



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2018-0277, 14 December 2018

Mental health support for firefighters

Westminster Hall, Tuesday 18 December 2018, 2.30pm

A Westminster Hall debate on mental health support for firefighters is scheduled for Tuesday 18 December 2018 at 2.30pm. The Member leading the debate is Emma Dent Coad MP.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Contributor: Sarah Pepin
Subject specialists: Jenny Brown, Tom Powell
(Mental health)

Contents

1.	Background	2
1.1	What mental health support is available to firefighters?	3
	NHS support	3
1.2	LIBOR grants	3
	Blue Light Programme	4
1.3	Inspectorate assessments	5
2.	News and blogs	6
2.1	Press	7
3.	Parliamentary Business	9
3.1	Debates	9
3.2	Parliamentary Questions	9
4.	Further reading	12

1. Background

Firefighters have a stressful and at times traumatic job. The mental health charity 'Mind' are running a programme of work aimed at improving mental health services for emergency workers (discussed further in section 1.2). As part of this programme the charity commissioned research to better understand the mental health of emergency service workers. This research found that emergency service personnel are:

disproportionately affected by mental health problems, and that this is strongly linked to the work they do. Nearly nine in ten blue light staff report having experienced stress and poor mental health at work, and they are around twice as likely to identify problems at work as the main cause of those mental health problems as the general workforce.¹

In relation to firefighters 'Mind' have found that:

- 85% of people in the fire and rescue services have experienced stress and poor mental health at work.
- They are twice as likely as the wider workforce to identify problems at work as the main cause of their mental health problems.
- 37% think that colleagues would treat them differently – in a negative way – if they spoke about a mental health problem at work.
- They are more likely seek help from a GP than from a colleague.²

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC: an advisory non-departmental public body) conducted a study of occupational health risks in firefighters in March 2010. They identified only four research papers that looked at the mental health impacts of working as a firefighter.³ As such the IIAC were unable to make recommendations in relation to mental health in firefighters due to a lack of research.⁴

¹ Mind, [*Blue Light Programme Research Summary: An evaluation of the impact of our mental health support for emergency services staff and volunteers in 2015 to 2016*](#), p5

² Mind, [*Our Blue Light: Mental health support for our emergency services staff and volunteers – one year on*](#), p7

³ Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, [*Occupational health risks in firefighters*](#), March 2010, p227

⁴ Ibid, p228

1.1 What mental health support is available to firefighters?

Individual fire service authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have appropriate health and wellbeing support for their staff.⁵ How fire authorities arrange this support is up to them.

The Fire brigade Union (FBU) have advocated for all fire authorities to have specific mental health policies.⁶

Support is also available to firefighters from various charities and professional bodies:

- [Firefighters charity: Public spotlight on mental health](#)
- [Mind: Mental wellbeing- fire and rescue](#)
- [National Fire Chiefs Council: Health and Wellbeing](#)

NHS support

The NHS provides a range of services that may be appropriate for the treatment and care of patients with different mental health conditions. For example, people suffering from trauma may be offered therapeutic approaches including: family therapy, psycho-education, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT); the NHS in England also provides an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme that offers a range of interventions for treating people with depression or anxiety. Further information can be found in the [Commons Library briefing on mental health policy in England](#).

NHS support for Grenfell survivors

While NHS mental health services are generally accessed by patients by presenting to the NHS a more proactive approach has been taken after recent major incidents. For example, the NHS has undertaken a screening for trauma programme for those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. NHS England announced on 9 October 2018 that up to £50 million will be made available over five years to provide ongoing physical and mental health services for those affected by the Grenfell fire, including long-term screening.⁷

1.2 LIBOR grants

The UK financial regulator placed substantial fines on banks for manipulating the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) for profit.⁸ In

⁵ PQ172593, [Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Health Services](#), answered 14 September 2018. See also *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*, [section 2](#).

⁶ FBU, [Mental health at work: an initial guide for FBU reps](#), 2016, p22-23

⁷ NHS England, [NHS to provide long term screening service for Grenfell community](#), October 2018

⁸ See House of Commons Library, [LIBOR, Public Inquiries & FSA/FCA Disciplinary Powers](#), Commons Briefing Paper, 06376, July 2014

2012 the then Chancellor, George Osborne, announced that “the multi-million-pound fines paid by banks and others who break the rules will go to the benefit of the public and not to other banks”.⁹

A LIBOR fund was set up and administrated by HM Treasury. The majority of the fund was used to support Armed Forces and emergency services charities and other related good causes. A total of £773 million was committed to charities between 2012 and 2017. The fund is now closed.¹⁰

A proportion of the LIBOR fund was used to support charities providing mental health support and advocacy to emergency service personnel. The table below details LIBOR grants which are relevant to mental health services for fire service personnel.

LIBOR grants given to charities supporting mental health of firefighters			
Announcement	Charity/Organisation	Commitment	Description
October 2014 announcement	Mind	"up to £4m"	To develop a package of targeted support and information for all emergency services personnel. This will include anti-stigma work, establishing peer support groups and embedding training and awareness raisin within employers, charities and other groups
Autumn Statement 2016	Mind	£1,535,670	To provide improved mental health for Emergency Services staff across England and Wales
LIBOR 2017: grant commitments	The Fire Fighters Charity	£1,416,262	To contribute towards establishing a Recovery Centre, to provide a centre of excellence delivering high quality emotional wellbeing services for Fire and Rescue Services personnel.
	British Red Cross Society Royal Charter	£649,625	To support the ‘Resilient Responders’ programme providing resilience and improved wellbeing of Emergency Services personnel at British Red Cross and Fire and Rescue Services of South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.
	Pete’s Dragons	£80,000	To establish a ‘Suicide-safer’ community for Emergency Services personnel across the South West of England.
	Police Treatment Centres	£1,500,000	To expand the Police Treatment Centre in Harrogate, providing increased Psychological Wellbeing support to the Police and other Emergency Services personnel.

Source: HM Treasury: [£10m LIBOR boost to support emergency services, 3 October 2014](#)
 LIBOR 2017: grant commitments, 22 November 2017
 Autumn Statement 2016: LIBOR commitments, 23 November 2016

Blue Light Programme

The largest recipient of LIBOR grants relating to mental health support for emergency service personnel was the mental health charity ‘Mind’. ‘Mind’ used the funding to establish the [Blue Light Programme](#). This programme has run since March 2015. Government grants supported the programme up to March 2018.¹¹

Through the programme ‘Mind’ have:

- developed [local mental health networks](#) for emergency service personnel;

⁹ HM Treasury, [Speech: Statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne MP, on LIBOR](#), July 2012

¹⁰ HM Treasury, [Guidance: LIBOR funding](#), November 2017

¹¹ Mind, [Funding for Mind's Blue Light Programme](#), June 2017, see also

- set up the [‘blue light info-line’](#) for advice on mental health and wellbeing;
- conducted research about mental health of emergency service personnel. Including research on what interventions work to support emergency service personnel;
- run anti-stigma campaigns; and
- produced support resources for service personnel (including [information tailored for firefighters](#)).

More information on Mind’s ‘Blue Light Programme’ can be found on its [webpage](#). ‘Mind’ have also published reports describing the work of the programme’s three phases ([phase one](#), [phase two](#) and [phase three](#)).

1.3 Inspectorate assessments

In July 2017 responsibility for inspecting England’s fire and rescue services was given to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).¹²

In answer to a parliamentary question the Minister for Police and Fire Services, Nick Hurd, has stated that:

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services is assessing how well services understand and meet the wellbeing needs of their workforce and where improvements could be made.¹³

This assessment of how the fire authorities meet the wellbeing needs of their staff is part of HMICFRS’ ‘inspection question set’ for 2018-19.¹⁴ It therefore forms part of HMICFRS’ regular inspections of fire authorities. HMICFRS has yet to publish an inspection of a fire rescue authority.

¹² HMICFRS, [Fire and rescue](#), [last accessed 13/12/18]

¹³ PQ194010, [Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Health Services](#), answered 29 November 2018

¹⁴ HMICFRS, [FRS inspections question set 2018-19](#), question 3.1.3

2. News and blogs

NHS England

[NHS to provide long term screening service for Grenfell community](#)

9 October 2018

Fire Fighters Charity

[Public spotlight on mental health](#)

17 August 2017

Fire Brigades Union

[Revealed: how counselling services for firefighters have been cut back](#)

15 June 2017

Mind

[Mind's Blue Light Programme – LIBOR funding announcement](#)

Undated

Mind

[Mind's Blue Light Programme – Phase 2 \(2016/17\)](#)

Undated

Mind

[One in four emergency services workers has thought about ending their lives](#)

20 April 2016

HM Treasury

[£10m LIBOR boost to support emergency services](#)

3 October 2014

2.1 Press

Huffington Post

[Stress and anxiety leading cause of absence for London firefighters after Grenfell tragedy](#)

6 December 2018

Telegraph

['Everything spiralled out of control' – a firefighter's story of being saved from PTSD](#)

18 November 2018

Guardian

[Most Grenfell Tower survivors show signs of PTSD – council study](#)

24 July 2018

Guardian

[For firefighters like me, the hidden dangers are often the most hazardous](#)

28 April 2018

Independent

[Number of firefighters off sick with mental health problems jumps by a third in the last six years](#)

17 September 2017

BBC News

[Fire staff on long-term mental health leave up by 30%](#)

17 September 2017

Guardian

[Fire fighters' battle with PTSD: "Every day is an anxious day"](#)

23 August 2017

Guardian

[London fire chief says she has had counselling for Grenfell Tower trauma](#)

21 August 2017

Telegraph

[Emergency service workers suffering post-traumatic stress following terror attacks and Grenfell fire](#)

23 July 2017

Guardian

[NHS bosses warn of mental health crisis with long waits for treatment](#)

7 July 2017

BBC News

[Firefighter with post traumatic stress disorder helps mental health scheme](#)

5 May 2016

3. Parliamentary Business

3.1 Debates

[Fireworks: Public Sales](#)

HC Deb 26 November 2018 c2-44WH

[Grenfell Tower](#)

HC Deb 16 May 2018 c310-40

[Assaults on Emergency Workers \(Offences\) Bill](#)

Second reading

HC Deb 20 October 2017 c1103-57

3.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Health Services](#)

Asked by: Diane Abbott

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support for firefighters.

Answered by: Nick Hurd | Home Office

We recognise the vital role firefighters play and it is essential that fire and rescue authorities, as the employers, ensure that they receive the mental health support they require.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services is assessing how well services understand and meet the wellbeing needs of their workforce and where improvements could be made.

29 November 2018 | Written question | 194010

[Emergency Services: Mental Health Services](#)

Asked by: Thelma Walker

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that retired emergency service workers have access to mental health support.

Answered by: Nick Hurd | Home Office

Since 2014, the Government has provided £7m to pay for mental health support through Mind's Blue Light Programme. This ensures that our

current and former emergency service workers have the support they require.

Emergency service workers have demonstrated extraordinary courage and fortitude in the face of major challenges over recent years, including terrorist attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire. We are grateful to them for their tireless work and dedication to duty.

29 November 2018 | Written question | 194743

[Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Health Services](#)

Asked by: Karen Lee

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will provide additional funding to Fire Authorities for firefighter mental health services.

Answered by: Nick Hurd | Home Office

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority in England to ensure that they have appropriate support and wellbeing provisions in place which reflect the specific needs of their workforce.

However, since 2014, the Government has provided £7m to pay for mental health support through Mind's Blue Light Programme to ensure our emergency services workers, including fire service employees, have the counselling and emotional support they require.

14 September 2018 | Written question | 172593

[Emergency Services: Mental Health Services](#)

Asked by: Cat Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 April 2016 to Question 34792, how the £4 million allocation from LIBOR fines that have been allocated for mental health support is being divided between emergency services; and what proportion of that funding will be allocated to (a) firefighters, (b) police officers and staff and (c) paramedics and ambulance staff.

Answered by: Mike Penning | Home Office

The LIBOR funding allocated to support emergency services staff and volunteers was allocated to a variety of charities covering all the emergency services. The Police and Fire Service treatment and rehabilitation centres and the Air Ambulance Services Charity are among the charities in receipt of LIBOR funding and they support retired as well as serving personnel. Information is not held centrally on proportions of funding allocated to each emergency service or to retired emergency services workers.

27 April 2016 | Written question | 35410

[Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Illness](#)

Asked by: Cat Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the prevalence of mental health issues among firefighters.

Answered by: Mike Penning | Home Office

The physical and mental well being of fire fighters is of utmost importance and we recognise that from time to time some fire fighters may experience challenging times because of the stressful and demanding functions of the role. The responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of fire fighters rests with individual fire and rescue authorities. The Chief Fire Officers' Association supports them in this work through its lead on fire and rescue occupational health matters.

The Government announced in October last year the allocation of nearly £10 million to help support 200,000 emergency services personnel and volunteers, funded through the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) fines. Of this funding up to £4 million was allocated to mental health charity MIND to develop a programme of targeted mental health support and information for all emergency services personnel across England. The programme includes an anti-stigma campaign, a confidential advice line for emergency service staff, training, peer learning events and other resources to help promote better mental health in the work place.

25 April 2016 | Written question | 34792

4. Further reading

[Mental health policy in England](#), Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP-7547, 4 September 2018

Mind, [Fire and rescue - mental wellbeing](#)

Mind, [Blue Light Programme](#)

Blue Light Programme, [Research and evaluation](#)

Blue Light Programme research summary: [an evaluation of the impact of our mental health support for emergency services staff and volunteers in 2015 to 16](#)

National Fire Chiefs Council, [Health and wellbeing](#)

Fire Brigades Union, [Mental health at work – an initial guide for FBU reps](#), 5 October 2016

R A Graveling and J O Crawford, [Occupational health risks in firefighters](#), IOM Strategic Consulting Report P530, Institute of Occupational Medicine for Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, March 2010

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).