

Case Study | Police Scotland

Mental Health Awareness & Resilience

Police Scotland/Scottish Police Authority (SPA) launched an organisational wide wellbeing initiative under the banner 'Your Wellbeing Matters', with a primary focus on establishing core wellbeing systems, mechanisms and support for police officers and staff.

There had been a steady increase in the number of days lost to psychological absences and the force was working towards preventing issues occurring in the first place.

Whilst there had been a number of successful interventions under 'Your Wellbeing Matters', it was recognised that this was neither systemic nor far-reaching enough to make the difference required for the lived experience of their people to change and how the organisation empowers, enables and develops its people in this area.



Requirements

It was determined that there was a significant gap in awareness and understanding of mental health and priorities were identified and aligned to where the most impact could be delivered.

Police Scotland/SPA identified four key interventions required to initiate a mentally healthy culture where the 8,000 police officers and staff are confident to raise issues and concerns about themselves and/or their colleagues, knowing that this will be positively received and acted on.

The interventions set out by Police Scotland/SPA were comprehensively designed to build mental health and resilience, competence and capability across the force.

Interventions

One

Breaking down the mental health barriers

Awareness training for the Police Scotland Force Executive (Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and staff equivalents) to role model and set the tone from the top re: 'breaking down the mental health barriers'.

Two

Creating Pioneers – destigmatising psychological challenges

Specific training for supervisors (Sergeants, Inspectors, Chief Inspectors and staff equivalents) to empower them to support people to stay psychologically well.

Three

Normalise mental health conversation

Training for all line managers of all ranks and grades to enable them to have meaningful discussions to identify and address emerging issues that may impact their people's wellbeing.

Four

Building psychologically resilient people

Training for staff and officers of all ranks and grades which will transform their lived experience by equipping them with the tools, knowledge and self-awareness to stay psychologically well.



Relatable

We approached each of the interventions with a tailored framework and team to ensure the trainers, language and learning material were relevant and relatable and backed by clinical expertise where required.

For example, at the Force Executive level, training was led by Lt Gen Sir Nick Pope, former Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and Chartered Psychologist Lisa Lloyd.

Nick and Lisa each brought a unique insight and relatable experience to the programme, and combined, they were able to bring to life the science behind leading a large-scale public-sector organisation with mental health in mind.

The key element being that each level of intervention required relatable trainers whose own experience would resonate, engage and inspire the target audience.



Eleos' Approach

With a launch date that coincided with the first national lockdown and the sensible decision taken to suspend all but legislative training for police officers to protect front-line services, it was recognised that now more than ever, officers and staff needed training in mental health awareness and resilience.

Delivery of the requirements was originally intended to be a blended approach, with a range of virtual and face-to-face options to suit the 24/7/365 nature of the force, but because of the unforeseen lockdown, this rapidly had to change.

Despite the national crisis, we were able to draw on our existing business continuity plan and quickly adapt our delivery model to ensure this vital mental health awareness and resilience training was effectively delivered on-budget and on-time, through Teams and remote technology, across the four areas of intervention.

Programme Leads

The programme was led by Eleos co-founders and former army officers Tim Rushmere and Olly Church.

Tim and Olly's experience of ill mental health through frontline operational service was pivotal in communicating the relationship between mental health, resilience and leadership.

This was especially relevant at the management and supervisory level, where effective communication up, down, and across the organisational structure, required a developed skillset.

Eleos' trainers all come from diverse backgrounds in the military, police, public, private and clinical sectors.



Results

Despite the challenging circumstances and new ways of working for all, the approach delivered successfully across the four interventions and has initiated the foundations to create a mentally healthy culture and preventing absence due to ill mental health.

Eleos delivered 100% of the planned sessions throughout the programme and were able to adapt to meet the challenging circumstances.

Chief Inspector Jackie Dunbar, Police Scotland Wellbeing Lead, said:

"ELEOS WAS FLEXIBLE THROUGHOUT AND WORKED WITH US TO DESIGN A REVISED DELIVERY METHOD AND SCHEDULE TO SUIT THE CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES."

"We worked in partnership to overcome the various hurdles that are inherent with public sector engagement, and they displayed nothing but professionalism.

The Eleos team's operational background gave them a unique insight and understanding into the demands of working with first responders, and nothing was too much trouble. The administrative support provided was exceptional.

Fast forward to the present day and a large portion of the organisation, particularly our leaders, have benefited from inputs, with many more accessing the vast array of support materials made available online.

In summary, working with Eleos under challenging circumstances has been an absolute pleasure."

Accessible

Live sessions were typically delivered via Teams to ensure they could be accessed by all staff.

At times during the delivery of module four, COVID affected the planned level of attendance in sessions. To ensure training was accessible to all, in these instances, learning content was provided in a video series called Mental Fitness Matters and made available through Police Scotland's intranet.

Sessions were designed to provide a solid understanding of the topics within mental health and self-care resilience and provide knowledge, skills and tools that can be practically applied in their roles by police officers and staff.

To further augment live training sessions, digital resources were provided for people to dive deeper into subject areas and go further with their own understanding of mental health and resilience. This also provided a mechanism for people to revisit learning on demand.