



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mental Health Strategy
2020 – 2023

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1. FOREWORD



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Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Mental Health Strategy.

As mental health becomes more of a recognised challenge, it can be expected that, with a workforce of just under 8,000 people, the SFRS will have many staff who are currently suffering, or have previously suffered, with mental ill health.

SFRS continually strives to be an employer of choice and as such has a moral and legal duty to ensure that staff with mental ill health are supported. We aim to ensure our staff are better equipped to identify potential mental ill health in themselves, their colleagues and family members.

The [Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#) states; "We must prevent and treat mental health problems with the same commitment, passion and drive as we do with physical health problems". The strategy also goes on to say that Scotland; "must challenge stigma and discrimination in relation to mental health and improve understanding and create person centred approaches".

It is therefore important that the SFRS commits to a fully integrated approach, and mental health is placed front and centre of SFRS planning, from recruitment, through promotion processes, and on to retirement.

To support this commitment the SFRS has developed this Mental Health Strategy. The Strategy will outline, amongst other things, how the Service intends to mainstream mental health awareness through engagement with staff and partners. By creating a more preventative approach to mental health, we will ensure a supportive environment which removes stigma, promotes the need to look after our own mental health and provides early access to support and professional assistance.

Mental ill health, which comes in many guises, can be harmful and destructive, if left untreated. The SFRS has made excellent progress in relation to the support we provide to staff who have faced mental ill health, however identifying those who may not feel safe to speak up, or those who may have undiagnosed mental ill health has proved to be more challenging.

The SFRS is only as good as the people who work in it. If our staff face challenges, then so will our Service. Working with staff to improve their mental health is not only the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense because a healthy workforce equals a healthy Service.

The Board of the SFRS, in conjunction with our Strategic Leadership Team, are fully committed to creating a mentally healthy environment within which staff can work and prosper. We are also committed to ensuring mental health is mainstreamed across everything we do and fully integrated within our culture and we will do this by weaving mental health throughout our strategic planning processes.

By improving our mental health literacy, we hope to increase the wellbeing of our staff and positive outcomes for those who face mental health challenges.

2. INTRODUCTION

Mental ill health is a very complex issue. Our personal experiences, our family life, our relationships, how we see ourselves, the social circumstances we find ourselves in, will all determine our unique state of wellbeing.

The subject of mental ill health, the stigma attached to it, the devastating effects it can have and the support required to reduce and mitigate the associated impacts, has grown in prominence over the last number of years. This has led to concerted efforts from the Scottish Government and other organisations, such as the NHS, to spotlight the challenges around mental ill health and provide appropriate support and treatment.

The SFRS has in place a number of processes which enable support to be provided once a member of staff has suffered from mental ill health. However, we have found it much more challenging to be proactive in identifying the early stages, which would enable intervention at a much earlier stage.

The nature of our Service is such that firefighters and other members of staff, can be exposed to traumatic and challenging situations. We know that non-work related matters can also impact on the wellbeing of our staff. In recognising these stressors, we need to be fully committed to creating a mentally healthy environment within which all staff can work and prosper. We are committed to ensuring mental health is considered across everything we do and integrated within our culture. This requires structure, resources, supporting interventions and good management practices.

The SFRS has mainstreamed Health and Safety across the Service and this, along with Equalities, is fully considered when creating our plans and detailing work. This strategy now treats mental health in the same way if we are to fully support the wellbeing of our staff. Mental health is now embedded within the SFRS Strategic Plan, and this will ensure corporate support and oversight is provided.

This Mental Health Strategy therefore sets out the following:

- Our Mental Health Pledge;
- Our Mental Health Commitment;
- Our Mental Health Model;
- Our Mental Health Objectives.

There are many organisations and groups who support good mental health and it is important that the SFRS

works in partnership and utilises the knowledge and skills that these groups have built up over many years, to help benefit our staff.

The aspiration for this Strategy is to produce a road map towards the creation of a mentally healthy workplace. [The Beyondblue, Good Practice Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing in First Responder Organisations Report](#), describes a mentally healthy workplace as, “one that actively minimises risks to mental health, promotes positive mental health and wellbeing, is free from stigma and discrimination, and supports the recovery of workers with mental health conditions, for the benefit of the individual, organisation and community.”

Types of Mental Health Conditions (not exhaustive)

- Anxiety Disorders;
 - Panic Disorder
 - Social Anxiety Disorder
 - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
 - Generalised Anxiety Disorder
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Depression;
 - Post-Natal and Other Forms
- Attention Deficit Disorder;
- Schizophrenia;
- Bipolar Disorder;
- Eating Disorders.

Some of these may result in a person affected with feelings of being overwhelmed, tired and unable to concentrate.

Mental health outcomes are different across the Scottish population, with inequalities evident for most of the protected characteristics, as detailed in the Equality Act 2010. Individuals face stigma and discrimination in society and are at higher risk of developing poor mental health because of this. Evidence shows there can be barriers to accessing mental health services; particularly services that understand and can provide support according to individual needs and experiences. Groups with these protected characteristics already face discrimination, adding stigma and a lack of services around mental health just further compounds these impacts. All of this makes

the discussion around inequality and mental health an important one for the SFRS.

Promoting and mainstreaming equality and inclusion throughout our mental health work will allow us to align with the SFRS value of respect, an important principle for our desired organisational culture.

There are many factors which may cause or trigger episodes of mental ill health and an individuals’ mental health can vary throughout their lifetime. This may be linked to life experiences (e.g. depression following loss, PTSD following trauma exposure), our attempts to cope with stress (e.g. alcohol use) or to biological and developmental factors (e.g. ADHD and clinical depression). Some outcomes from mental ill health can be devastating, not only to the person involved, but to their loved ones, friends and colleagues. They can also have an impact on an individual’s physical health and wellbeing.

There are effective treatments for most mental health conditions and approaches which can help people manage those which are enduring. E.g. someone may have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder but manage their condition effectively and be mentally well. Without treatment and support the outcomes of mental ill health can vary from psychological injury; which can affect the individual and their work, mental illness;

which can cause individuals to leave their employment, right through to suicide. It is therefore vital that early identification and intervention takes place to ensure people access the support and treatment they need to improve the chances of a positive outcome.

It has been acknowledged that repeated exposure to potentially traumatic events, workload pressures and long working hours can be triggers of poor mental health for people in the Fire and Rescue Service, and that organisational pressures can increase the risk of post traumatic psychological injury.

The mental health charity [Mind](#), has conducted research into Fire and Rescue Services in England and Wales. Their findings show that Fire Service personnel are more at risk of developing mental ill health than the general population. The research also showed that 85% of Fire Service personnel have experienced stress and mental ill health at work. From this research, it suggests Fire Service personnel work hard to prevent mental health problems from affecting their performance at work, which can have a negative impact on their personal relationships.

This Strategy sets out the direction of travel for the SFRS, and is the start of a long journey to improved mental health.

3. OUR MENTAL HEALTH PLEDGE

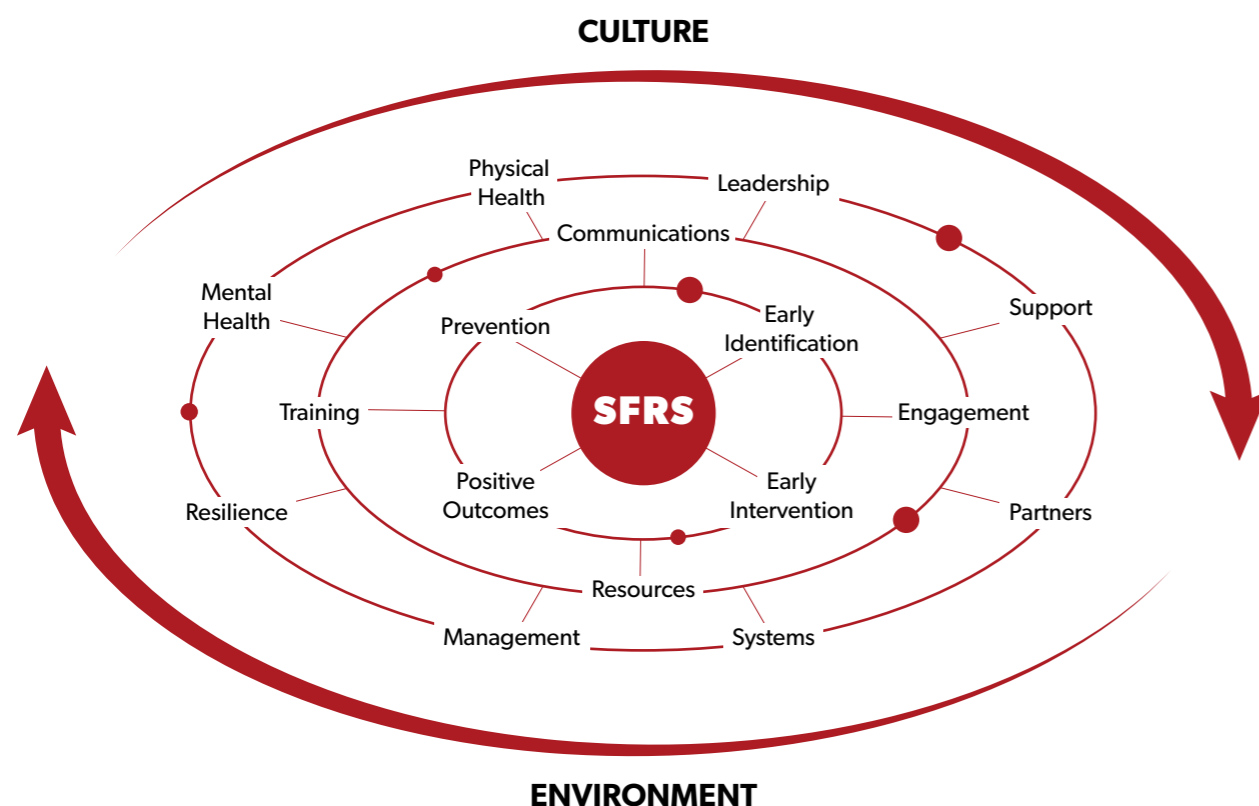
- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is fully committed to ensuring our staff work in an environment which is mentally healthy.
- We recognise that our staff are our greatest and most valuable asset and we will structure, resource and manage our activities to provide the support our staff need to best equip them to meet the challenges they face.
- Our mental health matters.

4. OUR MENTAL HEALTH COMMITMENT

- We will prioritise mental health within the SFRS by delivering a systematic programme of support.
- We will be proactive in ensuring work planning and design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes within the SFRS.
- We will promote an open and supportive culture around mental health, increasing transparency and accountability.
- We will increase our organisational confidence and capability through effective engagement with staff and partnership working.
- We will provide the tools, skills and support required to improve mental health amongst our staff.

5. OUR MENTAL HEALTH MODEL

There are several factors which constitute the SFRS mental health model. To be effective it must be person centred. Positivity is more powerful than negativity, so preventative messages and approaches must be positive and supportive in nature. Early identification is essential if a positive outcome is to be achieved and this will require staff to be upskilled in their mental health knowledge. This leads to early intervention and it is crucial that this process is delivered in a discreet and subtle manner, to enable the recipient to feel supported and able to discuss those issues they may find challenging to deal with.



Through effective communications and engagement with staff, the SFRS will identify the resources required and the training needed to support this.

Research has shown that poor workplace practices and culture are equally debilitating as is exposure to trauma. Therefore, the SFRS will improve our management processes to create the ideal environment in which staff can feel supported, valued and able to declare they need help. This, along with good leadership, will create a culture where staff know they are empowered.

The SFRS will gather information relating to mental health so that we can understand the scale of the challenges being faced and how our interventions are performing. It would be wrong to set targets on improvements as reporting will undoubtedly increase as mental health literacy improves. It is however important to fully understand where our challenges lie so we can create the right environment with the right support. This will also support Scottish Government through its National Performance Framework Health Indicator.

For every Strategic document produced by the SFRS, an Equality Impact Assessment is required, along with Health and Safety considerations amongst others. Mental health will also be considered when producing any policy or procedure to ensure any potential mental health impacts have also been identified.

6. OUR MENTAL HEALTH OBJECTIVES

During the life of this Strategy we will ensure the following objectives are met:

We will create a Positive and Inclusive Culture, and Open and Supportive Environment within which our Staff Can Operate

The SFRS is rightly considered as an employer of choice, where people take pride in having a good job within a trusted organisation.

A good job can be described as one where people have some control over their work. They have a healthy work-life balance and opportunities to develop. Good working conditions inspire loyalty and high performance from staff. They can also prevent people from developing new mental ill health or being psychologically injured at work.

“Rates of leaveism¹ and presenteeism² are rising. They are characteristics of a technology enabled, always on, workplace culture, and are closely linked to employee burnout.” ([Deloitte: Mental Health and Employers – Refreshing the Case for Investment](#))

It can be argued that the SFRS has an ‘always on’ culture with regards to many of its employees. The availability and use of technology has resulted in an increase in the instances of leaveism as employees work more often out with working hours and at weekends.

The most successful mental health interventions normally offer large scale cultural change/Service wide initiatives for all employees. This should focus on prevention and building employee resilience. It also includes the use of data and technology to tailor support as required.

To create a positive culture within the SFRS we will:

- Promote and raise awareness of mental wellbeing;
- Tackle work related causes of mental ill health;
- Support staff suffering from mental ill health;
- Signpost staff to relevant information and support;
- Provide clear objectives in relation to mental wellbeing;

- Get senior leaders on board;
- Involve staff in decision making;
- Promote a healthy work/life balance;
- Provide opportunities for learning and development; and,
- Promote positive working relationships.

A healthy and supportive work environment is reliant on good, effective managers and management processes. The SFRS will work to ensure all managers and management processes are supported to create the type of environment that enables our staff to flourish.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the SFRS as a public body, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations. The equality duty covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It relates to marriage and civil partnership around the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

This Strategy sets out how we aim to meet this by considering mental health and wellbeing in our day to day work - in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to our own employees. Through this, the SFRS are striving to achieve a culture where individuals can be themselves and feel comfortable in seeking support around their mental health, knowing that any protected characteristic (s) they may hold will be respected and considered through that process.

A healthy and supportive work environment is reliant on good, effective managers and management processes. The SFRS will work to ensure all managers and management processes are supported to create the type of environment that enables our staff to flourish.

1. Leaveism can be defined as the practice of working during non-paid hours or annual leave.
2. Presenteeism can be defined as working when ill and/or working excessive hours.

We will Mainstream Mental Health across the Service and Ensure it is Considered as part of our Planning Processes

As a Service we have successfully main-streamed both Equality and Health and Safety across everything we do. Both are rightly considered at the heart of our planning processes. If the SFRS is to provide the same focus and support for mental health, then this strategy must treat mental health in the same way and given equal focus.

Effective Strategic Planning within the SFRS requires its staff to become fully involved with the associated implementation work plans. Mental health is now captured within the SFRS Strategic Plan Outcome 3.

The main-streaming of mental health within our planning assumptions will require consideration of the following:

Workloads

- These must match an employee’s ability and experience to complete the work to the standard required.
- Timescales set for the completion of work must be achievable and, where appropriate, agreed with the employee.
- There must be clearly defined roles and responsibilities prior to the commencement of the work.
- Where possible, employees should be involved with the planning of their workloads.
- Employees should be free to express any concerns they may have.
- Vacancies should be filled as soon as practicable to reduce potential additional workloads.

Employee Development

- Employees should have a say in the identification, and support, of their development needs.
- Each employee should be supported to develop the necessary skills to achieve or exceed the standard required to implement SFRS plans.

Supporting Structures

- Supervision and management structures must be clear and easily understood by staff. There must be no ambiguity in this regard.

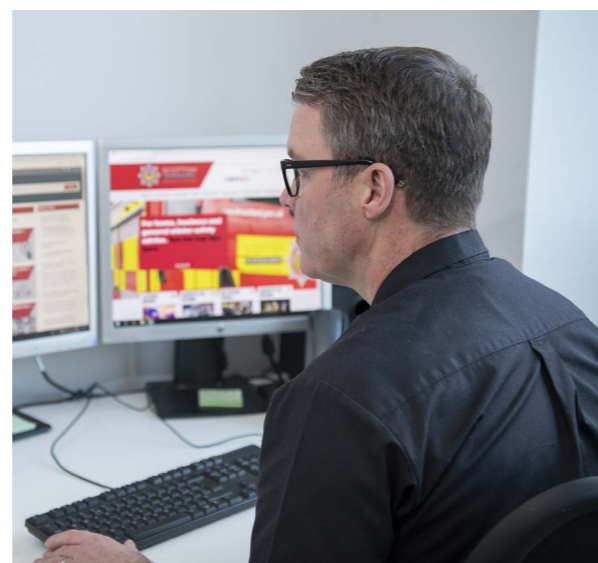
- There must be clear guidelines for managers. Poor management of staff has been linked to stress, anxiety, burn out and depression. Managers must understand the impact their decisions and demeanour can have on those who report to them.
- Managers should have good awareness of employee issues and challenges and what to do to support them.
- Good teamwork which supports employees must be encouraged within the SFRS. This ethos will break down barriers, help build good relationships and improve the mental health of employees.

Employee Voice

- The views of employees should be sought and considered when conducting long term planning for the Service.

National Performance Framework

- The Health Indicator within the Framework captures improvements in Scotland’s mental wellbeing. The SFRS can support the Framework by providing mental health data as we collate it.
- The Framework utilises the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The SFRS should consider this as we look to benchmark and evaluate our own Organisations mental health.



We will remove Stigma by Improving Mental Health Literacy through Proper Communications and Engagement

There has historically been a perceived degree of stigma attached to mental ill health. This perception is now being successfully challenged, however some people still find it difficult to open up about their illnesses and the challenges they are facing. Mental health stigma can have a devastating effect on those who require support but won’t seek it.

The SFRS will tackle stigma head on by main-streaming mental health and raising awareness on the support available. Trust and integrity are key drivers of effective engagement and the SFRS must ensure that its messaging is accurate and open to feedback.

To do this, the SFRS will:

- Raise awareness of mental health by providing staff with reliable information. This will lead to an

increase in mental health literacy amongst staff;

- Talk about mental health, the more we talk about it the easier it is for people to seek help and support. We will create an engagement and communications plan to support this;
- Share experiences from those who have experience of mental ill health. This will help to normalise open discussion;
- Create programmes that support staff to consider their own and colleagues mental health; and,
- Promote the use of mental health champions across the Service.

The SFRS will ensure that all staff are fully aware of our equality and diversity processes to assist in the removal of stigma and to improve openness.



We will Ensure Parity between Physical and Mental Health

Although, through focus and raised awareness, the issue and scale of mental ill health is becoming more understood and acknowledged, there remains disparity between how physical and mental ill health are viewed and supported.

Under the Equality Act 2010 Scotland, a mental health condition is considered a disability if it has a long-term effect on normal day to day activity. A condition is deemed long term if it lasts, or is likely to last, 12 months. The SFRS therefore has a legal duty to provide support to those with long term mental ill health.

Reasonable adjustments are a legal obligation that an employer must make to enable a person with a disability to work or continue to work. The SFRS views these adjustments as an important way in which we can support employees in the workplace and meet their individual mental health and wellbeing needs. There are many examples of reasonable adjustments the SFRS can put in place, the work around the Mental Health Strategy will include supporting line managers and employees to make reasonable adjustments due to a disability through poor mental health.

In order to meet its legislative duties, and also support those with mental ill health that does not fall within the definition of disability above, the SFRS will ensure it treats and promotes support for mental ill health to the same degree as it does for physical illness.

Physical activity is normally one of the key recommendations provided to people with mental ill health by their doctors. The link between good physical health and good mental health is a theme that runs through many research findings.

‘People with serious mental health problems have shorter life expectancy and a higher risk of developing some medical conditions. An empowering programme that increases levels of physical activity may play a role in reducing this mortality gap.’ ([Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning: Empowering People Through Physical Activity](#))

The SFRS will provide support, and encourage all staff, to be more physically active as the physical and mental health benefits are clearly identifiable.

We will Pool all Mental Health Related Processes under a Single Umbrella and Governance Structure

The SFRS has formalised governance arrangements for key supporting processes such as health and safety and equality, where all connected and contributory elements are pooled together under a single governance structure.

Support for improving mental health across the SFRS must also be given this focus and appropriate governance arrangements. The SFRS will create a Mental Health Board to review, manage and evaluate the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy. The Board will activate and direct working groups as required to support this implementation. The Board will provide regular updates as required to corporate SFRS

bodies such as the Strategic Leadership Team, Senior Management Board and Staff Governance Committee.

It is crucial that all supporting policies and procedures which link to the mental health of staff are collated, considered, implemented and reviewed under the overarching umbrella of a mental health assurance process. This will ensure all those policies complement and support each other.

Current and developing policy should be reviewed as to its impact on mental health. The SFRS will produce and conduct mental health impact assessments on all policies and procedures, to ensure any potential impacts and the staff groups to be impacted are recorded and removed or mitigated where possible.

We will Focus our Resources on a Proactive and Preventative approach to Mental Health

The SFRS will provide authentic commitment and sustained effort and resourcing in relation to mental health. This will continue in the long term, and be fully visible to staff. Confidentiality and privacy will be at the forefront of our approach if our staff are to fully trust and engage with our support systems.

Resilient people and resilient workplaces will play a large part in ensuring our staff are able to better face any mental health challenges which may affect them. Implementing this Strategy will improve both individual and collective resilience, leading to better mental health outcomes. It should be noted, the purpose of this Strategy is not to place the onus or burden onto the individual to seek support, but rather to ensure all staff can identify the challenges in themselves and others and what support is available to them.

Research has shown that, if identified and treated early, most mental health conditions can be temporary and reversible, and that long-term conditions can be managed effectively.



Employees who understand normal reactions to stress and how to manage these reactions are more resilient. They can recover from stress, potentially traumatic events, and other adverse situations.

The [Health and Safety Executive Management of Stress Standards](#), provide clear guidance on how the SFRS can meet its legal duties in relation to assessing risks to its employees from work related stress.

It is possible to train people to recognise changes in their own mental health and to become more resilient. We will support the creation of the [Lifelines](#) Fire resource to help SFRS staff understand the protective and risk factors that affect their wellbeing at work.

We will support the use of techniques including Mindfulness to help staff reduce the stress and anxiety they may be feeling.

Scottish Government have set a target of reducing the rate of suicide in Scotland by 20%, by 2022. Help is offered too little and too late in the journey of a suicidal person. Suicidal people cannot wait for help

We will therefore create Suicide Prevention plans to provide additional support to staff and enable prevention processes to be implemented at the earliest stages when someone is struggling with dark thoughts. In some instances, this can be as simple as asking if they are thinking of self-harming, the effect of which can prevent that person from taking further action.

We will also train identified staff in Mental Health First Aid, [ASSIST](#) and other online Suicide Prevention resources.





We will Identify and Provide the Best Available Help for staff Suffering from Mental Ill Health

The SFRS will, through engagement with staff, identify the workplace triggers of poor mental health.

We will routinely take stock to:

- Understand any negative factors that exist within the SFRS and how we deliver our services.
- Assess the level of impact these factors may be having and review any processes we have to negate the impact they may have.
- Plan how we can improve to increase positive mental health outcomes.

We will upskill line managers by:

- Providing mental health training to raise their awareness and enable them to support staff.
- Providing clear guidelines within which we expect them to work.

We will meet regularly with staff to:

- Maintain clear lines of communication and engagement.

- Ask about their mental health, particularly at appraisals and other development meetings.
- Understand what may be impacting on their mental health.
- Understand how we can improve their work environment.

We will create an open and supporting environment to:

- Support an internal network for staff to share experiences.

We will improve awareness of the challenges faced by staff on long term absence, particularly those with terminal or life limiting illness to:

- Ensure regular support is provided.
- Reduce the potential impact of isolation.

We will work closely with the Rivers Centre to ensure staff have access to the Post Incident Support Service, particularly following difficult/challenging incidents.

We will Train and Support all staff in relation to Mental Health throughout their Service Careers

Training is a major consideration in our approach to improving mental health provision.

Training support will be different at various stages of a person's Fire Service journey:

- Recruitment. We will produce and make available very clear communications on what the job entails and the skills and competencies required for each role within the Service as well as an understanding of the risk and protective factors involved.
- Induction. How we prepare staff for new/different roles within the Service.
- Promotion. How we prepare staff to take on additional responsibility and make good decisions.
- Responding to disclosure of mental ill health; Managers require appropriate training in how to support staff who present with mental ill health.
- Providing support as required when an employee is unwell and off work.
- Supporting an employee's return to work.
- Supporting staff when their mental ill health means they are going through the process of ill health retirement.
- Supporting staff who are retiring through ill health, related to terminal or life-limiting illness, which may also impact on their mental health.

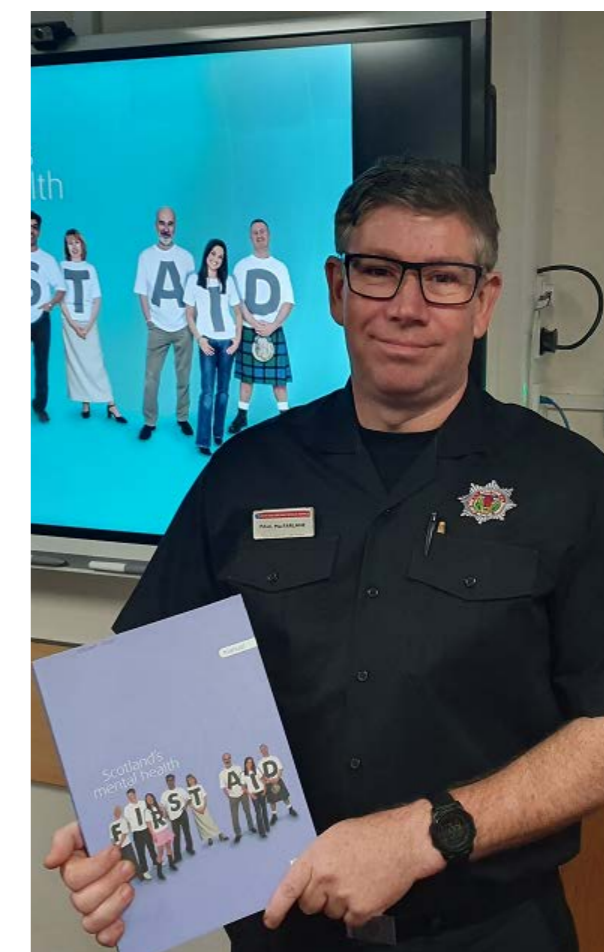
Notwithstanding the above, the SFRS will train staff in how to identify potential mental ill health in themselves and others, and what to do in those circumstances.

Managers require training to ensure they provide the right support and manage any emerging mental ill health in the correct manner. It is vital that those who lead, also understand the potential challenges they may face whilst supporting middle managers and others. This Strategy is designed to support everyone within the SFRS. This will require the following:

- Leading by example. Encouraging teams to adopt healthier working habits by working sensible hours, taking lunch breaks and taking time off.
- Building their confidence on mental health related matters.

- Normalising mental health through day to day engagement with their staff.
- Taking stock, not just of support for others, but of personal challenges.
- Being available for staff, engaging with them regularly and treating them as individuals whose needs are different.
- Creating opportunities for coaching, learning and development for staff.
- Promoting positive work relationships.

Many authorised training packages are available to the SFRS for staff and managers alike. Appropriate training will be identified and implemented following agreement through the Mental Health Board.



We will Conduct Research and Analysis to Enable us to Deploy Resources Effectively

There have been many research projects undertaken worldwide which provide guidance on how to improve various aspects of mental health within the workplace. The SFRS utilises this guidance when crafting its own approaches. However, to fully understand and address the issue of mental health within the SFRS, we will require to conduct our own research that enables a tailored and effective approach to be adopted that maximises the benefits to staff.

To do this, the SFRS will engage staff and collect data related to mental health. All collated medical data will be anonymised and compiled under GDPR guidance.

Some of the data which is currently available and could be utilised includes:

- Absence data;
- Occupational Health referral data;

- Staff turnover data;
- Exit interview information.

The SFRS will also conduct staff surveys and initiate staff mental health forums where qualitative information can be obtained and factored in to our plans. We will look to identify causal factors that are impacting on our staff. By building a comprehensive picture of mental health within the SFRS we will be able to identify areas and people who are at most risk, enabling specific prevention activities and interventions to be deployed.

We will carry out an early benchmarking process to provide a mental health baseline. Thereafter we will conduct annual benchmarking processes, culminating in a full evaluation after year three of this Strategy. We will employ academia to conduct and report on this evaluation.

We will Ask Staff and Listen to how we can Improve the Mental Health Support we Provide

We will conduct a mental health survey then regular mental health audits to hear from staff and listen to how we can improve. We will be transparent and open to staff feedback, using the information to support this Strategy.

We will commit to two-way communications, encouraging staff to let managers know how they feel.

We will not overload staff with information they cannot process nor exclude them from key knowledge and information.

We will also work closely with trade unions and staff groups to create a culture of inclusiveness on all matters related to mental health.

We will Utilise Digital Technology to Ensure Information and Support is Available to Staff at all Times

Whilst constant access to digital technology can be viewed as a negative regarding mental health, it is also true to say it can be utilised as a supporting tool for staff.

We can now provide access to information and support for staff on an instantaneous basis. The SFRS has several fully functioning applications available to staff on their mobile

devices. This should be considered in the case of mental health, to provide staff with access to information and support at the point and time of need.

This would also provide an anonymous method of reviewing the elements that staff are mostly using, enabling the SFRS to tailor its support in a more surgical fashion.

We will Work Closely, and in Partnership, with other Organisations in Relation to Mental Health to Maximise Capacity and Efficiency

Effectively addressing the issue of mental health within the SFRS will pose substantial challenges for the Service. However, this is an issue that all emergency services are currently faced with. It therefore makes sense to work closely with partners, particularly those with similar risks to the SFRS, to share information, expertise, and knowledge. Joint research can also be conducted to identify areas where we can share resources and reduce individual impact on our Service capacity. A current example of this is the tri-service, Scottish Government and NHS supported, wellbeing initiative, [Lifelines](#).

It should be acknowledged that others may be in a much more experienced position in some areas and we could make good use of this and vice versa. The SFRS is a learning organisation and this may be an area where we could learn from our partners.

As an organisation that utilises public funds, the SFRS should always look for the most efficient method of procuring its resources. This is replicated in other emergency services, and is an underpinning value of the Christie Report. Joint working and sharing of resource to address mental ill health would therefore be beneficial to all.

We will Consider a Reach Back Process that Enables Retired Employees to Seek Help and Support

Not all mental ill health will manifest itself whilst a member of staff is employed by the SFRS. This is most noticeable within the uniformed staff groups where attendance at incidents, or engaging directly over the telephone with people during the most critical moments of their lives, can often have a lasting effect which does not manifest itself until the staff member retires or leaves the SFRS.

Although the duty of care for staff members legally ceases once the staff member leaves their employment with the SFRS, it can be argued the SFRS maintains a moral duty

to continue to provide support to those who's mental ill health could be related to their duties whilst employees.

Taking cognisance of this, the SFRS will engage with retired employee groups and look to put in place supporting mechanisms for those leaving the Service which provide reach back for mental health support where this is appropriate. As part of its commitment to improving mental health, the SFRS will form partnerships with external support providers and include details of these for staff who are retiring from, or leaving the Service.



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

www.firescotland.gov.uk