



Managing Mental Health in the Emergency Services





Mind's research shows that at some point 9 out of 10 members of the emergency services have experienced stress, low mood or poor mental health whilst at work.

www.mind.org.uk

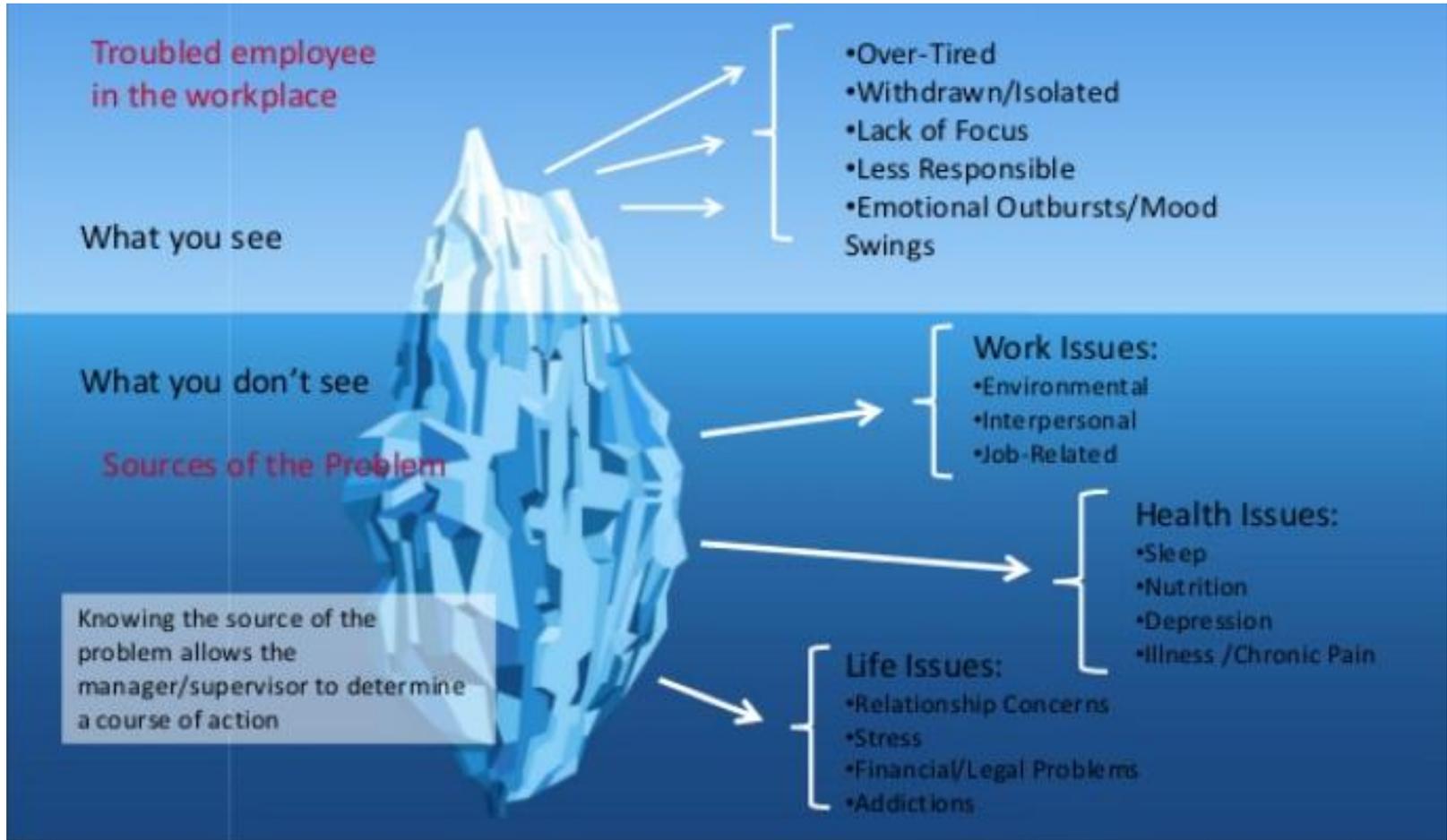
- Emergency services staff and volunteers are more likely to experience poor mental health, BUT they are also less likely to seek support. **Why?**
- 71% of emergency services staff and volunteers surveyed feel that their organisation does not encourage them to talk about mental health.
- Line managers and team-leaders can play a vital role in reducing stigma and changing attitudes in the workplace.



Vicky's Story



Identifying when support is needed

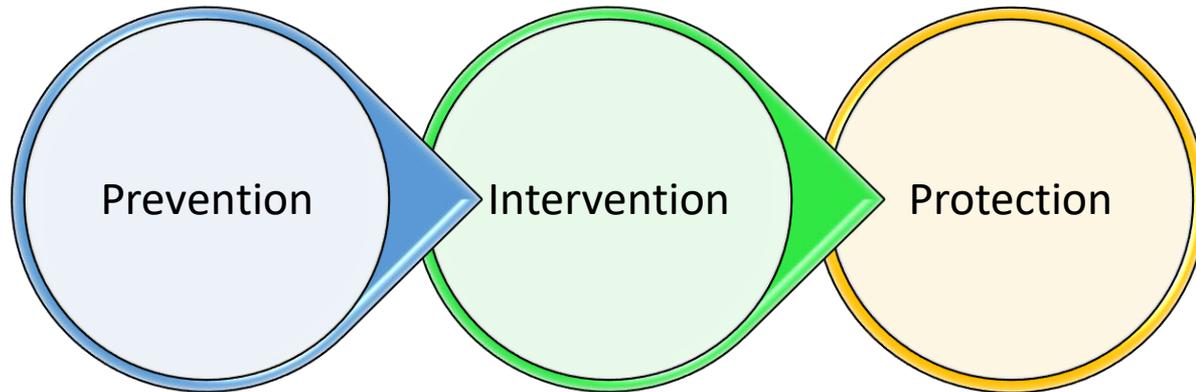


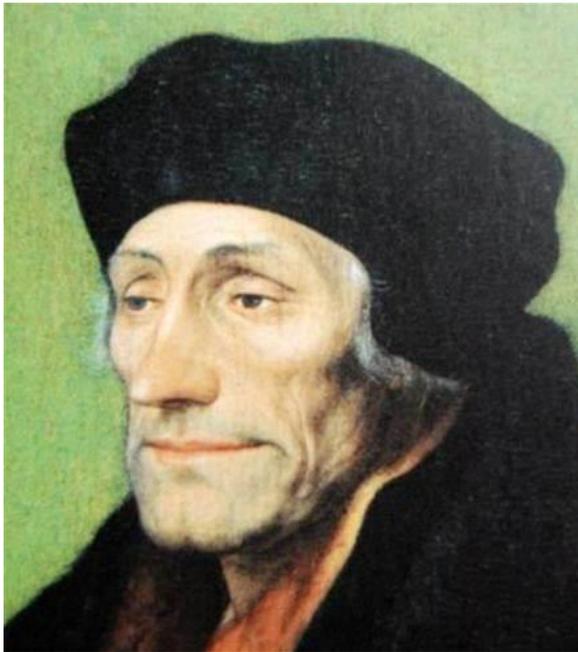
Mental Health Continuum Scale

Where would you say you are on this scale?

IN CRISIS	STRUGGLING	UNSETTLED	THRIVING	EXCELLING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very anxious • Very low mood • Absenteeism • Exhausted • Sickness, physical pains • Isolation • Very poor sleep • Weight loss • Psychotic break • Severe drug/alcohol abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious • Depressed, sad • Low self-esteem • Tired • Poor work performance • Presenteeism • Poor concentration • Poor sleep • Poor appetite • Drug/alcohol abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried, nervous • Edgy • Irritable • Frustrated • Self-doubting • Sad, gloomy • Trouble sleeping • Tired • Distracted • Decreased social activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal mood, some variations • Positive • Calm • Functioning normally in job • Sleeping well • Focused • Eating normally • Normal social activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheerful, joyful • Solution focused • Energetic • High job performance • Prioritising sleep and recovery • 'Flow' - intense engagement • Fully realising potential • Actively seeking connections

How do you manage mental health in the workplace?





Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus
(1466-1536)

Dutch philosopher and Christian
scholar

Превенцията е по-добра от лечението

Zapobieganie jest lepsze niż lekarstwo

La prevención es mejor que la cura

Prevenirea este mai bună decât leacul

Prevention is better than cure

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Culture

- Develop a Mental Health Policy – having a concrete policy reassures employees that their company cares about their wellbeing.
- Create a culture of openness and awareness by encouraging people to talk about mental health.

Working practices

- Encourage staff to take regular breaks away from their desks and get out of the office to reduce stress.
- Introduce a power-down hour, where everyone steps away from their email.
- Review job descriptions to make sure these set out clear and realistic expectations of staff. If not, this might be contributing to, or even causing, mental distress amongst your employees.
- Think about how success is measured and people are rewarded.

Communication

- Use staff newsletters, posters in communal areas, and other internal communications to raise awareness of mental health.
- Introduce discussion about mental health at staff meetings – use them as opportunities to check in with staff about how they are feeling or how they would rate their stress levels and why.
- Conduct regular staff surveys to take a temperature check on wellbeing and feedback results and progress to staff.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk



Managers

- Train up management – if employees know their boss is clued up in mental health matters, they may feel more comfortable in coming forward to discuss any problems they may have at work, or even at home.
- Make sure line managers spend time with staff and get to know them – this makes it easier to spot when they're struggling or behaving uncharacteristically at work.

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Need to build TRUST between staff and senior managers

I'm worried about losing my job

My colleagues will think I am a risk to them

My boss doesn't understand

Solution: Give line managers and team leaders the skills they need to manage their mental health in their organisations

Through a dedicated training programme for line managers and team leaders, participants can gain the following knowledge...

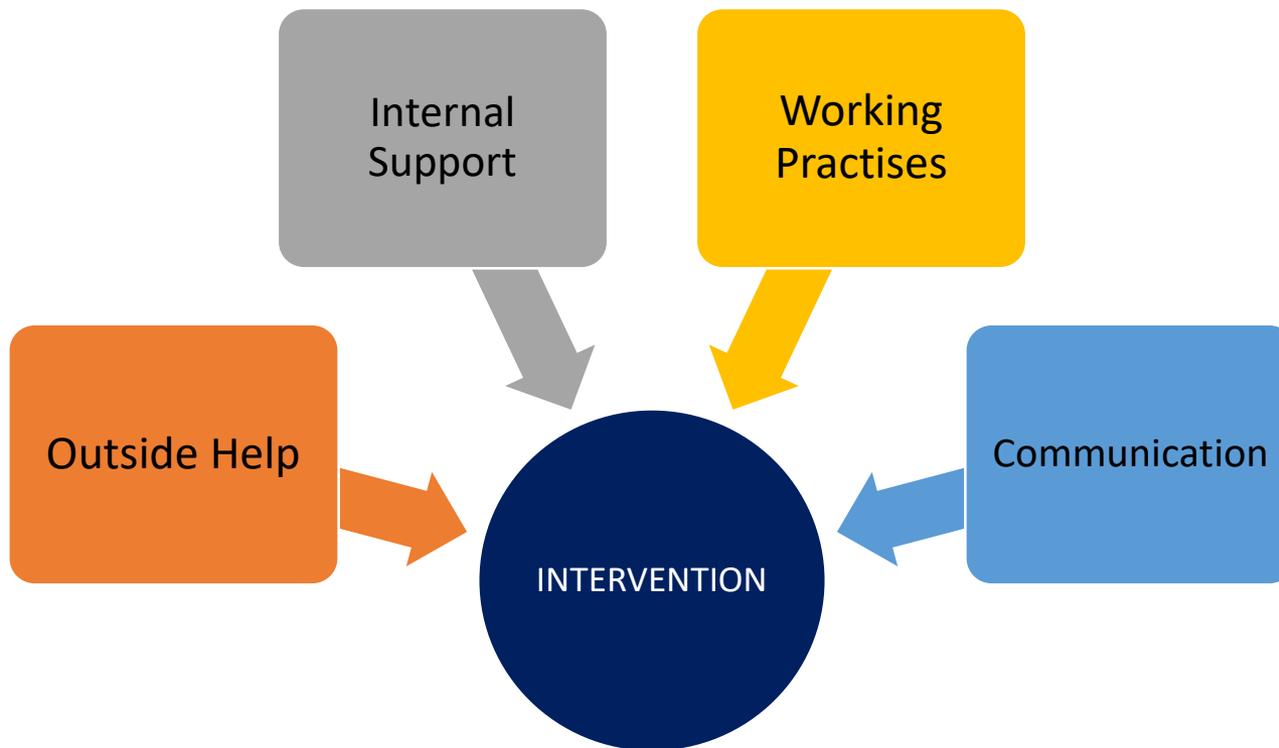
Awareness and understanding of mental health at work and how work can affect emergency services staff and volunteers.

Awareness of the signs and symptoms of poor mental health, how to approach the issue and explore what support is needed.

Understanding of how to manage employees' mental wellbeing in order to reduce poor mental health and its associated risks for absence.

Understanding of how to start a conversation about mental health and how to handle disclosure.

INTERVENTION - when problems do occur, take simple steps to stop them from developing into something more serious!



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Internal support

- Provide accessible guidance on how to manage stress. Understand that problems with stress arise when there is an imbalance between what is expected of someone and their beliefs about whether they can meet those demands
- Provide guidance and support to help employees to become more resilient and more able to positively adapt to change in the workplace
- Create a peer-to-peer support system so people can talk with colleagues of the same level about their concerns
- Consider holding regular informal 'drop-in' sessions with someone from HR, or even a third party, to encourage people to talk through any issues they may be experiencing
- Provide training and resources for line managers to empower them to spot the signs of mental health. Make sure you follow up with them to make sure they have taken this on board and understand how this applies to their own role .

Outside help

- Check that you have an Employee Assistance Programme in place to provide additional support for staff if they're having difficulties inside or outside the workplace – these can offer a range of services from counselling through to legal advice
- Seek the advice of your health partners. Your Employee Assistance Programme will have plenty of resources available to help your managers become more comfortable with the issues relating to mental health



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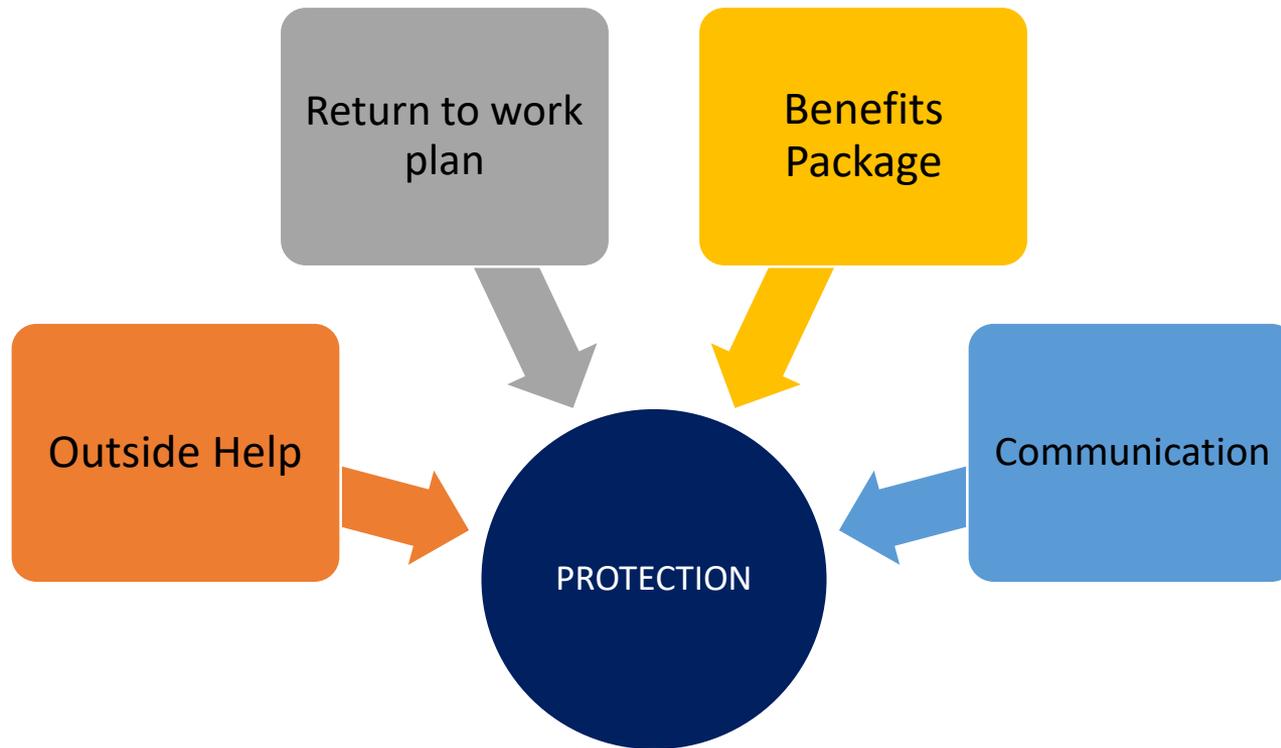
Working practices

- Allow flexible working and accommodations for all staff to work from home – during a period of stress or worry, coming in to the office could aggravate illness in certain cases. Give them the option to work from home if they need to be in more relaxed surroundings.

Communication

- Make sure staff know what support is available through your intranet or employee handbook and find opportunities throughout the year to remind people what is available and how to access it
- Keep in touch with staff so they don't disengage from the workplace and they understand you are available to provide support

PROTECTION – in the most serious cases, staff may need professional support or an extended time off work. This is how you can support the recovery process



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Benefits package

- Make sure your employee benefits package provides support for mental health. Income Protection, for example, provides a regular replacement income if an employee is unable to work due to illness for more than six months. It may also come with vocational rehabilitation services to support them if they are able to return to work. Your Income Protection provider may also offer training and education programmes designed to help managers address mental health problems in the workplace.

Return to work plan

- Develop a tailored and phased return to work plan to help employees ease back into the workplace when they are ready – this may mean starting them on a few hours a week and build their time up slowly, or making adjustments to their role to reduce the pressure they are under.

Communication

- Hold consistent return to work interviews – these ensure the employee hasn't come back too early and can help you get to the root of a problem, as well as being an effective tool of absence management.
- Continue to check-in with employees regularly – often support can drop off once they are settled back in the workplace, but it is important to have an ongoing, and meaningful dialogue to prevent problems from recurring.

Outside help

- Make use of Occupational Health services like the government's Fit To Work service and professional third parties and charities to address health problems and make any necessary adjustments in the workplace.

Thank you!