APPENDIX 1

'OFFICIAL'

Protecting local communities

# Health and Wellbeing Strategy

## 2019/20 – 2021/22

May 2019

People

| People Area | Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy |
|---|---|
| **Process** | **Detail** |
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| **Implementing Officer:** | **Nicola Moore: Head of Human Resources** |

# Contents


| | Page No |
|---|---|
| Statement of Intent | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Our Strategic Outcomes | 7 |
| Our Approach to Health and Wellbeing | 8 |
| Our Health and Wellbeing Framework | 9 |
| Delivering our Physical Health and Fitness Outcomes | 10 |
| Delivering our Mental Health Outcomes | 13 |
| Delivering our Health Promotion Outcomes | 15 |
| Governance | 16 |
| Resources | 16 |
| Equality Impact Assessment | 16 |
| Performance, Review and Audit | 16 |

Appendix 1: Employee Health and Wellbeing Improvement Plan

## Statement of Intent

The Brigades “People Strategy”, which underpins our CIRMP 2018-2022, details a statement of our intent to support, engage, trust and develop every member of our workforce throughout their employment to make a difference every day.

Because we want the people who work for us to be the best they can be, we are firmly committed to supporting and promoting health, safety and wellbeing across our workforce.

The Fire Authority and the Brigade’s Executive Leadership Team will play a key leadership role in promoting, educating and supporting health and wellbeing for all staff.

The principle of this statement is that through the investment in our staff, we will achieve our Strategic Outcome: ***‘A Healthy Workforce’*.**

## Introduction

It is widely known that being in work is good for people's health and wellbeing, but it's increasingly being recognised that a healthy workforce is beneficial to employers too. And we acknowledge this and so by creating a positive, safe and healthy environment for employees we can increase morale, improve our employees' work -life balance and, in turn, positively impact our service.

We are passionate about the health and wellbeing of our people and have for a long time committed resources to preventing people being absent from the workplace for health reasons. Previous strategies have focussed on robust sickness absence management and improved support for people with poor mental health, a top cause of ill-health in the Fire and Rescue Service. And our strategy has worked - we are making a difference.

Figures for 2017/18 show that overall our staff sickness was 6.72 shifts lost per employee; a reduction of 21% from the previous year and significantly lower than the national average (8.64). Whole-time firefighter sickness reduced by 14% to 6.44 duty shifts lost per employee, Retained Duty System staff by 1% to 7.25 shifts. Fire Control and Green book reduced by 52% to 4.83 shifts and 39% to 7.62 shifts per employee respectively. In all cases the rate of sickness is lower than the national average for the respective staff groups.

Leading on the fire and rescue national health agenda helps as it means that we are talking at the right tables to the right people to improve the health of our workforce and can push through policy and initiatives to continue to make that difference not only at national level but also at a local level.

Going forward therefore we will continue to build on our excellent work and investments; we are excited about the implementation of our new Health and Wellbeing Strategy that has been developed through the members of our workforce and representative bodies that sit on our Health and Wellbeing Board.

This Strategy:

- focuses on the achievement of the Authority's strategic outcomes as set out in its Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22

- sets out our approach to health and wellbeing

- further enhances our Health and Wellbeing Framework through adoption of good practice, compliance with legislation, refreshment of policies and external assessments

- specifically concentrates on physical health and fitness, mental health and health promotion

- continues to reflect ACAS guidance in that managing health, work and wellbeing is the responsibility of both the employer and the employee - a philosophy based on self-help and individual responsibility

## Health and Wellbeing Strategy Outcomes

This strategy forms part of the Brigade's over-arching **People Strategy 2018-2022**. The specific outcomes and objectives we seek to achieve through our health and wellbeing strategy build on, and seek to improve, our existing arrangements, all of which are aimed at supporting **our strategic outcome** '**A healthy workforce'**.

**By 2022**:

**Outcome HWB1: We will have employees who are supported in their physical health to remain at or return to work.**

**Outcome HWB2: We will have an increasing number of firefighters achieving and maintaining the standards of personal fitness required to meet their operational roles**

**Oucome HWB3: We will have employees who are supported in their mental health to remain at or return to work**

**Outcome HWB4: We will have promoted healthy lifestyles and provided access to information and advice to enable our employees to look after their own health, fitness and wellbeing**

Our corporate indicator suite sets out those indicators that support the measurement of our strategic outcome 'A Healthy Workforce' – we will regularly report on and develop these indicators and these will be used to determine the success of this Strategy.

## Our Approach to Health and Wellbeing

Achieving a healthy workforce is through approaches that promote, prevent, detect and treat workplace issues known to impact wellbeing including physical, psychological and societal elements.

**Promote**

**Executive Leadership and Heads of Departments**
will promote physical and mental health including healthy lifestyles across the Brigade by organising events, improving their knowledge and skills; and providing materials, toolkits and online support

**Line Management**
will promote physical and mental health including healthy lifestyles within their teams; ensure awareness and use of the Brigade's support mechanisms and encourage staff attendance at events

**Prevent**

**Understanding Wellbeing Needs**
we will undertake continued analysis and comparisons of physical and mental health performance; engage in forums to share best practice, learn from others and seek feedback from staff and HWB Board

**Individual Resilience**
we will provide training, workshops, materials, toolkits and support to help people build and improve their own resilience

**Detect and Support**

**Psychological Screening**
we will provide a role risk assessment tool and guidance on screening and monitoring

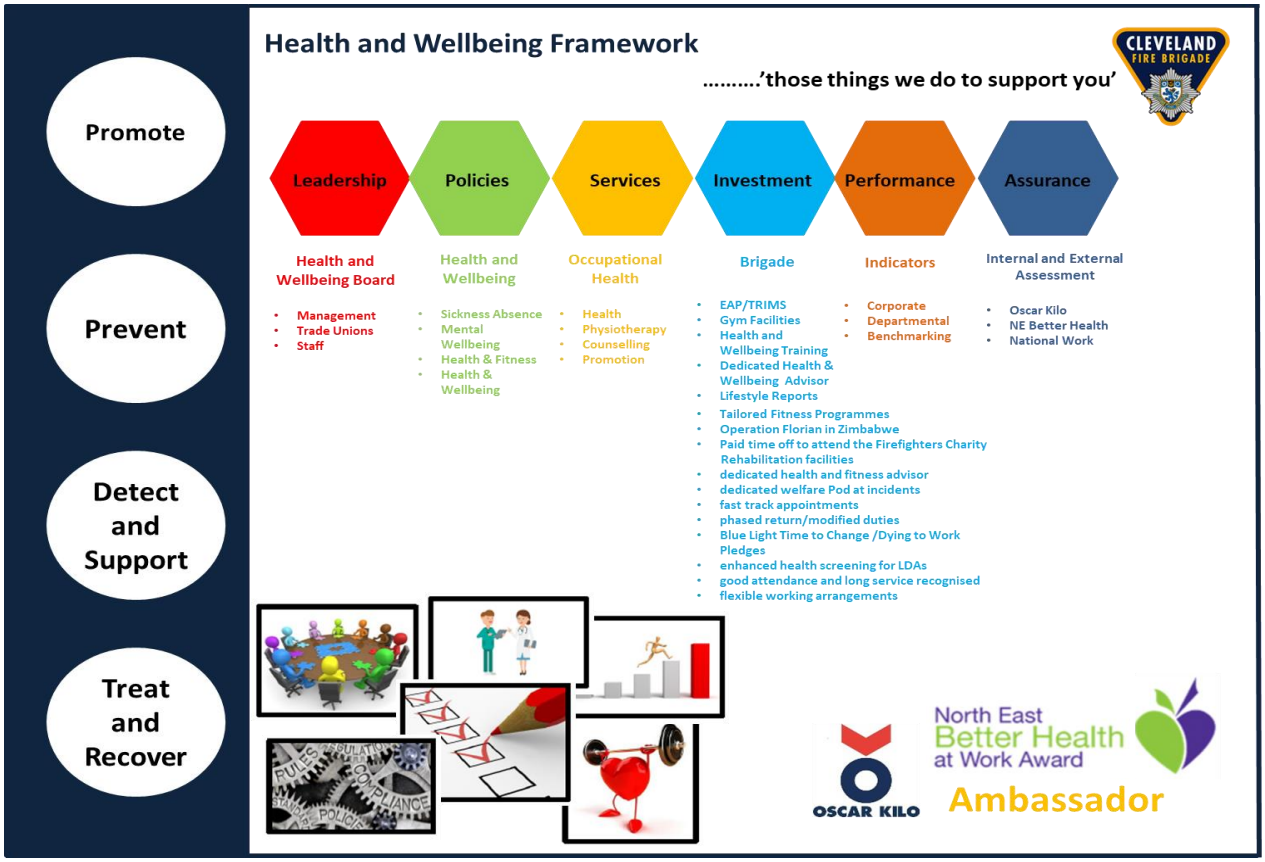
**Occupational Health Services**
we will provide occupational health, physio and counselling services; and an outreach health and fitness advisory service; training will be provided to early identify wellbeing issues

**Treat and Recover**

**National Guidance**
we will operate in line with national Medical and Occupational Evidence for Recruitment and Retention of staff in the FRS and ensure our Occupational Health providers are members of the Association of Local Authority Medical Advisors/accredited to the Safe, Effective, Quality Occupational Health Service standards

**Trauma, Post-Incident Support**
we will build organisational capability and individual resilience by providing and developing early intervention and post-trauma support

Our Health and Wellbeing Framework provides a strategic overview of our work in relation to health and wellbeing.




Each year we review elements of our framework to ensure we: comply with relevant legislation; incorporate best/good practice and keep our policies and procedures up to date

**Our focus over the next three years will be to:**

- ✓ review and procure occupational health services
- ✓ review our policies and procedures relating to sickness absence and substance misuse
- ✓ review our overtime levels and assess the impact on individual health and wellbeing
- ✓ implement blue light wellbeing framework and Oscar Kilo
- ✓ review and where necessary expand our existing suite of performance indicators to better measure employees' health and wellbeing
- ✓ seek independent accreditation of health and wellbeing arrangements

## Delivering the Outcomes – Building on Existing Work

**<u>Outcome HWB1</u>: We will have employees who are supported in their physical health to remain at or return to work.**

**<u>Outcome HWB2</u>: We will have an increasing number of firefighters achieving and maintaining the standards of personal fitness required to meet their operational roles**

Physical health is essential to the complete health of an individual; this includes everything from overall well-being to physical fitness. It can also be defined as a state of physical well-being in which the individual is able to perform daily activities without problems

Some of the most obvious and serious signs that we are unhealthy appear physically. Addressing this dimension is crucial for anyone attempting to sustain overall health and wellness.

Traditional definitions of physical health prior to the onset of modern medicine would have considered someone physically healthy if he or she was not stricken with a serious illness. With modern medical innovations came longer life spans, which changed the way we define physical health. Today's definition can consider everything ranging from the absence of disease to fitness level.

While physical health consists of many components, the key areas that should be addressed are:

- physical activity - includes strength, flexibility, and endurance
- nutrition and diet - includes nutrient intake, fluid intake, and healthy digestion
- alcohol and drugs - includes the abstinence from or reduced consumption
- medical self-care - includes addressing minor ailments or injuries and seeking emergency care as necessary
- rest and sleep - includes periodic rest and relaxation, along with high quality slee

In the Fire and Rescue Service the physical fitness of firefighters is important. For members of the public, firefighter fitness is vital to ensure swift and effective firefighter performance when their lives and/or property may be at risk. For firefighters, adequate levels of physical fitness may be important to ensure they minimise the risk of personal injury when being faced with extreme physical demands. For a human resource manager, physical fitness is important due to the known health benefits of active lifestyles with a healthy, productive workforce.

In general terms, firefighter fitness is important for three main reason s: 1. operational performance; 2. firefighter safety; and 3. employee health and work productivity.

These physical demands mean that firefighters require higher levels of fitness than those people working in most other occupations and therefore there is a requirement for operational personnel to maintain levels of personal fitness. It is recognised that fitness levels may decline with age and whilst this may be mitigated by fitness training, diet and other lifestyle changes, it is acknowledged that there may be a general decline in fitness as a result of the ageing process.

We accept that we have an important role in helping to ensure their firefighters remain fit and are supported in remaining in employment. As such to support fitness of firefighters we have:

- employed a dedicated Health and Fitness Advisor
- have a specific policy and procedure on health and fitness and  a clear process of fitness assessment and development in line with the Home Office Fire and Rescue Service National Framework
- have health and fitness representatives on fire stations
- have provided gym facilities on every premises

**Our focus over the next three years will be to:**

- ✓ review our occupational health services in relation to physical health
- ✓ review our health and fitness policy and procedure
- ✓ expand our use of qualified health and fitness representatives
- ✓ review our physical health support and management arrangements and seek out new/best practice solutions to support physical health
- ✓ develop a corporate suite of health and fitness performance indicators
- ✓ seek independent accreditation of physical health arrangements

## Outcome HWB3: We will have employees who are supported in their mental health to remain at or return to work

ACAS defines mental health as the mental and emotional state in which we feel able to deal well with the normal stresses of everyday life. If we feel good about ourselves we often work productively; interact well with colleagues and make a valuable contribution to our team/ workplace.

Poor mental health can range from feeling 'a bit down' to common disorders such as anxiety, stress and depression that may be diagnosed by a doctor. The Centre for Mental Health has estimated that one in four of us will suffer from a mental health problem at some point in our lives.

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. Pressure turns into stress when an individual feels unable to cope. People have different ways of reacting to stress, so a situation that feels stressful to one person may be motivating to someone else. Many of life's demands can cause stress, particularly work, relationships and money problems and, when an individual feels stressed, it can get in the way of sorting out these demands.

Stress causes a surge of hormones in the body which are released to enable individuals to deal with pressures or threats – the so-called "fight or flight" response. Once the pressure or threat has passed, stress hormone levels will usually return to normal. However, if someone is constantly under stress, these hormones will remain in the body, leading to the symptoms of stress.

**Stress Management Society 'Stress Facts'**

- The UK's government agency the Health and Safety Executive says there is a convincing link between stress and ill health. Its research showed that over 105 million days are lost to stress each year– costing UK employers £1.24 billion. The research is based on responses from almost 700 senior HR practitioners and almost 2,000 employees.
- Pressure itself is not bad. In fact, many thrive on it. But when those pressures exceed a person's ability to cope, it follows, therefore, that stress can be tackled either by reducing pressures or by increasing coping resources – or a combination of the two.

Stress is not an illness itself, but it can cause serious illness if it isn't addressed. It's important therefore for individuals and managers to recognise the symptoms of stress early to help figure out ways of coping and save individuals from adopting unhealthy coping methods, such as drinking or smoking or getting more serious complications, such as high blood pressure.

There is little that can be done to prevent stress, but there are many things that can be done to manage stress more effectively, such as learning how to relax, taking regular exercise and adopting good time-management techniques.

Our health and wellbeing strategies over the years have had a focus on mental health and we are committed to ending mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace and have signed the Blue Light Time to Change pledge. Our employees have access to TRIMS and EAP which provides access to a 24 hour helpline staffed by professional counsellors who can provide impartial and confidential advice on matters which may create anxiety or stress. Our work on mental health has helped to support individuals to feel comfortable to ask for support and we have found that more people are declaring and using their experiences to help others.

**Our focus over the next three years will be to:**

- ✓ review our occupational health services in relation to mental health
- ✓ review our mental health support and management arrangements and seek out new/best practise solutions to support mental health
- ✓ seek independent accreditation of mental health arrangements

## <u>Outcome HWB4</u>: We will have promoted healthy lifestyles and provided access to information and advice to enable our employees to look after their own health, fitness and wellbeing

Healthy and well-motivated employees can have a positive impact on an organisation, so it's important to promote health at work.

When people think of health at work, they often think about health and safety in the workplace, and how they can ensure that they're meeting their legal health and safety responsibilities.

However, workplace health promotion is about taking steps to help our employees improve their own general health and wellbeing at work.

As an employer, we have an abundance of things we do to help create a healthy, safe and positive workplace for our employees; this is evident within our working practices and externally recognised by others; this includes gym facilities; employee engagement in workplace health initiaitves; provided training to staff in physical and mental wellbeing; many forms of flexible working

**Our focus will be to:**

- ✓ develop an annual health promotion programme linked to national campaigns
- ✓ explore channels and digital solutions to communicate our health promotion programme
- ✓ invigorate our Intranet and Internet to support employee health and wellbeing
- ✓ explore the provision of a 'staff community garden' to encourage those who do not want to/cannot participate in physical activity to 'chill out' during breaks
- ✓ promote healthy eating

## Delivering this Strategy

### Governance

The Director of Corporate Services will continue to provide a strategic focus to the area of employee health and wellbeing and will work with the Brigade's cross service Employee Health and Wellbeing Board (including representative bodies) to maintain the Brigade's employee health and wellbeing arrangements. She will also cross work to deliver the future improvements identified within this strategy as set out in the Improvement Plan at Appendix 1.

### Resources

This strategy in the main drives a more strategic focus on employee health and wellbeing and the achievement of associated outcomes and targets which mean that more strategic resource may need to be invested into this important area in the future.

Initial assessment of resources for the short to medium term relate to training (mental health, sickness absence management) attendance at events such as Firefit and NFCC; these are catered for within existing budgets.

The Director of Corporate Services will continue to identify and request the medium term resource requirements as necessary to ELT once the outcomes from the improvement actions associated with this strategy are known.

### Equality Impact Assessment

Equality impact assessments will be undertaken against each completed improvement action as appropriate in line with the Brigade's procedure.

### Performance Review and Audit

The Director of Corporate Services will undertake a review of this strategy to ensure it is driving improvement and that it is taking account of any new or emerging economic or environmental factors in March 2022.