

Every London school to have access to Youth Mental Health First Aid by 2021

A ground-breaking programme has been launched to ensure every state-funded primary, secondary school and further education college in London has access to Youth Mental Health First Aid by 2021.

The programme is a collaboration between Thrive LDN and Mental Health First Aid England, supported by funding from the Mayor of London through the Young Londoners Fund. The partnership continues the Mayor's drive to help and support children and young people to fulfil their potential, with a particular focus on improving the mental health and wellbeing of all young Londoners.

Half of all cases of diagnosable mental illness begin by age 14 and three-quarters by the age of 24. The planned Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training programme will ensure schools have access to a trained individual who can recognise the crucial warning signs and symptoms of poor mental health in young people and can guide a young person to the appropriate support.

The ambitious programme will initially provide 100 funded places on a Royal Society for Public Health accredited Youth MHFA Instructor Training programme. This will more than double the number of Youth MHFA instructors in London. The seven-day instructor training programme is facilitated by Mental Health First Aid England and is typically spread out over six weeks.

As part of their training, individuals undertaking this 'train the trainer' programme will go on to lead an on-going programme of Youth MHFA two day training courses across London. The programme will initially see training delivered to approximately 2,000 school staff and peer mentors.

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "The wellbeing of children in London is absolutely vital in building a healthy and successful future for our city. We've seen the devastating impact that poor mental health can have on young people, which is why we're increasing the number of Youth Mental Health First Aid instructors in the city and providing every school with access to a member of staff with appropriate mental health training. It's a great example of how our Young Londoners Fund can help children and young people fulfil their potential."

Fionuala Bonnar, Chief Operating Officer, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, said: "Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches people the skills and confidence to spot the signs of mental health issues in a young person, offer first aid and guide them towards the support they need. In doing so, this can speed up a young person's recovery and stop a mental health issue from getting worse. Mental Health First Aid England is already working with a number of schools across the City as part of the Department of Health funded Youth MHFA in Schools programme. We are excited to build on this reach and support the Mayor's ambition to now train a Youth Mental Health First Aider in every school in London."

Dr Yvonne Doyle, London regional director for Public Health England and Mayoral Health Advisor, said: "Good mental health is essential for children and young people to be able to thrive in life. The emotional health and wellbeing of a child is just as important as their physical health and wellbeing and prevention is paramount. Helping children early with

ground-breaking programmes such as this can avoid them falling into lifelong struggles with poor mental health.”

Dr Tom Coffey OBE, Mayoral Health Advisor, said: “This is a ground-breaking programme that has real potential to help young people across London. Spotting the early signs of developing mental health problems in children and young people, and stepping in to offer the right support, significantly improves a child’s chances of succeeding at school and their future job opportunities. It can also reduce the risk of a young person developing problems with contact with the criminal justice system, suicide, substance misuse and self-harm.”

Jane Milligan, senior responsible officer for Healthy London Partnership’s mental health programme of work, said: “This is a great example of how we are all working together across London’s health and care systems to improve the mental health of young people in London and reduce stigma. This partnership approach will help to ensure that the correct support is being offered to children and young people who begin to feel vulnerable or mentally unwell.”

The programme is now open and those who are interested in accessing Youth MHFA training as part of this funded programme should contact Thrive LDN on youthmhfa@thrivedn.co.uk. You can find out more about Youth MHFA training and the learning outcomes by visiting www.mhfaengland.org/organisations/youth/.

Ends

For more information, please contact james.ludley@nhs.net / 07795 665680.

Notes to Editors

- There are approximately 2,500 state-funded schools in London.
- In the last twelve months, approximately 291 schools across London have had at least one person trained in Youth MHFA skills (as part of a separate [government funded schools programme](#)).
- The Youth MHFA in London Schools programme is funded through the Mayor’s [Young Londoners Fund](#) scale-up activity.
- The Youth MHFA in London Schools programme is costed at £375,000 for year one of the programme and will enable Thrive LDN to train Youth Mental Health First Aiders in every London borough and undertake a robust London wide evaluation of the programme’s impact. This will inform the delivery model for years 2 and 3 of the programme.
- School types include state-funded primary, secondary, Sixth Form College and special educational needs schools.
- Youth MHFA instructors will be recruited from the range of organisations across the communities (schools, faith, voluntary, statutory and primary care) to ensure sustainability beyond the timeframe of the programme.
- Everyone who attends a Youth MHFA Two Day training course receives a manual and workbook to support them in their role as a dedicated Youth Mental Health First Aider.

The Young Londoners Fund was established by the Mayor of London to help London’s children and young adults make the most of our amazing city. It will support a range of

education, sport, cultural and other activities for children and young people. The 3-year fund totalling £45 will see £30m made available for projects in local communities with the remaining £15m invested in 'scale-up activity' to expand existing projects funded by City Hall that support young Londoners.

Thrive LDN is a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners. It is supported by the Mayor of London and led by the London Health Board, in partnership with Greater London Authority, Healthy London Partnership, NHS England (London Region), Public Health England (London Region) and London Councils. More information can be found at www.thriveldn.co.uk.

Mental Health First Aid England is a community interest company (CIC). The organisation has a clear vision to normalise society's attitudes and behaviours around mental health, thereby reducing stigma and discrimination across communities. It aims to do this by training one in ten of the English population in MHFA skills. It has currently trained over 290,000 people in England in MHFA skills and has 1,800 registered MHFA instructors across the country. More information can be found at www.mhfaengland.org.

Healthy London Partnership (HLP) was formed in April 2015. HLP aims to make London the healthiest global city in the world by working with our partners for Londoners to improve health and care, so everyone can live healthier lives. HLP works across health and social care, and with the Greater London Authority, Public Health England, NHS England, London's councils, clinical commissioning groups, and Health Education England. More information can be found at www.healthylondon.org. The Thrive LDN programme team is hosted by HLP.