

# MHFA ENGLAND SUMMARY OF THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID IN THE WORKPLACE (MENTOR) STUDY



## BACKGROUND

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an international programme which trains individuals to recognise the signs of mental ill health in others and offer timely and appropriate support.

MHFA is not specifically a workplace intervention, and only a small number of the 70 studies on MHFA have looked at MHFA in the workplace.

## METHODS

Three studies were done as part of this research.

### THE FIRST STUDY

The first study used internet searches to find out what mental health and suicide awareness training is available for UK workplaces. The courses were compared on their content, format, duration and cost.

### THE SECOND STUDY

The second study surveyed organisations whose employees had received MHFA training using an online questionnaire. Employees were asked questions about how staff were selected to attend MHFA training, how the uptake impact of MHFA was recorded and what the outcomes of MHFA training were for individuals and organisations.

### THE THIRD STUDY

The third study interviewed employees from the organisations that had participated in the survey about their experiences and opinions of MHFA training, how they used MHFA skills in the workplace and how Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders) were promoted and supported in the workplace.

## RESULTS

### THE FIRST STUDY

The first study identified four MHFA courses, 25 mental health-related courses and 14 suicide-related courses available for use in UK workplaces. Courses were between 45 minutes and three days long, and were most often delivered face to face. Courses covered a range of mental health-related topics, with shorter courses covering fewer topics in less detail than longer courses.

### THE SECOND STUDY

The second study analysed data from 139 employees from 81 organisations and found that:

- The main reasons for their organisation taking up MHFA training was in recognition of the impact of mental health issues (32.4%), and because it was part of the organisation's wellbeing strategy (19.4%)
- Organisations most often invited all employees to attend MHFA training (36.7%), or employees requested (28.8%) or were selected (22.3%) to go on a MHFA course



## RESULTS

— After the training:

**91%** of employees said there was an increased understanding of mental health issues in their workplace

**88%** reported an increased confidence around mental health issues

**87%** said more mental health conversations were happening at work

**83%** noticed an improvement in procedures for signposting to further support

**78%** said that employees trained in MHFA skills were supporting colleagues

- Employees were made aware of MHFA training and MHFAiders through a range of strategies, including posters, intranet links, email signatures, leaflets and badges.
- Organisations had different strategies for measuring the uptake and impact of MHFA training, but not all employees could give details about this.

## THE THIRD STUDY

The third study indicated that participants viewed MHFA training positively and noted that training to refresh their skills would also be welcome. MHFAiders were promoted throughout their organisations in many ways, such as lists of trained members being shown on posters or on the intranet, and events which raised awareness of trained MHFAiders in the workplace. These strategies meant that interviewees who were not trained in MHFA were aware of MHFAiders and their roles.

Some organisations had formal systems in place for employees to access MHFAiders and record instances where they had provided support, and other organisations had networks for MHFAiders to seek support for themselves. Key issues faced by MHFAiders in the workplace included the risk of breaching the confidentiality of the person accessing support, difficulty managing the boundaries of the MHFAider role and difficulty measuring the success of MHFA within an organisation.

## CONCLUSIONS

MHFA is one of many different mental health training courses available for the workplace. MHFA appears to be well received in the organisations whose employees were surveyed and interviewed. Participants noted that the training provides increased knowledge about and confidence in addressing mental ill health, and report that MHFA skills are being used in the workplace after the training. The results note that there is a lack of clarity

around how MHFA is implemented in the workplace and how its effectiveness can be measured by organisations

Overall, the research supports the core claims of the MHFA programme, which are to increase mental health awareness, knowledge and confidence in how to support a person experiencing mental ill health and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

## MHFA ENGLAND'S NEXT STEPS

In response to the MENTOR study's findings we will now:

*Strengthen our existing guidance for those trained as Mental Health Aware (Half Day) and as MHFA Champions (One Day).*

*Launch the MHFA England refresher training in early 2019.*

*Use these findings to inform research we are commissioning with the Centre for Mental Health to further investigate the impact of MHFA in the workplace.*

For more information on Mental Health First Aid England training in the workplace visit:

[mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org)

