



How to support someone's wellbeing – for the family and friends of those working in North Wales Police

This booklet is for the family and friends of those working in North Wales Police, who can act as a valuable support network for the benefit of an individual's wellbeing. Those working within a police environment may be exposed to both physical and psychological hazards in the course of their work which makes it doubly important that their support network is aware of how they can help. Family and friends can also be affected by police work prompting various reactions.

This booklet explains some of the factors that may have an impact on wellbeing, how to spot the signs that someone might be struggling and what to do to support your friend or family member.

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing could be described as “the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy”. It encompasses how we feel in ourselves physically, mentally and emotionally and how confident we feel to express ourselves. It is about engaging in life and with those around us and how we cope with day to day stresses, change and challenges. Our wellbeing changes day to day depending on what happens in our lives.

There are multiple factors that influence our wellbeing – in North Wales Police we group these into four areas, which we use to promote the support we have available for wellbeing:

- Healthy Body – e.g. fitness, healthy lifestyle, awareness of health conditions;
- Healthy Mind – e.g. mental health and wellbeing, resilience, mindfulness;
- Healthy Worklife – e.g. balancing work and home, family support, flexible working;
- Healthy Finances – e.g. support to manage finances, including debt, tips for reducing costs.

You may have heard of the five ways to wellbeing (see below from NHS Wales) – these describe all the elements that together can enhance our wellbeing.

Pum Ffordd at Les



Five Ways to Wellbeing

Pum ffordd syml i deimlo'n iachach a hapusach

<p>Cysylltu â'r bobl o'ch amgylch – teulu, ffrindiau, cydweithwyr a chymdogaion. Cyfarfod. Ymuno. Gwranddo.</p>	 cysylltu connect	<p>Find ways of connecting with the people around you – family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Meet up. Join in. Listen.</p>
<p>Mynd am dro neu i redeg, beicio, chwarae gêm, dawnsio, garddio. Dod o hyd i weithganwch corfforol rydych yn ei fwynhau.</p>	 bod yn fywiog be active	<p>Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, dance, do some gardening. Choose something to do that you enjoy.</p>
<p>Bod yn chwifrydig, sylwi ar y tymorau'n newid. Bod yn ymwybodol o'r byd o'ch amgylch a'ch teimladau.</p>	 bod yn sylwgar take notice	<p>Be curious, notice the changing seasons. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling.</p>
<p>Rhoi cynnig ar rywbeth newydd. Ailgydio mewn hen ddiddordeb. Cofrestru am gwrs. Dysgu canu offeryn neu sut i goginio eich hoff fwyd.</p>	 dal ati i ddysgu keep learning	<p>Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for a course. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food.</p>
<p>Gwneud rhywbeth dymunol i ffrind. Diolch i rywun. Rhoi gwên.</p>	 rhoi give	<p>Do a favour for a friend. Thank someone. Offer a smile.</p>

What factors may affect the wellbeing of your friend or family member?

Hearing details of distressing incidents – examples include someone working in our Force Communications Centre taking an emergency call, someone listening to recordings of interviews or someone reviewing evidence for a prosecution file;

Seeing distressing incidents – examples include attending road traffic collisions, sudden deaths and violent attacks; reviewing video footage of incidents or indecent acts; attending a crime scene or processing evidence from an incident;

Dealing with verbal and physical aggression and being assaulted – for those in operational roles, they may face verbal and physical aggression and there is a risk of assault, particularly frontline officers responding to incidents;

Witnessing the assault of a colleague – for those in operational roles, this may happen and can be difficult to deal with;

In depth involvement in protecting vulnerable people – dealing with vulnerable victims including those subject of rape, dealing with child protection issues, domestic abuse cases, managing sex offenders and cyber crime;

Exposure to police intelligence – those researching and analysing intelligence may be exposed to information which affects them negatively;

Pressures of workload, long hours and shift work – this can make it difficult to find time for wellbeing activities and also lead to stress and fatigue;

Being unable to talk with family and friends about work – because of the sensitive nature of our work, your friend or family member may not be able to discuss details, which can make them feel isolated and difficult for them to seek support.

The above are just a few examples – what affects someone’s wellbeing is very individual and personal to them and different for everybody.

What factors could affect you as a friend or family member?

- Hearing about or viewing media coverage of police officers or staff being killed or injured in the line of duty. This can trigger shock, fear and anxiety. Your reactions may be more pronounced if the incidents occur near or at the station your friend or family member works at. You may feel a strong need to contact them to check on their wellbeing, to hear their voice and to tell them to take care;
- Finding yourself worrying about the wellbeing of your friend or family member;
- Over time you may experience anger at North Wales Police for not managing your friend or family member the way you feel they should be managed;
- If you notice changes in the behaviour of your friend or family member after difficult incidents, you may worry about the long-term impacts of this exposure on their wellbeing. You may feel helpless or frustrated at your inability to make things better, or how to help them during these times;
- You might worry that they have become more emotionally distant over time, showing less emotion than they used to, and wanting them to return to the person they were before they joined the Police Force;

All these reactions are normal but being aware of them may make it easier to recognise if you have been affected and to talk about them with your friend or family member.

What can you do to help your friend or family member?

- **Listen to how they are feeling** – just being there for someone can make a difference;
- **Help them reflect on whether they are stressed** – they may not recognise the signs that something is affecting them, but you may notice changes in their behaviour, or see physical symptoms, so tell them you see a difference and ask how you can help;
- **Encourage them to look after their physical health** – maintaining good physical health also supports positive mental wellbeing;
- **Help them identify mood triggers** – share observations on their mood in a gentle and non-judgemental way. If they are happy to talk, your perspective might help them identify what is triggering their emotions;

- **Help them learn and practise relaxation techniques** – there are exercises they can do to help them relax and activities that could help such as mindfulness and yoga;
- **Support them with routines to maintain their wellbeing** – for shift workers this could be ensuring they have a peaceful environment if they are trying to sleep, or ensuring they can build in time for wellbeing alongside family commitments;
- **Look after yourself** – you may be affected if your friend or family member is struggling. Ensure that you are looking after yourself so that you are more able to help others;
- **Accept that they might not be ready to seek help** – if this is the case just remain patient, don't force them to do anything, be supportive and be there for when they are ready to talk.

Signs that someone might be struggling with wellbeing

Be alert to any changes in the behaviour of your friend or family member as this may be an indication that there are issues with their wellbeing. Particular events such as a change of role or promotion, getting married, getting divorced, bereavement, having children or a health scare/illness can all affect our mental health. **Examples of indications that something may be wrong include:**

- Missed deadlines or forgetting tasks
- Erratic/unpredictable behaviour
- Irritability/aggression or being tearful
- Complaining of a lack of management support
- Being fixated with fair treatment issues
- Complaining of not coping with workload
- Withdrawn and not participating in conversations
- Increased consumption of caffeine / alcohol / smoking / sedatives
- Inability to concentrate
- Being indecisive
- Memory loss
- Confidence loss
- Conflicts with manager/colleagues
- Quick to use grievance procedure
- Increased errors / accidents
- Taking on too much work / volunteering for extra work / working too many hours
- Being adamant that they are right and know the right way to do things
- Louder and more exuberant than usual

More physical signs include:

- Being tired all the time
- Taking time off sick
- Being run down / getting frequent minor illnesses

- Having headaches
- Reduced reaction times e.g. when responding to questions
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight loss / gain
- Dishevelled appearance/ lack of normal care of appearance
- Gastro-intestinal disorders
- Rashes

How to offer emotional support



Just being able to listen and talk with your friend or family member can help. Here are some tips for having these conversations:

- To offer support, **use open questions** such as 'How are you doing at the moment?'
- **Have an open conversation** by explaining why you are concerned and give the individual the opportunity to explain to you how they feel;
- **Keep the chat positive and supportive;**
- If using video link, keep your body language open and non-confrontational;
- **Be empathetic and take them seriously** – don't offer glib advice such as "pull yourself together" or "cheer up";
- It's important to **validate an individual's feelings**. Don't validate negative behaviours but instead focus on the feeling behind the behaviour, so things like "It's normal to feel overwhelmed when you are juggling multiple tasks" or "It's understandable that you would feel anxious returning to work" etc.;
- Words such as reasonable, normal, makes sense, understandable are all **good validating words;**
- **Try to focus on "tentafiers"** so instead of "You're feeling lonely" say something like "It sounds like you're feeling lonely" "You seem to be feeling lonely" or "I'm hearing that you're feeling lonely" These are helpful when you are trying to get someone to share more and helps to avoid you sounding like you are making assumptions;
- Use words such as brave and proud to strengthen a visible action, so for example "You've made a brave step reaching out for support";
- **Explore the individuals feelings** and identify what their goal is for the end of the conversation. Don't make promises, be open and honest. So for example, give them a time frame when you can call them back rather than a specific, I will call on Friday at 12pm (in case you can't make that) use, "I'll call you before the end of the week" or "I'll make contact sometime next week";

- It's important too, to **give the individual the space to problem solve for themselves**. This can be guided along by exploring their coping skills and support systems they already have in place. Questions like "Tell me what usually helps..." "What do you see as your first step in getting through this..." Rather than "I'm going to refer you here...." and "You need to....".
- **Explain that support is available** and you're there if they need you;
- **Don't judge them or make any assumptions** about why they may be feeling unwell or how they may be feeling;
- **Remain calm** even if the person may be tearful and upset;
- **Reassure them** that you are listening and want to help; provide them with details of support available should they wish to seek further help; They may not want to admit that there is a problem, or may not realise it themselves. Just leave them with an open offer of help if they need it.

What practical support can you offer?

If your friend or family member is open to receiving help you could help by:

- 1) Research information that might be helpful such as explanations of mental health conditions and what can help; self-help guides; Apps that might help such as Calm, Headspace etc;
- 2) If your friend or family member is going to visit their GP you could help them write down questions to ask and key points about how they have been feeling and anything that might have triggered poor health;
- 3) Help organise appointments or paperwork such as prescriptions;
- 4) Support them by going to appointments with them to provide reassurance;
- 5) Offer to help with practical tasks such as helping with childcare, getting some shopping in if they are struggling to get out or running errands for them;

What support is available from North Wales Police?



Mental Health Peer Support

We have over 60 individuals in our workforce who have been trained to provide peer support – a confidential, neutral friend to listen and signpost.

Your friend and family member can view details on our Intranet, on the Health and Wellbeing pages.

Alternatively, they can access a list of our peer supporters on our external wellbeing page for our workforce:

<https://www.north-wales.police.uk/bluetree/index.html>

 <p>HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU NORTH WALES POLICE</p> <p>Welfare Support Team</p>	<p>Our welfare support team is the next level of support after mental health peer support. The team offer one to one support, including advice on difference mental health disorders, welfare assessment and referral to other support if necessary.</p> <p>Email: WelfareSupportTeam@nthwales.pnn.police.uk</p>
 <p>HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU NORTH WALES POLICE</p> <p>Counselling</p>	<p>We have a team of counsellors across the North Wales Police area with expertise in a variety of areas including CBT, trauma, relationships, NLP, Mindfulness, addiction, hypnotherapy and more.</p> <p>Your friend or family member can self-refer for counselling by contacting our Occupational Health Team:</p> <p>Phone: 01492 804673 / 01492 804060 Email: ochealthadministrators@nthwales.pnn.police.uk</p>
 <p>HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU NORTH WALES POLICE</p> <p>Volunteer Chaplain</p>	<p>Our volunteer chaplain, Gerald Williams is there to provide support to those who seek assistance, irrespective of their religious background. He offers a friendly confidential 'listening ear' about whatever situation or subject.</p> <p>Phone: 07971 254151 Email: gerald.williams@nthwales.pnn.police.uk</p>
 <p>NWP Police Federation</p>	<p>The Police Federation offer welfare support to Police Officers. Police Staff can also take advantage of the different discounts and schemes that they offer.</p> <p>Phone: 01492 805400 Email: FedAdmin@nthwales.pnn.police.uk</p>
 <p>NWP UNISON</p>	<p>UNISON offer welfare support to Police Staff who are members.</p> <p>Phone: 01492 804392 / 01492 804139 Email: UNISON@nthwales.pnn.police.uk</p>

What other organisations might be able to help?

 <p>Police Care UK</p>	<p>Providing practical, emotional and financial support for serving and former police officers, staff and volunteers who suffer harm as a result of their policing role that is confidential and impartial.</p> <p>Phone: 0300 012 0030 Website: http://www.policecare.org.uk/</p>
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<p>In crisis? Need support?</p> <p>Text shout to 85258</p> <p>Shout</p>	<p>Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.</p> <p>By texting 'SHOUT' to '85258' a Texter will be put in touch with a trained Crisis Volunteer (CV) who will chat to them using trained techniques via text. The service is designed to help individuals to think more clearly and to take their next steps to feeling better.</p>
 <p>MIND</p>	<p>Urgent help tool, information and support, booklets about mental health, online community, personal stories, resources for emergency services. There are also local branches in North Wales.</p> <p>Infoline: 0300 123 3393 https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/blue-light-support/</p>
<p>MIND Aberconwy</p>	<p>Phone: 01492 879907 http://www.aberconwymind.org.uk/home/ 3 Trinity Square, Llandudno, LL30 2PY</p>
<p>MIND North East Wales</p>	<p>Phone: 01352 974431 (Mon – Sat, 10am – 4pm) http://www.newmind.org.uk/ 23 Chester Street, Mold, CH7 1EG</p>
<p>MIND Vale of Clwyd</p>	<p>Phone: 01745 336 787 https://www.valeofclwydmind.co.uk/ 82 Marsh Road, Rhyl</p>
	<p>Confidential 24 hour listening and support service for Wales and self-assessment portal</p> <p>Phone: 0800 132 737 Website: http://callhelpline.org.uk/</p>
	<p>24 hour listening service</p> <p>Freephone 116 123 https://www.samaritans.org/</p>
	<p>Offering support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies.</p> <p>Phone: 0808 808 1677 Website: https://www.cruse.org.uk/</p>

For questions about this booklet, please contact Jennifer Hutchinson, Wellbeing Lead at: jennifer.hutchinson@nthwales.pnn.police.uk.