

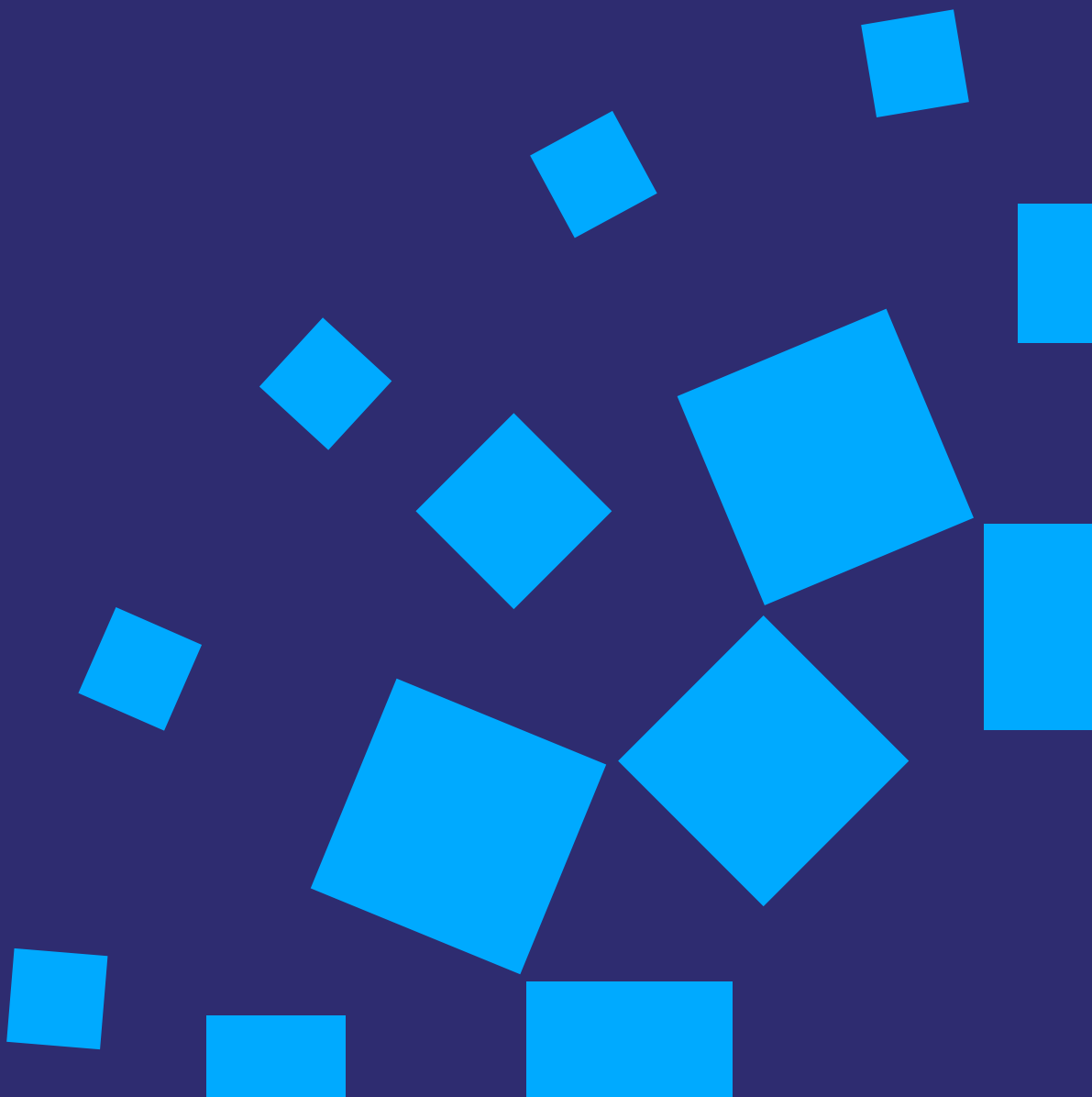


College of  
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to keep people safe

# Blue Light Wellbeing Framework



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# Foreword

I have worked closely with the UK police service for many years and have seen first-hand the high levels of emotional labour associated with the profession. I have published research on police wellbeing, working closely with the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Wellbeing and Engagement working group. This research highlights the unique issues and complex challenges that emergency service workers face in the workplace.

The Blue Light Wellbeing Framework is grounded in this research and in Public Health England guidance. This framework provides invaluable advice in the key areas of leadership, environment, resilience and support, including some of the new risks faced by staff, such as exposure to COVID-19.

Wellbeing is linked to physical and mental health. At the heart of getting wellbeing right is how we perform when we feel good. This framework demonstrates the police service's commitment and determination to understand and address the issues affecting its people, so that it can further invest in prevention, early detection of illness and rehabilitation.

The framework's overarching focus is on creating a positive working environment in which the workforce can draw meaning and purpose from what is a challenging and hugely rewarding profession. In addition, the framework now includes the opportunity to self-assess the quality of occupational health provision, an important component of secondary and tertiary prevention of illness, which will augment the drive towards good work ability for all.

## **Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE**

50th Anniversary Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, Manchester Business School; President of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD); President of Relate; President of the British Academy of Management

# Introduction

The Blue Light Wellbeing Framework (BLWF) is a statement of intent, showing a commitment to health and wellbeing. This is the second edition of the framework.

Organisations use this framework to audit and benchmark themselves against an independent set of standards, which have been tailored to meet the specialist needs of emergency services staff. The BLWF will help to identify what an organisation already has in place and what gaps there may be in providing the best wellbeing provision it can for employees.

The aspects of the framework are based on widespread consultation with leading academics and professionals in the field, as well as practitioners at all levels. The framework has always been intended as an up-to-date and ambitious guide for employers to self-assess against. This facilitates subsequent strategy and interventions that are based on evidence of need and improved outcomes.

Since the launch of the first edition of the BLWF<sup>1</sup> and Oscar Kilo in 2017, the wellbeing landscape across policing has begun to see a positive shift. We have seen an increase in investment into police welfare from the government, the introduction of the Common Goal for Police Wellbeing and the launch of the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS).

Over the past two years, we have also been able to learn from the information submitted by forces through the BLWF. This has provided us with a richer national picture of wellbeing provision.

As a result, our understanding of the evidence base and ‘what works’ has deepened. This has led to the publication of this updated version of the BLWF to ensure, in a spirit of continuous improvement, that it remains an up-to-date and relevant resource for organisations to use.

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1 Hesketh I and Williams S. (2017). ‘The Blue Light Wellbeing Framework’ [internet]. 1st ed. Available from [collegenet.college.police.uk/news/Pages/Oscar-Kilo.aspx](https://collegenet.college.police.uk/news/Pages/Oscar-Kilo.aspx) [Accessed 12 August 2020]

# What changes have been made?

## A new occupational health section

The most significant change is the addition of a brand new area that focuses specifically on occupational health. This area has been added to complement the Foundation Occupational Health Standards introduced by the NPWS in November 2019.

The standards are intended as guidance to establish a benchmark for the structure of occupational health services, to help put in place the building blocks for services that are more consistent across the country, while still being adaptable to local demand.

Recognising that many occupational health services are under pressure to meet the needs of their forces, we continue to provide as much support and guidance to forces as we can to help them adopt these standards. This additional area of the framework is intended to assist forces in this respect.

## Refined and updated questions

The six existing areas of the framework remain the same. However, we have made refinements to some of the questions within those areas. For example, within the section 'Protecting the workforce', we now make specific reference to Operation Hampshire and the Police Federation's Seven Point Plan. In the 'Mental Health' section, we have made refinements to suggested pledges and commitments that your force or service may wish to align itself with.

# Leadership

- 1 The organisation has assessed and documented its leadership requirements and priorities around embedding wellbeing.
- 2 The organisation can demonstrate the process for ongoing consultation and communication with staff on relevant workplace wellbeing issues. This consultation and communication should be through an appropriate agreement with staff associations.
- 3 Senior management encourage a consistent and positive approach to employee wellbeing throughout the organisation.
- 4 There is an effective communication policy in place at all levels.
- 5 An effective policy and procedure to tackle bullying and harassment has been implemented and evaluated, and is regularly reviewed.
- 6 Flexible working practices and family-friendly policies are in place.
- 7 An effective policy is in place for whistle-blowing.
- 8 Effective policies are in place to manage disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- 9 A system is in place that recognises and rewards good work.
- 10 Managers understand, and can explain, the main issues that affect the health and wellbeing of their team.
- 11 Line managers have relevant leadership and management training that is documented in their personal records.
- 12 Line managers demonstrate regular joint working and shared decision making with employees and empower employees to work independently.
- 13 Line managers have documented training in how to have difficult conversations, develop people skills and resolve disputes.
- 14 Employees are offered learning and development opportunities to maximise their potential. These opportunities are included in their annual review.
- 15 There is evidence of managing organisational development and change appropriately.

# Absence management

- 1 A clear attendance management policy is in place and procedures are known to staff.
- 2 The organisation maintains contact with absent employees, to provide support and to aid return to work.
- 3 Documented return-to-work procedures are in place and are followed.
- 4 The organisation conducts and records return-to-work interviews, records any concerns and provides appropriate support.
- 5 The organisation conducts specific risk assessments for individuals in high-vulnerability roles and takes into account a person's health status.
- 6 Reasonable adjustments are available to employees, in line with recommendations made in a Statement of Fitness for Work.
- 7 The organisation collects and monitors absence rates and feeds these into a suitable assessment and intervention model, for example, the GAIN model (policing).
- 8 Interventions are undertaken where patterns indicate trends of absence. Bradford Index findings do not necessarily lead to performance sanctioning.
- 9 Managers have participated in attendance management training and this is documented on their personal records.
- 10 The organisation monitors absence trends. To reduce further absence, the organisation designs and implements specific programmes to address the issues identified, taking into account special measures that may be introduced (for example, quarantining, isolating or shielding for COVID-19).
- 11 The organisation's return-to-work policies are designed to support rehabilitation and early return to work, with adjustments made to accommodate this when necessary.
- 12 The organisation has a proactive system in place to support staff on long-term sick leave with returning to work. **The organisation will raise awareness of, and support, staff with long-term conditions.**



# Creating the environment

- 1 All employees are aware of the need to create a workplace environment that is conducive to wellbeing and can communicate this to others.
- 2 All leaders can articulate the importance of creating an environment where people can experience meaning and purpose in their working life.
- 3 All employees, volunteers and contractors can demonstrate an awareness of the legal obligations in relation to health, safety and welfare in the workplace.
- 4 Force frameworks and expectations are communicated to all new staff, volunteers and contractors.
- 5 Systems are in place for staff to raise and resolve environmental issues, including management decisions and the way that work is arranged.
- 6 All employees, volunteers and contractors are empowered to raise issues in relation to working conditions, such as those that create stress and fatigue.
- 7 An internal engagement forum exists and is accessible by all.
- 8 There are identified health and safety representatives (trade union and/or company representatives). All employees, volunteers and contractors are expected to engage with these representatives if issues arise.
- 9 All employees, volunteers and contractors are aware of their duty to act with ethics and integrity.
- 10 There is a clear emphasis on preventing ill health across all policies. There is also clear direction and organisational support around attending work while unwell (presenteeism).
- 11 All those with supervisory responsibilities have received health and safety management training.
- 12 The organisation holds regular meetings to discuss the working environment. The organisation actions and records general analysis, interventions and needs (GAIN) assessments.

# Mental health

- 1 A mental health and wellbeing statement of intent is in place and is followed. This statement of intent highlights promoting mental wellbeing to the organisation and addresses investment in workforce mental wellbeing.
- 2 The organisation is signed up to, and engages with, the Blue Light Wellbeing Framework.
- 3 **The organisation provides information to employees about, and actively promotes reducing the stigma around, mental ill health.**
- 4 The organisation provides information about mental health and wellbeing, including work-related stress and additional information readily available to staff at all levels.
- 5 The organisation has an effective means of identifying high-risk roles and monitoring changes in staff.
- 6 The organisation promotes regular mental health checks and provides support for those in high-risk areas of work.
- 7 The organisation has implemented a mental wellbeing policy that follows the principles of the Health and Safety Executive's Management Frameworks for Stress and promotes mental health awareness.
- 8 **The organisation ensures employees are aware that mental health and wellbeing issues are valid.** People seeking to address these issues are fully supported by the organisation at all levels.
- 9 The organisation has an individual performance and development review system in place that enables any training needs to be identified. This system also allows employees to comment on work-related and personal issues that affect their performance.
- 10 The organisation has a protocol in place for the use of risk assessments to prevent stress. These risk assessments are conducted on an individual and an organisational level, and are regularly reviewed.

- 11 Education and development opportunities are routinely available to managers and staff, to enhance their skills and knowledge around workplace mental health issues.
- 12 Mental health awareness training is documented on personal records and is regarded as continuous professional development.
- 13 Staff consultations and surveys take place that seek information on mental wellbeing of staff. These also cover working conditions, communication, work-life integration, staff support and work-related or other causes of stress, with action plans drawn up to address major issues.
- 14 The organisation provides a confidential support service in-house or externally to individuals who come forward with a problem.
- 15 The organisation ensures that change programmes are accompanied by support, information or targeted intervention programmes.
- 16 The organisation provides appropriate avenues of communication to keep staff at all levels informed of changes.
- 17 The organisation acknowledges the requirement to provide specialist mental health support for complex conditions, for example, social support groups for those experiencing post-traumatic stress. Volunteering and out-of-work activities are actively encouraged and supported by the organisation.

# Protecting the workforce

- 1 The organisation has a statement of intent around all activity related to employee physical health and healthy eating.
- 2 Food provided by, or sold within, the organisation meets government buying frameworks for healthy eating.
- 3 The organisation is familiar with Operation Hampshire and the Police Federation Seven Point Plan:
  - assaults on police officers and staff should be investigated with the same care, compassion and commitment as assaults on members of the public
  - the Victim's Code applies to all victims, including police officers and staff
  - the assaulted officer must never be the officer in charge (OIC) for their own assault
  - victims recover more quickly and make a better recovery if they receive the right welfare and supervision
  - supervisors must ensure the direct commander is informed, to provide continuity of welfare support
  - assaulted officers or staff, as well as the relevant supervisor, must complete the Accident Management System report
  - to achieve successful prosecution, the best evidence must be presented
- 4 The organisation has procedures in place to identify and assist with financial problems or crisis.
- 5 A variety of wellbeing interventions are available to staff that are signposted, governed and monitored.
- 6 The organisation actively promotes raising the awareness of key physical health indicators, for example, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar.
- 7 Alcohol policy includes guidelines on the use of alcohol on duty, including alcohol in the system during working hours.

- 8 Employees are supported in seeking help to treat alcohol or substance misuse issues, including providing readily available sources of further information and support.
- 9 Organisational code of conduct and behaviour in relation to alcohol and substances has been well established and well publicised.
- 10 New employees are made aware of how to access relevant policies, information and support services at the point of induction.
- 11 The organisation has protocols in place to identify risks associated with an ageing workforce and strategies in place to support and monitor those individuals.
- 12 The organisation has the facility to ensure that all significant incidents are debriefed and staff are aware of the support available.
- 13 Staff representatives from various levels of the organisation are involved in developing or reviewing the policy, which addresses alcohol and other substances.
- 14 Managers have access to information on how to identify the signs of alcohol and substance misuse, and are aware of where to obtain support or signpost employees with a problem.
- 15 Employees have access to alcohol awareness training, which has been delivered to the majority of the employees.
- 16 Peer support panels are established and are regularly used to challenge workforce wellbeing by the organisation, which then takes action on recommendations emerging from peer support work.
- 17 The organisation has policies that are understood and applied consistently to support reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.
- 18 Effective procedures are in place to enable discrimination or bullying to be reported and managed.
- 19 Dietary advice, particularly for shift workers, is available and accessible by all, and the organisation supports healthy living programmes.

# Personal resilience

- 1 Resilience training is available to help all employees identify potential issues.
- 2 The organisation actively promotes improving personal resilience and openly commits to workplace wellbeing programmes.
- 3 The organisation actively seeks ways to reduce sleep deprivation, for example, overtime policies, turnaround times and working day limits.
- 4 Any on-site catering facilities provide healthy options that are actively promoted.
- 5 A rolling schedule of planned events to promote the importance of healthy eating is in place.
- 6 Internal or external support is on offer for those who wish to lose weight and commit to a healthier lifestyle.
- 7 Information is made available on the benefits of physical activity and the organisation actively promotes physical activity.
- 8 The importance of minimum legally required breaks taken by all staff is communicated at all levels. Employees are encouraged to undertake physical activity if they are engaged in sedentary roles, for example, office-based roles.
- 9 Staff are encouraged to take part in regular physical activity and opportunities to do so are actively promoted, for example, social, sports and leisure facilities.
- 10 Physical activity in the workplace and in the local area is actively encouraged and supported by the physical environment.
- 11 The organisation provides appropriate, acceptable and accessible information on healthy eating.
- 12 The organisation offers tailored programmes to improve understanding and take-up of physical activity.
- 13 The organisation promotes self-efficacy and encourages individuals to recognise their own limitations in the workplace.
- 14 The organisation promotes alternative methods of travel.

# Occupational health

- 1 The occupational health (OH) service acts with integrity and financial propriety.
- 2 The OH service maintains adequate clinical records.
- 3 The OH service implements and complies with systems to protect confidentiality.
- 4 Clinical staff are qualified and competent to undertake the duties for which they have been employed.
- 5 There is adequate training and clinical governance by regular one-to-one appraisal and clinical supervision systems, which should have knowledge and expertise in occupational health and policing embedded.
- 6 The OH service conducts its business in facilities that are safe, accessible, maintained and appropriate. These facilities have the correct standards of hygiene for the services provided.
- 7 Medical equipment is safe and appropriate for the services provided.
- 8 Appropriate medicines management and clinical supervision is in place where required.
- 9 **The OH service builds and maintains constructive and confident relationships.**
- 10 The OH service is aware of, and driven by, the needs of the organisation, as well as the hazards, risks, processes and control measures, particularly in relation to emerging police agendas. The OH service has the clinical capacity and capability to resource these needs effectively.
- 11 The OH service must ensure that all service users are treated equally, fairly and with respect, in line with professional standards and policing codes. These standards and codes are consulted with regard to OH services provided, there is a feedback mechanism in place and the provision of informed consent is explained.

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## About the College

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Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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