

New independent study reveals positive impact of Mental Health First Aid England training in workplaces

[Friday 23 November 2018, 09:00 GMT] New research published today, undertaken by the University of Nottingham and commissioned by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), adds to the existing body of evidence which shows Mental Health First Aid training to be highly effective at increasing knowledge and confidence in understanding and talking about mental health. The **MENTal** Health First Aid in The **WORK**place (MENTOR) report reveals that 91 per cent of employees surveyed said there had been an increased understanding of mental health issues in their workplace as a result of the training.

In addition, the MENTOR study shows that 88 per cent of employees reported an increase in confidence around mental health issues in their workplace and 87 per cent said that more mental health conversations were happening at work as a result of the training. 83 per cent noticed an improvement in procedures for signposting to further support.

The new research also found that Mental Health First Aid England training helped to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace, with 64 per cent reporting this. As well as helping to create a culture of openness in the workplace, the training also led to positive action being taken, with 59 per cent of participants reporting an increase in help-seeking behaviour.

Fionuala Bonnar, Chief Operating Officer, Mental Health First Aid England, said, “We welcome this new study into the effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid training in the workplace. Time and time again Mental Health First Aid is shown to be effective in increasing knowledge, confidence and skills necessary to support someone with mental health issues.



MHFA England

“It’s encouraging to see that this latest piece of research adds to our evidence base and the report recommends that more could be done to strengthen the boundaries of a Mental Health First Aider in the workplace. This is something we will enhance as part of our existing course content and supporting materials and we will also be launching a refresher training course in early 2019 to ensure that skills are kept up to date at regular intervals.

“More widely, the Health and Safety Executive announced this week that First Aid guidance has been updated to explicitly include mental health. So now there will be an even clearer focus on how the role of the Mental Health First Aider fits into a ‘whole organisation’ approach to mental health and wellbeing.

“As part of our organisational objective to further build the evidence base around Mental Health First Aid, we will use the MENTOR findings to inform a new piece of research we are commissioning through the Centre for Mental Health. This will further investigate the impact of Mental Health First Aid in the workplace, including the experiences of employees who have received support from a Mental Health First Aider.”

In response to the report’s recommendations Mental Health First Aid England will commit to enhance its training offer by:

- Strengthening [existing guidance](#) on the boundaries and role of the Mental Health First Aider and include guidance for those trained as Mental Health Aware (Half Day) and as Mental Health First Aid Champions (One Day)
- Offering a Mental Health First Aid Refresher course in early 2019
- Commissioning the Centre for Mental Health to work with an academic partner to undertake a longitudinal study into the impact of Mental Health First Aid in the workplace, including the experience of the person supported by a Mental Health First Aider

Currently, Mental Health First Aid England is delivering training into thousands of organisations across the country, including private and public bodies, schools, colleges, universities and the Armed Forces community. Many of these organisations are

reporting the positive impact that MHFA England training is having within their organisations and on their staff, including earlier access to support services such as Employee Assistance Programmes and in-house counselling.

Karl Simons, Chief Health, Safety & Security Officer, Thames Water, said, “Stress, anxiety and depression contributes to over 40% of all our occupational health referrals. But thanks to our strategic approach to health and wellbeing we’ve seen sickness absence as a result of these issues fall by 75 per cent over the last five years.

“Our 350 Mental Health First Aiders are a key part of this approach and their introduction has led to a cultural revolution across the Thames Water. They have been a catalyst for engagement and we now record five times as many Mental Health First Aid interventions compared to physical first aid interventions.”

MHFA England training sits on a uniquely strong evidence base of over 70 studies which demonstrate the effectiveness of MHFA training in increasing mental health awareness, knowledge and confidence in how to support a person experiencing mental ill health. A recent RAND study commissioned by Public Health England studied 117 mental health and wellbeing programmes and found MHFA England training to be among the top five identified as meeting the highest standards of evidence (Nesta level 3).

To find out more about the evidence base for Mental Health First Aid or to learn about MHFA England courses visit mhfaengland.org. To find out more about MHFA England’s campaign to change the law around First Aid visit wheresyourheadat.org.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

- For interview requests and case study information please contact the MHFA England media team on media@mhfaengland.org or call 0207 250 8116
- Mental Health First Aid is the mental health equivalent of physical first aid training and provides participants with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and



MHFA England

symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support, be that self-help or professional services.

- To date over 300,000 people in England are trained in MHFA skills.
- The core principles of MHFA include: spotting the signs of a mental health issue, helping to prevent issues from getting worse and giving confidence in helping someone who is experiencing an issue.
- As well as the Adult MHFA course, the organisation runs a number of tailored courses including Youth MHFA, Higher Education MHFA, Armed Forces MHFA and Workplace MHFA.
- MHFA England has a vision to normalise society's attitudes and behaviours around mental health by developing the skills we need to look after our own and other's wellbeing.
- More information about MHFA England and its courses can be found at www.mhfaengland.org or by emailing info@mhfaengland.org.