

## **Well-Being Task and Finish Group**

### **Information Paper – Fire Authority**

**June 2018**

## 1. Background

A Mental Health Well-being Task and Finish group was originally established to look at measures to improve awareness of, and to remove the stigma associated with, mental health illness throughout the Service. In addition, it was to identify ways to improve the existing support networks available and introduce new ones to assist those affected.

The group is made up of a cross-section of people from different departments across the organisation including Employee Relations, Health and Safety, Personnel, Operations, representative bodies, mental health champions, and also Member participation.

Through working on a comparison of our current organisational status against the College of Policing Blue Light Well-being Framework (Oscar Kilo), it became apparent that our focus on mental health only, would not be appropriate as it is only a small part of overall employee well-being. It was felt that a holistic view of well-being should be the focus of the group. This resulted in the creation of a well-being strategy lifecycle which will sit under the embedded People Strategy and became a focus of the role of the group (*see Appendix 1*).

The framework recognises that the state of well-being is linked to both physical and mental health. How people perform when they feel good is at the heart of getting well-being right. Its overarching focus is creating a positive working environment in which the workforce can draw meaning and purpose from a highly challenging and rewarding profession.

Contained within the Blue Light Well-being Framework is a self-assessment tool based on six categories:

- Leadership
- Absence management
- Creating the environment
- Mental health
- Protecting the workforce
- Personal resilience

**Leadership** – Asks questions around leadership and management training, policies and procedures such as bullying and harassment and whistle blowing and their effectiveness, and considers whether there are ongoing consultation and communications with staff on well-being issues.

**Absence management** – Asks whether the organisation supports absent employees; if return to work interviews are conducted; whether risk assessments are carried out for those high vulnerability roles; whether reasonable adjustments are made to assist employees, and whether absence trends are monitored.

**Creating the environment** - Considers how the organisation creates a workplace environment that is conducive to well-being through consultation and communication, and whether it demonstrates awareness of the legal obligations relating to health, safety and well-being.

**Mental health** – Explores what measures the organisation has taken to promote awareness of mental health, to proactively reduce the stigma around it, and what support mechanisms are in place to assist employees who are affected by mental health illness.

**Protecting the workforce** – Asks questions around how the organisation promotes physical health in terms of healthy eating, drug and alcohol use and other stressors i.e. financial. How it plans for an ageing workforce and whether engagement with employees is actively encouraged.

**Personal resilience** – Explores how organisations encourage physical activity in the workplace (through communication and promotion campaigns) and how self-efficacy and recognition of personal limitations in the workplace is encouraged.

As employee well-being forms part of the People Strategy, and as the framework is designed specifically for blue light emergency services, the group deemed it appropriate to carry out a self-assessment against the Blue Light Well-being Framework (College of Policing) document to determine the current position in terms of the assessment criteria - 'Fully developed'; 'In development' or 'Under development'. This will provide a benchmark from which an action plan can be established for improvement across those areas identified for development.

## **2. Current position**

### **a. Blue Light well-being Framework (College of Policing)**

The self-assessment against the six categories of the framework has been carried out which identified that, as an organisation, forty two areas are 'Fully developed; thirty two areas are 'In development' and nineteen areas are 'Under developed'. It is envisaged that a further assessment against this document will be carried out once the identified work to improve has been completed.

### **b. Policies and procedures**

There are a suite of policies and procedures in place that cover well-being. Examples of which, although not definitive, are the Stress, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), Firefighter fitness, Anti Bullying and Harassment, Substance Misuse and Attendance Management.

### **c. Employee assistance and support networks**

The following employee assistance and support networks are in place:

- Employee Assistance Programme
- CISD
- Services of the Welfare Officer
- Counselling including Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Intranet 'Fighting Fit' pages
- Stress audits
- Stress risk assessments
- Night workers annual medical questionnaires

### **3. Future work**

An initial training needs analysis has been completed to determine the training required to deliver Mental Health Awareness training across the organisation – this also includes costs. A further training needs analysis will be carried out to determine any additional training that might be necessary across the service later in the project. A request for further funding to facilitate any additional training may also be required at that stage.

Work has commenced on a gap analysis of those areas that are currently 'In development' and 'Under development'. This will be captured within an action plan which will detail required actions, progress, target dates for completion and a RAG status for each. This will be the first major task for the group and will provide a continuous record of progress made throughout the project.

A draft, high-level communications plan has been drawn up to support this work and will be reviewed and updated throughout the life cycle of this project – see *Appendix 2*.

An integrated impact assessment has been completed for the start of this project and it has been determined that there are no negative equality and diversity issues identified. Improvements in employee well-being can lead to positive outcomes for all protected characteristics.

Once the work detailed within the action plan has been completed, the self-assessment against the framework will be repeated in order to evidence the improvements made and benchmark the new position of the organisation.

Depending on the timeframe for completion of the action plan, it may be necessary to bring to SMB an interim paper to report progress, and there will also be a need for an end of project paper for evaluation purposes.

[Report ends]