

<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>			
<b>MEETING OF THE:</b>	<b>POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>1 APRIL 2014</b>	<b>REPORT NO:</b>	<b>CFO/040/14</b>
<b>PRESENTING OFFICER</b>	<b>DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER</b>		
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	<b>NICK MERNOCK – DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE &amp; ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>KELLY PATTERSON- SENIOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH OFFICER</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>Paul Blanchard-Flett (Occupational Health Manager), John McNeil (Health and Safety Manager), SM Thomas (Operational Performance Team)</b>		
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT</b>		

<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>NONE</b>
-------------------	-------------

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update Members on the Critical Incident Stress Management procedure; which was introduced to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MF&RA) in July 2013.

### **Recommendation**

2. That Members note the contents of this report.

### **Executive summary**

3. In August 2012 a critical incident working group was formed to review the mental health needs of fire and rescue authority employees throughout their career, from entry to exit, with particular reference to the mental health impact following exposure to critical incidents throughout their service. The group were tasked to research and report, with recommendations an implementation plan for the Service.
4. The contents of this report are intended to provide an update to members following the launch of the Critical Incident Stress Management procedure which was introduced within MF&RA in July 2013

### **Introduction and Background**

5. After extensive research and reflecting on other UK Fire and Rescue Service support systems already in place post-attendance at serious and potentially

traumatic incidents, the Service adopted a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) process. Effective management of staff exposed to potentially traumatic stress at incidents is a recommendation under Sec.13 Fire and Rescue Service Health, Safety and Welfare Framework 2012 document.

6. Following a scoping exercise to establish Organisational and Individual requirements, recommendations were presented to the Health, Safety and Welfare committee and SMG, and as a result, a Critical Incident Stress Management procedure was introduced in to MF&RA in July 2013.
7. The Critical Incident Stress Management procedure provides a response to critical incidents, as well as promoting an understanding and developing a framework for the individual or team to manage any reactions encountered following attendance at or exposure to a potentially traumatic incident.
8. Critical Incident Stress Management involves a three tier response consisting of defusing, debriefing and bridging team support.
9. Trained Defusing Officers undertake the initial response; Defusing is conducted immediately when staff have returned to their station or normal workplace location following attendance at a critical incident - always before they go off duty.
10. To enable crews to be defused post incident the Authority required defusing officers to be appointed and trained. Due to the nature of the incidents it was decided that the Station Manager (SM) group would be appointed as defusing officers because:
  - a) SMs would attend all of the incidents that may be deemed traumatic/critical
  - b) SMs by nature of their command role would generally be remote from any potential trauma at scene and therefore able to make a more informed assessment of heightened emotions of crew members
11. All SM's have now been trained as defusing officers. This training is delivered by the Critical Incident Coordinators who have received enhanced Critical Incident Stress Management debriefing and defusing training utilising the Organisation LivewellWorkWell.
12. Debriefing Officers conduct the second stage of the process. If a full Critical Incident debrief is required after the defusing stage (based on the nature of the incident and the decision of the defusing officer), Debriefing Officers will hold a structured meeting with those involved, enabling all attending individuals to share their experiences of the incident, reviewing facts, feelings and reactions encountered. This should take place within 48-72 hours following the incident. When this is not possible it will take place as soon as staff return to duty after this time.
13. A selection process was held for all Service personnel to apply to become Debriefing Officers. After receiving a substantial amount of applicants 15 were selected. This 15 included staff from uniformed and non-uniformed posts at

every level within the Organisation including Firefighters, Managers, Advocates and Support Staff.

14. Debriefing Officers received an intensive three day course to attain the required standard. The course was delivered by LiveWellWorkWell.
15. Bridging team support is offered to all personnel following the debriefing process. The Bridging Team consists of a range of voluntary personnel, uniformed and non-uniformed (religious and non-religious), under the leadership and direction of the Authority Chaplain.
16. A dedicated intranet portal site has been created and developed. This site enables Service personnel to view CISM information and is also used by Coordinators to monitor and evaluate progress following defusing and debriefing.

#### Progress to Date

17. Since going live in July 2013 there have been 22 critical incidents declared– all have been as a result of an Operational Incident.
18. Three of these 22 incidents subsequently led to a full critical incident debrief being arranged.
19. There has been one critical incident declared at MACC and subsequent defusing was undertaken with the MACC Operators.
20. All Authority staff are in the process of receiving a Critical Incident Stress Management presentation to ensure that they are familiar with the process .These presentations are being delivered to each individual watch and team within the Service, the rationale being that smaller groups are more interactive and more likely to engage with the individual delivering the presentation. Presentations are delivered by Debriefers and currently 53 of these presentations have been completed.
21. Critical incident coordinators have received both constructive and positive feedback from various sources including: Crews, Defusing Officers, Debriefing Officers and Bridging Team members.
22. One of the most common comments fed back to the coordinators following the CISM presentations from Crews is that the procedure is 'the right thing to do' and that 'it is long overdue'. It has also been highlighted in operational debriefing forms as an area of good practice post-incident.
23. Some initial issues have been highlighted regarding the debrief coordination. It has not always been possible that everyone who attended the critical incident has been able to attend the critical incident debrief- due to detached duties, annual leave etc. Coordinators have been able in such instances to make individual contact to offer one-to-one post incident support.
24. An incident with Whiston station highlighted the practicalities of defusing always occurring on return to station after a critical incident. The incident happened at

the end of shift and crews wanted to go home rather than be defused. Levels of engagement with the process is paramount and so where defusing should always take place before crews finish shift, defusing in this instance should be judged on the expected levels of engagement. Defusers are encouraged to seek the advice of the coordinators before allowing crews to leave shift before defusing occurs.

25. Learning points were highlighted following a recent incident at Speke. Contrary to the procedure, crews were grouped together rather than being defused at their own locations. This led to a lack of engagement with defusing officers. Although in this particular incident the desired outcome was slightly compromised, crews still reported back that they recognised that the Service was attempting to do the right thing by its crews.

#### Future considerations

26. The coordinators aim to ensure that all CISM presentations are delivered to all staff, to ensure that all personnel are aware of and understand the procedure and are given the opportunity to feedback any comments.
27. A development day for the Debriefers has been conducted since the initial training to refresh their knowledge and skills. Training will be offered to those involved in the CISM procedure as and when deemed required.
28. It may be possible to consider in the future sharing training with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Authorities such as Greater Manchester and Cumbria with who use the CISM procedure and the same Organisation LiveWellWorkWell for training.
29. The Coordinators who conduct the defuser training have now trained all SM's in defusing. Defuser training is now planned for the Watch Managers within the Search and Rescue Team (SRT), for instances when they may be deployed to other areas of the country where a SM may not be present to conduct defusing. As an aspiration, all Watch Managers within MF&RA will be fully trained in defusing.
30. All bridging team members are required to be qualified to a minimum of Mental Health First Aid (2 day course). All defusing and debriefing officers are strongly encouraged also to undertake the Mental Health First Aid course. This training is now being undertaken by the MF&RA Mental Health First Aid Instructor.
31. Mental Health First Aid Lite (1/2 day course) which is a brief mental health awareness course is intended to be delivered to all MF&RA personnel in the near future. This will be delivered by the MF&RA Mental Health First Aid trainer.
32. The CISM Coordinators following feedback from crews have had discussions regarding the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between MF&RA and local hospitals/groups so that a nominated MF&RA person may contact the local hospital after critical incidents for updates on the casualties involved. This

is hoped that this may assist MF&RA crews who attended the incident with some closure.

33. Occupational Health notice boards across all stations may be considered to be useful in order to promote the services of Occupational Health, the welfare support available, monthly health promotions and critical incident support/procedural information.
34. Developing workforce understanding of the Bridging Team will be promoted in the near future once the team is fully established and trained in Mental Health First Aid.
35. Critical Incident Coordinators will present updates regarding this report to SMG and elected members following the ongoing review of the critical incident stress management procedure.

---

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

---

36. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed at the initial implementation of the Critical Incident Stress Management procedure. This procedure continues to apply to all employees of MF&RA and does not exclude any group or individual.

---

### **Staff Implications**

---

37. The implementation of the Critical Incident Stress Management process will support and promote mental wellbeing in the workplace. The introduction of this process aims to reduce absence from issues that negatively affect the welfare of staff.
38. Commitment will be required from Senior Management to allow staff time to attend the relevant training courses for this process to proceed.

---

### **Legal Implications**

---

39. Critical Incident Stress Management will ensure that the Authority complies with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (s.2); by ensuring that the Authority is acting reasonably practical in its attempts to reduce stress in the workplace. By using this procedure, the Authority is demonstrating compliance with CFA guidance "Health, Safety and Welfare Framework Document 2012 (s.13) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1995 Regulation. 6.

---

### **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

---

40. Training costs to date have included:

Defusing Officers – £1,583 for the train the trainer course in defusing. These two individuals are Critical Incident Stress Management Coordinators and are existing employees from Occupational Health and Operational Response.

Defusing training is then delivered free of charge to defusing officers.

Debriefing Officers - Debriefers are now fully qualified in Critical Incident Stress Management. This is following completion of a 3 day course run by LiveWellWorkWell at a cost of £4516. This cost also included a review and development day and access for a period of 12 months following initial training to a 24/7, 365 days a year 'debriefing helpline'.

The overall cost for the training is £6,100.

41. The Service approached a Health and Safety software management company to arrange recording and monitoring of the procedure (i.e. enabling a vehicle to report back attendance at Critical Incidents and debriefs by personnel). The final cost for this product was quoted at £30,000. Coordinators viewed this as excessive and requested an employee within the Strategy and Performance department to review the requirements. This employee was able to create a product using existing Intranet Portal Systems and software to create a system that was to the exact specification required,.
42. A Mental Health First Aid instructor is readily available within the Service; cost for training is limited to the cost of the manuals and workbooks at the current price of £25 per person. CIPD Survey October 2011 states that stress has become the most common cause of long term absence for manual and non-manual employees and on the basis of these figures, The National Association for Mental Health (MIND) recommends that with a greater awareness and mental health support that nationally businesses could save £8 billion per year.
43. The introduction of this procedure aims to reduce the instances of stress, days lost due to stress related illnesses and the associated costs. As this is a new procedure there has been insufficient time to highlight any financial evidence of monetary savings to MF&RA regarding stress related absences. However, given a suitable period of time, this should be something in which may be observed in the future.
44. Finance is provided through existing Occupational Health Services budgets.

---

#### **Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications**

---

45. The leads on the project presented their research to the Health, Safety and Welfare committee. After reviewing and discussing the findings, the committee agreed that Critical Incident Stress Management was the best way forward for MF&RA as opposed to alternative options.  
Regular updates have been reported back to the committee.
46. There are no environmental implications relating to this process.

47. The introduction of the critical incident stress management process directly supports all Service staff in their mental wellbeing and contributes to making firefighters safer and therefore more effective in their duties

---

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

---

Fire Service Health, Safety and Welfare Framework 2012 Document  
CFO/045/13 Critical Incident Stress Management SMG Report  
Critical Incident Stress Management scoping group document  
Service Instruction 0789 CISM

---

## **GLOSSARY**

---