

Youth MHFA in Schools programme launches

MHFA England is today pleased to announce the national launch of the **Youth MHFA in Schools programme**. This follows a commitment made by Prime Minister Theresa May in January to provide Youth MHFA training to at least one member of staff in every state secondary school in the country over the next three years. This training aims to give staff the skills and confidence to support young people in emotion distress on a first aid basis.

As part of this government-funded programme, 1,000 secondary school staff across England will this year take part in a Youth MHFA One Day course, that it fits perfectly into school inset training days and busy timetables. Overall, the government has committed to fund over 3,000 course places so that by 2020 at least one person in every state secondary school in England has MHFA skills.

Caroline Hounsell, MHFA England Director and lead of the Youth MHFA in Schools programme, commented, “Mental ill health in young people is a growing health concern, with half of all lifetime cases of mental health issues starting by the age of 14. It’s therefore vital that we put the right measures in place to ensure that young people get the help they need and at the earliest possible stage. We are really pleased to be involved in this government-backed programme and supporting our instructors to deliver this important schools-focused training. Ultimately we believe that Youth MHFA should form part of initial teacher training so that all teaching staff start their career with these essential skills and school support staff are trained when in post.”

Mike Henshall, Head of House at Holmes Chapel Comprehensive school, Cheshire commented, “Having recently completed a Youth Mental Health First Aid course, I now feel I have a greater understanding of mental health issues and greater confidence to approach young people to start conversations about mental health. There are a limited number of staff in our school whom have dealt with these issues and despite the high prevalence, many have no formal training to enable them to manage these kind of situations. I now look forward to being able to share course learnings to empower my colleagues, be they teachers or support staff, to feel able to start conversations around mental health, offer comfort and reassurance to students, and guide them to the appropriate support.”

A recent survey by the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) found that 98% of teachers had come into contact with pupils who were experiencing mental health issues, however only 46% reported receiving training on children’s mental health. The Youth MHFA in Schools programme aims to address this gap by creating Youth MHFA Champions in every state secondary school in England, so that staff are skilled to spot the common signs of mental health issues and guide a young person experiencing a mental health issue to the support they may need.

Sarah Brennan, Chief Executive of YoungMinds, said, “Children and young people today are facing a huge range of pressures, from exam stress to online bullying, which inevitably take a toll on their mental health. Many of these pressures become particularly intense during secondary school so it is important and welcome that mental health first aid training will be available for secondary schools.”

“This training is a move in the right direction and will help give staff the opportunity to gain confidence and understand mental health better. We hope it will encourage more leadership teams to put student wellbeing at the heart of their school which will benefit both students and schools alike.”



MHFA England

“Young people need to learn about wellbeing and resilience from a young age, so when they leave school they are equipped to deal with problems and have the confidence to seek help. It is vital that this work is part of a whole-school approach to wellbeing, and that mental health is made a priority across the education system.”

Around one in 10 children have a diagnosable mental health issue – roughly three children in every classroom – so upskilling frontline school staff to be able to support these children is crucially important. As a robust evidence-based training Mental Health First Aid will not only increase the mental health literacy of school staff taking this course, but will help them turn this awareness into action by teaching them skills to support young people in emotional distress.

To find out more please visit our [Schools programme page](#).