

Part of the Mind Blue Light programme

The Blue Light Time to Change pledge action plan

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About the pledge

To drive long term change, we are working with Police, Fire and Rescue, Search and Rescue and Ambulance services in their capacity as employers to tackle mental health stigma in their workplace. We invite services to make the pledge and detail the tangible action they will take in the form below.

By pledging, you will be aligning your service with a major national movement for change. Importantly, it shows that this aspirational commitment to be active in tackling mental health stigma and discrimination in your workplace has support from the top - helping to inspire the culture of your organisation.

Please save this action plan document to file and upload here <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/bluelightpledge> when ready to submit.

We ask that you submit your plan a minimum of four weeks before the preferred date of your pledge signing to allow us time to feedback on your plan and send you a Blue Light Time to Change pledge board to sign.

When you upload your plan online you will need the following information:

- a completed action plan (table below)
- the date and time of your signing
- know the person who will be signing on behalf of your organisation
- where the signing will be taking place

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Your pledge action plan

The pledge you are taking is not a measure of attainment or success; instead, it's an aspiration. It's a statement of your organisation's intent to work towards improvement and therefore we want to know what you are aiming to do to, to support these aspirations.

Why do we want an action plan?

While neither a quality mark nor endorsement, for a pledge to have real value, it should lead to some practical action. Your action plan will not be shared with anyone outside of the Blue Light Programme, or Time to Change, but we need to see that you are serious about being active in tackling mental health stigma to ensure the Blue Light Time to Change organisational pledge maintains its value.

Meeting the action plan criteria

We have developed a set of essential criteria to help guide you in the development of your action plan. This criteria has been developed from our learning working with 325 organisations, across sectors, who signed up to the Time to Change organisational pledge between 2011/14. Our [pledge toolkit](#) has been designed to support you in completing your plan and gives examples of how each essential criteria may be met. Please ensure you download and have this to hand when you are discussing and completing your form.

However, please don't be limited by our criteria. We encourage you to get creative and create a plan that is manageable within your capacity and resources, but that is ambitious and sustainable. So please feel free to add additional activity above and beyond our essential criteria. We strongly encourage you to think about how you will sustain the momentum and weave activity into long term strategies relevant to wellbeing.

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Essential criteria

Core Statement

Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing

Why we need to do something

Developed by the Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing Group
July 2015

Our staff are our greatest asset and we recognise, promote, encourage and support mental health and wellbeing for all.

We envisage a future workplace where people feel safe, supported, respected and valued. People will feel more confident in talking about their mental health and wellbeing and feel able to take action when they are not well. People will want to be at work and feel they are working in a vibrant environment. This will be evident from hearing people engaging with each other and talking freely about their work, choosing face-to-face communication. People will be happier - smiling and relaxed. The personal and organisational cost of stress and other illnesses will be reduced.

Our organisation provides a prevention, protection and response Service to the public of Essex, Southend and Thurrock. We have a formal organisation structure and policies and procedures which govern how employees work. In the face of this structure, the business and political reality means that change is inevitable and this uncertainty is affecting people's morale. Employees do not always feel valued or supported at work; managers are not equipped to manage mental health and wellbeing in their team and management practice is variable. Moreover, people worry about the stigma of discussing their own mental wellbeing at work.

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Historically we have provided a response service for employees affected by mental ill health: they have been referred to medical services after they have fallen ill. We are aiming to build our prevention and protection strategies to improve wellbeing for all.

This intention fits with our Service values of openness, accountability, respect and involvement. It builds on earlier work by the Wellbeing Group and will form part of the Wellbeing strategy later this year. At face value the message that 'our staff are our greatest asset' appears at odds with the plans to reduce the workforce over the next five years. However, this reduction will only increase the need for offering support and encouragement to maintain mental wellbeing.

There are two main resource streams at our disposal. Firstly, the commitment and enthusiasm of staff to drive forward improvements by fitting in project work around their jobs. Secondly, there are skills and expertise within the Service, particularly in Occupational Health, which will provide a solid foundation for improvements. Managers at all levels lack skills in supporting team members consistently and signposting employees to services.

We are not alone in considering these challenges. Mind, the mental health charity, has launched a Blue Light programme to support the mental health of emergency services staff across England. We will ask the Fire Authority to sign up to this scheme as a mechanism for developing an action plan and gaining support and resources from Blue Light partners.

Criteria	Your activity (how will you meet each criterion). Please refer to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge toolkit for examples	Timescale	Internal lead (include contact details)	Performance indicator
1) Top level senior buy in	Secure support from Essex Fire Authority for the core statement on employee mental health and wellbeing and for signing the Pledge linked to the action plan	September 2015	Director of HR and OD l.stafford-scott@essex-fire.gov.uk	Report is approved

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	Work with Strategic Management Board and Strategic Delivery Board to embed the ethos of the core statement and action plan into day to day business of the Service	September to December 2015	Director of HR and OD l.stafford-scott@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence that employee mental health and wellbeing is incorporated into Service Business Plans.
2) Internal communications campaign	Disseminate the core statement and action plan through intranet, briefings and meetings. Coordinate public signing of the pledge.	November 2015	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence of messages and public signing.
	Develop Blue Light Champions who can challenge stigma and increase understanding of mental health in the emergency services. Develop a package of support and information for them to use and pilot it at a station. Build on the progress achieved to date by the Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing Group.	September 2015 – March 2016	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	Existence of a network of Champions
	Learn from partners across the sector through attending Blue Light Peer Learning Network events and visits to other services.	September 2015 and ongoing	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	Examples of good practices which have been shared and brought in to the Service

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	Continue to meet as the Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing group to provide a forum for discussing ideas, developing initiatives and maintaining dialogue across the service	September 2015 and ongoing	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence of dialogue and developments
3) Review policy and processes that impact on mental health and wellbeing	Review the Trauma Policy to ensure it meets the needs of staff who are involved in critical incidents. Issue interim guidance to ensure all employees understand the support and facilities currently in place Deliver face to face or on-line policy briefings	September to December 2015	Health and Safety Manager Danny.bruin@essex-fire.gov.uk	Guidance and policy are issued Feedback from employees that they understand the process.
	Develop the existing Stress Risk Assessments into an Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy which takes a proactive stance on building and maintaining resilience and positive mental health whilst also giving guidance on dealing with illness once it has occurred.	December 2015 to March 2016	Occupational Health Manager	Guidance and policy are issued Feedback from employees that they understand the process.

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	Deliver face to face or on-line policy briefings			
4) Create space for people with lived experience of mental health problems to share their stories	Support the Make Some Noise action plan to achieve an environment of trust, honesty, transparency, respect and confidentiality. Reassure people suffering from ill health regarding job security. Encourage people to speak openly about their health history so they may gain support and give confidence to others.	September 2015 and ongoing	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence of improvements in employee engagement scores resulting from the Make Some Noise action plan. Examples of people being open about their situation and experience.
5) Commit to activity on key dates in the mental health calendar e.g. World Mental Health Day, national Time to Talk Day	Disseminate information on World Mental Health Day and National Time to Talk Day	Ongoing	Head of HR Jenny.dines@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence of information being disseminated
	Set up events for these days to actively engage people in discussion and increasing understanding. Work with the Employee Mental health and Wellbeing Group.	Ongoing	Head of HR Jenny.dines@essex-fire.gov.uk	Evidence of taking place and positive feedback from employees.
6) Commit to sending one manager to the free Blue	Indicate your commitment by emailing bluelight@mind.org.uk	September 2015	Learning and Development Manager	At least one manager is signed

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Light Programme free half day face to face training for line managers / shift leaders.	requesting more information. You do not need to confirm who will attend the training at this stage. Requested information 7 August 2015.		Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	up for the half day training for managers/shift leaders
	Implement a Wellbeing and Resilience Training package for all employees	September 2015 – September 2016	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	All employees have a basic awareness of how to maintain positive mental health
	Offer access to the Level 3 Award in Mental Health Awareness to give employees with a particular interest in the subject a deeper knowledge and understanding.	September 2015 – September 2016	Learning and Development Manager Claire.budgen@essex-fire.gov.uk	A cross section of employees has deeper knowledge which they are sharing with colleagues.

Who will be signing the pledge on behalf of your organisation?	Preferred date of your pledge signing	Pledge signing occasion (for example, name of the event where you will sign e.g. all staff meeting)	Address to which you require your pledge board to be sent once your action plan has been approved
Chairman Cllr Anthony Hedley			Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Service Headquarters Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall, Witham, Essex, CM8 3HB

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Your pledge board

Please indicate whether you require

A board with space for one signatory from your service	
A board with space for up to three signatories from your service	

Communications

We would love to tweet about your signing on the day.

If you are happy for us to do so please tick below and provide your twitter handle

Please tweet about our signing on the day	
Twitter handle:	

Next steps

Have you...

- ✓ ...completed your action plan table above?

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- ✓ ...arranged a date for your signing that is at least 4 weeks away? If you do not have a signing date don't worry. Just submit your plan online and let us know as soon as you have confirmed a date. And please ensure you still give us 4 weeks' notice so that we may send your pledge board in good time.
- ✓ ...confirmed the name/s of who is signing the pledge on behalf of your organisation?
- ✓ ...arranged a location for the signing?

If the answer to all of the above is yes, please submit this information via the Time to Change website at <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/bluelightpledge>