I think people will see that nothing bad comes of talking about it. And that it's safer, to be honest – it's better for your health.

Depression took away my purpose within the police. I couldn't do what I used to do and I felt useless. Doing this has given me a new purpose. It's helping me have a reason to be a police officer again.



Peer Networks

Be a point of contact – set up a peer network

Peer support means people supporting each other on an equal basis, to offer something based on shared experiences. It can happen in all sorts of places, informally and formally, in one-to-one settings and in groups.

A network of peers who can signpost to mental health support and wellbeing resources, and be an additional point of contact for staff and volunteers who might need to talk, can be a welcome source of support.

Peer support offers many benefits, for example: shared identity and acceptance, increased self-confidence, the value of helping others, developing and sharing skills, improved mental health, emotional resilience and wellbeing, information and signposting, challenging stigma and discrimination.

“Sometimes just having someone to talk to who has been through that, and who can appreciate the signs and symptoms and early warning signs of depression and mental illness, can be a huge help.”

David, Ambulance Service

Mentoring and buddy schemes can help new staff and volunteers to understand your service faster and can support all staff to gain confidence and develop new skills. We know of organisations who have:

- Established a confidential peer support network through their disability support group and health and wellbeing forums which operates as a directory of people with personal experience of mental and physical health conditions.
- Established a career mentoring scheme whereby staff with personal experience of a mental health problem mentor other members of staff who also have personal experience of mental health problems.
- Developed a Wellbeing Network for staff with and without personal experience of mental health

problems who provide signposting support to colleagues, organise events and help keep mental health on the agenda in the workplace.

“I am starting my own charity, called Siren, for front-line personnel. I want to help staff who are off with depression and anxiety to be able to talk about it. I wanted to create somewhere where these people can have a voice.”

David, Ambulance Service

Supporting each other and sharing good practice – Champion networks

Networking with other Blue Light Champions across England and locally can help you:

- Share experiences, ideas and challenges
- Find ways to work together and share resources
- Discuss difficult situations in a confidential and supportive environment
- Support your personal and career development

Ways to network

- Attend one of our regional Speaking Up workshops – take the opportunity to meet other Blue Light Champions and exchange ideas.
- Contact your local Mind or other organisations focused on mental health locally to see how you can work together.
- Seek out events internally and externally to your service where mental health is a focus – this is a great way to meet people and promote what you are doing.



Section 3: Getting everyone involved

Getting organisational buy-in

How to gain support from your organisation, including senior management and your line manager

Getting people engaged with the Blue Light Programme is about helping them see the need and value in promoting positive mental health and challenging stigma within the workplace. We have prepared some tips and guidance on how you can do this.

The key will be in showing people your drive and passion to raise awareness of mental health problems and highlighting what your service can gain. Understanding your audience is a vital first step towards gaining their support.

You may be looking to get support from your line manager, Human Resources department, Equality and diversity lead, senior leaders within your service or colleagues more broadly.

Whoever you are trying to engage, think about:

- **Your service:** every organisation works slightly differently and you are in the best position to understand the environment where you work or volunteer. In some organisations senior managers are very visible and happy to have informal chats with their staff, while in others there are more formal routes of communicating with senior staff, for example via staff forums.
- **What's in it for the individual:** put yourself in their shoes and think about what's in it for them. It might help to consider their priorities in the service and current understanding of mental health and mental health awareness within the organisation. That way you can build on this and tailor your approach. For example, if you are seeking support from a member of your occupational health team you may want to focus on how you can help promote the use of their services and foster good links between them and staff or volunteers, whereas with your line manager you may wish to highlight the benefit to your immediate team.
- **What is the best way to communicate:** think about the best way to communicate with the individual you are trying to reach, taking into consideration their preferences and availability. This may be via email, phone, one to one meeting or presenting to a group. It may be that you have to try all of them and more. Identify opportunities that you can capitalise on to get your message across such as staff meetings or questions and answer events.
- **What's in it for your organisation:** think about how supporting the Blue Light Programme can benefit your organisation and what they have to gain. We have prepared some **potential benefits** to get you thinking. You may also want to consider ways the Blue Light Programme can link with or build on current initiatives within your organisation, such as mental health awareness training.
- **The language you use:** it is important to speak in a way that will resonate with your audience, mirroring their language if appropriate. Remember that some of the phrases we use in the Blue Light Programme, such as personal experience of mental health problems, may not be widely understood and so you may need to explain them.
- **Time constraints:** be mindful of the individual's time constraints and foster a relationship built on mutual respect. Keep it focused for example you could prepare three key benefits to your organisation of getting involved in the Blue Light Programme and one thing you would like the individual to do to support it.
- **Don't be disheartened:** you may not be able to engage, or even speak to the first person you approach and they may ask you to talk to someone else. Keep trying, bear in mind any feedback you get and follow all the leads you are given. It can take time to find the right person to drive organisational support. And remember, you can still participate in activities to challenge mental health stigma in the meantime.



Do your homework

You may have a short time to keep your audience's attention so consider:

- **Who is the best person to speak to?:** think about what support you are asking for and who is most likely to be able to give you this.
- **Find out if mental health is already on their agenda:** look into whether the wellbeing of staff and volunteers or mental health awareness is a strategic priority. If it is, your activity may be able to contribute to achieving objectives that your service has already set for itself, and you'll have extra bargaining power for your ask.
- **Prepare:** think about how you can make your interaction engaging and powerful. For example, if you have your own personal experience of a mental health problem you could share your story, to bring to life why support is so important. Have a clear message prepared: you are much more likely to get support if you go with a specific request, for example asking to speak at an upcoming event or for your communications team to promote the Blue Light Infoline.
- **Be creative:** think about how you can make your request stand out from the rest. An idea like having a depressed cake sale⁵ could really get a discussion going.
- **Your business case:** use the evidence base to get buy-in. You could include:
 - **A summary** of why raising awareness and challenging stigma around mental health is vital to your service.
 - **Some of the key findings** of the Blue Light Programme research. Having an evidence base to show the potential benefits of what you want to do can help persuade people.
 - **Options** of activities that you and your employer can take, and what you expect the effects to be. Presenting a few options helps your audience feel part of the decision process and increases the likelihood that one of them will be a good fit.
- **Good practice:** include information about what other services have done and are doing. You can find out what some other employers have done in the Blue Light Time to Change pledge **toolkit**.
- **Prepare in advance for how you'll respond to any potential questions your audience may have and what further information you may be asked to provide:** this way you are more likely to get agreement whilst you have your audience's attention and you'll feel more prepared and confident.

5. A depressed bake sale is a new, innovative idea for raising awareness of mental health problems. Cakes and biscuits are iced grey on the outside, but are typically brightly coloured on the inside to illustrate the hope of recovery. A great conversation starter. For more info google 'depressed cake shop'.



Benefits to your organisation

There will be specific benefits to your service of the activity which you and they undertake. Here are some benefits of running anti stigma activities that you can add to.

When an organisation supports the Blue Light Programme:

- Staff and volunteers feel more able to speak openly about mental health and to seek support when they need it.
- There's greater mental health awareness within your service, which will better enable your staff and volunteers to look out for themselves, their team and members of the public.
- There's a better chance bigger problems can be prevented if staff and volunteers feel able to get support as soon as they need it.
- Staff and volunteers come forward with ideas and good practice of how their wellbeing can be better supported in the workplace.
- It demonstrates to staff and volunteers that the people in charge value them and care about their wellbeing.
- We've found that looking after wellbeing in workplaces can also have a positive effect on productivity and help to increase the effectiveness of staff.⁶

How could you follow up to see if the action you have taken has delivered these benefits?

Evaluate: you could:

- Count the number of people you spoke to at an event.
- Ask your communications team to tell you how many people viewed the Blue Light Programme information on your intranet.
- Ask participants to complete a feedback form after a presentation to see how useful they found it.
- Run an online survey to gauge levels of mental health awareness.
- Reflect on what you felt worked well, and perhaps didn't work so well to inform further activities.

6. gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/356637/bis-14-1120-does-worker-wellbeing-affect-workplace-performance-final.pdf



Blue Light Programme resources and opportunities

Opportunities for you to promote and get involved in

Click on the links for more or go to mind.org.uk/bluelight

Blue Light Time to Change pledge

Signing the Blue Light Time to Change pledge is an aspirational statement with meaning. This public statement will show the commitment your service has made, in its role as an employer, or voluntary group, to work to change the way everyone in your service thinks and acts about mental health in the workplace and to keep staff well at work.

Pledging involves developing and delivering an action plan detailing the tangible activities your service will undertake to challenge mental health stigma and promote positive mental health for your staff and volunteers. In signing the pledge your organisation will be joining a growing movement of 450+ employers across sectors throughout England who are working to challenge mental health stigma and helping to keep staff well for work.

You can find out if your service has signed the Blue Light Time to Change pledge by checking on our [website](https://mind.org.uk/bluelight) or speaking to senior staff or your Human Resources department.

If your organisation has already pledged, that's great news! Why not:

- Find out who is leading on your service's action plan?
- Think about how your role as a Blue Light Champion could link in and support delivery?

If your organisation hasn't signed the pledge, you could find out from your HR or Equality and Diversity leads whether they are aware of the programme. If your service is new to the pledge, take a look at the [getting organisational buy in section](#) to help you think about how to promote the benefits of engaging in anti-stigma activity.



Blue Light Mental Health Networks

Currently in 2016/17 we are piloting four Blue Light Mental Health Networks bringing together the learning we have gained across the four key programme areas (improving workplace wellbeing, building resilience, providing information and challenging stigma) to enable emergency service organisations within each selected area to collaborate and work together on applying our three-pronged approach to workplace wellbeing across their organisations.

Led by a local Mind, each network has investment available to support a programme of activity, designed to collectively improve access to mental health information and support for all employees across emergency services in that area. To ensure join-up with wider community mental health support, the networks will have a dedicated coordinator, based within a local Mind to facilitate cross-sector partnership activity.

Resilience Training

Alongside The University of Oxford we have redeveloped our resilience course, which we are piloting in our network areas between October 2016 and March 2017 to make sure we have it right. The course will cover topics such as stress, work-life balance and difficult emotions like anger and loss. If you are in one of the network areas and would like to apply to be part of the pilot, please visit our [website](#) and click the sign up now button.

From Summer 2017 onwards we will be offering the course more widely, so that more Blue Light personnel can have access. If you are not in one of the pilot network areas, please keep your eyes open for communication from us when the course launches widely.

If you have any questions or want more information please email bluelight@mind.org.

Managing mental health in the emergency services (MMHES) training course

Our independent research has shown that 9 out of 10 members of the emergency services have experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health at some point whilst at work. We've also learnt that there is a need to actively build trust between staff and senior managers in the emergency services when it comes to talking about mental health. This is why the Blue Light Programme includes a training course specifically for managers, team-leaders or those with a pastoral role in the emergency services to help them manage mental health matters.

More than 5,000 participants attended the course during the pilot stage of the Blue Light Programme. We have developed a new version of the course based on findings from the pilot stage. The re-developed course has been named "Managing mental health in the emergency services". We have a version for each of the blue light services we work with: ambulance, fire, police, search and rescue. It is still a half-day course which includes a balance of trainer-led presentation and opportunities for interaction and discussion.

Further information about the content of the course, the objectives and an example programme can be found [here](#). As in the pilot stage, the course is delivered in partnership with selected local Minds who have experienced trainers to deliver the course at a suitable venue arranged by the emergency service organisation.

If you would like someone to contact you about this training course, or if you have any questions or comments, please get in touch by emailing bluelight@mind.org.uk.

Here's our full list of resources you can use as a Blue Light Champion

Print and other materials

Blue Light information

We have created information to support staff and volunteers from the emergency services with their mental health. This is available for you to **view on the Blue Light Together website**.

Downloads

Use online

Show your support for the Blue Light Programme by using our email banners and badges. They are available for use on emails and in-house documents.

Blue Light films

Reggie, Mo and some of their colleagues working across the UK emergency services share their experiences of mental health problems in these **short films**.

You can show these films at events, training sessions or ask for the links to be added to your intranet page so that staff can view the films in their own time.

Mind resources

You can find information on a specific mental health condition, treatment options or practical issues by looking at our **A-Z of Mental Health**.





Webinars

The aim of our series of webinars is to raise awareness of mental health across the emergency services, share tips and guidance with staff and volunteers on how to look after their mental wellbeing at work, and that of their colleagues. They are available [here](#).

Sharing information

You can let your colleagues know about the Blue Light Programme, looking after their wellbeing and our confidential Blue Light Infoline with our posters, postcards, business cards, printed booklets on mental wellbeing and more.

Check out our [online resources](#) such as email banners.

There are lots of ways you can use the pack and online resources to promote better mental health where you work or volunteer. You could:

- Leave some booklets in a communal area for colleagues to look at.
- Use our [email banners](#) to promote the Blue Light Infoline or show your support for the Blue Light Programme.

- Ask for the Blue Light Programme's activities and resources to be promoted on your staff intranet pages.
- Get your Human Resources department to send one booklet to every member of staff or add them to packs for new recruits.
- Give our booklets out to your team, maybe using them as a conversation starter.
- Put our posters up in your workplace.
- Use our materials at your events.

Ready to use our materials to reach your colleagues?

Try thinking about:

- Who you're trying to reach
- Which materials your colleagues are most likely to find relevant or useful
- If you are using the materials as a conversation starter, whether you feel ready to talk about mental health
- How comfortable your colleagues might feel taking materials in front of others

Frequently asked questions

Who can become a Blue Light Champion?

If you are currently employed by, or volunteer with any of the four emergency services, and you want to positively and constructively challenge mental health stigma, we'd love you to become a Blue Light Champion. For more information please take a look at the [Blue Light Champion role description](#).

Do I need to have personal experience of a mental health problem to become a Blue Light Champion?

No. We welcome individuals with and without personal experience of mental health problems to become Blue Light Champions. What counts is that you are passionate about challenging mental health stigma and promoting wellbeing at work.

I have personal experience of mental health problems but do not want to share this at work. Can I still become a Blue Light Champion?

Of course. If you have personal experience of mental health problems and decide that you would like to become a Blue Light Champion, it is completely up to you whether you choose to share your story as part of becoming active in challenging mental health stigma. We understand this is a very personal decision and is by no means required in order to become a Blue Light Champion.

What is the time commitment?

We want the Blue Light Champion opportunity to be as accessible and flexible as possible 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 want to discuss with your line manager the possibility of them allowing work time to undertake activities as a Blue Light Champion, although this may not be possible or necessary.

Is there a limit to how many Blue Light Champions a service can have?

There are no limits on how many Blue Light Champions an organisation, department or team may have. The more Blue Light Champions in your service the more you can achieve together.

How can I learn to speak up about my mental health experience in a safe environment?

As a Champion, you will have the opportunity to attend a workshop on Speaking Up, supporting you to talk about your experiences to other people. If you have your own personal experience of mental health problems you may wish to speak about this to an audience of your colleagues. If you don't have personal experience of mental health problems, you could find opportunities to talk to colleagues about the importance of challenging mental health stigma and promoting wellbeing. We are holding Speaking Up workshops for Blue Light Champions in a number of locations across England. If you are registered as a Champion we will keep you posted. If you are not yet registered you can do so [here](#).





My organisation has not signed the Blue Light Time to Change pledge. Can I still become a Blue Light Champion?

Yes. Your organisation does not need to have signed the pledge for you to register as a Blue Light Champion, although you may want to use your role to encourage them to do so.

Still got questions?

Just get in touch at bluelight@mind.org.uk.

Glossary

Terms used in this toolkit

Discrimination

When someone dislikes, or is prejudiced against, a certain group of people and treats people from this group unfairly. People can face discrimination because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion / beliefs, or because they have a mental health problem.

Stigma

When a person, group or condition has very negative or bad associations attached to it. There is a powerful stigma attached to mental health problems, which causes people to discriminate against or stereotype people with mental health problems.

Stereotype

When someone has a generalised or simplified idea about what people from a particular group are like, leading them to believe that people from this group are all the same. More often than not, stereotypes are negative. So when someone says all people with mental health problems are violent, this is an example of negative stereotyping. In reality people with a mental illness are more likely to be a victim of violence themselves.⁷

Resilience

The capacity to adapt and cope in the face of challenging circumstances, such as having a baby, being socially isolated or dealing with stressful workplace situations, whilst maintaining a stable mental wellbeing. Resilience can be taught and learned.

Webinar

A short informative film that can be accessed via the internet.

Wellbeing

Mental wellbeing describes your mental state – how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. Our mental wellbeing can change, from day to day, month to month or year to year. The World Health Organisation states: “Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.⁸



Image: Metropolitan Police

7. who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

Appendix I

Blue Light Programme - our year one report and 10 actions

The Blue Light Programme was designed to support the people who serve in our police, search and rescue (SAR), fire and ambulance services in England.

As a pilot programme, we closely evaluated our work over the first year from March 2015 to March 2016 and the key findings are now available to share in this report.

It shows that thousands of staff and volunteers across services have actively challenged mental health stigma, learnt more about mental health, and have improved their wellbeing with the support of the Blue Light Programme.

But the report also shows that after just one year many people and organisations are only at the start of their journey. There are still high levels of stigma within many organisations and low levels of awareness of the mental health support and information available amongst those who are not closely involved in the programme. Take a look [here](#).



Appendix 2

Some of our research findings

Use these key statistics about mental health problems and the emergency services to help challenge the stigma many people still face.

Mind ran an online survey in late 2014 to help better understand experiences of mental health problems within the emergency services. Approximately 1.5% of all emergency services staff and volunteers (3,627 people) responded. The results show staff and volunteers:

- Have almost certainly experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health at some point while working for the emergency services (almost nine out of ten said this was true for them).
- Were more likely to have experienced mental health problems at some point than the general workforce, when compared with findings from the CIPD's (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) Focus on mental health in the Workplace survey.
- Report better mental health and are less likely to take time off work if they are volunteers.
- Think colleagues would be more comfortable talking about physical health than mental health (eight out of ten said they believed this).
- Tend to give long periods of service, meaning they can experience extended exposure to high levels of stress and trauma over time, which can have profound effects on their mental health.
- Are more likely to turn to family and friends for support than using other coping methods. Two thirds said this.
- Have a high level of interest in more information about mental health.
- Work hard to prevent their mental health problems affecting their performance, but say that this can come at a large personal cost.
- Are not generally aware of the mental health support their organisation offers – only half were aware of this.
- (44%) Sometimes think colleagues would be treated differently, in a negative way, if they disclosed a mental health problem at work.
- Can experience symptoms of stress and anxiety such as loss of sleep, loss of appetite and anger but can be reluctant to seek support.
- Are just as likely to seek help from a colleague as from their GP.



Appendix 3

Signposting templates: click [here](#) for editable Word versions

Blue Light Together bluelighttogether.org.uk	The place for UK emergency services staff, volunteers, retirees and friends and family to find information, ideas and support to help look after your mental health.
Be Mindful bemindful.co.uk	Information, and details of local mindfulness courses and therapists.
Bereavement Advice Centre 0800 634 9494 bereavementadvice.org	Support for people who have been bereaved.
Blue Lamp Foundation 0871 2345 999 bluelampfoundation.org	Financial aid to emergency service workers injured in the course of duty.
British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP): 0161 705 4304 babcp.com	Lists accredited therapists.
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP): 01455 883 300 itsgoodtotalk.org.uk	Practitioners in your area.
Citizens Advice 03444 111 444 (England); 0344 477 2020 (Wales) citizensadvice.org.uk	Confidential advice on a range of issues.
Cruse Bereavement Care 0844 477 9400 (national helpline) helpline@cruse.org.uk cruse.org.uk	Bereavement charity offering online, telephone and face-to-face support.
Direct.gov.uk direct.gov.uk/en/employment	Information about employment rights and services, and career advice.
Samaritans Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK Chris, PO Box 90 90, Stirling, FK8 2SA 24-hour helpline: 08457 90 90 90 jo@samaritans.org samaritans.org	Emotional support for anyone in distress.
United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) 020 7014 9955 psychotherapy.org.uk	List of registered practitioners
Side by Side sidebyside.mind.org.uk	A supportive online community where you can be yourself. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard.

Ambulance

LINC 020 7921 5200 (available 24 hours) lasunison.com/linc	A peer support network for the London Ambulance Service, promoting physical, psychological and emotional well-being of any member of staff.
The Ambulance Services Charity (TASC) 0800 1032999 (support line) theasc.org.uk	Provides support to current and retired ambulance services personnel, their families and dependents.

Fire Service

Togetherall togetherall.com	Online community and forum overseen by trained advisers.
The Fire Fighters Charity 0800 389 8820 info@firefighterscharity.org.uk firefighterscharity.org.uk	The Fire Fighters Charity provides services that enhance quality of life for serving and retired firefighters, fire personnel and their families.
Women in the Fire Service UK 01355 381 237 wfs.org.uk	Voluntary organisation aimed at supporting women in the fire service and promoting gender equality.

Police

Disabled Police Association disabledpolice.info	Promotes equality of opportunity for disabled people working within the extended police family.
Flint House Police Rehabilitation Centre 01491 874499 flinthouse.co.uk	Provides individually planned, intensive, rehabilitation services for sick and injured, serving and retired police officers.
National Association of Muslim Police muslim.police.uk	National organisation that aims to support Muslim officers and staff.
Police Treatment Centres enquiries@thepolicetreatmentcentres.org thepolicetreatmentcentres.org	Treatment centres where serving and retired police officers can receive rest, recuperation and treatment following an illness or injury.
SafeHORIZON UK	Support and advocacy services for police officers and their families affected by psychological injury, stress and mental ill health.

Appendix 4

Mental Health Calendar

These are a number of dates in the mental health calendar when you could plan activities for your staff, to raise awareness of mental health, encourage conversations about wellbeing, and ramp up internal communications.

Key dates

Time to Talk Day - February

The Time to Change campaign challenging mental health stigma and discrimination by getting people talking about mental health. This event has a key 'ask' every year which you can plan activity around. Time to Talk Day is normally the first Thursday in February.

timetotalkday.co.uk/about

Aside from these key dates there are plenty of other opportunities throughout the year around which you can plan targeted activity. Here are just a few:

February

OCD Week: Raising awareness of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

OCD Action

ocdaction.org.uk/

World Mental Health Day - 10 October

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year. The overall objective is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilise efforts in support of mental health. It is promoted by the World Health Organisation.

who.int/mental_health/world-mental-health-day/en/

March

World Bipolar Day

The purpose of the day is to raising awareness of bipolar disorders and to improve sensitivity towards the illness. It is promoted by the International Bipolar Foundation and partners.

ibpf.org/blog/world-bipolar-day

May

Mental Health Awareness Week

Raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing every year, promoted by the Mental Health Foundation. For more information and future dates, go to:

mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week

June

Men's Health Week

A focus on healthy living for men normally held in June.

menshealthforum.org.uk/mhw

September

World Suicide Prevention Day

Organised by the International Association for Suicide Prevention and the World Health Organisation, the purpose of the day is to promote worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides.

iasp.info/wspd/index.php

October

OCD Awareness Week: normally in October each year.

A week dedicated to raising awareness of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, promoted by OCD-UK.

ocduk.org

November

National Stress Awareness Day

Normally held on the first Wednesday of November each year, this day is promoted by the International Stress Management Association (ISMAUK). The purpose of the day is to raise awareness of the effects of psychological distress in the workplace and of the many coping strategies and sources of help available to address it. For more information go to: isma.org.uk





We're Mind, the mental health charity.

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.

mind.org.uk/BlueLight

bluelight@mind.org.uk

 @MindCharity
 Mind

We're a registered charity in England (no. 219830)

Funding administered by



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