



Issue 10, September 2020

MIND Blue Light Wellbeing Program, UK (2015-2019)

The Blue Light Program was a UK-based, nation-wide wellbeing and mental health improvement program for emergency responders that ran for four years, from 2015 to 2019. It was the largest ever program in the UK to focus on the mental health of emergency responders (ERs).

MIND ran the program with funding from the UK government. They worked with the University of Oxford on their resilience intervention and the Institute of Employment Studies evaluated their work.

Program activities

Six key areas:

- [tackling stigma](#)
- [empowering staff to lead change](#)
- [training line managers](#)
- [making support accessible](#)
- [building resilience](#)
- [establishing Blue Light Mental Health Networks](#) – This is of particular relevance to the Learning Network because this initiative brought together diverse emergency service agencies to promote wellbeing, tackle work-related mental health problems, and support staff and volunteers with their mental health.

Blue light also:

- Influenced wider practice and policy
- Worked [with emergency services and other partners to support their own wellbeing initiatives](#)
- Developed the [Blue Light Programme Blueprint Pack](#)
- Providing targeted support for new recruits (see p. 20 of [this report](#))
- Tailoring existing support for 999 call handlers (see pp. 27-33 of [this report](#))

Reach

- 100+ emergency services and support organisations had signed the Blue Light Time to Change pledge, committing to practical action to tackle mental health stigma.
- 3000 Blue Light Champions had registered (staff and volunteers who take positive action at work to raise awareness and challenge the way people think and act on mental health).
- 400 peer supporters were empowered through training to share their personal lived experiences to help colleagues and signpost to support.
- 9000 line-managers, team leaders and pastoral staff were trained in managing mental health in the emergency services.



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- 9000+ calls were made to their Blue Light Infoline, which provided emergency services staff, volunteers and their families with personalised information and support.

Evaluation:

Survey results found:

- More emergency responders were aware of the mental health support available (up from 46% in 2015 to 65% in 2019)
- More organisations encourage ERs to talk about mental health (up from 29% in 2015 to 64% in 2019)
- 60% of ER's felt attitudes had improved and 56% felt support had improved in their agency over four years
- ERS in the fire service (47%) engaged with the program the most, and those from the ambulance service the least (38%).

Lessons

- *Tackling stigma*: Culture change can happen through programs like Blue Light, but takes time
- *Empower staff to lead change*: Mental health champions can have significant positive impact so they must be supported and empowered by their employers.
- *Make support accessible*: There is a need among staff, volunteers and their families for personalised (tailored) information and support on a range of mental health issues and concerns.
- To help *build resilience*, the course design was tweaked after they got positive feedback but no evidence of results in evaluation data. In the new mixed-format course (combining online and face-to-face sessions) there was significant improvements in wellbeing, resilience, and reduced likelihood of experiencing psychological distress, among participants.
- *Establish Mental Health Networks* - By working with several emergency service organisations, the sector benefits from cost-effective integration, peer support, and easier sharing of learning and best practice.