

Leading mental health expert urges UK to follow in America's footsteps and bring parity of esteem into schools

5 March 2015: The USA's First Lady Michelle Obama yesterday announced that 3 million people, including school teachers, will be trained in Mental Health First Aid in a bid to bring equality to mental and physical health in American society. On the same day, Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt and Conservative MP James Morris both spoke at the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Mental Health's inquiry report into parity of esteem, where a key recommendation was that all teachers should be trained to spot the signs of an early mental health issue.

Currently 23 countries run an MHFA training programme, including England and the USA. The training model teaches people to be able to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and provide support on a first aid basis. Addressing an audience of government and not-for-profit leaders, Mrs Obama revealed that she has personally attended a Mental Health First Aid training course and said that she could see "just how useful it is. It really gives you the skills you need to identify — and ultimately help — someone in need. Because you never know when these kinds of skills might be useful".

Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA), the sole provider of mental health first aid training in England is urging the government to follow America's lead and invest the money needed to ensure as a first step that all teachers are trained in Youth MHFA. The longer term mission is for MHFA training to be mandatory in the workplace, in the same way that physical first aid is.

Poppy Jaman, CEO of MHFA England says:

"What we need now is the government to follow through on its recommendations to bring parity of esteem into our society and set aside the necessary funding for all schools to have at least one trained Mental Health First Aider. Ideally the Youth MHFA course should be made a mandatory part of initial teacher training so that teachers are given the necessary tools to spot the signs and symptoms of mental health issues in pupils and have the confidence to guide them to appropriate support, such as a school counselling service or Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services."

Commenting on the release of the Parity of Progress? report yesterday, James Morris MP, Chair of the APPG on Mental Health said:

"While there have been some good commitments from Government and the NHS to improving mental health services, our inquiry found that progress has been unacceptably slow. There has been long-term failure over successive governments to give mental health equal priority with physical health; for too long poor quality mental health care has been tolerated in a way that would not be acceptable in physical health care. Swift action must now be taken to ensure that the one in four people who experience mental health in their lifetime get the treatment they need and deserve."

For more information about MHFA England visit www.mhfaengland.org

ENDS



Notes to Editors

1. For further information, photographs, comments or case studies, please contact Eleanor Miller on media@mhfaengland.org or call 020 8224 1144
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 85,500 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 www.mhfaengland.org or by emailing info@mhfaengland.org

You can read the All Party Parliamentary Group's report in full [here](#).