



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

One of our key areas of focus within [the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2020-2024](#) is to develop and improve the ways in which we support the mental health and wellbeing of our staff.

This strategy sets out in greater detail why this is important to us, and what we intend to achieve over the IRMP period. It is supported by a detailed action plan (DMS#603284), which links directly to the overarching [IRMP action plan](#).

We place people at the heart of everything that we do, and we recognise that the good mental health and wellbeing of staff is crucial in order that every individual can achieve their potential and contribute to the success of the organisation. Put simply, when people aren't feeling their best, they can't work at their best – and if everyone can't work at their best, as a Service we will not be able to achieve our full ambitions.

Our overarching aim is to create a mentally healthy workplace and to embed a positive wellbeing culture across the organisation.

In a mentally healthy workplace people at all levels have a shared vision of and commitment to positive mental health and wellbeing. There is a culture of inclusion and respect where everyone feels comfortable to speak openly about mental health, without fear of stigma or discrimination, and realistic work demands balance the strategic needs of the employer with the needs of staff.

We all have mental health, all of the time.

Mental health exists on a continuum: from positive, healthy functioning at one end through to severe symptoms of mental health conditions at the other. Our mental health moves back and forth along this continuum during our lifetime, in response to different circumstances, events and stressors.

Protective factors and risk factors influence our mental health and can nudge us back and forth along the continuum. These factors can be individual to each of us; often they are related to family, work or other life circumstances. With much of our time spent at work, the workplace is a very influential environment when it comes to mental health and wellbeing. An overview of the risk and protective factors for CFRS and how these can be leveraged and mitigated is at Appendix 1.

An integrated approach to mental health and wellbeing

There are a number of factors that contribute to the creation of a mentally healthy workplace. We articulate these as sitting under three broad headings:



Having an integrated approach to mental health and wellbeing means that we will:

- Integrate our work to create a mentally healthy workplace and to embed a positive wellbeing culture into our broader organisational strategy for people, as delivered through our IRMP
- Listen to our staff to understand what will best support good mental health and wellbeing at work (recognising that this may be different in different areas of the Service as there is no 'one size fits all' single solution) and encouraging employee-led action wherever possible
- Draw on different areas of information and sources of expertise both from across the Service and externally to deliver against this strategy (for example Occupational Health, the People Group and specialist external consultancy advice and support)

Underpinning principles

Our integrated approach to mental wellbeing is underpinned by three key principles:

- **Commitment of senior leaders** – All Chief Officers and COAG members are fully committed to creating a mentally healthy workplace and to embedding a positive wellbeing culture across the organisation
- **Individual responsibility** – each and every member of CFRS has a responsibility to help in achieving our overarching aim. The more specific responsibilities of senior leaders, line managers and individuals are set out at Appendix 2
- **Communication** – we will enable meaningful two-way communication about our work in this important area, and our evaluation of this work.

Our mental health and wellbeing aims

Over the IRMP period to 2024 we intend to work to:

- Demonstrate a visible and active commitment to good mental health and wellbeing at work.
- End the stigma about mental health, encouraging and supporting people at all levels to speak openly about mental health and wellbeing, including sharing personal experiences where appropriate.
- Develop leadership and management skills to promote and support good mental health and wellbeing at work.
- Raise understanding of how everyone can support good mental health and wellbeing at work, for themselves and for each other.
- Consider mental ill health to be the same as physical ill health.
- Allocate the appropriate resources to implement our action plan which supports this strategy.

How we will deliver this strategy

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by a Wellbeing Committee (*once set-up details will be updated here*), which will report through to Chief Officers via the People Excellence IRMP group. However, this strategy cannot be delivered by a comparatively small group of people working in isolation; it will require input and positive effort from every single member of the Service.

Evaluation

We are committed to evaluating the activities that will deliver our wellbeing strategy, to assess effectiveness and consider how they may need to evolve in order to remain relevant to particular organisational or wider societal context and circumstance (for example the implications to mental health and wellbeing driven by the Coronavirus pandemic).

We will look to the following sources of data when evaluating the impact of this strategy:

- Results from employee engagement survey and other relevant surveys
- Sickness absence data (including analysis of reasons for absence and considering any patterns/trends across different staff groups)
- Occupational health data such as anonymous thematic feedback on reasons for referral to Occupational Health and for contacting the external Employee Assistance Programme

However, creating a mentally healthy workplace and embedding a positive wellbeing culture across the organisation cannot always be evaluated in 'hard' metrics, and therefore we will also seek qualitative and informal feedback on our progress towards meeting our overarching aim, for example through conversations held with senior leaders at station and team visits.

Appendix 1 – An overview of the risk and protective factors impacting on mental health and wellbeing at CFRS

	Risk factor	Objectives for mitigating the risk factor
1.	Incidents	Appropriate measures in place to minimise the trauma from operational incidents (for all staff, in both short and long term)
2.	Day to day workload	Workloads feel manageable for all. Promote open and honest discussions and realistic expectations (not just manager, wider Service and individuals too. COG/COAG setting).
3.	Outside factors (personal / financial etc.)	Organisation: provide tools and offerings. Personal: encourage awareness of the need to take personal responsibility.
4.	Work/life balance	Encourage and support individuals to achieve a healthy balance.
5.	'Always on' culture and expectations / self-expectations	Raise awareness of the risks of 'always on' culture, clarify organisational expectations and encourage reflection of self.
6.	Line manager impact	Provide line managers with the awareness, skills and motivation to enable them to positively impact their teams.
7.	Relationships (Facet/workplace personalities)	Support all staff to foster positive working relationships.
8.	Role clarity (affected by such things as temporary positions and positive pride/caring)	Ensure everyone has clarity of their role and responsibilities.
9.	Personal responsibility / learned helplessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Everyone to take personal responsibility for their part in creating a positive wellbeing culture across the organisation. b) Encourage responsibility for physical and mental self-care
10.	Change	Deliver change in a way that supports employee wellbeing
11.	Perceptions of the MHWB pillar	Clear communication.
12.	Perception of mental health in general	To reduce the stigma around mental health.

Protective Factors		
Prevention	Protection	Response
COAG / line manager priorities	Team de-brief	Employee Assistance Programme
Line manager development	Line manager development	Mind Blue Light Pledge and Champions
Communication skills (upwards and peer to peer)	Personal resilience training	TRIM Practitioners
Time management skills	Regular 1-1s	Healthshield
Delegation skills	Financial assistance	The Firefighters Charity
Flexible working	Mediation	External counselling
Facet5 and Teamscales	Self-development	External support routes
Keeping physically and mentally well		
PT sessions		
←	Occupational Health	→
←	Mindfulness	→
←	Mental Health Awareness Training	→
←	Wellbeing hub on intranet	→
←	RESPECT programme	→
←	Campaigns and awareness days	→

Appendix 2 – Responsibilities of individuals, line managers and senior leaders.

Individuals

All staff have a responsibility to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.

This includes:

- Taking responsibility to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Registering with a GP.
- Seeking advice about fitness to work when symptoms of mental ill health arise
- Seeking professional advice about mental ill health, managing mental ill health and accessing appropriate treatment, advice and support.
- Taking advantage of the occupational and health and wellbeing services provided by the Service.
- Taking advantage of health promotion and advice, guidance and information provided by the Service.
- Attending relevant training programmes as specified by the Service.
- Sharing ideas for promoting health and wellbeing in their place of work.
- Raising issues that affect their mental health and wellbeing or that of their colleagues with their line manager, Occupational Health, the People Group or member of the senior leadership team as appropriate.
- Supporting others to discuss their mental health, should they wish to.
- Contribute to a positive wellbeing culture within the Service.

Line managers

Line managers have a responsibility to promote and support the good mental health and wellbeing of their staff. This includes:

- Setting an example as a role model by adopting and promoting this strategy.
- Taking the health and wellbeing of their staff seriously, and helping to alleviate, as far as reasonably practicable, workplace stressors.
- Seeking advice from the People Group around the implementation of relevant policies where these are needed, e.g. management of sickness absence, and making smart decisions regarding action under these policies.
- Seeking appropriate advice and support when dealing with complex staff mental health and wellbeing problems.
- Encouraging staff with mental health and wellbeing problems to seek help through occupational health and wellbeing services, e.g. counselling, physiotherapy, stress, smoking cessation etc.
- Considering and exploring where necessary whether there may be an underlying mental health and wellbeing problem when there is concern about an individual's performance.
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated.
- Promoting behaviours that contribute to positive staff mental health and wellbeing.

- Promoting and supporting wellbeing initiatives and activities, enabling reasonable access for their staff.
- Attending relevant training as required including management, mandatory training and health and safety training.
- Ensure effective measures are in place to monitor and manage sickness absence.

Senior leaders

Senior leaders influence the culture in the areas they are responsible for. Their specific responsibilities include:

- Setting an example as a role model by adopting and promoting this strategy.
- Promoting behaviours contributing to positive staff mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring effective communication between management and staff, particularly through organisational change.
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated in the organisation.
- Working with line managers, Occupational Health, the People Group and other sources of expertise in the organisations to initiate and deliver wellbeing initiatives.
- Ensuring appropriate resources and support is available to deliver this strategy.