



Wellness and Behaviour Change Workshops



The
Fire Fighters
Charity



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Background

The UK's fire services community has faced more challenges in the last few years than it has in decades, with the advent of a global pandemic and high-profile operational incidents. In turn, it's meant the health and wellbeing needs of the entire workforce have also changed - most especially in relation to physical and psychological health.

The 2018/19 NFCC Occupational Health Report revealed that around 371,000 duty days per year are lost to sickness absence (9 days per employee) across all sectors of the workforce, with musculoskeletal and mental health reasons accounting for 36% and 21% respectively. The cost to the fire sector was approximately £77m per year.

Despite the scale of the problem, there remain challenges for how the UK's fire services address and support the health of the workforce, both from a physical and mental health perspective as well as the broader concept of wellbeing.

As a trusted charity that's worked directly with the fire services community for years, The Fire Fighters Charity is in an ideal position to help, while complementing any existing occupational health provision within individual services. We have first-hand insight into the challenges faced every day by fire service personnel, therefore, we are well placed to provide tailored health and wellbeing support to meet the needs of both the individual and the service more widely.

Over the last 18 months, The Fire Fighters Charity has been working with a small number of fire and rescue services to develop and deliver health and wellbeing support, shaped as wellness coaching. By adopting a wellness coaching approach, we can focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding of issues associated with physical, mental and social health.

The Programme

Working in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), the Charity's Health Improvement Lead will agree a programme of workshops with each FRS's wellbeing lead.

Programmes include interactive and inclusive workshops that encourage open engagement with health, wellness and behaviour change. Providing a supportive environment, the workshops will focus on empowering participants to make positive changes themselves by inviting discussion, exploring ideas, providing practical suggestions and evidence-based interventions.

The workshops topics can be delivered as themed packages or individually depending on the needs of each FRS. The programmes include:

Resourcing Your Resilience

- Improving Sleep (1 hr)
- Managing Stress (1hr)
- Developing Resilience (1.5 hrs including break)
- Introduction to Relaxation and Mindfulness (1.5 hrs including break)
- Mental Health and Physical Activity (1 hr)

Flourishing – Living Your Best Life

- Flourishing: Happiness and Wellbeing (Positive Psychology) (2 hrs including break)
- What's Strong with You (Positive Psychology) (1hr 45 mins including break)
- Strong Relationships: A Strengths Based Approach to Positive Relationships (1hr 30 mins including break)
- How Connecting with Nature is Good for our Health (1hr)
- Improving Communication (2hrs including break)

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Health Series

- MSK Injury Prevention (1hr)
- MSK Injury Management and Rehabilitation (1hr)
- Understanding and Managing Back Pain (1.5 hrs including break)
- Nutrition and Healthy Eating (1 hr)
- Mental Health and Physical Activity (1hr)

Transitions of Life

- Understanding Menopause (1hr)
- Wellbeing into Retirement (1hr)
- Introduction to Relaxation and Mindfulness (1.5 hrs including break)
- Mental Health and Physical Activity (1 hr)
- Nutrition and Healthy Eating (1 hr)
- What's Strong with You (Positive Psychology) (1hr 45 mins including break)



All workshops draw on current research and interventions are evidence-based and shaped to address the specific audience, for example, delivery may be different for crew members compared to management.

Group Size

Workshops can accommodate a maximum of 15 and a minimum of 5. Multiple sessions could be run in one day as required.

Evaluation

Workshops may be evaluated using the following methods:

- the completion of an online survey by participants
- the completion of a follow-up survey 1 and 2 months after the workshop
- The FRS will have access to the anonymised evaluation by agreement

Delivery Methods

Workshops are delivered digitally using a video conferencing platform such as Teams or can be delivered face-to-face

The FRS will act as the 'host' and will be responsible for inviting participants and the Charity's workshop facilitator to access the session.

A named representative from the FRS will be the key contact, ensuring that sessions are set up, participants are invited and appropriate and agreed contact details are made available.



Workshop outlines

Please note: All sessions draw on current research and interventions are evidence-based.

Improving Sleep(1hr)

Sleep is vital to our wellbeing and yet many of us experience insomnia or disrupted, unsatisfying sleep, especially when working shifts. This wellbeing session will:

- explore the biology of sleep
- look at exactly how much sleep we need
- explore different sleep patterns
- explore the benefits of different stages of sleep
- identify many of the causes of sleep issues and look at the impact of poor sleep
- provide information on coping strategies, giving practical solutions to try at home
- provide information on support available and how to access further help

Managing Stress (1hr)

Stress and feeling overwhelmed is a common and unpleasant problem and one we don't always see in ourselves. This wellbeing session will:

- help identify symptoms of stress

- look at how stress might impact on day-to-day living
- explore some of the causes of stress
- provide information on coping strategies, giving practical solutions to try at home and at work
- provide information on support available and how to access further help

Developing Resilience (1hr 30 mins including break)

Developing, nurturing and learning to be resilient is vital to our wellbeing. During this session we will:

- explore the nature of resilience and look at why it is so important
- through a short questionnaire, increase self-awareness and discover more about internal or external locus of control, which can help shape individual resilience-building strategies
- group discussion will explore how we can develop and improve our resilience
- information will be provided on how to access further support

Wellbeing into Retirement (1hr)

Approaching retirement brings with it the prospect of a major transition. This session's aim is to:

- increase understanding of the psychological and

- emotional aspects of retirement
- encourage exploration around hopes and fears relating to retirement
- provide an opportunity to explore what may need to be put in place to create a healthy transition into retirement
- provide information on how The Fire Fighters Charity can offer support
- participants will be introduced to the five emotional stages of retirement, will identify in small group discussions their hopes and concerns relating to retirement and will explore practical ways to achieve positive outcomes to reduce the impact of negative aspects associated with retirement

Understanding Menopause (1hr)

Menopause, premature menopause and perimenopause can be an overwhelming experience and this session will:

- explore the psychological and physical symptoms and impact of menopause on body and mind
- include group discussions
- provide useful self-help strategies
- provide information on support available, including signposting to useful websites
- this session is also useful for those supporting someone going through the menopause.

Improving Communication (2hrs including break)

During this session, the focus will be on improving communication skills. The session will:

- look at some key theories which can help us discover more about ourselves. The theories we will explore may help with understanding why some people are more

- challenging to us than others.
- look at how we can make some simple changes to improve our communication skills
- include group discussion around challenges with communication and how to improve communication in certain scenarios
- the opportunity to complete a questionnaire to find out more about what drives certain behaviours

Introduction to Relaxation and Mindfulness – (1 hr 30 mins including break)

This session looks at what constitutes relaxation and introduces mindfulness concepts. It provides an opportunity to experience a guided visualisation technique, mindfulness meditations, as well as guidance on how to practice active mindfulness. Participants will:

- Be asked to evaluate how relaxed they feel at the beginning and end of the session so that their experience is measurable.
- Be given suggestions on how to incorporate mindfulness and relaxation techniques into daily life.
- Be offered information on where and how to access further support

Nutrition and Healthy Eating – 1 hr

Aim – To empower individuals and FRS groups on the essential information regarding proper nutrition and diet to improve/maintain health.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Understanding the health and wellbeing benefits of a balanced diet and proper hydration.
- Clarity regarding the potential effects of certain foods on health and disease risk, factoring in occupation-specific exposures
- Practical options and strategies for healthy meals and snacks in a variety of situations, at work and at home
- Understanding energy balance, diet quality and their impact on body composition

Mental Health & Physical Exercise – 1 hr

Aim - To increase levels of physical activity for the benefit of your mental health and cognition.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Enhance your understanding of the benefits to mood and cognition of physical activity/exercise
- Recognising potential barriers to being active
- Create a feasible plan to incorporate a variety of types of physical activity/exercise into everyday life

Flourishing: Happiness and Wellbeing (2hrs including break)

Aim - to enable you to identify ways of enhancing your overall happiness and wellbeing.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Expanding on your current understanding of happiness and wellbeing through the lens of positive psychology.
- Learning about a model of happiness and wellbeing that can be applied simply.
- Explore different practical ways of boosting your own happiness and wellbeing.

What's Strong with you? (1hr 45 mins including break)

Aim – To empower you in developing an awareness of your personal strengths of character before exploring ways to apply them and enhance your performance and wellbeing.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Learning the benefits of a strengths based positive approach to performance and wellbeing
- Discovering your own personal character strengths using a scientifically validated tool.
- Exploring ways in which your strengths can be applied to enable you to thrive.

Strong Relationship: A Strengths Based Approach to Positive Relationships (1hr 30 mins including break)

Aim – To support you in maximising the potential of important relationships.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Considering what contributes to effective relationships and reflecting on important relationships that could be improved.
- Learning and practicing strategies to enhance relationships drawn from positive psychology.

How connecting with nature is good for our health – 1 hr

Aim - To provide an understanding of how to better relate and connect with nature for the health and wellbeing benefits



Benefits of attending this session:

- Understanding the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature
- Gaining an understanding of the term Nature Connectedness and its relevance to human health and wellbeing
- Learning an overview of the 5 Pathways to Nature Connectedness
- How to increase your Nature Connectedness through personal practice

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Injury Prevention – 1 hr

Aim - To provide you with an understanding of how to prevent musculoskeletal related injuries in the context of overall health & wellbeing.

Benefits of attending this session:

- Learning what factors can contribute to causing musculoskeletal injuries
- Gaining an understanding of the principles of injury prevention

- Considering the role of physical activity and exercise in preventing injury and improving overall health and wellbeing

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Injury Management and Rehabilitation – 1 hr

Aim – To provide you with an understanding of how to manage and rehabilitate from musculoskeletal related injury in the context of overall health & wellbeing

Benefits of attending this session:

- Gaining an understanding of different management measures to reduce the impact of musculoskeletal injury and re-occurrence
- Having an overview of the key components & principles of the rehabilitation process
- Understanding the importance of tissue healing times in relation to rehabilitation
- Considering the relevance of late-stage rehabilitation in the context of the Fire & Rescue Service Fitness Standards

Understanding and Managing Back Pain (1hr 30 mins including break)

Aim – To provide an understanding of what can contribute to back pain and how to manage it

Benefits of attending the session:

- Considering the role of the nervous system in the experience of pain
- Exploring the evidence between medical investigations and back pain
- Learning the importance of applying a physical and psychological approach to back pain management and recovery



Delivery Options

Online

Group sizes: minimum 5, maximum 15, so to encourage interaction.

Sessions can be delivered as a one-off or on a regular basis over a period of time.

Please note: Recordings of the sessions are not permitted. This is for confidentiality reasons and to ensure attendees feel comfortable and able to share information if appropriate. Sessions are interactive and this aspect is missing for those watching a recording. Research suggests that the learning and engagement with the content doesn't compare to the live experience. Flexibility of delivery means sessions can be repeated to increase access to the sessions.

On-site

Group sizes: minimum 5, maximum 15, so to encourage interaction.

The space provided would need a whiteboard or flipchart and the ability to display a PowerPoint presentation to the participants.

Sessions can be delivered as a one-off day or can be delivered on a regular basis over an agreed period of time.

Contact

This brochure was produced in January 2023.

We are always developing new Wellness Workshops to meet the ever evolving health and wellbeing needs of our beneficiaries.

For an up-to-date description of what we are currently able to deliver, please visit firefighterscharity.org.uk/wellness-workshops

To discuss the Charity's Wellness and Behaviour Change Workshops in more detail, please contact Health Improvement Lead, Dr Greg Lessons, on glessons@firefighterscharity.org.uk or **07586 553 259**

Join MyFFC

After the workshop, your journey isn't over. You can continue the support network by joining our new wellbeing app, My Fire Fighters Charity – or MyFFC. This is a dedicated space for the UK fire services community to engage with each other, enjoy exclusive health and wellbeing content and access support whenever they need it.

MyFFC is also a social media platform in your pocket. You can join dedicated groups to encourage others and share ideas and thoughts with friends, colleagues and peers far and wide.

Scan the QR code to register or go to firefighterscharity.org.uk/myffc-wellness-workshops

