

Decision title

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## Counselling and Trauma Service - Creation of Additional Staff Counsellor Posts

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Recommendation by  
Assistant Director, People Services

Decision Number  
LFC-0470-D

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### Summary

Report LFC-0470 explains that following the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower report and a visit to the Counselling and Trauma Service (CTS) by the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, the London Assembly was supportive of the capacity of mental health provision in London Fire Brigade (LFB) including direct counselling, being increased. The funding requested by LFB will provide two (2) additional fulltime, permanent Staff Counsellor posts for the Brigade's CTS at an annual cost of £120,000. This will increase the capacity of CTS to see more LFB employees requiring counselling more quickly. CTS can currently offer a first appointment within 10 days of contact to the service for 74% of employees applying for counselling, this will be increased by having additional counselling capacity.

This extra resource will also allow for speedier advancement of the Brigade-wide mental health agenda, as outlined in the LFB Wellbeing Strategy. This will include the completion of actions required by the HMICERS report to develop trained peer mental health and trauma support networks.

### Decision

That the London Fire Commissioner agrees the funding of £120,000 for two full time permanent Staff Counsellors to join the LFB Counselling and Trauma Service.



**Andy Roe**  
London Fire Commissioner

This decision was remotely signed  
Date on Wednesday 03 February 2021

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## Counselling and Trauma Service - Creation of Additional Staff Counsellor Posts

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Report to	Date
Brigade Portfolio Board	14 December 2020
Commissioner's Board	13 January 2021
London Fire Commissioner	

Report by	Report number
Assistant Director, People Services	LFC-0470

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### Executive Summary

Following the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower report and a visit to the Counselling and Trauma Service (CTS) by the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, the London Assembly was supportive of the capacity of mental health provision in London Fire Brigade (LFB) including direct counselling, being increased. The funding requested by LFB will provide two (2) additional fulltime, permanent Staff Counsellor posts for the Brigade's CTS at an annual cost of £120,000. This will increase the capacity of CTS to see more LFB employees requiring counselling more quickly. CTS can currently offer a first appointment within 10 days of contact to the service for 74% of employees applying for counselling, this will be increased by having additional counselling capacity.

This extra resource will also allow for speedier advancement of the Brigade-wide mental health agenda, as outlined in the LFB Wellbeing Strategy. This will include the completion of actions required by the HMICERS report to develop trained peer mental health and trauma support networks.

### Recommended decision

That the London Fire Commissioner agrees the funding of £120,000 for two (2) full time permanent Staff Counsellor to join the LFB Counselling and Trauma Service.

### Introduction and Background

1. The CTS currently operates with 7.4 FTE Staff Counsellor posts, 1 Senior Counsellor and 1 Head of Service. It offers time limited, confidential counselling to any LFB employee requiring counselling for any work related, psychological / physical health or personal issue. The counsellors are all very experienced offering a wide range of counselling modalities with which to tailor the appropriate treatment for each individual needing assistance. All counsellors hold at least one specialist qualification in National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommended treatments for trauma including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

2. CTS offer a range of other services including trauma prevention debriefing, mental health inputs to apprentices, watches and teams and the development and implementation of a Brigade-wide mental health strategy, for example the creation of a Mental Health First Aiders scheme and the ongoing development of a team of trained trauma supporters to be deployed to fire stations after attendance at a critical or major incident, to mitigate adverse trauma responses.
3. CTS aims to offer initial appointments to clients within 10 working days of them contacting the service. This compares very favourably with waiting times in the NHS and other agencies which can be several months. CTS recognises the great importance of timely interventions when people need counselling and the impacts on their ability to attend work if this gets delayed. The current complement of counsellors is able to meet this target approximately 74% of the time.
4. Additional staff counsellors would increase the ability to see more staff more quickly. It would also increase the capacity that CTS has to lead the Brigade-wide mental health agenda and so fulfilling the strategic aim of the Transformation Delivery Plan (TDP), creating the best people and the best place to work.
5. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Grenfell Tower Investigation and Review Team (GTIRT) commissioned an independent review of CTS's actions to support the psychological needs of staff after this incident. GTIRT made several recommendations requiring increased staff capacity and this was reiterated by the Deputy Mayor when she visited CTS. The Deputy Mayor was then insistent that 2 more staff counsellors were provided for the team.
6. Another recommendation following the Grenfell Tower review of CTS psychological provision following the incident was that LFB formally includes mental health in routine periodic medicals. This includes asking questions to identify indicators of anxiety, depression and trauma / PTSD. CTS has worked with Health Management Limited (HML), the Brigades occupational health service provider so that this can begin in January 2021. It is anticipated that this will increase the number of staff seeking and being referred for counselling from HML, so CTS must have the resources to meet this increased demand.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Consultation**

7. The Grenfell Tower report and the Deputy Mayor have already identified that increasing CTS resources is the option preferred to provide additional capacity to maintain the mental wellbeing of LFB employees.

### **Objectives and Expected Outcomes**

8. The objective of this report is for the board to agree the funding for 2 fulltime permanent CTS staff counsellor posts in line with the recommendation made by the Deputy Mayor. These posts will allow LFB to increase the capacity for counselling for employees having any mental health issues. This would increase the number of employees CTS is able to see and importantly would enable more individuals to be seen quickly. We aim to improve the number of clients being offered a first appointment within in 10 days from the current 74% to approximately 100%.
9. The additional posts would also increase capacity for the Brigade's mental health strategy (enshrined in the Wellbeing Strategy) to be further developed and implemented. It's important

that every employee in the Brigade is mental health aware and can access timely support whenever it might be needed.

## Impacts

### Equality Impact

10. The London Fire Commissioner and decision takers are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) when exercising our functions and taking decisions.
11. It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
12. The protected characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), Race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), Religion or belief (including lack of belief), Sex, and Sexual orientation.
13. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us, in the exercise of all LFC functions (i.e. everything the LFC does), to have due regard to the need to:
  - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
  - (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic;
  - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
  - (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
15. The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

16. Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
  - (a) tackle prejudice, and
  - (b) promote understanding.
17. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been undertaken on the advice of the Inclusion Team.
18. Data shows that there is a disproportionate representation of women and BAME staff using counselling services (this was also mentioned explicitly in the HMICFRS inspection report), and the addition of these two roles will support the Brigade to ensure equality of opportunity to access CTS (under the Public Sector Equality Duty)
19. The CTS are often on the frontline of issues which may have stemmed from inequality, discrimination, harassment or bullying, all of which are disproportionately faced by minority groups. Growing the team supports the objectives within the Togetherness Strategy in relation to 'building a culture of belonging' and ensuring everyone accesses the support they need.

### **Procurement and Sustainability**

20. The addition of the 2 Staff Counsellor posts to CTS is a positive action as it supports the health safety and wellbeing strand of LFB's sustainability framework.

### **Strategic Drivers**

21. Include the following:
  - Request from Deputy Mayor of Fire and Resilience
  - HMICFRS report
  - Grenfell Tower Report
  - Transformation Delivery Plan: the best people and the best place to work
  - LFB Wellbeing Strategy

### **Workforce Impact**

22. No negative issues are anticipated from the provision of additional mental health support for the workforce. Early discussions with trade union colleagues have resulted in them providing unanimous support for this initiative.

### **Finance comments**

23. This report recommends that 2 full time FRS E staff counsellor posts are established with an effective date of March 2021. This is at a cost of £120 annually which includes accreditation expenses, compulsory CPD and other on costs. This cost will be met from the transformation reserve in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years and then be met from the £4m ongoing revenue budget for transformation in subsequent years.

24. As part of his Final Consolidated Budget the Mayor allocated £2.2 million towards the London Fire Commissioner's transformation programme. The Mayor then noted that the Transformation programme includes £0.1 million towards counselling and wellbeing services.

### Legal comments

25. Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) states that the Commissioner is the fire and rescue authority for Greater London.
26. In accordance with Sections 5A of the FRSA 2004, the Commissioner, being a 'relevant authority,' may do "anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying - out of any of its functions..." Also, in accordance with section 12(1) of the FRSA 2004 'a fire and rescue authority may provide the services of any persons employed by it ....to any person for any purpose that appears to the authority to be appropriate'.
27. The Commissioner must also comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (the "1974 Act"). Section 2 of the 1974 Act imposes a general duty on the employer to 'ensure, so as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all of his employees.'
28. The provision of the appointment of two new counsellors as described in this report contributes to the Commissioner's compliance with its duties under the 1974 Act and the subordinate legislation made under that Act and falls within the Commissioners powers under the FRSA 2004.

### List of Appendices

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1.	None	