

# Health & Wellbeing @ First



This is our new wellbeing branding and logos that appear across our wellbeing promotional material and internal channels. It focuses on **Financial, mental and physical** wellbeing.



Our employee discounts site, First Xclusives has a specific wellbeing hub where we are able to direct people to products, tools, hints, tips and services to support improving your mental health.

Whether that's mediation techniques, articles, links to podcasts or mindfulness techniques, the First Xclusives hub has something for everyone.

Wellbeing Centre > Mind

### Audio of the week

**Morning manifestation**  
by Jamie Clements

The focus of the session today is on manifesting our goals and how we can achieve our deepest desires

10 min

### Meditation

**Being grateful**  
by Jamie Clements

**Enhancing creativity**  
by Enda Quealy

**The power of breath**  
by Jamie Clements

**Wind down breathwork**  
by Jamie Clements

First Xclusives More for you

What are you looking for?

Alerts Account Basket

## Find Sanctuary in the Mind section

Try our brand new mental wellbeing content in the Mind section today!

Provided by:



**Quick Health Fact**

*Walking outside, or spending time in green space, can reduce negative thoughts and boost self-esteem.*

- Move**  
Get active
- Munch**  
Eat your way to a healthier you
- Money**  
Financial wellbeing
- Mind**  
Mastering your mental health

### Featured Articles

**Strategies for stress: talkin...**  
by Sharon James

2 min read

When it comes to stress, many people overlook the simple strategy of talking. Here's how it can help you to reduce stress and improve your health and wellbeing. Talking can help you to: Build healthy relationships Social interaction is important for mental health and wellbeing. Talking to friends, family and colleagues can help to build strong relationships and develop trust. W

[Read on >](#)

**How to live more...**  
by RG Wellbeing Team

3 min read

Most of us are aware that global warming is a profoundly serious problem, and we are often told to live more sustainably to reduce the effects, but what does living sustainably actually mean? In short, living a sustainable lifestyle involves having as little impact on Earth as possible, reducing the amount of resources we use, limiting our energy output and using eco-

[Read on >](#)

**Five ways to manage stress**  
by RG Wellbeing Team

4 min read

We all would like to have less stress in our lives, but what exactly is stress? Our reaction to stress is a natural response, it is our body's way of telling us that a situation is dangerous, and we need to make changes. By releasing cortisol into our bloodstream, the body responds with visible physical symptoms. Whilst the response to stress is normal if we are subjected to stress for long per

[Read on >](#)



# ACTION CALENDAR: FRIENDLY FEBRUARY 2021



This calendar was distributed for Children's Mental Health Week in February 2021.

It highlights daily activities that people can undertake to support themselves and others to improve the mental health outcomes.

MONDAY

- 1 Send someone a message to say how much they mean to you
- 8 Share what you're feeling with someone you really trust
- 15 Smile at the people you see and brighten their day
- 22 Give sincere compliments to people you talk to today

TUESDAY

- 2 Ask a friend how they have been feeling recently
- 9 Thank someone and tell them how they made a difference for you
- 16 Check in on someone who may be struggling and offer to help
- 23 Be gentle with someone who you feel inclined to criticise

WEDNESDAY

- 3 Do an act of kindness to make life easier for someone else
- 10 Look for the good in people, even when they frustrate you
- 17 Respond kindly to everyone you talk to today, including yourself
- 24 Tell a loved one about their strengths that you value most

THURSDAY

- 4 Organise a virtual 'tea break' with colleagues or friends
- 11 Send an encouraging note to someone who needs a boost
- 18 Appreciate the good qualities of someone in your life
- 25 Thank three people you feel grateful to and tell them why

FRIDAY

- 5 Show an active interest by asking questions when talking to others
- 12 Focus on being kind rather than being right
- 19 Share a video or message you find inspiring or helpful
- 26 Give positive comments to as many people as possible today

SATURDAY

- 6 Get back in touch with an old friend you've not seen for a while
- 13 Send a friendly message of support to a local business
- 20 Make a plan to connect with others and do something fun
- 27 Call a friend to catch up and really listen to them

SUNDAY

- 7 Make an effort to have a friendly chat with a neighbour
- 14 Tell your loved ones why they are special to you
- 21 Actively listen to what people say, without judging them
- 28 Make uninterrupted time for your loved ones



"The best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer somebody else up" - Mark Twain



"The only way to have a friend is to be one" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

Happier · Kinder · Together

Learn more about this month's theme at [www.actionforhappiness.org/friendly-february](http://www.actionforhappiness.org/friendly-february)



# Minds matter



Coronavirus has had a huge impact on all our lives. Lots of us are feeling worried and uncertain at the moment – and have been for many months. These feelings are completely normal.

It can be difficult to manage these emotions, though, which is why our expert practitioners have created this toolkit. It's full of advice and activities to help you look after your own, your family's and your children's wellbeing.

## Looking after your own – and your family's – wellbeing

### Try mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing. Here are some suggestions to help you focus on the here and now.



Breathe in. Breathe out.  
Feel the flow of breath.



Be aware of every activity you do  
(working, speaking to someone).



Pay attention to your senses – notice  
the taste and textures of food, or the  
sights and sounds of nature.



Go outdoors – take a walk  
and look around you.



As soon as the mind wanders, bring  
your thoughts back to breathing.



Forgive yourself for every  
negative thought.



Empty the mind – take a few  
moments to be still.



Be grateful – say 'thank you'  
to people, nature and things.



Practice non-judgemental  
thinking.



Go easy on yourself – with  
time you'll see progress.

## Eat well and stay hydrated



Your appetite might change if your routine changes, or if you're less active than you usually are. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can help your mood and energy levels.

Drink plenty of water. Drinking enough water is important for your family's mental and physical health. Changing your routine might affect when or what you drink. It could help to set an alarm or use an app to remind you.

## Connect with people

It's important to keep in touch with people – the best way to do that at the moment is online.



Make plans to video chat with friends or groups you'd normally see in person. You could also arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts.

If you're worried you might run out of stuff to talk about, plan to watch a TV programme or read a book separately so that you can chat about it later.

## Get as much sunlight and fresh air as you can



Spending time in green spaces or bringing nature into your everyday life has lots of benefits. It can improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, and make you more relaxed.

If possible, try to go for 30-minute walk six days a week. If not, you can still get the positive effects from nature at home. You could:

- Open the windows to let in some fresh air.
- Sit by a window and look out at the trees or sky, or watch birds and other animals.
- Listen to natural sounds, like birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall, via an app or online.
- Get as much natural light as you can by spending time in your garden (if you have one) or open your front or back door and sit on the step.

## Try to keep active



Build physical activity into your daily routine. Most of us don't have equipment like treadmills at home, but there's still lots we can do. Exercising at home can be simple: doing a bit of cleaning, dancing to

music, going up and down stairs or online exercise classes.

Give yourself targets – start small and build up. You could also set yourself a challenge with a family member, friend or as part of a team.

## Self-care



As a parent, you give your children endless time, energy and love all year round. But it's also really important to look after your own wellbeing.

Self-care is more than facemasks and candles. It's taking time to do things that give you energy and resilience. Here are a few ideas.

- Do something you love. Keep it simple – put your feet up and read your favourite book, watch a film, or take a long bubble bath. Make space for activities you can enjoy on your own. This can remind you that you're not 'just' a parent.
- Cook a proper meal. Dust off the cookbook and test that recipe you've been meaning to try. Making a tasty meal from scratch can give you a real sense of achievement and you get to sample something new. Use it as time to help you unwind. You could listen to your favourite podcast or album as you go.
- Spend quality time with loved ones. Catch up with a friend or family member. You could have a virtual coffee, meet up to go on a walk together or keep it simple with a phone call.
- Celebrate your achievements. Being a parent can be so rewarding but it also comes with plenty of challenges. Write down a few of the hurdles you've managed to tackle since becoming a parent. It's important to celebrate even the smallest of wins and take pride in what you've done.

## Looking after your child's wellbeing

Every child has ups and downs – it's natural for feelings to fluctuate in this way. As a parent or carer, it's a good idea to let your child know they can talk to you when they need to. If your child is finding things difficult right now, it might help to try some mood-boosting tactics.

### Collect words of kindness



Encourage your child to collect nice things that people have said or written about them. This could be cards, emails, or feedback from teachers.

Or it could be something a friend has said. Suggest your child writes them down.

This highlights how much they're valued by others, and builds self-esteem. Keep the things they've written in a safe place so your child can find them at any time.

### Give your child's health a boost



Your child's physical health is closely linked to mental and emotional wellbeing. Try playing some sport, going for a walk together, or doing activity at home. This will help them experience the feel-good hormones released by exercise.

Eating well as a family will help, too. Look for inspiration online (try searching 'healthy' on the [BBC Good Food website](#)).

### Create a happiness jar



When something good happens, get your child to write it down on a piece of paper, fold it up and put it in a jar. It can be absolutely anything that makes them feel happy.

- Encourage them to think about happy moments from the past week.
- Get them to jot down positive things when they happen.

Noticing the good bits of life can help them to feel good about what they have.

### Take a moment to breathe

Get your child to put aside between 10 minutes and half an hour every day to relax. Suggest they use the time to do as little as possible.



They should just 'be' and reflect on their day, instead of trying to achieve anything.

Help them to create a peaceful space where they find it easy to take time out.

## Activities

### Activity 1: Celebrate the good

Take 10 minutes to recognise the good stuff in your life.

Things, people and places you like:



Write down one thing that's going well for you right now:

One thing you've worked hard to achieve:

Two people you can count on for kind words or a warm hug:

Three things you are looking forward to:

## Activity 2: Perfecting your life commentary

Positive 'self-talk' can make you feel good about yourself. It's like having an optimistic voice in your head that boosts your mood and helps to build resilience.



It takes a bit of practice – becoming aware of your 'self-talk' isn't easy. But the more you notice the running commentary in your head the quicker you can change negative talk into positive commentary.

Start by speaking your thoughts out loud for a few minutes every day. Choose a time when you're alone if you feel more comfortable. For example, you may notice thoughts like:

***'I'm always running late. Why can't I be more organised? I'm useless.'***

With practice, you may be able to change this thought to:

***'I have a lot to do in the mornings but I manage to get my children ready, dressed, give them breakfast and get them to school. That's quite an achievement.'***

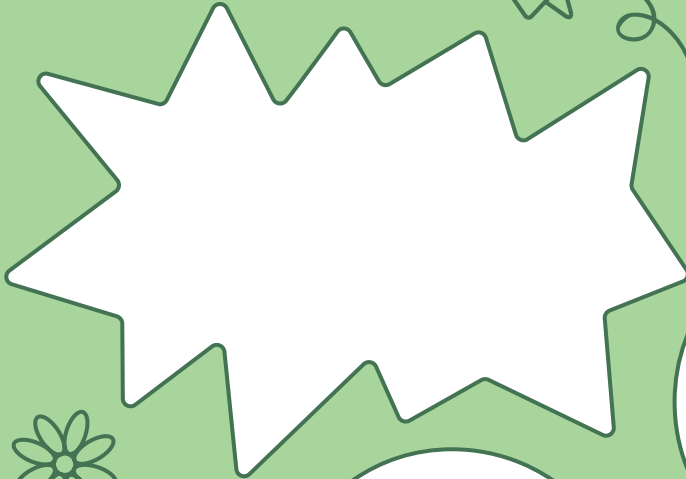
You might find it useful to set aside a bit of time each day to make a note of your negative thoughts and a more positive way of thinking. Training ourselves to have a more positive life commentary can lift our mood and build resilience.

### Activity 3: Looking to the future

It's important to look forward. Although this is difficult at the moment, it can help to set some goals (big or small) for the week, month or year ahead. Think about new things you'd like to try, skills to develop or a bucket list for the future.

# 2021

**New things to try**



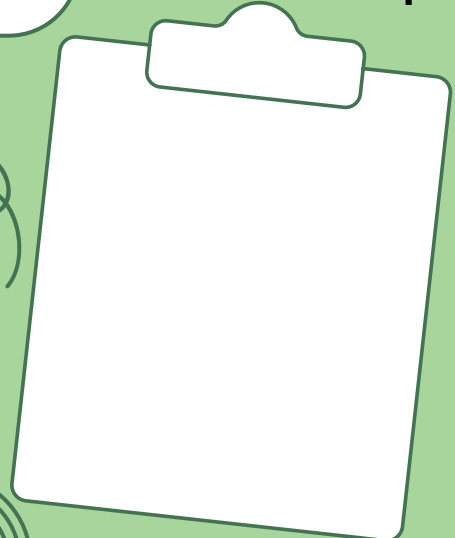
**Goals for the year**



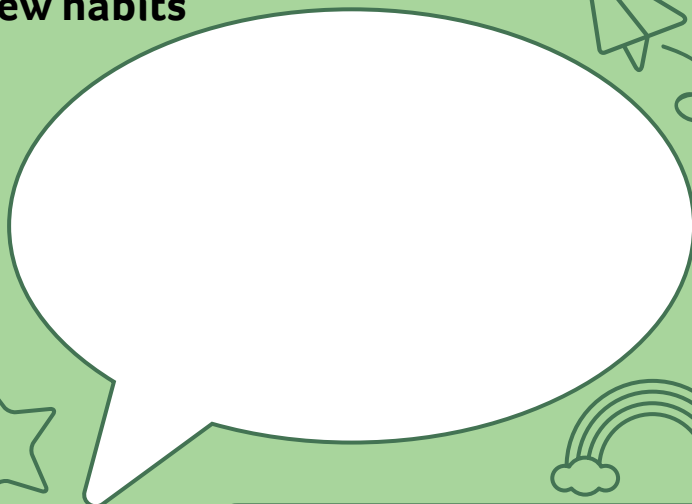
**Dreams**



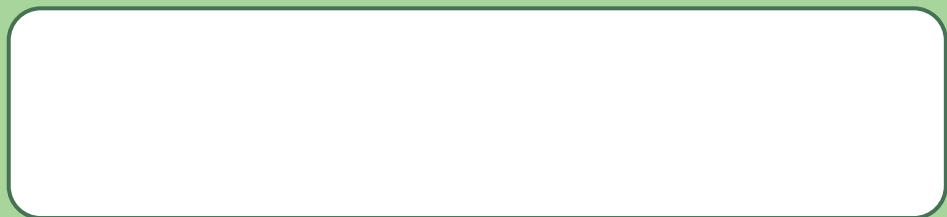
**Skills to develop**



**New habits**



**Bucket list**





## Useful resources

Our **Parent Talk** online service is home to lots of useful information and down-to-earth advice, as well as live one-to-one chat support. For more information on supporting adults, as well as children and young people struggling with their mental health, head to: [parents.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk)

### Apps (external providers)

#### Mindful Gnats

Helps young people to develop mindfulness and relaxation skills.

#### MindShift

Designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.

#### Calm

Calm encourages meditation through guided programmes and sleep stories.

#### Happify

Offers science-based activities and games to reduce stress, overcome negative thoughts and build resilience.

#### MoodGYM

An interactive programme – based on cognitive behaviour and interpersonal therapy – to help young people with low mood.

#### Headspace

Help to let go of stress, relax and get a better night's sleep using meditation and mindfulness techniques.

#### SuperBetter

A game that builds resilience: the ability to stay strong, motivated, and optimistic even in the face of difficult challenges. For young people over 13 years old.

#### Daylio

A private journal (no typing needed) that tracks mood and activities, helping to understand habits and be more productive.

#### Smiling Mind

A free modern meditation app that helps young people aged over seven to bring balance into their lives, de-stress and stay calm.

### Other organisations that can help

#### Anxiety UK

Charity that supports people who have been diagnosed with an anxiety-based condition.

Phone: **03444 775 774**  
(Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.30pm)  
[anxietyuk.org.uk](https://anxietyuk.org.uk)

#### Bipolar UK

Charity that empowers people affected by bipolar to live well and fulfil their potential.

[bipolaruk.org.uk](https://bipolaruk.org.uk)

#### CALM

Campaign Against Living Miserably has a mental health helpline and webchat.

Phone: **0800 58 58 58**  
(daily, 5pm to midnight)  
[thecalmzone.net](https://thecalmzone.net)

#### Men's Health Forum

24/7 support for men by text, chat and email.

[menshealthforum.org.uk](https://menshealthforum.org.uk)

#### Mental Health Foundation

Information and support for anyone who has a mental health problem.

[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://mentalhealth.org.uk)

#### Mind

Charity that represents the needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: **0300 123 3393**  
[mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

#### No Panic

Charity that offers advice, support and recovery programmes for people living with phobias, OCD and other anxiety-based condition.

Phone: **0300 7729844**  
(daily, 10am to 10pm)  
[nopanic.org.uk](https://nopanic.org.uk)

#### OCD Action

Support for people with OCD, including information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: **0845 390 6232**  
(Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 8pm)  
[ocdaction.org.uk](https://ocdaction.org.uk)

#### OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: **0333 212 7890**  
[ocduk.org](https://ocduk.org)

#### PAPYRUS

The young suicide prevention society, offering confidential support and information.

Phone: HOPElineUK **0800 068 4141**  
(9am to midnight, every day of the year)  
[papyrus-uk.org](https://papyrus-uk.org)

#### Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

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

#### Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: **116 123** (free 24-hour helpline)  
[samaritans.org.uk](https://samaritans.org.uk)

#### SANE

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most: [sane.org.uk/textcare](https://sane.org.uk/textcare)

Peer support forum:  
[sane.org.uk/supportforum](https://sane.org.uk/supportforum)  
[sane.org.uk/support](https://sane.org.uk/support)

#### YoungMinds

Information about child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: **0808 802 5544** (parent helpline, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)  
[youngminds.org.uk](https://youngminds.org.uk)

For more ideas, support or materials,  
please contact:  
[FirstGroup@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:FirstGroup@actionforchildren.org.uk)

[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

 /actionforchildren  
 @actnforchildren  
 @actionforchildreuk

# Online Mental Health First Aid Course overview



MHFA England



© MHFA England 2020

# This course qualifies people as **Mental Health First Aiders**

It's ideal for designated staff at every level who would like to become Mental Health First Aiders with skills to spot signs of a range of mental health issues and guide a person to appropriate support.



# Learning outcomes

- An in depth understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress
- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to further support - whether that's self help resources, through their employer, the NHS, or a mix



# Course outline Session 1: Introduction to MHFA

## Individual pre-learning (1 hour)

- Introduction to the Online Mental Health First Aid course and the Online Learning Hub
- Activity 1: Why Mental Health First Aid?
- Activity 2: The Mental Health First Aid action plan
- Activity 3: What is mental health?
- Activity 4: Quiz: Impact of mental health
- Activity 5: Stress Container (completed after live session)
- Activity 6: Frame of Reference (completed after live session)

## Live session (1 hour 45 minutes)

- Introduction to course functions
- Introduction to the course
- ALGEE and mental health introduction recap
- Stigma
- Risk and protective factors
- Frame of Reference
- The Mental Health Continuum
- Introduction to the Stress Container

# Course outline Session 2: Depression and suicide

## Individual pre-learning (2 hours)

- Activity 7: What is depression?
- Activity 8: Risk factors for depression
- Activity 9: Mental Health First Aid for depression
- Activity 10: Introduction to suicide

## Live session (2 hour 20 minutes)

- Recap of individual learning on depression
- Prevalence of suicide
- Suicide, substance misuse and dual diagnosis
- Analyse the impact of suicidal feelings
- Recap of ALGEE and risk factors for suicide
- Mental Health First Aid action plan 1 for suicide
- Explain non-judgemental listening, Empathy video
- Practice using ALGEE in case study scenarios
- Review of ALGEE for suicide and depression
- Self-care

## Course outline Session 3: Anxiety disorders, self harm and eating disorders

### Individual pre-learning (2 hours)

- Activity 11: What is anxiety?
- Activity 12: Mental Health First Aid for anxiety
- Activity 13: What are eating disorders?
- Activity 14: Mental Health First Aid for eating disorders
- Activity 15: What is self-harm?
- Activity 16: Mental Health First Aid for self-harm
- Activity 17: What are personality disorders?

### Live session (2 hours)

- Recap of individual learning on anxiety
- Recap of the five basic steps of ALGEE for anxiety
- How to support someone who is having a panic attack
- Explain crisis first aid
- Practice action 2: non-judgemental listening
- Practice applying the Mental Health First Aid action plan for anxiety
- Explain cognitive behavioural therapy
- Recap of eating disorders and self-harm
- Case study for eating disorders and self-harm
- Review ALGEE for eating disorders and self-harm

# Course outline Session 4: Psychosis, recovery and action planning

## Individual pre-learning (2 hours)

- Activity 18: What are psychosis, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder?
- Activity 19: Risk factors for psychosis
- Activity 20: Mental Health First Aid for psychosis
- Activity 21: Helpful and unhelpful responses
- Workbook Activity 10: My action plan for using Mental Health First Aid (completed after live session)

## Live session (1 hour 55 minutes)

- Review of individual learning on psychosis
- Explain the development of symptoms of psychosis
- Review the five steps of ALGEE for psychosis
- Group discussion about MHFA Australia psychosis video
- Case study activity using Mental Health First Aid action plan for psychosis
- Recovery
- Explore how to build a mentally healthy workplace
- Start action plan to use Mental Health First Aid
- Feedback



# Benefits of Online Mental Health First Aid



Build a network of skilled Mental Health First Aiders at all levels



Our Online Learning Hub provides a platform for an inclusive and flexible learning experience for your employees



Employees will learn invaluable skills, increasing their knowledge and confidence to support their teams and colleagues, both remotely and face to face



Increase connection and contact within the organisation by empowering employees with knowledge and skills to support their colleagues by:

- Understanding mental health issues
- Championing self-care
- Signposting to further support for colleagues who may be struggling with their mental health



**MHFA England**

# Benefits of booking with MHFA England



Research and evaluation shows that MHFA England courses make a lasting difference in people's knowledge and confidence around mental health



We've provided expert consultancy and training to over 20,000 workplaces. Organisations we work with have seen reductions of up to 75% in referrals for common mental health issues



Grounded in research and rigorously tested, our courses are developed with input from clinical experts and those with lived experience of mental health issues



All MHFA England courses are delivered by a qualified Instructor Member. We are the only provider of licensed Mental Health First Aid Instructor Training in England, accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health



**MHFA England**

# FAQ

## Who should be a Mental Health First Aider?

People who want to learn more about mental health to support others, whether or not they have experienced mental health issues themselves. It's important to have a wide range of individuals who represent the diversity of your organisation, and who can commit to the time required and have support from their manager to fulfil the role once trained.

## How many people is the course suitable for?

We limit numbers to 16 people per course so that the instructor can keep people safe and supported while they learn.

## What will learners receive as part of the course?

- A manual to refer to whenever they need it
- A workbook including a helpful toolkit to support their own mental health
- A wallet-sized reference card for the Mental Health First Aid action plan
- A certificate to say they are a Mental Health First Aider

## How is the course structured?

- We recommend that the course is run over four consecutive days where possible
- Learners will be trained through a mix of individual learning modules and live sessions with an MHFA England Associate Instructor, covering 15 hours in total
- Learners will need to complete the individual learning modules before each live session and attend each live session to be certified as a Mental Health First Aider

## How is the course delivered?

- The course is delivered through our MHFA England Online Learning Hub. It will host the individual learning modules, the live sessions with your MHFA England Associate Instructor, and break out rooms during the training for exercises
- We will share access to our MHFA England Online Learning Hub for all attendees one week before the first session so they can complete the first individual learning module



**MHFA England**

# Thank you

For more information please contact

[workplace@mhfaengland.org](mailto:workplace@mhfaengland.org)



MHFA England



# Being a Mental Health First Aider

## Your guide to the role

### Contents

Welcome

Mental Health First Aiders

Your responsibilities

Supporting people remotely

Engaging with your employer

Providing Mental Health First Aid from a distance

How MHFA England supports you



MHFA England



# Welcome

## Congratulations on completing your Mental Health First Aid Two Day course and becoming a certified Mental Health First Aider.

You are now part of a community of hundreds of thousands of people in England and 3 million people worldwide trained to support themselves and each other.

Together, we strive to achieve our vision of improving the mental health of the nation, and create a society where everyone's mental health matters.

This document is for Mental Health First Aiders and outlines what to expect from this role, what support you will need from your employer if you are a Mental Health First Aider for your workplace, and how MHFA England can support you.

Thank you for becoming part of our community.



Simon Blake OBE  
Chief Executive Officer

Using the five-step MHFA action plan, you now have the skills to:



**A**pproach the person, assess and assist with any crisis

**L**isten and communicate non-judgementally

**G**ive support and information

**E**ncourage the person to get appropriate professional help

**E**ncourage other supports

© MHFA England CIC 2019

# Mental Health First Aiders

Now that you have taken the Two Day course you are a **Mental Health First Aider**.

You can:

- Understand the important factors affecting mental ill health
- Identify the signs and symptoms for a range of mental health conditions
- Use ALGEE to provide Mental Health First Aid to someone experiencing a mental health issue or crisis
- Listen non-judgementally and hold supportive conversations using the Mental Health First Aid action plan
- Signpost people to professional help, recognising that your role as a Mental Health First Aider does not replace the need for ongoing support

It's important to remember that MHFA England courses do not teach people to be therapists or counsellors and do not teach people how to diagnose mental health conditions or provide ongoing support. Instead, your role is to act as a point of contact and reassurance for a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. Maintaining appropriate boundaries is a key part of successfully providing Mental Health First Aid and keeping yourself safe and well.

“Sarah, one of our Mental Health First Aiders, noticed I wasn't how I usually was. I was really struggling and I didn't know who else to go to. To sit there and let me speak about how I feel and what's happened, it made me feel reassured that I wasn't just an employee, but she took my personal and mental health into consideration.

Together we discussed the next best steps to take: we phoned the GP together and Sarah personally took me to my appointment that very same day. She came in with me so they could discuss what would be the best thing for me at work, as well as what steps my doctor wanted to take.

I ended up taking three weeks off work and then began a phased return with the help of Sarah. I also had private counselling through the company's employee benefits scheme, and cognitive behavioural therapy through my GP.”

**Rachael, Dermalogica**

# Your responsibilities

Mental Health First Aiders can have a profound and positive impact on their communities. Carrying out your role responsibly involves the following:

- ✓ Keeping yourself safe and well – for more information refer to your MHFA England course manual
- ✓ Communicating any concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of anyone in your workplace, for example to an appropriate manager
- ✓ Following your workplace's policies and procedures on how MHFA is implemented in the workplace
- ✓ Upholding your role as a Mental Health First Aider alongside your other responsibilities
- ✓ Establishing appropriate boundaries between yourself and colleagues you may be supporting
- ✓ Refreshing your skills every three years on an MHFA Refresher course

“The MHFA training also made me realise that I need to look after my own mental health more and keep an eye on how I’m feeling, as well as supporting others.”

**Mick, Mental Health First Aider,  
Royal Mail**



# Supporting people remotely

As more organisations move to remote working, human connection has never been more important. Remote working can increase feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are risk factors for mental ill health. Fortunately, the principles of Mental Health First Aid are the same whether you are supporting someone face to face or from a distance. However, the way you apply these principles might be different.

**A**

Getting to know remote workers when they are well makes you more able to spot when they are struggling. Consider how online workers approach you. Are you easy to get in touch with digitally? Think about how your colleagues know who their Mental Health First Aider is. Lanyards or posters work well in person but won't tell remote workers who they can go to for support.

**L**

When listening to an online worker, much of their non-verbal communication – facial expressions, posture, body language – can be lost. Using video calling is best wherever possible.

**G**

Giving support in a face-to-face setting might mean speaking to a person's line manager with them or supporting them to contact their EAP. Where possible, it is important to offer remote workers the same support you would give any other colleague.

**E**

When encouraging professional help, make sure you work with the person to discover what professional support might be available to them locally. The support available to an online worker might differ as their place of work is different.

**E**

Talk to the remote worker to find out what other supports are available to them. Think about sharing **some guidance about how to support their mental health when working from home.**

# Engaging with your employer

Being a Mental Health First Aider makes you an important part of an organisation's health and wellbeing strategy. But promoting positive mental health is not just down to you. To perform your role effectively and safely at work, MHFA training should be one part of a whole organisation approach. You need the full support of your employer, which should include an effective strategy, policies and procedures, and clear communication of your role and how you will be supported.

## **Discuss policies**

Discuss with your employer what organisational policies and procedures you should follow and refer to in your role as a Mental Health First Aider.

If you are advising a manager, or if you're a manager yourself, consult the [Line Managers' Resource](#) for external guidance on dealing with mental health in the workplace.

## **Find out about referral pathways**

Find out from your employer what the referral pathways are for mental health support and how best to signpost a colleague, either internally or externally. Your workplace may have its own support available for employees, such as an Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programme.

Your MHFA England course manual also contains details of reputable national charities and services that can be approached for support. If in doubt on where to signpost someone or how to deal with a crisis, refer to the guidance in your manual.

## **Ask how your role will be communicated**

Ask your employer how they will let colleagues know you are a Mental Health First Aider and how to contact you. Organisations use a variety of ways to let staff know how they can

talk to a Mental Health First Aider, and what kinds of thing a Mental Health First Aider can support them with. Some examples include putting up posters around the workplace, putting a list on an intranet hub, or giving out first aider lanyards or badges.

## **Your role within the whole organisation**

Training up Mental Health First Aiders is only one part of an effective approach to fostering a mentally healthy organisation so it's a good idea to find out how your role fits in. Ask your employer what steps they are taking to adopt a whole organisation approach to mental health and wellbeing.

## Engaging with your employer

You may be working as part of a team alongside colleagues who have completed an MHFA England One Day or Half Day course to become MHFA Champions or Mental Health Aware. Find out if your organisation has trained staff in these roles and how you might work together as a team.

Each role is different but plays a part in supporting a mentally healthy organisation:

People who have taken the MHFA England One Day course are **MHFA Champions**.

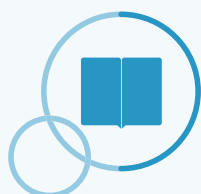


**MHFA  
Champions**

They can:

- Understand why mental health is as important as physical health
- Help build a mentally healthy workplace and understand how Mental Health First Aid fits into the workplace
- Recognise the main symptoms of mental health conditions
- Listen non-judgementally
- Use ALGEE to provide Mental Health First Aid for the most common mental health conditions
- Guide a person towards appropriate professional support
- Consider becoming a Mental Health First Aider

People who have taken the MHFA England Half Day course are **Mental Health Aware**.



**Mental  
Health  
Aware**

They can:

- Understand why mental health is as important as physical health
- Support a mentally healthy workplace
- Recognise some signs of mental health distress
- Start a supportive conversation about mental ill health and listen non-judgementally
- Guide a person towards appropriate professional support
- Go on to become a Mental Health Champion or First Aider

## Engaging with your employer



### Useful resources

Download our free digital resources for mental health awareness and tips, which can help to create a culture where it's OK to talk about mental health:

[Every Mind Matters](#)

[Empower Half Hour](#)

[Address your Stress toolkit](#)

[Take 10 Together toolkit](#)

Visit the [Mental Health at Work gateway](#) for a hub of information and resources for organisations of all sizes



### Support for you

Being a Mental Health First Aider is a rewarding role but it can also be a challenging one. It's important that you communicate with your employer to understand what support is available to you. It would be useful for you to find out:

- Who you should contact if you need support or are concerned about any aspect of your role
- Whether there is a peer support system such as a Mental Health First Aider network where you can meet regularly with others to discuss your role and share ideas
- Whether you will have the opportunity to renew your skills on an MHFA Refresher course after three years

"It's as though the safe space created during the MHFA training has come back with us into the office. We now feel able to be more open with each other about our mental health and to support each other when we are stressed."

**Pamela, Mental Health First Aider**

# Providing Mental Health First Aid from a distance

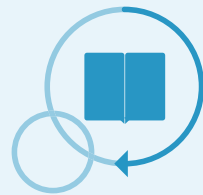
When providing Mental Health First Aid from a distance, the following tips might be useful:

- Get to know remote workers and check in with them regularly
- Show that you are a Mental Health First Aider in your email signature or by sharing a digital poster so remote workers know who you are
- Apply the same principles to video calls as you would to conversations in person – set time aside, minimise distractions, and give the person your full focus
- Make it clear that you are there to support the person remotely in any action they want to take
- Know how the person can contact HR, their line manager, or their EAP remotely
- Offer some self-care tips that they can do from home – going for a walk, meditating, and eating well can be done from almost anywhere

“If you think a remote worker may be struggling, act sooner rather than later. The isolation that accompanies lone working can aggravate a period of low mood or stress that might be easily sorted out if dealt with promptly.”

**Jane Cattermole,**  
**The Mainly Mental Health**  
**Company Limited**

# How MHFA England supports you



## MHFA Refresher

Mental Health First Aiders and MHFA Champions are encouraged to take an MHFA Refresher course every three years. Just like physical first aid, regularly updating skills and knowledge empowers people to perform the role confidently and safely.

Speak with your employer about attending an MHFA Refresher course and how regularly they would like you to update your skills.

MHFA Refresher enables you to:

- Keep awareness of mental health supports current
- Update knowledge of mental health and what influences it
- Practice applying the Mental Health First Aid action plan

## Keep in touch with MHFA England

You may find it helpful to keep up to date with the latest mental health news and campaigns. Find out how to keep in touch with us below.



Follow us on social media [@MHFAEngland](https://twitter.com/MHFAEngland) for self-care tips and news from the MHFA community



**Sign up to our newsletter** for updates on the latest news, events, and resources



Explore our website [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org) for free **downloadable toolkits** for supporting mental health in your workplace or community



Visit our **community blog** where Mental Health First Aiders across the country share their stories