



Gwasanaeth Tân Ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

Suicide involvement - Briefing Note

1. Introduction

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service have a holistic approach to intervention. This includes promoting partner health and safety messages and being proactive in identifying vulnerable individuals and applying safeguarding principles to help protect those who are at risk of self-harm. The Service is also a champion for positive mental health attitudes and greater awareness of mental health and provides a network of support to staff. This briefing note provides an insight into how the Service responds to the subject of suicide within its Communities.

2. Impact upon our Operational Response staff

Operational Crews and Officers are often exposed to traumatic incidents and the Service is mindful of the impact that this can have on them. This has led to a team of staff being specially trained so that they can be deployed for Critical Diffusion debriefing and Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) and this allows these Diffusion Officers to identify where they can provide support. This support can be as immediate as discussing the traumatic event or where appropriate referring individuals or teams for more specialist support.

An employee Stress Awareness Programme is being rolled out to all staff ensuring that all staff have received a level of awareness and that there are a number of roles who have received more intensive and detailed training. This allows for trained staff to be available across the Service area.

At Executive Team level, the Corporate Head of Prevention & Protection is the strategic lead for Mental Health within the Service.

3. Staff awareness and Staff support through Corporate Health

Raising awareness on mental health and supporting staff with training and awareness is co-ordinated through the Service Human Resource and Corporate Risk Departments who are proactive in improving responses and attitudes to mental health.

Strategies are in place such as the Occupational Stress Management Procedure to set out clearly the Service's commitment to supporting positive mental health and identifying and managing stress with an action plan for mental health promotion.

There is a wide range of comprehensive information on the Service's intranet and messages are also communicated via e-mails, posters and social media, using our corporate communication methods team to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service is proactive in promoting campaigns, both national and international that raise awareness on mental health and our objective is to support the removal of the stigma that is often associated with mental health and encourage people to discuss the subject openly and support each other.

The provision of occupational health options has been significantly developed and this allows for individuals to be referred to a wide range of mental health specialists and counsellors, including priority support during times of employee crisis or following traumatic incidents. Employees can be directed to external resources such as Mind Blue Light, CRUSE counselling and Samaritans as necessary.

The Service promotes fitness and health, which includes mental health at Wellbeing Days across the Service. This encourages awareness and engagement and allows the staff to share any concerns.

The Service has an Employee Assistance Programme provided by 'Care First', a free telephone facility for staff to discuss any concerns they have with a qualified, independent counsellor who can advise them on a wide range of issues that may be causing them anxiety or unhappiness both within and outside of the workplace. An on-line resource is also available to support self-run health and mindfulness advice and exercises and the Service constantly reviews emerging supplementary therapies.

4. Our role within the Community

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service has an essential role within the Community both in response and preventative measures. However, for matters of Suicide Prevention, this is limited to attending emergency incidents where we can assist in preventing an individual from harm and this includes self-harm such as when fire is used as a means of self-harm. Such activity can include the use of high reach appliances and the use of our Drone technology. Sadly, the Service also attends to assist other Services following suicide events to include matters of body recovery.

Since 2012/13, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service has attended 236 incidents that are suicide related.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service employees are trained to identify Safeguarding risks and will refer any concerns to the Safeguarding Office who will assess, advise and refer as appropriate. This Safeguarding includes where concerns are identified regarding mental health or self-harm. During 2017/18, there were 11 cases of concern regarding attempts of suicide and these were dealt with through signposting to key Partners and multi-agency working.

5. Multi-agency working

Our Service Safeguarding staff attend regular meetings with Local Authority Mental Health Teams and this allows Partners to share critical information with us in a secure and limited way where fire is used as a means of self-harm.

6. Public Service Boards

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory role on Public Service Boards and in the development of their Well-being plans and these focus on the collaborative responsibility of raising awareness and supporting well-being, including the mental well-being of everyone within our Communities.