

**SUBJECT: BLUE LIGHT TOGETHER - MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

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**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief members on the launch of Blue Light Together – a new national hub for mental health support in the Emergency Services.

**2 BLUE LIGHT TOGETHER**

- 2.1 MIND, together with the Firefighters Charity, the National Fire Chief Council and other bodies from across police and ambulance services, have come together to create Blue Light Together – a new national hub for mental health support in the Emergency Services (<https://bluelighttogether.org.uk/>).
- 2.2 The national launch took place on 25 November 2021, hosted by The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and attended by national figures including the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.
- 2.3 Blue Light Together does not replace the well-established sources of mental health support here at TWFRS, however it is designed for people working and volunteering in emergency services, retirees and their friends and family, so that they can find the right kind of support for their mental health.
- 2.4 The website provides specialised information and advice to help emergency responders with mental health, real life stories and tips from colleagues working in the field, and guides for employers so that they can support their teams with their wellbeing.
- 2.5 As part of the launch, senior leaders representing the national bodies across the UK emergency services (including the National Fire Chiefs Council) have signed the Mental Health at Work Commitment on behalf of emergency services across the UK. This is an unprecedented agreement, declaring that mental health is, and will remain, a strategic priority for all UK emergency services, and means that for the first time, a uniform set of standards for supporting the mental health of their emergency responder staff will be adopted and integrated into their workplaces.

2.6 The Commitment includes six standards against which signatory organisations can assess their progress:

- Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity.
- Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes.
- Promote an open culture around mental health.
- Increase organisational confidence and capability.
- Provide mental health tools and support.
- Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.

2.7 TWFRS intends to sign the Mental Health Commitment and we will be assessing our current performance against the set of standards over the coming months. There is significant overlap between the six standards and other accreditations.

### **3 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AT TWFRS**

3.1 Over the last 4 years TWFRS has evolved its approach to supporting mental health and this has been recognised in a variety of ways including through the achievement of the Better Health at Work Award at Gold level. Aligned with this award the service developed a dedicated Mental Wellbeing policy.

3.2 To provide further support for employee mental health and wellbeing, TWFRS have also introduced Mental Health First Aider training and to date 56 employees have completed this training. The training is delivered by MHFA England approved trainers within our staff.

3.3 We have also introduced the role of Family Support Officers. These are trained managers who will provide support, guidance and liaison between the family and the Service in cases of serious injury or death of a serving member of staff.

3.4 Existing sources of mental health support and signposting include, but are not limited to, Occupational Health, HR, independent counselling, Trauma Support, Mental Health First Aid, staff network groups, FBU / UNISON / GMB, etc.

### **4 CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

4.1 Signposting to specialist mental wellbeing support services is available to employees and has always been well received. The role of the service's dedicated mental health awareness training (delivered jointly between OH and the FBU) has been maintained and adapted during the pandemic. This initiative has proved invaluable in supporting employees for whom isolating during lockdown was especially difficult or those who have simply struggled to come to terms with living through a pandemic.

## **5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

- 5.1 A review of OH service provision is commencing in 2022 and this will include any mental wellbeing support and services. This review should encompass and embed the principles of the Blue Light Together Mental Wellbeing Commitment.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from the content of this report. However, supporting the direction of travel in relation to Mental Health can help to mitigate risk for example in relation to employee turnover, improve employee wellbeing and reducing the risks of unplanned absence.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any costs associated with investments in resources will be considered at the appropriate time and using the appropriate Authority procedures.

## **8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as the various work and projects required to support our direction of travel commence.

## **9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 Members are recommended to:
- a) Note the content within the report
  - b) Receive further reports / updates as appropriate.

