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**When you support us,
you are not only helping
to support your brothers
and sisters in blue,
but also yourself!**

THIN BLUE LINE^{UK}

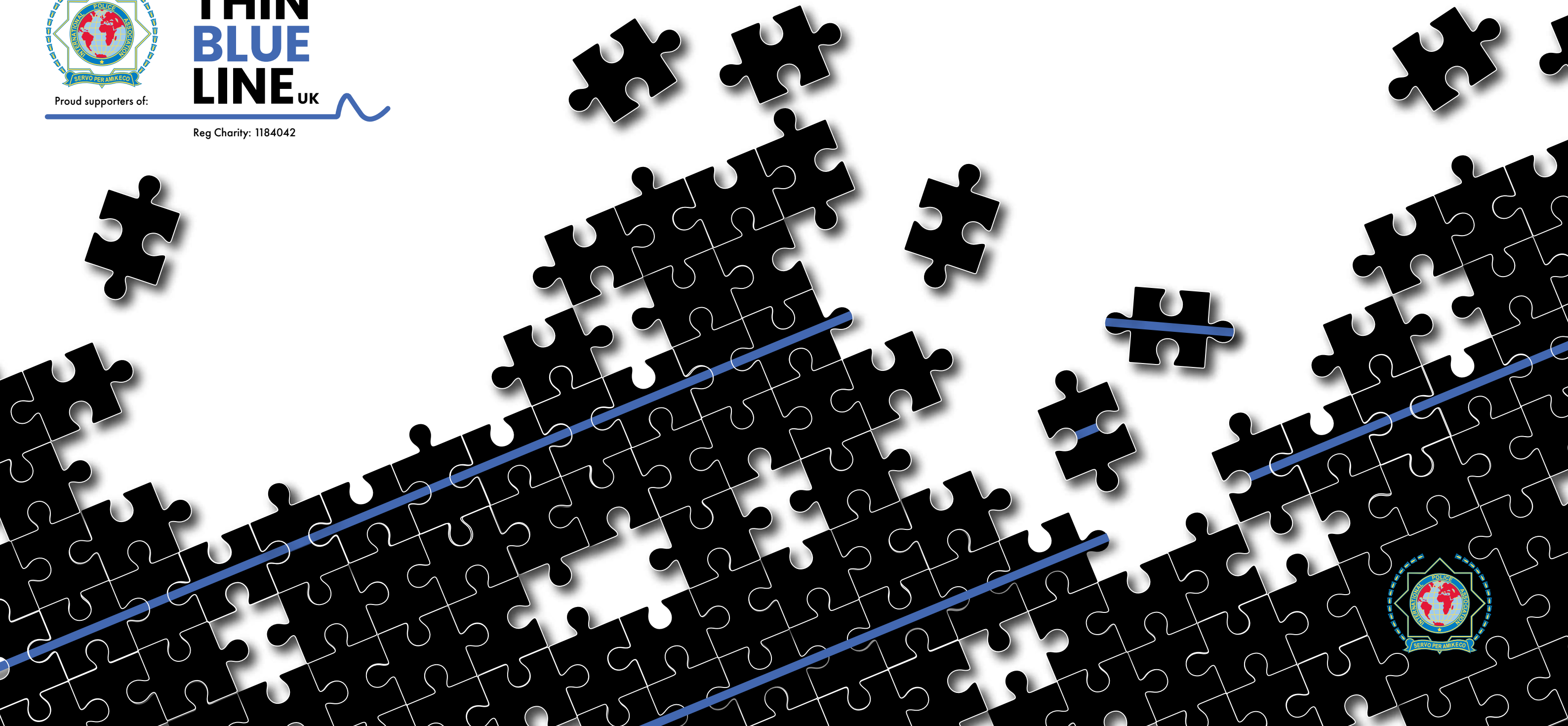
Bringing Together the Pieces of Mental Health & Wellbeing



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Police officers do a difficult and dangerous job on the ground yet seem to get attacked from all sides. Numbers have been cut, crime and the personal danger to officers increases on a daily basis. Officers go out to work in the morning to serve the public whatever the day brings.

The only thing they want is to know that they will get home again that evening to see their family. Unfortunately as recent events show this cannot always be guaranteed. The Thin Blue Line UK was set up to enable those who want to show support for the police and to remember those who paid the ultimate price.



When it comes to our own mental health and wellbeing the hardest part is being honest with ourselves and to the people closest to us. Too often we hide our emotions with words like "man up" or "it'll be fine" echoing in our minds. The real challenge is to admit to ourselves when we need support.

How do you really feel? Are you anxious or worried? Distracted or easily annoyed? Are you sleeping? Do you find enjoyment in everyday life?

When it comes to our mental health & wellbeing there is a spectrum of support - starting with self help through to professional support.

Self Help

- ✳ Be active – physical exercise has many benefits, it lifts our mood, releases feel good endorphins and reduces stress and anxiety, as well as helping fitness. It can be as simple as taking a walk, cycling, or swimming. Try a new sport or join a club. Anything that raises our heart rate a little.
- ✳ Relax – make time for a hobby you enjoy, read a book, do a puzzle or brain teaser, watch a movie, try yoga, meditation or just take time out for yourself every day and switch off from the stressors of life.
- ✳ Cut down on the junk food, make time for breakfast, try and eat at regular intervals. Maybe cooking is something you would enjoy?
- ✳ Don't forget about your friends and family, meet for coffee, dinner or a chat – remain connected to those that care about you. Be honest with yourself and be honest with them. Open up. As police officers we are often the person that others want to open up to and be with. Let other people in and be open with them too.
- ✳ Helping others can help you too! Showing kindness can lift your own spirits, and you will have a sense of wellbeing, that warm glow of satisfaction.
- ✳ Positive reflection – reflect upon why you became a police officer. You should be proud of the work you do on a daily basis. This can be difficult against a backdrop of public criticisms so it is essential to remember you the work you seek to do – to protect our communities, to keep others safe. We can often be our own harshest critic so it is important to be kind to yourself; seek something positive everyday. See yourself through the eyes of your family and closest friends.

Helping Others

In our line of work it is important we are also mindful of our colleagues - to support our police family on a daily basis. Do you notice a work colleague or friend becoming quieter at work, more withdrawn, not joining in where once they did, going through the motions, showing an unusual lack of enthusiasm? Is their work of a lower standard, are there more delays in their submissions? Do they put themselves down more, is this a joke that is hiding something more? Where once they took pride in their appearance and themselves - has this changed? Are they drinking more alcohol than usual? Are they more distracted or more clumsy?

If you are concerned and identify with any of the questions above it is important to ask your colleague if they are ok. The question is often asked with no anticipation of an honest answer. So be prepared that someone may not be OK and may want to talk. Ask in a way that shows that you are ready for any answer by using open questions.

- ✳ Do you want to talk?
- ✳ Are you OK? - I am concerned about you and want to help
- ✳ How can I help you?
- ✳ Lets have a coffee and a chat?

We need to actively listen to verbal and non-verbal responses. Do not force someone to talk; be genuine in your desire to listen and help. If someone does open up remember that open questions are key. Questions that elicit a yes or no response can sometimes close the conversation down.

Remember not everyone will open up; just knowing that someone is willing to listen and actually cares can make a real difference. There are however times when professional help is required and it is important you know how to signpost someone for support.

Professional Help

Police Care UK – National Police Care Champion Program – local officers, local station – listening ear, advice, point to professional help.
www.policecare.org.uk
0300 012 0030 (9am – 5pm Mon-Fri)

Police Treatment Centres – www.thepolicetreatmentcentres.org.
Mental Health and support is available through the PTC Psychological Wellbeing Programme on a residential basis at both Police Treatment Centres. The PTC are also working closely in conjunction with Police UK in expanding the delivery of mental health support in terms of providing an improved treatment plan to greater numbers of officers in the future.

Flint House – www.flinthouse.co.uk

PTSD999 – www.ptsd999.org.uk

Police Federation of England and Wales – Man up – if you hear this – think Man Down. This ties in with the active listening and being careful around our own words. The Federation have been working to promote mental health support and rid the forces of the stigma, whereby ill mental health is considered a weakness
www.polfed.org/our-workwelfare-support-programme-wsp

The Samaritans – www.samaritans.org
24/7 Helpline 116 123

Mind – www.mind.org.uk

Campaign against Living Miserably (CALM) – www.thecalmzone.net

Shout – www.givesusashout.org

Call4BackUp – www.call4backup.org/findsupport

Contact your GP