

# Improving the mental health of the nation for 15 years

Our journey to training 1 in 10 in  
mental health skills and knowledge

**Mental Health First Aid England  
Impact Report 2020–2022**

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**MHFA England**

# Foreword from our Chief Executive

In November 2022, we celebrated 15 years of Mental Health First Aid being delivered in England. During that time, and in our capacity as a social enterprise, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England has been working towards a mission of training and empowering one in ten adults in mental health skills and knowledge.

We believe this widespread knowledge and confidence will create the societal change needed to help us towards achieving our vision of improving the mental health of the nation. I would like to thank everyone who has played a role in empowering such an important movement – our central team, Instructor Members, partners, Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders®), everyone who has trained with us – there are too many of you to name, but you know who you are. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the important work of our global MHFA partners. Together we have trained over five million people. As the only organisation trusted to deliver licensed MHFA in England, we work to the International Quality Principles from MHFA International.

The last few years have not been easy for individuals, communities or organisations – big, small, for profit, charity or social enterprise. It has been a tough time which has demanded a lot from all of us.

And we at MHFA England have not been protected from that. Up until March 2020, we delivered most of our courses face to face. And that meant, unless we adapted quickly, we would not be able to deliver our training.

I am proud of how innovative we were as a community, drawing on our skills and abilities to navigate the choppy waters we were in. As a result, we were able to quickly make our training accessible online.

We know that MHFA and Suicide First Aid are both life-changing and life-saving interventions. As a nation, we are on a journey to build our mental health knowledge and use that understanding to create balanced lives, seek, provide and signpost to support, and create healthier workplaces and communities.

We are at the early stages of that journey. When we look back, it is with confidence and pride at the difference the MHFA England community has made over the last 15 years. The results speak for themselves.

- ✓ **1 in 45**  
adults trained so far in our mission to train 1 in 10
- ✓ **822,500**  
people trained
- ✓ **20,000**  
organisations trained
- ✓ **Over half a million**  
MHFAiders® in England

And when we look forward, it is with optimism that our community will grow ever stronger and ever bolder; and together, with many others in civil society and beyond, we will play our part in tackling structural inequalities, creating a more equitable world and supporting the mental health of the nation.



*Simon Blake*

**Simon Blake,**  
Chief Executive

# We are trustworthy

COVID-19 has put mental health and workplace wellbeing firmly on the public's radar – according to Centre for Mental Health, ten million more people need help with their mental health because of the effects of the pandemic.

After the initial shockwaves of lockdown, we realised that our community of learners, staff and Instructor Members would need tailored support. Not only to be able to perform in their roles, but to look after their own wellbeing too.

Here are some of the ways we supported our incredible community over the last two and a half years, and what we've achieved together despite such difficult circumstances.

## Learners

Before the pandemic, most of our training was delivered face to face. In March 2020, this all had to change.

As our learners and community began working from home, some for the very first time, we helped them adjust to the 'new normal'.

### What we did:

- Adapted nine of our courses for online delivery
- Redeveloped our flagship product, MHFA, and developed an app for learners to support their continued journeys as MHFAiders®
- Created and shared resources that provided support and guidance on remote working
- Interviewed over 500 past learners to understand what they needed to thrive as an MHFAider® in the workplace
- Delivered 25 webinars to support our community between April 2020 and April 2022 on topics ranging from how to talk about race in the workplace, to how to thrive as an MHFAider®

### What we achieved:

- Over 5,000 people attended one or more of our webinars between April 2020 to April 2022
- 9.5/10 learners said they would recommend us

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If you fell over at work and broke your arm, you would expect someone to be there to support you and triage your injury until a paramedic arrived or you were able to go to hospital. We believe the same rationale should be applied to mental health - if you are struggling and need support, there should be someone available to help signpost you to the most relevant support so that you can get the treatment you need to prevent your injury having a long-term impact on your life.”

Helen Gibbons, IT Programme Manager at Deutsche Bank



## Supporting your mental health while working from home

My Whole Self aims to create a healthier working culture built on respect and collaboration. We're encouraging employers to create a culture where people can be themselves at work. Whether online or in person, bringing your whole self to work is a mindset that's better for mental wellbeing and better for business.

As more organisations move to online working, human connections are more important than ever. Here are some ways to support your mental health, reduce feelings of isolation, and feel connected with colleagues while working remotely.



Get set up

# We are accessible

Like many organisations, the last two and a half years have brought about many challenges, which have impacted our revenue. But that hasn't stopped us from tackling the issues that affect our society – both as a result of the pandemic and those already endemic.

We're proud to be a social enterprise. As such, we reinvest our profits into giving access to quality mental health training to those who need it most. Our focus through the pandemic has been on supporting the NHS, frontline workers, and Black-led organisations.

Over the past two and a half years we have also supported the mental health of young people, by providing subsidised training to schools and youth settings across London. This work was done in partnership with Thrive LDN. From a workplace sector perspective, we've been a key training provider for the Building Mental Health initiative – working in partnership to tackle the mental health crisis within the construction industry.

## What we did:

- Delivered 364 subsidised and part-subsidised courses, with a focus on the NHS and front-line services
- Worked with the NHS Homeless Health COVID-19 Response team to develop digital resources and deliver a series of live workshops and micro learns to support hotel staff housing and the homeless community. We delivered 32 workshops and 12 Mentorship drop-ins, reaching 700 individuals

- Worked with the Royal Voluntary Service to develop training for the NHS Check and Chat Plus volunteers who supported people in need throughout COVID-19
- Trained 284 MHFA England Instructor Members as part of the Building Mental Health initiative – they have gone on to train 5,318 Mental Health First Aiders® and deliver 3,349 Mental Health Awareness courses
- Commissioned an Instructor Member to deliver two free MHFA England courses to 20 Black-led organisations
- Working with Thrive LDN, we delivered 202 courses, resulting in 4,000 people being trained in mental health skills and knowledge.

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“There was a lot of fear, exhaustion and people were hopeless about the future, some even suicidal. I used my Mental Health First Aid skills on every single call that came in.”

**Maria Ditch,**  
Clinical Educator at Nottinghamshire Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust

## What we achieved:

- Reached nearly 5,000 learners via our subsidised and part-subsidised courses
- The social value of the three-year Building Mental Health initiative was calculated at £5,508,713, which shows a return on investment of £5.50 for every £1 invested



# We are empowering

Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders®) have always played a vital role in improving the mental health of the nation, providing life-changing support and signposting to professional help when it is needed. But after engaging with our Instructor Members, clients and community of MHFAiders®, we identified a gap in the support we give those supporters. So, in September 2022, we launched our new Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course.

Developed through an inclusive lens, our new MHFA training is designed to help MHFAiders® stay effective, confident and motivated in their roles. We have added new support and benefits, including access to our new MHFAider Support App® and 24/7 digital support, which is now available to all MHFAiders® trained in the last six years.

## Support and benefits

- ✓ Training resources and ongoing learning opportunities through our MHFAider Support App®, so MHFAiders® can improve their support skills in their role
- ✓ 24/7 text support for when MHFAiders® are feeling overwhelmed or need guidance for certain situations
- ✓ Helpful reminders so MHFAiders® can organise their roles, and secure conversation journaling to allow them to safely reflect on their work
- ✓ Regular online events for further learning and support, allowing them to continue to perform their role confidently and effectively, long after receiving their initial training
- ✓ Resources for critical self-care skills, with the emotion tracker function on the MHFAider Support App® allowing them to chart their own wellbeing



In the first six weeks, over **5,000 learners** registered for our new course with support and benefits.

Looking forwards to 2023 and beyond, we are confident about building and growing the largest community of MHFAiders® in England so everyone is supported and empowered in their role.



“This refreshed course has kept all the best elements of the previous version of the course but has introduced more practice using ALGEE in realistic conversations.

What I found most interesting and beneficial was the case studies and the videos that brought the written material to life. This was added to by the practical element of using the MHFAider Support App® - all the tools to have conversations are provided which makes the course a must do for anyone with a passion for MHFA.

Having worked with MHFA England to train and introduce over 160 MHFAiders® into our business, we are continuing this journey and have already planned two courses with MHFA England using the new course content. I know that our next 32 MHFAiders® will get even more out of the course because of the new content and introduction of MHFAider Support App®.”

Evan Judge, Senior HSE Manager, Compass Group UK & Ireland

# We are innovative

For the last 15 years, MHFA England has been the only provider of evidence-based Mental Health First Aid training in the country. We believe everyone should be able to talk freely about mental health and get support when they need it. One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been an increased understanding of the impact of poor mental health, and how to better support workplace wellbeing.

## My Whole Self

In March 2020, we launched our campaign for workplace culture change, My Whole Self, at the House of Lords. The campaign encourages all workplaces to support and empower their people to bring their whole selves to work – be that their cultural or ethnic background, gender identity, sexuality, disability or health.

Bringing our whole selves to work builds psychological safety and deeper connections, and research shows that this is a key ingredient for a successful team.



**My Whole Self**

In the last two years:

**14,528**

people have accessed our My Whole Self resources



We're thrilled that many large organisations and government bodies, including Skanska, Ford and the National Crime Agency, have embedded My Whole Self into their working practices.

**SKANSKA**

**NCA**  
National Crime Agency



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“I really enjoyed the #MyWholeSelf initiative and was amazed at how many views and interactions I received, just from sharing some personal things about myself. The team created a collage of all selfies which I used as a wallpaper on my computer. It was a great way to get to know our Mental Health First Aider family a little better. We have an incredible, diverse team at Ford, and I'm proud to be a part of it.”

**Lee Walker**, Director, Quality, Ford of Europe, and Ford's senior executive sponsor for mental health and wellbeing

## We are innovative cont.

### Suicide First Aid

We have been working in partnership with The National Centre for Suicide Prevention Education and Training (NCSPET) since 2020, building a network of tutors to deliver more Suicide First Aid training across the UK.

We share the belief with NCSPET that through education and intervention, suicide is one of the most preventable deaths. That's why, to deepen our partnership, in 2022 MHFA England launched direct delivery of Suicide First Aid training to workplaces, accredited by City & Guilds.

This is a great opportunity to enhance wellbeing strategies in workplaces of all sizes and across all sectors, creating cultures where individuals can speak openly about their mental health and seek support when they need it.

### Startwell

As we began to lean into the 'new normal', we saw a surge in demand for greater mental health support in the workplace. At the same time, worries over returning to the workplace and issues such as the 'great resignation' were creating fresh challenges for business leaders.

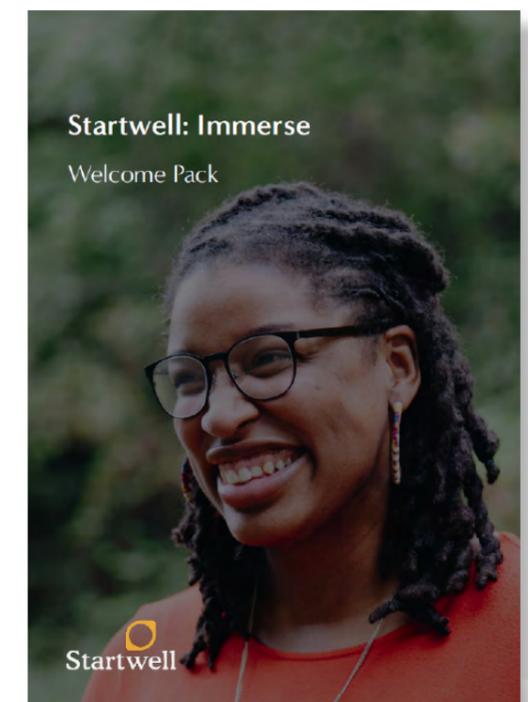
Through our networks and clients, we began to hear that there was a critical need for a service that took an end-to-end, tailored approach to workplace wellbeing. So, in January 2022, we launched Startwell – a diagnostic service that begins with extensive research, including sentiment surveys, focus groups, data deep dives and stakeholder interviews. The resulting qualitative and quantitative data provides an honest picture of the collective mental health of an organisation.

Following the diagnostic process, the Startwell 'Mental Health Playbook' offers clear recommendations for sustainable culture change. These recommendations help guide the overall organisational strategy and set out the necessary tools needed to achieve it. Depending on the research outcomes, it could suggest ideas for training, motivating the workforce, tackling stigma, improving employee communications and more.



“Startwell has such a great structure, and we were given so much support on our wellbeing journey. We would recommend the process to other organisations. We have noticed a shift in culture, our employees are now more open about their mental health, and it is helping to remove the stigma.”

**Mandy Stevens,**  
Head of HR at IVC Evidensia



# We are inclusive

## Instructor Members

Our Instructor Members have always been at the heart of our community. Sadly, they were not immune to the effects of the pandemic. As many are self-employed, they could not rely on furlough schemes or government support when the country was in lockdown, so we needed to support them where we could.

As the country began to recover, we wanted to continue to support our Instructor Members so they could keep developing their knowledge about mental health.

### What we did:

- Nine courses were adapted for online delivery so Instructor Members could run them during lockdown, and we continued to support flexible course offering post-lockdown
- Offered online training courses for the first time, which included the Instructor Training Programme and Instructor Upskills
- Ensured digital versions of materials were a part of the product development process
- Waived the Instructor Membership renewal fee in 2020 and postponed membership renewal in 2021 to help support Instructor Members impacted financially by the pandemic
- Launched the Instructor Member Development Programme in August

2021 so Instructor Members felt able to deliver on and exceed the required role attributes as set out in our Quality Assurance framework

- Delivered over 100 development events between April 2020 and April 2022
- Designed and launched mandatory anti-racism training, amended our membership agreement to include our inclusion commitments and provided dedicated race equity resources as part of our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation

### What we achieved:

- Over 1,000 Instructor Members attended newly launched events and webinars
- We saw a 10% increase in the number of Instructor Members agreeing or strongly agreeing that MHFA England provides high-quality learning and development opportunities that support their continuous development
- 100% of Instructor Members said they would attend future Instructor Member Development Programme events

## Feedback from Instructor Members



*“Great subject delivered at the right time.”*

Attendee of our 'Strategic self-care: passion, burnout, compassion fatigue and everything in between' event

*“Today I have learnt more about a complex diagnosed illness than ever before, in four years of delivery as an Instructor [Member]. I feel more equipped to train, discuss and support.”*

Attendee of our 'Eating disorders: what you need to know' event

*“An absolutely brilliant session, delivered from the heart with passion. I found this better informed me as well as provided some reassurance for the way that I work and celebrate diversity within my training and my everyday life.”*

Attendee of our 'Transgender awareness and inclusivity' event

# We are inclusive cont.

## Our people

As many organisations established new ways of working, the pandemic also gave us the opportunity to evaluate how inclusive we really were as an organisation and make positive, meaningful changes for our people.

It was vital that we led from the front on workplace wellbeing. We have listened, learnt, and adapted our working policies so that our people have a full sense of belonging and can bring their whole selves to work.

While we have made great progress, we know we have much more work to do and have plans in place to become a truly inclusive organisation.

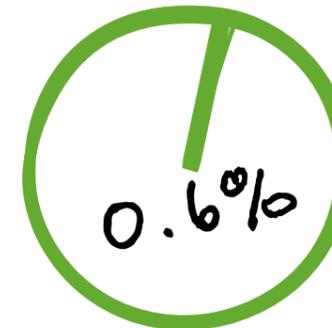
### What we did:

- Committed to becoming an anti-racist organisation in 2020 with a 15-point action plan
- Established our race equity team to drive our anti-racism work
- Published our Race Equity Impact report in 2021 to examine the progress made against our 15-point plan, reveal the lessons learnt and set out our future commitments on race equity



- Wrote and developed an Inclusive Language Guide, with a list of terms and definitions centred around race and anti-racism
- Created practical guidance for our staff and Instructor Member community on starting conversations about race, such as Race Equity Drop-in Sessions and dedicated Instructor Member Race Equity resources, and shared free resources externally
- Developed anti-racism training for executive and leadership teams
- Held three learning events for everyone within MHFA England to fulfil our objective of engaging and educating our staff on race equity and intersectionality
- Began the process of reviewing and amending our courses and training materials to be more inclusive of race
- Undertook a review of our gender and ethnicity gaps to evaluate our approach to equity
- Reviewed all our recruitment and onboarding processes and made changes to ensure a more inclusive candidate experience
- Implemented a zero-tolerance policy on racism and committed to reviewing all our people policies on an annual basis so that they reflect our anti-racist culture, particularly in light of the findings of the pay gap report
- Established an LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Group (ERG)
- Established a new flexible working policy

## Gender Pay Gap



## Ethnicity Pay Gap



## Diversity in leadership

- Improved the diversity of our Non-executive board team from no People of Colour to 50% of the members being Black, People of Colour or from a racialised community
- Improved the diversity of our Executive team from no People of Colour to 25% of the members being Black and People of Colour
- Improved the diversity of our Leadership team from 20% People of Colour to 30% of the members being Black and People of Colour



“In 2020, we made a public commitment to become a truly anti-racist social enterprise, learning and leading by example. It was never going to be an easy journey. While the Race Equity Impact report was a moment to pause and take stock of the significant impact we’ve already made, we cannot allow complacency to creep in. This is just the start.

Anti-racism cannot be reduced to ‘listening and learning’ or time constrained initiatives, it is a collective responsibility, given to everyone (regardless of gender, class, religion, and race), to continuously seek equity within our workplaces, communities, and interpersonal relationships.

Now more than ever, we all need to continue being proactive in seeking to challenge, confront and change our attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours, in our own organisation and across the world. Let’s collectively seize it and work together to dismantle racism in every area and ecosystem in society.”

**Ama Afrifa-Tchie**, Head of People, Wellbeing and Equity, and **Chantal Senya**, Project Sapphire (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Specialist at MHFA England

# A final word from our Chair

The last two and a half years have shown that inclusivity simply doesn't go far enough. At MHFA England, we responded by focusing on closing the gap between what we do and say externally, with who we are internally. We chose to be transparent in leading by example and hoped to empower others. Our Ethical Business Statement outlined our view of the impact of recent global atrocities on the mental health and wellbeing of so many marginalised communities.

Our commitment to be anti-racist meant taking a systemic approach to our actions. We sought guidance from our communities and made changes, including the language we use, and brought those with more divergent lived experiences around the table and into positions of power. We wanted to ensure that those who have traditionally been marginalised are now seen, heard and valued.

We chose to take greater consideration of world events and adapted our products and services to give them the best opportunity to be effective and accessible in a world that is in a state of flux. This culminated in the innovation and launch of our new Startwell service in January 2022 and our new MHFA course in September 2022.

I am proud of all we have achieved, especially during such turbulent times. Both as an organisation and as individuals, we believe in something bigger than ourselves. Good mental health is a social justice issue, and to support ourselves and each other we need to take a holistic approach to mental health awareness and intervention.

As a social enterprise, it is an honour to be trusted by so many learners and workplaces to deliver training so we can all talk freely about mental health and seek support when needed. As we move closer to our mission of training one in ten of the population, I know that MHFA England and our community will continue to improve the mental health of the nation.

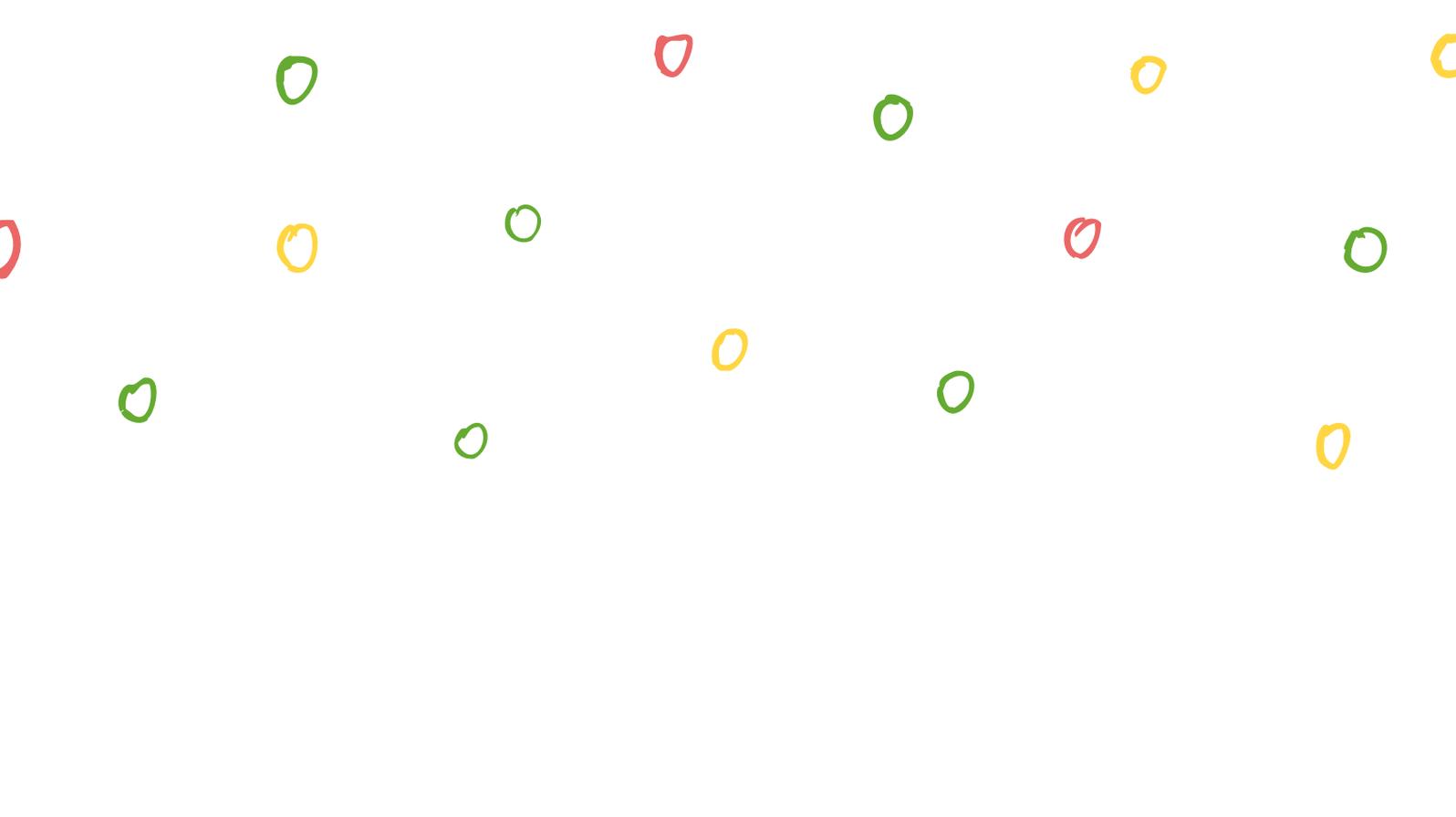
*Adah Parris*

**Adah Parris,**  
Chair



# Proud to be recognised by





Thank you!

Thank you for reading our Impact Report.  
We hope you will continue to support our work so we can  
improve the mental health of the nation together, in the  
workplace and beyond.



Visit the MHFA England website at [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org)  
Find us on social media @MHFAEngland

**MHFA England**