

MHFA Bangladesh launched by the country's Secretary of State for Health and Family Welfare

Secretary of State Syed Monjurul Islam announces support of Mental Health First Aid Bangladesh

[Thursday 9 April 2015]: The Secretary of State for Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Syed Monjurul Islam has announced his support for the roll out of the internationally recognised training programme, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). His announcement was made at the closing ceremony of the MHFA instructor training programme held on Thursday 9 April at the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation.

The Secretary of State's support comes at a time when an estimated 16% of Bangladesh's community (23 million people) are experiencing a diagnosable mental health issue. To help meet the needs of these Bangladeshi people, the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation (IWF) has been set up and is chaired by Monira Rahman. The IWF's first objective is the roll out of MHFA within the community and phase one has now been met, with 16 MHFA instructors trained to be able to deliver this internationally recognised mental health awareness programme.

Secretary of State for Health and Family Welfare Syed Monjurul Islam says:

"The Government of Bangladesh is committed to the principles of improving the provision of treatment of mental illnesses as well as undertaking activities for creating awareness among people to address the stigma and fear of mental illnesses. I am grateful to the team from Mental Health First Aid England that trained the first cadre of 16 MHFA National Trainers over the past three weeks. I congratulate those 16 national trainers on their success and thank them for their commitment to promote mental health first aid activities in Bangladesh."

Leading the initial MHFA instructor training in Bangladesh is MHFA England, a successful social enterprise which has trained 100,000 people in England to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and support on a first aid basis. Increasingly working on an international platform, MHFA England has invested considerable resources to support the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation, as part of its overall commitment to increasing mental health literacy, at home and abroad.

Poppy Jaman, CEO for MHFA England says:

"We are delighted to be supporting the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation to help meet its aim of increasing the mental health literacy of the country's population. As highlighted by the Secretary of State today, there is a real need in Bangladesh for better mental health support and the Mental Health First Aid programme is an important part of the solution. We have been extremely impressed with the level of commitment and enthusiasm shown by the MHFA National Training Team here in Bangladesh and we are confident that they will go on to deliver excellent MHFA training across the country."

Leading the IWF is Monira Rahman, a leading advocate in the area of mental health and former CEO of the The Acid Survivors Foundation. As chair of the IWF, Ms Rahman will oversee the



MHFA England

organisation's aim of ensuring that people with mental health issues have access to innovative and learning based therapeutic services, including the roll out of MHFA across the country. She says:

“The development of the IWF is an important milestone in our country's bid to improve the mental health of our people. The work we are doing with MHFA England is truly fantastic and I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the visiting team and the organisation as a whole for putting such financial and emotional support into Bangladeshi training programme. We have a long way to go but with the support of the Government and organisations such as MHFA England I know we can achieve a better outlook for the mental health of our nation.”

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

About Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation (IWF):

For further information about IWF please visit www.iwellbeing.org

About MHFA England

1. For further information, images or case studies regarding MHFA England please contact media@mhfaengland.org or call 020 7250 8116
2. MHFA England is a Community Interest Company, established in 2009.
3. MHFA is the mental health equivalent of physical First Aid training and provides participants with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support services.
4. To date over 90,000 people in the UK are Mental Health First Aid trained.
5. The core principles of MHFA include: spotting the signs of a mental health problem, helping to stop the distress from getting worse and give confidence in helping someone who is experiencing a problem.
6. As well as the standard MHFA course, the organisation runs a number of bespoke courses including Youth MHFA, MHFA Lite, Armed Forces MHFA and MHFA Workplace.
7. More information about MHFA England and its courses can be found at mhfaengland.org.