

LONDON ASSEMBLY

January 2026

Fire Committee

In January 2026, the London Assembly Fire Committee received written evidence from London Ambulance Service (LAS) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), to inform the Committee's meeting on the wellbeing of London's firefighters.

The questions put to these organisations were:

- What cooperation / collaboration exists between LAS/MPS and other blue light services in London in addressing poor mental health / wellbeing?
- Does LAS/MPS have examples of effective approaches it has adopted to support its staff experiencing mental health challenges, what worked and what has the impact of that been?
- How does LAS/MPS identify and respond to the differing mental health and wellbeing needs of frontline paramedics, emergency call handlers, and managerial staff?

The written answers to these questions are collated in this document.

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London Ambulance Service

1. What cooperation / collaboration exists between LAS and other blue light services in London in addressing poor mental health / wellbeing?

Working with other organisations such as our blue light colleagues is an important way that we can share best practice and break down barriers to accessing support. All blue light colleagues work extremely demanding jobs, often in difficult circumstances and ensuring they are able to access the support they need is crucial.

To enable better cooperation and collaboration between LAS and other blue light services, representatives from the London Ambulance Service attend the Pan London Major Trauma Psychology Network, together with health and wellbeing leads from the other London blue light services. The aim of the group is to improve the psychological support provided to communities and responders in the wake of major incidents.

This group is due to conclude in February, when a replacement quarterly networking meeting has been agreed in order to continue to share information and learning.

All three blue light services contract the same external Occupational Health provider, which has afforded the opportunity to collaborate and share learning and explore services. This has included stress risk assessment toolkits, psychological monitoring resources and mental health awareness training for managers.

We also collaborate regularly with other blue light service partners in a range of ways where we talk about the key issues impacting us and themes from staff, which will include the wellbeing of colleagues. After incidents, we ensure full debriefs to colleagues, who have often had a multi-agency response. This allows colleagues to have a proper check in and gives space to process these and see if there is anything that could be helped.

Local Resilience Groups strengthen our relationships across organisations and allow a space for colleagues at all agencies to discuss how we work. As part of this we discuss mental health and wellbeing, and what we are doing to prioritise it in the Service.

There is also quarterly meeting between the Chiefs of all emergency services in London, where wellbeing is regularly discussed. This acts as a touchpoint across the organisations at the most senior level, where examples of good working are shared as well as joint areas of concern and what can be done to improve these.

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2. Does LAS have examples of effective approaches it has adopted to support its staff experiencing mental health challenges, what worked and what has the impact of that been?

At London Ambulance Service we take the mental health and wellbeing of our staff extremely seriously. We have offered an increased wellbeing offer since 2020 (as an early response to the impact of the pandemic), with a centralised wellbeing team and support hub. Colleagues are able to access support via phone or email five days a week from the internal wellbeing hub, which receives between 700 and 800 contacts a month with a 99% good or excellent rating from users. The aim of the hub was to increase awareness and usage of support services amongst a dispersed workforce with high utilisation rates and exposure to trauma.

We offer a stepped care pathway to accessing mental health support. This varies from an extensive peer support network to self and manager referral for mental health triage and counselling and psychotherapy options or crisis support. Our external Occupational Health (OH) provider is the main source of mental health therapy for most colleagues, with anonymised monthly reports detailing positive clinical outcomes for both anxiety and depression. Analysis of our OH data and absence levels has contributed to the recent introduction of a mental health screening tool in areas of the Trust where poor mental health is more likely to be an issue.

The Wellbeing Service within the LAS has been shaped in collaboration with colleagues and managers across the Trust and the Wellbeing Team hold regular drop-in meetings, training sessions and share updates via our intranet on a regular basis. These are all very well attended or utilised and in turn contribute to the activities of both the Trust Retention and Wellbeing group and the Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Group. These groups have overseen interventions such as the introduction of Ambulance Association of Chief Executives (AACE) mental maintenance toolkit, our new “Manager’s Guide to Wellbeing” and updating the Trust Death in Service guidance.

In August 2025, the Trust won a bid for £50,000 from NHS England/NHS Charities together to improve our debrief model and support the delivery of a trauma informed workforce who proactively seeks, recognises and accesses mental health support.

3. How does LAS identify and respond to the differing mental health and wellbeing needs of frontline paramedics, emergency call handlers, and managerial staff?

People in all roles need to have wellbeing support, whether that is colleagues on the road, answering calls in our 999 and 111 services, or those working in support roles. Our wellbeing team analyses Trust absence data to ensure we are reacting to hotspots or trends in poor mental health, supporting everyone to access the support they need. The team also cross references this information against Occupational Health data on referral volumes, demographics and cause of referral. As a result, we have been able to identify areas with relatively high levels of work-related stress and implement initiatives such as psychological

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screening and upskilling managers with stress risk assessment training. This approach has been used to address issues across roles and within local teams.

In 2023 the Trust began moving to a Teams-based working model, where managers would have a maximum of 15 team members reporting directly to them. . This has led to improvements in our staff survey metrics, including significantly better scores in how line managers promote their team's wellbeing, communication and sense of belonging. The staff survey data is extensively analysed to identify where outcomes are less positive, with work from a mental health and wellbeing perspective specifically examining our staff "burnout" score.

The Wellbeing Team operate five Wellbeing Support Vehicles (WSVs) across A&Es in London and have the facilities to run Wellbeing Cafes in each of our four 999/111 contact centres. Providing free snacks and drinks paid for by the London Ambulance Charity, the WSVs and Cafes offer an outreach service that gives our call handlers and ambulance crews an opportunity to decompress between periods spent assisting patients, and can signpost staff to additional services should they need further support. Our WSV and Cafe operatives are comprised of a mix of wellbeing team members, restricted duties colleagues who are unable to temporarily fulfil their substantive role and other teams within the Trust who wish to share information about their own work. We are also fortunate to benefit from the regular attendance of the Samaritans who run the HQ Cafe once a week. All of these colleagues receive wellbeing and suicide prevention training so that any necessary escalation of concerns is appropriate and safe. Our WSVs and Cafes are enormously popular with colleagues, with thousands saying these programmes have a significantly positive impact on their wellbeing and experience at work.

LAS works closely in collaboration with the other regional ambulance services, ensuring that good practice is shared and adopted. This has included engaging with nationally commissioned research into stress in our Emergency Operations Centres, support for Newly Qualified Paramedics and work on the National Ambulance Suicide Prevention consensus.

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Metropolitan Police Service

1. What cooperation / collaboration exists between the MPS and other Blue Light services in London in addressing poor mental health / wellbeing?

The MPS takes part in a number of local and national external boards, which include representation from other Blue Light services. This includes :

- Professional Responders Working Group (NHS, LFB, LAS) Shares best practice and collaborates on wellbeing support following a major incident to advise on minimum standards in trauma risk management
- MPS and British Transport Police - We are working with them to understand Trauma Response Automation and Trauma Tracker
- The Royal Foundation's "Emergency Responder Senior Leaders Board" – bringing together leaders from across all of the UK's emergency services on the issue of mental health. It promotes collaborative working across the nation's emergency services to ensure that all emergency responders receive the mental health support they need.
- Blue Light – other forces we collaborate with them through the NPWS Network groups and Police Covenant Delivery group.
- National Suicide Prevention Board
- National Men's Health and wellbeing board – NPCC

2. Does the MPS have examples of effective approaches it has adopted to support its staff experiencing mental health challenges, what worked and what has the impact of that been?

The MPS has implemented a number of both prevention and intervention services to support officers/staff psychological and mental health:

- **Trauma Informed Practical Techniques (TIPT)** – Training in the recognition and management of exposure to trauma as endorsed by the College of Policing. 650 officers have been trained in the techniques and further engagement in this with recruitment training is being considered by NPWS. This training allows officers to be aware of the impact of the work they undertake and how to spot the signs and symptoms of both primary and secondary (vicarious) trauma.
- **Trauma Peer Support Programme** – Peer to Peer support model allowing debriefing to be undertaken following police incidents and rapid access to clinical support if required via Occupational Health. 2580 officers/staff trained as of April 2025. This programme has been recognised nationally receiving an Oscar Kilo NWPS award in 2024 under mental health. It has shown the positive clinical impact of early debriefing following a trauma incident, reducing levels of OH intervention.

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- **Psychological Monitoring Programme** – Circa 11,000 officers in identified high risk roles receive regular MH monitoring to ensure clinical intervention can be rapidly applied to ensure management of any identified symptoms.
- **Long term clinical support plans** are implemented for required teams dealing with high risk exposure to traumatic material.
- Access to approved clinical interventions such as **Trauma informed CBT and EMDR Therapy**.
- **Mental Health Awareness Training** – MPS have included MH awareness and services available to the following delivered trainings : Recruits, Middle Line Leaders Programme and Frontline Leaders Programme.
- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Managers Advice Line (MAL)** – EAP offers a 24 hour support line which includes access to counselling provision. For high level needs or long term support, specialist trauma practice counsellors applying integrative counselling. MAL supports line managers accessing Occupational Health Nurses and OH Physician for early referral and support for MH concerns.
- **Access to National Mental Health Crisis Line** – 24/7 support to officers and staff who may be at crisis point, with access to a counsellor to speak confidentially
- Ensuring easy access to **online resources and signposting to specialist delivery groups** in areas such as bereavement
- An **MPS stakeholder thematic working group** has been developed to ensure we are working across the business, to identify from both data and lived experience, in order to further develop services in line with best practice - NPCC New National Health & Wellbeing Strategy 25
- Support from **trained Blue Light Champions** and Mental Health First Aiders across the business so officers/staff can be supported locally to access OH services and advice if required.

3. How does the MPS identify and respond to the differing mental health and wellbeing needs of frontline officers, emergency call handlers, and managerial staff?

The Met has applied the 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme for all officers and staff who may need support for mental health and wellbeing needs, offering a minimum of 6 counselling sessions which can be increased if clinically required. We also offer access to a National Crisis Mental Health Line. As part of our psychological monitoring programme we conduct role risk assessments to identify officers and staff in high risk positions resulting in them being onboarded into an annual screening programme, which also gives access to self-referral. MH training is offered as part of our frontline and middle line leadership programmes to ensure managers are equipped to understand the needs of their staff, and how to access the appropriate support for them. The internal HR Occupational Health and Wellbeing Team work in

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partnership with business stakeholders to identify any specific teams requiring particular support, for example investigative teams covering difficult/sensitive subject matter; call handlers dealing with traumatic incidents, or frontline officers responding to emergencies, in order to create specific support plans in partnership with Occupational Health.