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THE EMERGENCY
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THE OFFICIAL SHOW PREVIEW ISSUE

A FAST option to help with the mental health crisis facing our emergency services

Frontline Assistance for Stress and Trauma (FAST) was conceived in April 2020, when professional practitioner Wendy Power Stoten provided online support to a nurse struggling with overwhelming stress, on a COVID-19 Intensive Care Unit. The improvement in just one short session was remarkable. Word spread and other requests quickly followed with equally positive results, including greatly reduced stress levels enabling those helped to remain at, or return to work.

With the news reporting daily of the horrific toll on mental health of frontline staff in hospitals, the emergency services, care homes and more, Wendy knew that a larger scale fast response was needed, and FAST was created.

Within a month Wendy had conducted a pilot to ascertain the optimal support required, and attracted 30 advance-trained, trauma practitioners throughout the UK, offering their time, skills and expertise free of charge. With a solid structure in place, the team to date has delivered hundreds of sessions.

FAST offers up to four free online sessions to any health or emergency services worker in need. The service is simple to access via the FAST website, confidential and non-judgmental.

The gentle, simple technique of EFT (emotional freedom technique – now stated in NICE Guidelines relating to PTSD*) delivers highly effective results quickly – FAST! The techniques are easily taught to the client as an effective self-help tool they can use for life to reduce stress responses FAST.

FAST forward

Having worked in Japan, Wendy brings the Japanese 'Kaizen' concept of 'continual improvement' into FAST, quickly responding to ongoing changes and developments. A major lightbulb moment to further develop FAST's service, came having helped many clients from the police, ambulance and fire and rescue services, all of whom respond quickly, and deal with stressful and traumatic incidents daily. Exactly what the FAST team does and helps with!

FAST subsequently connected with a police constabulary in the South West of England in November 2020 to run trials, with clients referred by the constabulary's Welfare Officer. FAST has delivered impressive results, with officers and civilian staff feeling tangibly more resilient, and some of those on sickness absence able to return to work.

Survive to thrive

With large numbers of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Responses) among officers and staff, FAST quickly extended their service to offer additional individual sessions where appropriate, followed by transition sessions for those returning to work after sickness absence. To complete the trial, with the goal to move from 'survive to thrive', FAST plans to offer individual and group sessions for wellbeing maintenance and performance enhancement, enabling officers and staff to look towards their future with hope of achieving their potential.

Cost effective solution

When completed, the trial will hopefully prove and confirm that FAST offers a viable, cost-effective solution to the mental health crisis facing our emergency services.

Further evidence of FAST's commitment to making a real difference, is the organisation's work with researcher Sunita Pattani testing a PTSD protocol specific to frontline police officers.

FAST's next aim is to become a provider for other UK police constabularies, allowing this vital FAST service to be established as long term support.

With many in the emergency services accessing support over the past year, Wendy and the FAST team are acutely aware of the potential to tailor and extend their model to the fire and rescue service and emergency medical service.

FAST was registered as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in February 2021 and aims to become a sustainable service provider during this mental health crisis.

www.fasttraumasupport.org.uk

* <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9032/6/4/146>
Guidelines for the Treatment of PTSD Using Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques)

Visit FAST Trauma Support CIC at ESS2021 on Stand W13.

Dogs to be used to combat poor mental health in policing

Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service, has launched its new national Wellbeing and Trauma Support Dogs network (OK9).

The evidence proving the physical benefits of having a dog is well documented. Emerging research shows many ways in which dogs can provide support with mental health, creating a sense of calm, improving daily emotional and psychological stresses, and helping people to deal with the impact of a traumatic event.

The aim of this new national network is to have effective, professional, wellbeing dog resources available for as many police forces as possible, where the standards are high and maintained at the right level of consistency to support officers and staff in a safe and effective way.

Reduces stress and anxiety

Sgt Garry Botterill, Oscar Kilo lead for the Wellbeing and Trauma Support Dogs, said, "When a dog is introduced into the workplace, the atmosphere

immediately changes and people want to interact with him or her. During this time together, they share oxytocin, a hormone that engenders affection, trust and a sense of security. It helps naturally lower cortisone levels and in doing so reduces feelings of stress and anxiety.

"The enthusiasm of the people who are championing wellbeing in their home force is absolutely infectious and we are getting superb feedback from all over the country about how effective dogs are at helping colleagues."

Wellbeing dog handlers are also Mental Health First Aiders or trained peer supporters who are ideally placed to listen, enable difficult conversations and provide signposting to support if required.

<https://oscarkilo.org.uk>

If a police force is interested in getting involved, they should email contact@oscarkilo.org.uk
Visit Oscar Kilo at ESS2021 on Stand S79.

