

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training: the top-line evidence

[Systematic review and meta-analysis of Mental Health First Aid training: Effects on knowledge, stigma, and helping behaviour¹](#) (Morgan et al. 2018)

The study: This international meta-analysis reviewed and analysed research on Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Two Day day courses around the world. All together the analysis comprised 18 studies, seven of which were centred around the workplace, and included 5,936 participants. Other groups in the studies reviewed included university personnel, healthcare students, members of the public, teachers, parents, and the military.

The findings:

- MHFA training improves mental health first aid knowledge, recognition of disorders, and beliefs about the most effective forms of treatment for mental health issues.
- MHFA training reduces stigma, increases confidence in assisting someone with a mental health issue and increases intentions to provide mental health first aid to a small extent.
- These effects were evident up to six months after completing the training.

[Promising practices for health and wellbeing at work²](#) (Whitmore et al. 2018)

The study: This research by RAND, commissioned by Public Health England, set out to investigate the effectiveness of 117 health and wellbeing programmes available to employers. The study reviewed the evidence base for each and graded them according to Nesta Standards of Evidence, which help determine confidence employers can have that an intervention is having a positive impact.

The findings:

- Of the 117 programmes studied, MHFA England training was among the top five identified as meeting the highest standards of evidence (Nesta Level 3).

¹ Morgan AJ, Ross A, Reavley NJ | Systematic review and meta-analysis of Mental Health First Aid training: Effects on knowledge, stigma, and helping behaviour | PLOS One | May 2018

² Whitmore M, Stewart K, Pollard J, van Belle J, Yang M, van Stolk C | Promising practices for health and wellbeing at work: A review of the evidence landscape | RAND Europe | August 2018

[Exploring the role of mental health first aid officers in workplaces: A qualitative study using case study methodology](#)³ (Bovopolous et al. 2018)

The study: This research sought to understand how workplace Mental Health First Aid Officers (MHFAOs) were trained, promoted and supported, and understand any benefits and challenges that workplaces have found. Five organisations from different industries were used as case studies, and multiple individuals within each organisation were interviewed about their experiences.

The findings:

- Participants believed MHFAOs in the workplace were helping increase support and encouraging help-seeking, improving knowledge, attitudes and skills, and improving workplace culture.
- Participants believed that MHFA training should be offered to all staff in an organisation.
- Most organisations had developed and refined procedures to select MHFAOs over time and promoted them through internal resources.

[MENTOR: MENTAL health first aid in The wORKplace: A feasibility study](#)⁴ (Narayanasamy et al. 2018)

The study: Commissioned by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and conducted by the University of Nottingham, the MENTAL health first aid in The wORKplace (MENTOR) study investigated the views of 139 employees from 81 organisations across 20 industries on the impact of MHFA England training in the workplace.

The findings:

- 91% of participants said their understanding of mental health in the workplace had increased after training.
- 88% reported an increase in confidence around mental health issues.
- 87% said more mental health conversations were happening.
- 78% said that employees trained in MHFA were supporting colleagues.
- 59% reported an increase in help-seeking behaviours.
- Key issues faced by Mental Health First Aiders in the workplace included the risk of breaching the confidentiality of the person accessing support, difficulty managing

³ Bovopolous, N., LaMontagne, A. D., Martin, A., & Jorm, A. F. (2018). Exploring the role of mental health first aid officers in workplaces: A qualitative study using case study methodology. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*. doi:10.1108/IJWHM-06-2018-0082

⁴ MENTAL health first aid in The wORKplace (MENTOR): A feasibility study. Narayanasam et. al (2018)

the boundaries of the MHFAider role and challenges measuring the effectiveness in individual workplaces.

[Mental Health First Aid is an effective public health intervention for improving knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour: a meta-analysis](#)⁵ (Hadlaczky et al. 2014)

The study: This was the first meta-analysis of MHFA training. It analysed 15 different studies involving a total of 3,376 individuals. This research aimed to determine whether MHFA training is an effective public health intervention for improving knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour for adults and young people.

The findings:

- MHFA programmes are effective at increasing knowledge regarding mental health problems.
- MHFA effectively decreases negative attitudes toward those suffering from mental ill health.
- MHFA intervention is effective in increasing the number of times help is offered.

[Mental health first aid training in a workplace setting: A randomized controlled trial](#)⁶ (Kitchener et al. 2004)

The study: Data was gathered from 301 randomly selected participants from two large government departments in Australia to investigate whether MHFA training improved mental health literacy.

The findings:

- Participants showed greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved concordance with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes.
- Participants also reported an improvement in their own the mental health.

⁵ Hadlaczky, G., Hokby, S., Mkrtchian, A., Carli, V., & Wasserman, D. (2014). Mental Health First Aid is an effective public health intervention for improving knowledge, attitudes and behaviour: A meta-analysis. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 26(4), 467-475.

⁶ Kitchener, B. A., & Jorm, A. F. (2004). Mental health first aid training in a workplace setting: A randomized controlled trial [ISRCTN13249129]. *BMC Psychiatry*, 4, 23. doi:10.1186/1471-244X-4-23

[Experiences in applying skills learned in a mental health first aid training course: a qualitative study of participants' stories](#)⁷ (Jorm et al. 2005)

The study: This article, following on from the above trial in 2004, analysed the experiences in applying skills learned in a mental health first aid training course by gathering stories from 94 participants at 19-21 months post-training. 78% of respondents had experienced a situation where someone appeared to have a mental health issue.

The findings:

- The majority of respondents had had some direct experience of a situation where the course enabled them to take steps that led to better effects than otherwise might have been the case.
- Positive effects were experienced in terms of increased empathy, and confidence in crises.
- There was no evidence of people over-reaching themselves because of over-confidence.
- Attendees were able to identify specific benefits and were keen to see it repeated and extended.

⁷ Jorm, A. F., Kitchener, B. A., & Mugford, S. K. (2005). Experiences in applying skills learned in a mental health first aid training course: A qualitative study of participants' stories. *BMC Psychiatry*, 5, 43. doi:10.1186/1471-244X-5-43