

Frequently asked questions:

Why should we be aware of mental health problems?

Mental health problems can affect people at any time of life in different ways. They affect not only individuals and their families, but friends, work colleagues and employers too. Many people suffer a mental illness for a long time before they seek help.

What is Mental Health First Aid?

MHFA is a name for the help given to someone experiencing a mental health problem before professional help is obtained. The idea developed originally in Australia, has been adopted in many countries worldwide, and is now available in England.

The aims are:

- to preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others
- to provide help to prevent the mental health problems developing into a more serious state
- to promote the recovery of good mental health
- to provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem

MHFA does not teach people to be therapists. However, it does teach people how to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help, and how to guide a person towards appropriate professional help.

Can anyone attend the training?

Yes, MHFA is for everyone. Participants come from all backgrounds from family members wanting to gain more understanding of what a relative is going through to employers and people who are likely to come into contact with those at risk of mental health problems such as police, ambulance or community workers.

MHFA Instructors deliver courses across England. For details of dates, times and venues in your area visit the MHFA website, www.mhfaengland.org.uk or contact your local instructor:

Evaluation in England

A recent evaluation demonstrated an increase in confidence in helping someone with a mental health problem, a greater understanding of mental health problems and the stigma associated with them, and a positive impact on personal mental health. Participants were able to use the skills and knowledge gained to help people across a range of settings including the workplace, relatives and friends and the general public.

Quotes from participants:

"I will use what I have learnt in my personal life and with clients. I have more awareness of Mental Health issues and how they affect me and others."

"The course has given me more insight and understanding into the experience of mental distress, and given me strategies to help."

"The course has made me more aware of Mental Health issues which in my job as a shop steward will help me when representing union members."

Course programme

The 12-hour course covers a number of topics including:

- what is meant by mental health/mental ill health
- the signs and symptoms of common mental health problems including depression, anxiety disorders, and psychosis
- the range of effective interventions and treatments
- how to access professional help and support.

The course delivery is very flexible and may be delivered over 2 full days or spread out over a number of sessions. Courses for up to 12 participants can be arranged in house if an organization has suitable facilities. Smaller groups or individuals wishing to train should be able to access courses at external venues. For details of what can be offered locally, and the likely cost, contact a qualified trainer. Details of trainers are available from MHFA (website details below).

www.mhfaengland.org.uk

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