



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	16 December 2015
OFFICER	Lynne Swift, Director of People & Organisational Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Roger Reed
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	The Blue Light Pledge
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Blue Light Pledge is an initiative run by Mind, the mental health charity, in partnership with the blue light services. This report describes the Blue Light Pledge, its relevance to the Authority and the benefits of becoming signatories to it.</p> <p>Mind, the mental health charity have reported that one in six workers are dealing with mental health problems at any one time, and therefore has a potentially significant impact on the presence and effectiveness of any workforce, including that of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA).</p> <p>The BMKFA Corporate Plan 2015-20 incorporates a strategic aim 'to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people'. A key measure of success arising from the successful implementation of this enabler is a reduction in sickness absence and a more productive workforce.</p> <p>The Blue Light Pledge is described as an 'aspirational statement with meaning'. Its primary objective is the removal of stigma surrounding mental health. In order to be eligible to sign the pledge a document must be submitted to Mind describing all of the measures, in place and proposed, that the applying body will undertake in order to tackle mental health issues in their workforce and thereby reduce the level of stigma surrounding this type of illness.</p> <p>BMKFA submitted its pledge document to Mind in September 2015. Our submission was considered to be very strong. This is extremely encouraging as our pledge document was based almost entirely on measures that the Authority already has in place (Appendix 1).</p>
ACTION	Decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that the Blue Light Pledge be endorsed for signature by the Chairman of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive.
RISK MANAGEMENT	The primary risk associated with not signing the Blue Light Pledge is that top level buy-in will not be clearly demonstrated and the subsequent cascading of this ethos throughout the Authority's staff and management will not be as well versed as they could be in addressing mental health issues within BMKFA.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	There are no direct costs attached to the production or signing of the Blue Light Pledge.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	There are no known legal implications arising.
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION	<p>BMKFA has hosted staff from Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service on the first Blue Light Resilience course that has been run in-house. Authority staff have also attended the same course hosted by Thames Valley Police.</p> <p>As collaboration increases across the Thames Valley and staff employed by our partner services fulfil vital functions on behalf of the Authority; future stages will include work with these partners to progress their own pledge.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	<p>The Authority will demonstrate its recognition that individuals with mental health issues may face more stigma and discrimination than those with physical health problems and this could potentially adversely influence the treatment of the individual within the workplace. The Authority can demonstrate that it is taking positive measures to redress this potential imbalance. The measures contained within the Blue Light Pledge will be accessible to all staff regardless of staff group.</p> <p>The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 describes any 'impairment of a person's physical or mental condition' as a 'personal injury'. The Authority's signing of the pledge would be a strong contribution to making the causing of such injuries less likely.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No adverse impacts have been identified. All measures contained within the pledge are available to all employees. Reasonable adjustments to be made as required to ensure fair access.
USE OF RESOURCES	Contribution to the achievement of strategic objectives: Signing up to the Blue Light Pledge would support the Authority in achieving its workforce strategy (2015-20 Corporate Plan, Strategic Enabler 1 – 'to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people') by using the pledge as a further opportunity

	<p>to promote mental wellbeing and reduce sickness absence occasioned by such illnesses.</p> <p>Communication with stakeholders: Stakeholder communication will be a significant element in the success of the Blue Light Pledge. Following Authority approval the signing of the pledge will be communicated to the Leadership Group and remainder of staff by normal channels.</p> <p>Communication with the public will be via the BMKFA external website and external outlets as advised by the Communications Officer.</p> <p>System of internal control: Regular reports will be provided to the Performance Management Board on the progress and effectiveness of the Blue Light Pledge and its measures in reducing levels of sickness absence caused by stress, anxiety and other mental health issues.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Background</p> <p>Work related stress, anxiety and depression statistics in Great Britain 2014/15</p> <p>http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/index.htm</p> <p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority 2015 – 20 Corporate Plan</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/5514/3315/2727/ITEM_1_4b_2015-20_Corporate_Plan_-_Covering_Exec_Paper_Appendix_1.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Summary of the BMKFA Blue Light Pledge Components.</p> <p>Appendix 2: The Blue Light Time to Change pledge action plan - Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>10 Minutes.</p>
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