

# Spotlight on...

## Increasing awareness about mental health

### What the need was and how we identified it

In the 2008-2009 period, Huddersfield Blue Watch attended 3 house fires involving occupants with mental health issues. At one incident, the occupier threatened to take their own life and the crew remained with the community member for 45 minutes until specialist support arrived.

People with mental health conditions have been identified as a high risk group for WYFRS. We continue to work with partners to identify those most at risk and living independently within our community, to enable us to provide fire safety advice.

### What we did and the difference we made

Following these incidents Watch Commander Andy Blackburn felt that he and his crews needed more training around the complex area of mental ill health, and contacted local specialist clinical nurse manager, Chris Bontoft from Kirklees Health Authority. Chris agreed to produce a 2-hour awareness session and deliver it to all the watches at Huddersfield, and the Kirklees Prevention Team.

We now have firefighter and Prevention teams better equipped in identifying mental health issues affecting community members.

### Outcomes

All Huddersfield crews and Kirklees Prevention Teams have taken part in the awareness session, delivered by a specialist mental health nurse manager. Feedback from those taking part has been very positive.

The crews acknowledge they're not experts, however they're now more confident in identifying mental health issues and making contact with specialist support available.



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**Keys to our success**

- Identifying a gap in knowledge and understanding around mental health issues.
- Working in partnership with Kirklees Health Authority, who delivered the training to our crews and Prevention teams.
- Delivering the training to all Huddersfield's firefighter and Prevention teams.

**Contact**

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This 'spotlight on' contributes to...



**DELIVERING A PROACTIVE  
FIRE PREVENTION AND  
PROTECTION PROGRAMME**



**PROVIDING A SAFE,  
COMPETENT, DIVERSE  
WORKFORCE**



**EMPLOYMENT AND  
TRAINING**  
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