

Case Study: Police Service Northern Ireland

A proactive and preventative approach toward supporting colleagues

We know that working in the police can predispose colleagues to a wide range of unique work-related stressors, including being required to consider, respond, or bear witness to a vast degree of human suffering. Research has shown that recurrent exposure to such disturbing events or material can contribute to colleagues being traumatised by their work, often perpetuated by the ongoing degrees of physical threat they face. Unfortunately this can contribute to some being left vulnerable to injury through work-related trauma.

To support colleagues, we are developing a brand new Mental Wellbeing and Trauma Resilience Programme for our police officers and staff, with the aim of promoting trauma-informed practice and positive mental health outcomes within the service and the broader support systems of those we serve.

Our team is working alongside a range of internal and external stakeholders including our Human

Resources, Occupational Health and Wellbeing departments, as well the Police College. Our multicomponent Wellbeing and Trauma Resilience Programme has been developed as a wrap-around package of five projects:

- The first project is a foundation training programme on trauma-informed practice and mental health awareness for new employees and their families, with plans to expand this to all members of the service.
- The second project seeks to expand upon an established and accredited group of post incident police peer supporters and wellbeing volunteers.
- The third aims to digitalise and normalise the use of bespoke individualised wellbeing and trauma resilience plans within the organisation.
- The fourth project is the development of an innovative early intervention system for wellness monitoring using existing police systems. It is based on programmes such as the SafeTNet system used by Victoria Police, Australia.
- The final project seeks to use peer supporters and wellbeing volunteers to deliver an innovative form of group EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) to help address work-related trauma at any early stage of exposure.

This innovative and holistic approach has been made possible after securing a grant of £260,000 from Movember and Gilettte's Veterans and First Responders Mental Health Grant Programme.

The programme has been co-designed by clinical psychologists, police officers and police staff, ensuring lived experience is at the core of our work. Through the programme we are aiming to embed a culture of trauma-informed practice, prevention innovation, and early intervention in the service with a view to improving mental health outcomes for colleagues, their families and the communities they serve.

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