

Human Resources

Critical Incident Wellbeing Policy

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YORKSHIRE
SAFER &
STRONGER**



**South Yorkshire
FIRE & RESCUE**

Document Control

Title of Document	Critical Incident Wellbeing Policy
Document Class	Policy
Document Owner (Name, Job Role)	Alex Johnson, CFO
Document Author (Name, Job Role)	Sue Kelsey, Head of Human Resources
Approved By	Corporate Management Board
Date Created	04/2019
Issue Date	07/2019
Current Version	1.0
Review Period	2 years
Next Review Date	04/2021
Equality Assessment	Yes
Related Policies	SYFR Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Mental Health Policy

Change Management

Name	Position	Organisation	Version	Comments	Date
Phil Hargreaves	Health & Wellbeing Manager	SYFR	1.1	Updated following CIWS meetings on 23/10/19 & 02/12/2019. Approved by JCF in Jan 2020.	01/2020

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INTRODUCTION

1. Due to the nature of Fire & Rescue service work some employees will be exposed to critical incidents.
2. A critical incident is a situation, or a series of significant events, faced by an individual that may cause them to experience unusually strong reactions that can interfere with work and home.
3. This policy sets out the support that is available to you following a critical incident or a series of significant situations, to lessen the impact and reduce the likelihood of long-term detriment through a consistent, coordinated and effective approach.
4. The support available will vary depending on the nature of the incident(s). Not all levels of support will be required for all critical incidents. It will ultimately be the Incident Commander, in conjunction with your Line Manager, to decide the support required depending on the incident and individuals.

Levels of Support:

5. **Post Incident Wellbeing Defusing Session** – please note this session is an informal conversation to be undertaken back at the station / SYFR site immediately post-incident. It is likely this already takes place but perhaps hasn't previously been formally described or been assigned a name. Many of you may already refer to this as a 'fire brew'. The aim of this session is to make sure that those involved in the incident have the opportunity to openly discuss the incident, from a wellbeing perspective, in an informal setting and to provide information on initial support available. This will be undertaken by the Watch/Line Manager before the end of the shift and will include everyone who was involved in the incident. If there are any concerns about any individual(s) at this time, they will be referred to Occupational Health (OH) at the earliest opportunity. Support is also available through the SYFR Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
6. **Critical Incident Wellbeing Session (CIWS)** – this is a structured, confidential discussion facilitated by one or two trained peer CIW Supporters and attendance, whilst encouraged, is on a voluntary basis. The CIWS takes place from approximately 72 hours up to 2 weeks after the incident, though this may be extended in some situations if a Supporter or an attendee is unavailable during this time frame. The session is an opportunity for the group to discuss the incident in a safe, supportive and open forum and to make them aware of the support available to them. By talking through the incident, those involved may make some sense of their experience. **It is not counselling, psychotherapy or an operational debrief.**

Control staff, Fire Community Support staff, Fire Investigators and any other employees directly involved in the incident will have the opportunity to access a defusing session and/or a CIWS as appropriate (*see point 24 below*).

Support available:

7. SYFR has a framework of health and wellbeing support available to you to access directly or through your Line Manager, HR or OH. Information is also available on the intranet.
8. If you are concerned about a work colleague or your own wellbeing following a critical incident, you are encouraged to speak to your Line Manager. Alternatively you may contact any of the services below:
 - **SYFR Occupational Health (OH)** – your Line Manager can refer you to OH or alternatively you can confidentially self-refer if you feel unable to have a discussion with your manager. OH will determine, in conjunction with you, if you need further specialist support.
 - **SYFR Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** – external support is offered through the EAP which includes a helpline you can contact confidentially 24/7/365. The EAP has trained trauma counsellors who can offer over-the-phone support and/or signposting to other support services. Other information and advice is also available via an online portal and app.
 - **SYFR Blue Light Champions (BLC's)** – are employed volunteers who can provide a confidential, listening ear and assist with signposting to other avenues of support.
 - **British Red Cross (BRC)** – external support is also offered through the BRC who have trained trauma psychosocial staff who can provide on-site support following a critical incident.
 - **Multi-Faith Chaplaincy** – chaplains are available as another source of support either individually or as a Watch/team. It is recommended that any visits take place after the CIWS, however if earlier support is required this can be arranged.
 - **Fire Fighters Charity** – the charity offers psychological services which individuals can access directly.

Roles and Responsibilities:

9. **Employees** are encouraged to:
 - Contact your Line Manager if you need support following a critical incident or a series of significant events. If you do not feel able to do so, you should contact another manager or one of the above support services. Details are available on the Health & Wellbeing page on the intranet.
 - Attend a CIWS where arranged.
 - Contact your Line Manager if you are concerned about a colleague following a critical incident.

10. Incident Commanders are required to:

- Ensure the Line Manager undertakes a post-incident wellbeing defusing session (*see point 5 above*).
- Report to CIW Supporters (email: ciws@syfire.gov.uk) or HR where a CIWS needs to be instigated.
- Report for information to 'Head of Function' when a CIWS is required.
- Report to OH if you have any concerns regarding individual employee wellbeing.

11. Heads of Function are required to:

- Have oversight on requirement for CIWS to take place and instigate through CIW Supporters / HR as appropriate.
- Check on the wellbeing of your staff involved in the critical incident as appropriate post-incident.

12. Flexi Duty Staffing Officer is required to:

- Respond to request from CIW Supporter, Line Manager or Watch Manager and/or HR to take pump off run/take off operational duties to enable CIWS to take place.
- Arrange for a pump to be taken off the run/staff to be taken off operational duties for the duration of the CIWS.

13. Watch / Line Manager is required to:

- Undertake a post-incident wellbeing defusing session (*see point 5 above*).
- Where not already done so by the Incident Commander, report to the Incident Commander or contact CIW Supporters (email: ciws@syfire.gov.uk) or HR where a CIWS needs to be instigated.
- Provide possible dates/times and venue to CIW Supporter(s) for the CIWS to take place.
- Ensure those required to attend a CIWS, including yourself, are taken off operational duties and make arrangements for alternative cover where required.
- Check on the wellbeing of those involved in the critical incident on a one-to-one basis in the weeks/months following the incident.
- Complete a CIWS follow-up with individuals 3 months post-incident. (*see information required in Appendix 4 and send to Occupational Health*)

14. Human Resources are required to:

- Respond to request for CIWS from Incident Commander, Line / Watch Manager.
- Contact and receive availability details from trained CIW Supporters.
- Identify and communicate with CIW Supporters to support each CIWS.
- Co-ordinate the CIW Supporters to ensure there are sufficient trained staff available.
- Maintain CIWS log.
- Depending on the incident, contact an external provider for support if internal CIW Supporters cannot be utilised.
- Provide statistical data to management teams that does not breach confidentiality.

15. CIW Supporters are required to:

- Respond to Incident Commander, Line / Watch Manager and / or HR following a request for availability to support a CIWS.
- Liaise with Watch / Line Managers with a view to agreeing a date/time/venue to facilitate a CIWS.
- Work with HR and Flexi Duty Staffing Officer to ensure the pump is taken off the run/staff taken off operational duties as appropriate to enable the CIWS to take place.
- Provide OH with details of the CIWS (*providing information as per Appendix 3*).
- Raise any concerns regarding an individual with OH*.
- Attend meetings for all CIW Supporters when possible (*see Appendix 1*).
- In instances where CIW Supporters either identify need for a CIWS or are approached by colleagues independent of the process as described in this policy, ensure that Incident Commanders are advised of this requirement and the formal request for a CIWS comes from the Incident Commander.

**Note – consent should be sought prior to notification to OH. Where there is a risk to a person's wellbeing, which may lead to harm, then it is acceptable to share information without consent if it is felt to be in the best interest of that person.*

16. Occupational Health are required to:

- Contact individuals that were unable / declined to attend the CIWS.
- Refer an individual for further specialist support as required.
- Maintain records to show when a CIWS has taken place.
- Send a letter of support 4 weeks after the CIWS.

Please see Appendix 2 for roles and responsibilities in conjunction with others.

Procedure for CIWS:

17. CIWS will automatically be instigated by the Incident Commander in the following circumstances:

- Serious injury or death of a colleague
- Death of a child
- Incident involving traumatic injury or death
- Multiple casualties/fatalities
- Major disaster or incident (as appropriate)
- An incident which contains high levels of violence or aggression towards staff

18. Optional CIWS can be instigated by the Incident Commander or requested by Line / Watch / Station Managers, staff involved in the incident, OH, HR, Health and Safety or CIW Supporters in the following circumstances:

- Incident involving a fatality
- Where the involved person is known to an employee(s)
- Where staff are exposed to a series of traumatic events over a short period of time

- In the case of Control staff, where an operator has handled an unusual, difficult or traumatic call
- An incident which may result in excessive media interest
- An incident that is particularly challenging, for example a complex or prolonged rescue.

19. These lists are not exhaustive and there may be other incidents where a CIWS is arranged or an optional session requested.

20. The sessions **will apply to all individuals who may have been involved in the incident.**

21. Support is available to all employees if there is either serious injury or death of a SYFR employee.

Critical Incident Wellbeing Sessions (CIWS):

22. If you are whole-time, sessions will take place between 72 hours and 2 weeks of the incident wherever possible.

23. If you are On-Call (RDS), it will take place on the next training night, or at a suitable alternative time, providing there has been at least 72 hours since the incident.

24. Fire Investigation teams, Control staff, FCSO's, Officers and support staff may be invited to a CIWS with a Watch or separate arrangements may be made.

25. Your Line Manager will ensure you are removed from operational duty so the CIWS can take place with no interruptions. If this is not possible, the session will take place outside of normal working hours and you will be reimbursed in accordance with your terms and conditions of employment.

26. The CIWS will usually last for 1.5-2 hrs, but could last up to 3 hours. **Although attendance is voluntary, you are encouraged to attend and stay for the whole session.** If you feel you do not wish to take part, you will be encouraged to attend at the beginning of the session to enable you to make an informed choice.

27. CIW Supporters will record the names of individuals present at the session and those who were not. This is then forwarded to OH who will contact anyone who did not attend.

28. Four weeks after the CIWS, a letter will be sent by OH to all individuals involved with the incident to confirm the support services available to them.

Review and Monitoring:

29. HR will collate statistics to show the number of CIWS that have taken place and the number of individuals that took part. The information will be shared with the Corporate

Management Board (CMB), Health & Safety Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Group.

30. CIW Supporters will meet when required to have a higher level group defusing session – this will be via the SYFR CIW Supporter Network (**see Appendix 1 for further information**).
31. The number of trained CIW Supporters will be monitored by HR and further recruitment and training offered as and when required.
32. The CIWS policy and support offered to employees will be reviewed by HR to ensure effectiveness of delivery.

If you require any further guidance on this Policy please contact Human Resources

Appendix 1: Framework of Support for CIW Supporters

Support is vital to successfully embedding Critical Incident Wellbeing (CIW) support into SYFR, and to allow CIW Supporters to perform their role safely and effectively. Below are the strategies SYFR will employ to support CIW Supporters:

- Follow up after the CIW Supporter training course with a conference call or meeting. Make sure everyone feels comfortable in their new role, provide written documentation and answer any questions around how CIWS works in SYFR.
- CIW Supporter network with a clear remit for support and idea sharing. This is overseen by the SYFR Health & Wellbeing Manager. The network will meet quarterly and is an opportunity for CIW Supporters to talk through their experiences, highlighting problems and pit falls, sharing successes and good practice and being able to do so in a safe space. This will also be an opportunity to remind CIW supporters to look out for their own wellbeing too.
- Empower CIW supporters to maintain their skills by attending a CIW refresher course on an annual basis.
- Keep track of when CIW Supporters leave their role / leave the organisation and more CIW Supporter training is needed to maintain numbers.
- Review and report on the impact of the training regularly.
- Raise mental health awareness and tackle stigma throughout the organisation to help create an environment where people feel empowered to request and engage with CIW support.
- **Self-care and opting out**
As with all colleagues, CIW Supporters have a responsibility to look after their own health and wellbeing. CIW Supporters are encouraged to take a break or step down from the role if they feel they need to, and to communicate this with the Health & Wellbeing Manager / HR.

Appendix 2: CIW Roles & Responsibilities

Employee(s)	Trigger	Arrangements				The session (CIWS)		Aftercare
Watch / Line Manager	Undertake post-incident Wellbeing Defusing Session	Request CIWS (Critical Incident Wellbeing Session) to the IC if trigger met			Respond to the CIW Supporter with possible dates for the CIWS	Informs staff of the CIWS and support arrangements for them to be off the run / operational duties		Follow up with staff during 1-2-1 and at 3 months following the CIWS
Head of Function			Oversight of need for CIWS and ensure CIWS instigated through the CIW Supporters / HR					Follow up with WM/LM during 1-2-1
Incident commander	Ensure post-incident Wellbeing Defusing Session takes place	Instigate CIWS via CIW Supporters / HR if trigger met	Inform Head of Function of the need for a CIWS					Report to OHS any concerns regarding individual employee wellbeing
HR		Request session to the IC if trigger met	Contact CIW Supporters for availability for CIWS delivery			Make request to Flexi Duty Staffing Officer to take pump off operational duties for duration of CIWS	Maintain CIWS log	
CIW Supporters		Request session to the IC if trigger met	Respond to HR with availability	Discuss with WM/LM the need for CIWS	Contact WM/LM to confirm the date and time of the CIWS		Conduct CIWS	Send OHS record sheet of attendance and non-attendance
Occupational Health Service		Request session to the IC if trigger met						Write to those who did not attend CIWS
Staff affected	Critical incident experienced	Request session to the IC if trigger met					Attend CIWS	Write to all staff involved 4 weeks after the CIWS

Appendix 3: CIWS information for Occupational Health

Critical Incident Wellbeing Supporter to record the following information.

Critical Incident Reference Number / Description	
Date of Critical Incident	
Date of Critical Incident Wellbeing Session (CIWS)	
Time of CIWS	
Location of CIWS	
Name of Critical Incident Wellbeing Supporter(s) facilitating CIWS	
List of attendees to CIWS	
List of SYFR staff involved in incident who were not able to attend CIWS / declined	
Any other relevant information	

CIW Supporter to send this to SYFR Occupational Health and send copy to Health & Wellbeing Manager

Appendix 4: Critical Incident Wellbeing Session Follow-Up (3 Months)

Line Managers to complete this at 3 months post-critical incident

Employee name	
Role	
Location	
Incident Number	
Date of 1-2-1	
Manager	

How does the employee feel about the CIWS they attended and any additional support accessed?	
Has the employee experienced any effects following the incident?	Yes/No
If yes, please give details (e.g. guilt, fear, helplessness, anger, sadness, heightened emotions, tiredness, palpitations, tension, stomach problems, irritability, problems sleeping, flashbacks, bad dreams)	
Has the employee accessed support as a result of the incident?	Yes/No
If yes, give details (e.g. colleagues, friends, family, EAP, GP, OH, Manager, FF Charity, Chaplain, Blue Light Champion)	
Do you and/or the employee feel they need any additional support at this stage?	Yes/No
If yes, what support do you/they think may help?	
Remind the employee of support available (EAP, OH, FF Charity, Chaplain, Blue Light Champion, SYFR health & wellbeing website, Manager)	
Next steps if required (complete OH management referral as necessary):	

Manager to send this to SYFR Occupational Health