



# Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

## Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017 - 2020



# 1 MAKING NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SAFER

Our aim is to make Northamptonshire safer and we know that the health and wellbeing of our workforce is an integral part of keeping our communities safer by ensuring the Service is physically fit and mentally resilient to meet these demands.

This strategy is aligned to the aims and objectives within the Community Protection Plan (CPP) 2017-2020 for:

- Keeping our communities safe and well
- Keeping our staff safe and well
- Making the best use of our resources

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) People Strategy outlines six key areas in supporting the main drivers for change. This strategy focuses on the key theme of supporting the **health and wellbeing of all our people**. Although health and wellbeing is cross cutting and is relevant to all strategies, this directly links with the People Strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.



By aligning this strategy with our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the draft NFCC People Strategy we are ensuring that health and wellbeing is at the heart of our service and integral to how the service is delivered.

## 2 CONTEXT

The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is going through a transformational period, this includes changes in legislation; change of governance; a duty to collaborate; sector reform; an ageing workforce; changes in demand; diversification of role; all within a climate of financial and demographic pressures.

## 3 OVERVIEW

This document sets out our framework for improving the health and wellbeing of FRS staff by supporting a workplace culture that recognises and addresses a number of the causes of ill health, including emotional and physical wellbeing.

By encouraging greater understanding of healthier lifestyles and providing opportunities for participation in a variety of initiatives, the Service aims to support its employees by promoting wellbeing and tackling barriers to participation.

We recognise that our most important asset is our staff and having a happy and healthy workforce supports delivery of the Service's core vision of making Northamptonshire safer.

This strategy is supported by an Employee Assist Program (EAP), Occupational Health (OH) service, sports therapy and fitness testing programme.

## 4 PROMOTING WELLBEING FOR ALL

Our aim is to promote a positive culture where physical and emotional health is recognised, promoted and embedded within teams as a normal part of the culture. Providing support for wellbeing and taking specific actions to attack stigma about mental health including:

**Cultural reform:** to embed our service values that has the wellbeing of our staff at its core. Creating an environment that brings the best out of people.

**Support mechanisms:** to support teams, individuals and managers to embrace this culture with the understanding of the importance of wellbeing. To provide specific support to those with individual needs to both improve their health so preventing absence, and as required, facilitate a quicker return to work.

**Emotional wellbeing:** to understand the emotional wellbeing of employees is affected through ergonomic, environmental and psychosocial factors and to implement strategies to tackle work related stress.

Our strategic objectives include:

- To provide information and services that help people deal with any personal or professional problems, which could be impacting on their general health and wellbeing
- To provide support that can be accessed privately, or through managerial support, confidentially and in line with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) code of ethics
- To promote health and wellbeing through the Wellbeing Support Teams and wellbeing initiatives, providing an accessible and confidential internal advice service that can signpost support through a trusted advocate model

To establish an EAP that includes:

- **Counselling support:** access to counselling for emotional problems and a pathway to structured telephone counselling or face-to-face counselling sessions whenever needed
- **Legal information:** support for any issues that may cause anxiety or distress including debt management, accountancy, lawsuits, consumer disputes, property or neighbour legalities (this is not the same as legal advice)
- **Bereavement assistance:** at the most difficult times provide access to qualified and experienced counsellors who can help staff cope with both the emotional and practical issues they may be facing
- **Medical information:** qualified nurses to offer advice on a range of medical or health related issues to provide a sympathetic ear and practical information and advice (not diagnosis)
- **Online self-help tools:** provide a range of self-help modules, informative factsheets and invaluable advice videos from leading qualified counsellors

## 5 REDUCE POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Due to the very nature of the Service's role in responding to the needs of the community, our staff are often exposed to significant traumatic events that can result in stress and PTSD.

Our strategic objectives include:

- Cultural reform
- Strategic commitment to signing the Mind 'Time to change' pledge
- Providing resilience training to staff
- Up-skilling staff in recognising and normalising stress associated with post trauma and initiating early and appropriate intervention
- Provide emotional health checks as part of annual reviews and 3 yearly medicals
- To establish PTSD wellbeing support as part of normal organisational capabilities, promoting discussions about mental health and the impact of their role on themselves and others
- To provide reactive psychological support as required

## 6 MANAGING CHANGE

During this period of transformation change, the impact of change on individual's wellbeing, particularly reported stress is often related to change. This was a point picked up by the Thomas Review, highlighting the need for early engagement with staff during the change process.

Our strategic objectives include:

- Ensuring managers are suitably trained in assessing the impact on those involved and in managing the change process
- Provide clear communication to staff, explaining their involvement in the decision making process
- Work with representative bodies and staff groups to mitigate, where possible, the impact of change
- To continually provide help and support to staff involved in change

## **7 SUPPORTING PHYSICAL HEALTH**

To promote the importance of the individual's physical health through an improved understanding of the issues and encourage active involvement by individuals to take responsibility for maintaining and improving their health.

Our strategic objectives include:

- To promote a fitness orientated culture
- To promote a healthy lifestyle and core fitness standards for all, promoting a minimum 42Vo2 max for all staff
- Regularly assess response fitness standards in line with national guidelines for FRS fitness
- To support staff's normal fitness regime in promoting an active lifestyle, including access to fitness equipment
- Work with our OH provider and local medical practitioners to aid return to work

## **8 AGEING WORKFORCE**

In considering the issues of an aging workforce, we do this in recognition that ageing does not itself create a disability and we embrace people at every age and respect the enhanced experiences people can offer.

Our strategic objectives include:

- To embed a healthy culture in the Service that supports longevity
- To support on-going research in how age can affect people's physical and emotional wellbeing, including menopause and mental health as we age
- To embrace advances in new technology and procedures that support lighter and easier to use equipment
- To prepare staff for retirement

## **9 COMPLIANCE**

This strategy supports the organisation in compliance with the following related legislation (although not exhaustive):

- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Equalities Act (2010)
- Working Time Regulations (1988)
- Employment Act (2002)
- Health Act (2006)

## **10 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This strategy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) who will provide our Fire Executive Group (FEG) and portfolio holder with an update on activity and achievement.

The monitoring of health and wellbeing activity will be monitored through the FEG and Tactical Leadership Team (TLT) management forums and through relevant corporate scrutiny groups to ensure both compliance and to support service development.