

Wellbeing of London's firefighters

Key information

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Introduction

The London Assembly Fire Committee is holding a one-off meeting on 13 January 2026 about the wellbeing of firefighters in London.

Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

- To examine how the demands of firefighting in London are affecting London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) staff mental health and wellbeing.
- To scrutinise the impact LFB's policies and wellbeing support are having in tackling these challenges.

Key Issues

- Research indicates that firefighters may face a greater risk of mental health challenges compared with the general public, due to the nature of their work. In December 2024, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) said "we are facing a mental health crisis in the fire and rescue service" and that it has commissioned research "to better understand the type of support available to fire service employees, the scale and severity of the mental health crisis, and its underlying causes."

- The primary reasons for sickness absence across the fire and rescue sector nationally are musculoskeletal and mental health, accounting for 31 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. This has an estimated cost to the fire sector of approximately £77m per year.
- Between January 2019 and June 2024, “stress, anxiety and depression” was the cause of one fifth of all LFB’s long term sickness absences (firefighters off work for longer than two weeks).
- LFB launched a new Wellbeing Strategy for staff on 7 November 2022, along with a new mental health policy “Mental Health: Promote, Protect and Treat”. Together, these are intended to shift LFB “from a largely treatment model of wellbeing support to a preventative model.”

Key questions

1. How do the demands of firefighting affect the mental health and wellbeing of LFB staff across different roles – operational crews, control room staff, and leadership teams?
2. To what extent is poor mental health and wellbeing a challenge within LFB, and how does this vary by role, location, or demographic?
3. What mental health and wellbeing support services are currently available to LFB staff, and how do these differ between roles?
4. Are there examples from other organisations of effective approaches to treating, managing, and supporting staff experiencing mental health challenges, and what impact have these interventions had?
5. How effective are LFB’s policies at addressing the specific wellbeing needs of different staff groups?

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