

A Whole Organisation Approach to Young People's Mental Health

Mental Health First Aid starts with you

Welcome to Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). Here you will find a practical framework to support the mental health and wellbeing of the young people you work with.

Within, you will see best practice examples of how schools, colleges and youth organisations in England are using Youth MHFA training to build healthy, supportive environments.



MHFA England

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Understanding young people's mental health

Why it's important

Mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders, are common and often start at a young age. Here are some key facts about mental ill health in people under 24 which illustrate the scope of the issue:

10% of children and young people have a clinically diagnosable mental health issue

Source: Green et al. Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain

50% of mental health issues are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24

Source: Kessler: Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders

Suicide is the most common cause of death for people aged 5-19

Source: Public Health England: Health Profile for England 2017

80% of young people say exam pressure has a big impact on their mental health

Source: Young Minds: Wise Up report

But only **25%** of young people with a diagnosable mental health issue get access to the treatment and care they need

Source: Green et al.

10 years is the average delay between a young person first showing symptoms of mental ill health and getting help

Source: Centre for Mental Health: Missed Opportunities report

In an average classroom of 30 15-year-olds, **10** are likely to have watched their parents separate, **7** are likely to have been bullied, **6** may be self-harming and **1** has experienced the death of a parent

Source: Public Health England: Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing

Social media, peer pressure, bullying, family units breaking down and an increased number of children in the care system have all been suggested as contributing factors to the rise in mental health issues in younger people. Many of these issues affecting mental wellbeing are multiple and often remain undetected and untreated unless agencies such as schools take an active role (**Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools, 2015**).

Despite the focus in recent years, some young people still do not get the support and care they need. This can happen because there is a stigma associated with mental ill health. Young people may be reluctant to seek professional help or discuss mental health with friends and family because of their concerns about what others will think.

Some mental health issues can cloud clear thinking and decision making. A young person experiencing such issues may not realise that they need help, that effective help is available, or may be so distressed that they are unable to think clearly about what they should do.

GPs, counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals can all help young people experiencing mental health issues. However, just as with accidents and other medical emergencies, such assistance is not always immediately available when an issue first arises.

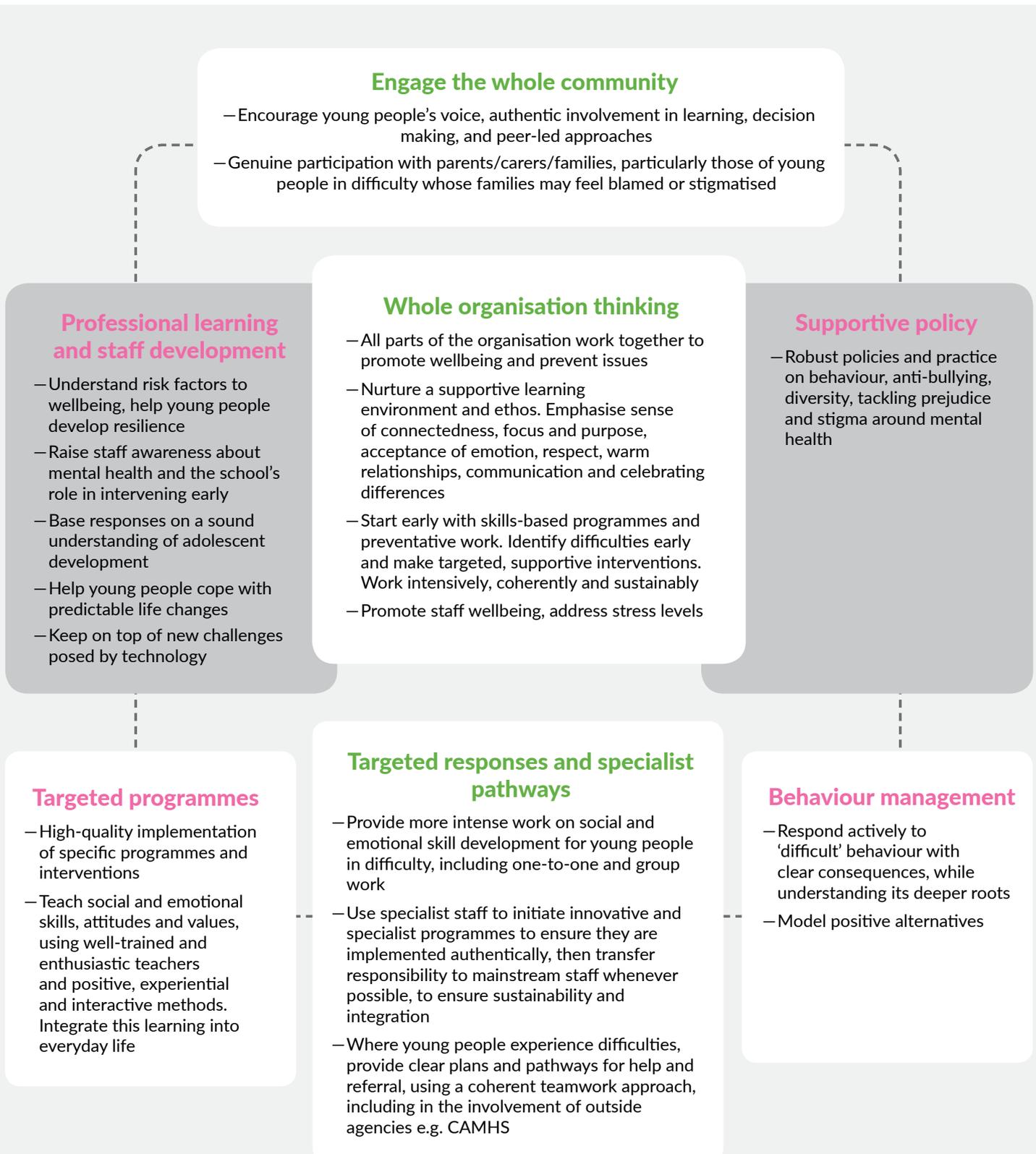
This is when key figures in the young person's life, such as parents, teachers, tutors, carers, and youth workers, can offer aid and guide them towards the appropriate professional support.

What works: A whole organisation approach

Evidence shows the only effective long term way to improve mental health is to adopt a 'whole organisation approach' where all parts of the organisation and its community are encouraged to work together in their commitment to wellbeing.

The diagram below outlines the whole organisation framework, as set out in the 'What Works' advice issued by the Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools coordinated by the National Children's Bureau.

Although this set of guidance is tailored to schools, any organisation that works with or supports young people can be guided by these principles.



“Youth MHFA has provided me with extra tools to understand and support young people - something so valuable in my line of work.”



How we can help

Youth Mental Health First Aid training can be the foundation of your whole organisation approach to mental health.

As a globally recognised training course, Youth MHFA is designed to teach staff, volunteers and parents alike how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health. The training gives people the skills and confidence to safely address mental health issues in young people aged 8 to 18, with a strong practical focus on how to support a young person experiencing mental distress.

We have training options to suit a range of timescales and budgets, from basic mental awareness sessions to a full Mental Health First Aider qualification. You can find out more about the different options for Youth MHFA courses on [page 28](#).

What will I learn on a Youth MHFA course?

Youth MHFA is the help given to a young person experiencing a mental health issue before professional help is obtained. The aims of Youth MHFA are to:

- Preserve life where a young person may be a danger to themselves or others
- Provide help to prevent the emotional or mental health issue developing into a more serious state
- Promote the recovery of good mental health
- Provide comfort to a young person experiencing a mental health issue
- Raise awareness of mental health issues in the community
- Reduce stigma and discrimination

Youth MHFA does not teach people to be therapists or replace long term support. Instead, it gives people the tools to:

- Recognise the symptoms of mental health issues
- Intervene early to provide initial help and reassurance
- Guide a young person to access appropriate professional support, for a faster recovery
- Stop preventable issues arising by building a supportive culture of wellbeing
- Embed positive, long term cultural change in policy and procedure
- Proactively support their own wellbeing and that of their colleagues

Instructor training

Many organisations are now choosing to train a member of staff as a Youth MHFA instructor who can deliver the course to colleagues, partner organisations and other members of the community, such as parents. Having a qualified instructor on staff is a cost-effective and self-sustaining way to roll out Youth MHFA training to larger numbers as demand requires. Learn more about our Royal Society for Public Health accredited instructor training programme on [page 30](#).

Why choose our training?

✓ Quality assured

Every MHFA course is delivered by a qualified instructor who has completed our Instructor Training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health. We are the only provider of licensed MHFA Instructor Training in England.

✓ Safe

Our instructors provide a safe, inclusive learning environment and are trained to support people throughout the whole course.

✓ Evidence based

Our courses are grounded in research and written by experts, including people with lived experience of mental ill health. Research and evaluation shows that MHFA England courses make a lasting difference in people's knowledge and confidence around mental health.

✓ Globally recognised

You'll be joining a community of over 350,000 people in England who have taken our courses and over 2.6 million people around the world who have trained in MHFA skills.

Training framework for the whole organisation

Training people at a blend of levels throughout your organisation is the most effective way to safeguard young people and foster whole organisation wellbeing.

Choosing the most suitable Youth MHFA course for each person will depend on their role, responsibilities, level of involvement and opportunity to support young people. An example can be seen below of a mental health skills and awareness framework for a whole organisation and its wider community.

Please note that the framework shown here is not prescriptive - it can be adjusted based on the level of commitment you are able to free up for individuals and how much interaction with young people they are likely to have in their role. With our consultation and guidance we can help you arrive at a training framework to suit the needs of your organisation.



Instructor Training

- Pastoral staff
- School nurse
- Management

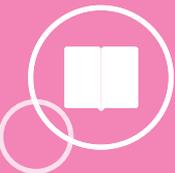
Instructors



Youth Mental Health First Aiders

- Pastoral staff
- Youth workers
- Foster carers
- School nurses
- Management
- Heads of year
- Heads of department

Two Day



Youth MHFA Champions

- Teachers
- Teaching assistants
- Youth workers
- Sports and activity coaches

One Day



Youth Mental Health Aware

- Parents
- Volunteers
- Governors
- Support staff
- Front line staff

Half Day

Youth MHFA in education

Although once seen as an optional extra, it has become clear that work in schools to promote mental health and wellbeing is central to overall effectiveness and should be prioritised. Recent evidence from **Public Health England** confirms that:

- Children with greater wellbeing and lower levels of mental health issues achieve higher grades, better examination results, better attendance, and drop out less frequently
- Academic achievement is more accurately predicted by social and emotional skills than by IQ
- The quality of PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education) in a school is strongly correlated with the school's overall effectiveness

Accordingly, the Ofsted inspection framework includes inspection criteria around learners' abilities to **"keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically"**. To be graded 'good' for personal development, behaviour and welfare, Ofsted's September 2018 school inspection handbook specifies that:

"The school's open culture promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare. Pupils are safe and feel safe. They have opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. They enjoy learning about how to stay healthy and about emotional and mental health, safe and positive relationships and how to prevent misuse of technology."

The most sustainable, effective way to embed this school culture is through a whole organisation approach. More information can be found on **page 3**.

Youth MHFA schools programmes

As part of an initiative to transform mental health support, the government has committed to fund over 3,000 places on Youth MHFA One Day courses so that by 2020 there will be at least one person in every secondary school in England trained as a Youth MHFA Champion.

Thrive LDN through the Healthy London Partnership has also committed to fund and deliver the training of 100 new Youth MHFA instructors who will go on to deliver Youth MHFA Two Day courses, ensuring one member of staff at every school in London will have a Youth Mental Health First Aider by 2021.

Visit mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/programmes to learn more about our funded schools programmes.

Youth MHFA as part of initial teacher training

Our goal is for these vital skills to be part of initial teacher training so that every teacher knows what to do when faced with a young person who needs support - and every young person has access to a Youth Mental Health First Aider.

The British Youth Council's **Select Committee report on Young People's Mental Health** recommends that there be mandatory minimum training for teachers on young people's mental health:

"Identifying young people with mental health problems is a known difficulty. Most young people attend school and interact with teachers on a regular basis. Teachers are key professionals, working with young people who can help to close the treatment gap. They do not need to be mental health experts. They do need a basic understanding of mental health, how to spot warning signs and where to refer."

We recommend that there be mandatory minimum training for teachers on young people's mental health. The training should focus on how to respond to a young person who asks about mental health, how to spot problems and where to refer. This training should form part of the core content of Initial Teacher training."

Each of these vital skills are taught on a Youth MHFA course.

Resources for schools

Visit mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/resources to access our set of free downloadable resources for mental health in schools, including film clips, infographics and a list of support sources.



Evaluation and outcomes

MHFA has been evaluated internationally since it was first developed in Australia in 2000. Below is a summary of recent studies into Youth MHFA in England.

UCL evaluation of Phase One of the Youth MHFA in Schools programme

A team of researchers from University College London (UCL) evaluated the first year of the Youth MHFA in Schools national programme in 2018. They surveyed over 800 school staff who trained as Youth MHFA Champions as part of the programme.

- Before the training, about a quarter of staff surveyed (27%) felt they were confident in supporting a young person experiencing mental health issues.
- One term after training, 56% of staff said they felt highly confident in using the framework provided by MHFA training. This increased to 90% three terms later, highlighting a sustained improvement as staff put their MHFA skills into practice.
- Before the training, over a third of staff surveyed, 37%, felt aware and knowledgeable on youth mental health and also confident to support a young person experiencing mental ill health.
- This rose to an average of 58% of staff one term later and 87% three terms following training, again highlighting a sustained improvement as participants had time to reflect upon and implement their training.
- Focus group research involving six schools found that, following training, staff reported increased confidence to challenge discriminatory mental health cultures within schools. This research also revealed an appetite for Youth MHFA training to be embedded within regular professional skills and practices, which staff argued would support a 'whole school' approach to mental health.

Wellbeing in Secondary Education (WISE) Project

The WISE study is an evaluation of the effectiveness of MHFA courses in secondary schools to support staff and students alike, run by researchers at the University of Bristol and Cardiff University.

The WISE study will measure if the training has an effect on:

- Teacher wellbeing and depression
- Student wellbeing and mental health difficulties
- Teacher absence and presenteeism (self-rated poor performance at work)
- Student attendance and attainment

The project was piloted in six schools and was found to be feasible and well received. 25 schools from Bristol and the surrounding area and from South Wales are taking part in this larger study and results will be available in 2019.

University of Westminster North East of England evaluation

In December 2013, a study examined the effect of Youth MHFA Two Day courses delivered to 224 delegates across 18 venues in the North East of England. It found that:

- Both self-reported confidence in ability to help young people with mental health issues and knowledge in how to support young people with mental health issues increased from a median rating of 5/10 to 8/10 (or by three points); a highly statistically significant increase ($p < .001$)
- A longer term follow up at three to six months post training highlighted that many of the schools involved in the training had clear implementation strategies in place to embed Youth MHFA into their organisation
- Analysis of open-ended responses on how delegates would respond to hypothetical scenarios around mental ill health also demonstrated continuing ability to identify symptoms of mental ill health and provide appropriate strategies for support and care. Some of this feedback can be read on [page 9](#).

For more information on evaluations of MHFA, visit mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/research-and-evaluation.

Feedback three to six months after Youth MHFA training:

“I have been able to ask the ‘right’ questions and openers to engage individuals in an honest discussion about their needs.”

“Confidence to challenge students and staff about their behaviours so that they feel confident to seek support.”

“I suggested my senior coach give me the groups of kids who are shy or hyperactive; I take it as a challenge to explore the talent of those kids.”

“Straight after the first session I was able to use the ALGEE technique with a student (who) had anxiety and panic attacks for a number of years. By listening, reassuring her and helping her to recognise her mental health she became more confident in discussing her concerns and we were able to give her the appropriate help during her examinations.”

“I developed observational and listening skills to pick up signs of difficulties at an early stage (and) further developed close links with external agencies.”

“Gaining more up-to-date knowledge about mental health has given me more confidence in myself. The information discussed has certainly made me look at how I can improve my practice to best support others.”

“I have led assemblies on mental wellbeing to raise the issue and revive my pupil drop-in and parent drop-in after school.”

“The sessions that covered the different types of mental health disorders have all been very useful as I now have a better awareness and know what advice/help to give.”

Case study: Anerley Street Vocational Centre

“Safeguarding is our highest priority for the pupils and MHFA training has helped us keep mental health in our minds when making a character assessment.”

“We want our students to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to their world. With MHFA training, we’re equipping our staff with the tools to provide support as a first point of contact, but also to have the knowledge and the insight to build an ethos of resilience.”

Jonathan Schofield
Acting headteacher

Started offering training

April 2018

Staff trained so far

4

Anerley Street Vocational Centre (ASVC) is an educational facility that supports up to 80 young people to re-integrate back into school, either from prolonged absence or due to exclusion from mainstream education. Recognising a need to improve its mental health approach, and under guidance from the Local Education Authority, ASVC felt that Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) offered the right balance of early intervention and self-care skills training needed for supporting at-risk children.

No two days are ever the same for Sally Clarke, Higher Learning Teaching Assistant, as she explains that challenges can arise at any moment:

“Our transition department is one of the first stages of a pupil’s introduction to ASVC. We work with pupils who have often been out of the education system for some time. They can be very emotionally reactive but also withdrawn, meaning it can be difficult to gauge their true emotions. Safeguarding is our highest priority

for the pupils and MHFA training has helped us keep ‘mental health’ in our minds when first making a character assessment.”

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Sally feels that mental health training is essential in giving staff insights into the behaviour of their students. With many coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and some having experienced trauma, violent outbursts can be common for students channelling their anger and frustration.

With an influx of drug abuse in the local community, it became a priority for ASVC to act proactively to spot the warning signs that a student may be using harmful substances before it’s too late. Sally explains that the course not only gave advice on this but also helped her team to understand other mental health issues which can come hand-in-hand with or increase susceptibility to drug abuse.

“Hearing others’ experiences during our training meant we got the chance to see how other people in our position handle similar challenges.”

“It can be difficult to know how to talk to students in the most effective way and to approach some of these topics sensitively. But the Youth MHFA manual the course provides is proving so useful to refer back to and gives me the confidence to know I’m asking the right questions.”

Learning collaboratively was important for Sally too: “The course was organised by our Local Education Authority and so it gave us the opportunity to train alongside staff from other schools. Being in a group of people learning these skills together was hugely beneficial in itself – hearing everyone’s experiences meant we got the chance to see how other people in our position handle similar challenges.”

Feedback

With the course structured around promoting resilience as well as giving the tools to react to a crisis, Sally and her colleagues were keen to share the information with other staff as quickly as possible. Together they developed a resource pack for staff on how to look after their own mental health when things get stressful. Mental Health Awareness Week in May then provided an ideal opportunity for students to

participate in class with exercises and presentations and on mental health. Noticeboards in both the hallway and staff room were covered with resources and information on where people can turn to seek help, including ASVC’s Mental Health First Aiders.

Providing Youth Mental Health First Aiders alongside the art and speech therapies and counselling offered on-site, has bolstered ASVC’s wellbeing and Sally has already put her MHFA skills in to action. She says: “Soon after I completed the course we had a student make a big disclosure. Before, I would’ve just reverted to my automatic mode and passed the child on to colleagues. This time, I was calm and used the non-judgemental listening skills I learned on the course. This kept the child calm, I was able to stay with them throughout before we worked out the next step.”

Safeguarding demands that students be supervised throughout the day meaning that staff and students eat together at ASVC. This is an important opportunity to build relationships and also, as Sally explains, to check in on student’s mental health. “For some of our pupils they don’t have the opportunity or may not feel comfortable talking

about how they’re feeling at home so getting the chance to speak to them in a group setting is invaluable for spotting the signs that something might not be quite right.”

What the future holds

ASVC is committed to the sustainability of its wellbeing strategy and has the full support of its acting headteacher, Jonathan Schofield, alongside its management committee. It’s clear that there is no issue of greater importance to the school than the safety of the students placed in its care. While physical wellbeing has long been at the forefront of this, its Mental Health First Aiders are now helping to ensure mental health is of equal importance when it comes to safeguarding.

Jonathan says: “Good mental and emotional wellbeing is an integral part of children and young people’s holistic development. We want our students to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to their world. With MHFA training, we’re equipping our staff with the tools to provide support as a first point of contact, but also to have the knowledge and the insight to build an ethos of resilience.”

Case study: Bacup & Rawtenstall Grammar School

“Because the school has such a positive and open minded approach to mental health, there is lots of opportunity to become a centre of excellence around student and staff wellbeing.”

“To ensure that students do not have any barriers to their learning we need to support them holistically in providing top-quality pastoral care and this excellent course effectively raises awareness and understanding of mental health issues.”

Alan Porteous
Headteacher

Started offering training

February 2015

Staff trained so far

27

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School (BRGS) is a selective co-educational state school which is renowned for its high achieving exam results. A larger than average secondary school, BRGS has over 1,200 students on its roll, drawing from a wide catchment in the borough of Rossendale in the rural setting of the South Pennines.

What is also larger than average for a typical state secondary school is the proportion of staff trained as Youth Mental Health First Aiders.

BRGS's Pastoral Manager, Siobhan Robinson, is responsible for the training. Since qualifying as a Youth MHFA instructor herself, Siobhan is able to deliver the course internally to her colleagues.

Siobhan has always been passionate about improving young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. On the school wide initiative, she comments:

“The headteacher at BRGS is so supportive around the development of good pastoral care and this creates a more open dialogue around mental health and wellbeing. The staff and students feel able to have conversations about issues that relate to mental health and it's not a taboo subject.”

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Giving recognition to the idea that young people will thrive academically if they have good mental health, and the role that a school can play in this, headteacher Alan Porteous says:

“Our aim is for students to 'enjoy and achieve' whilst at school. To ensure that students do not have any barriers to their learning we need to support them holistically in providing top-quality pastoral care and this excellent course effectively raises awareness and understanding of mental health issues.”

“I believe Youth MHFA has provided me with extra tools to be able to better understand and support young people - something so valuable in my line of work.”

Siobhan says: “Being able to recognise and help a young person with mental ill health is so important, and raising awareness around mental health issues will help to reduce the associated stigma.

“At BRGS we believe that teaching and support staff can play a really important role in supporting young people who may be experiencing mental health issues and by investing in some simple but effective training, we are giving our staff the tools they need to feel confident to open up that conversation and guide a person to appropriate help.

“The fact that we have Youth Mental Health First Aiders in our school is a really positive demonstration of our commitment to creating an environment where children’s emotional wellbeing is truly valued.”

Feedback

100% of BRGS staff who evaluated the training ‘agreed strongly’ that the course met their needs, through developing their knowledge and skills in dealing with student mental health issues.

One staff member commented: “I believe Youth MHFA has provided me with extra tools to be able to better understand and support young people – something so valuable in my line of work.”

Another colleague believed that it had changed their “outlook and perception of mental health and wellbeing in others” raising their confidence to deal with issues such as self-harm, depression and anxiety.

What the future holds

The work around mental health at BRGS is ongoing to continue to raise awareness and develop the support services in place for students. The team conducts regular surveys of students’ mental health using a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ).

Siobhan believes that because the school has such a positive and open minded approach to mental health that there is lots of opportunity to become a centre of excellence around student and staff wellbeing.

She says: “My vision is that we continue to develop all aspects of pastoral care, including training all staff in Youth MHFA and perhaps even engaging some of our sixth form students in a peer-to-peer training course.

“I am also keen to investigate different ways to build resilience within our school community because I think there are lots of really helpful strategies and tools to improve our sense of wellbeing and promote positive mental health.”

Case study: E-ACT Multi-Academy Trust

“Good mental health is vital if pupils are to be able to learn and thrive.”

“By introducing this training, we wanted to give every member of staff the skills to respond calmly and compassionately, to guide them towards the appropriate support to help them recover and thrive.”

Ali Quinn
Mental Health Lead

Started offering training

September 2017

Staff trained so far

293

E-ACT multi-academy trust plans to train all 2,300 staff members as Youth Mental Health First Aiders alongside the roll-out of a new pupil-led mental health curriculum. With 15,400 pupils attending the 25 E-ACT primary and secondary academies across England, their joined-up approach to pupil support is vital.

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

E-ACT's internal survey results reflect the growing crisis in young people's mental health across the country. Almost a third of pupils – over 5,000 young people – said they feel stressed either most or all the time, while hundreds reported signs of common mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

Director of Education Jane Millward recognised that they needed to be proactive to support their pupils' learning and wellbeing. Many of the young people who attend E-ACT academies come from disadvantaged areas, and the wide geographical

spread of E-ACT academies means that pupils face a diverse range of social pressures and concerns. In addition, those who have been excluded from school are at increased risk of mental health issues.

Ali Quinn, E-ACT's mental health lead, decided on an innovative approach to address the situation. Drawing from her background as a Social, Emotional and Mental Health specialist teacher, Ali recommended the Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course to train staff to recognise signs of mental health issues and offer support on a first aid basis.

“If a young person opens up to you and perceives a negative reaction, they may never open up to anyone again. And that's tragic,” says Ali. “By introducing this training, we wanted to give every member of staff the skills to respond calmly and compassionately, to guide them towards the appropriate support to help them recover and thrive.”

“I feel more confident in my role as a teaching assistant to support our children’s wellbeing.”

Feedback

Senior leadership at E-ACT were on board straight away with the training initiative. CEO David Moran says: “We know that one in 10 children have been clinically diagnosed with a mental health disorder in the UK – that is around three children in every class. This brings into focus even more our collective responsibility to help pupils maintain and manage their mental health - good mental health is vital if pupils are to be able to learn and thrive.”

Ali and nine of her colleagues qualified as Youth MHFA instructors so that they could deliver the courses to staff at academies across the country. So far, they have trained almost 300 staff as Youth Mental Health First Aiders, with plans to reach 500 by the end of the academic year.

Although the training initially prioritised staff who routinely have one-to-one contact with pupils, such as pastoral managers and heads of year, the courses are also open to all teachers, teaching assistants and support staff. With mental health being approached so holistically within the trust, it comes as no surprise that every Youth MHFA course that Ali and her fellow instructors run is oversubscribed. Ali says: “It’s supported by all our academies and time for the course is blocked out in advance of the term.

Dedicating the two days for the course saves school staff time in the long run as we are giving them skills and confidence to deal effectively with issues that they already face every day.”

Ali describes the feedback as “phenomenal”, with 100% of E-ACT staff rating the MHFA course as “good” or “very good”, and 100% reporting an improvement in their confidence and knowledge around mental health.

“People tell me it has been life-changing. A delegate from one of my courses came to me a while afterwards and said that it had opened their eyes to signs that one of the young people they work with was experiencing psychosis. Before they had interpreted it simply as odd behaviour and weren’t sure what to do, if anything. But after the training they were able to intervene and they have signposted the young person to external agencies for further support.”

As well as knowing how to respond to a mental health crisis and addressing problems such as bullying, the MHFA courses equip staff with the skills to encourage positive mental health in the long term. One delegate said: “I feel more confident in my role as a teaching assistant to support our children’s wellbeing.”

What the future holds

While E-ACT is on track to exceed its target of 500 Youth Mental Health First Aiders by the end of the year, it is set to launch a new strand of its mental health strategy, this time focusing on staff wellbeing. Ali and her instructor colleagues have recently qualified to deliver Adult MHFA courses too and will soon be training school staff, regional teams and head office employees, so that they can look after their colleagues as well as pupils.

Meanwhile, the trust is developing a tailored mental health curriculum for each academy. With pupil workshops running across various local areas, young people were supported to develop their own action plans, with activities ranging from assemblies to share their learning with peers, to creating information posters to put up around the academy, to organising fetes for parents on topics such as wellbeing and resilience.

Ali is running an evaluation of the impact of Youth MHFA training on the pupils themselves, with results due later in 2018. Summing up E-ACT’s pioneering approach to the strategy and new curriculum, Ali says “We can’t make assumptions – we must listen.”

Case study: Hendon School

“Our staff and students are very supportive, and there’s a massive opportunity for us to use the MHFA approach at Hendon to build support and enhance relationships even further.”

“I really believe that Youth MHFA can help every member of school staff. Having the skills and the confidence to broach sensitive topics like suicide and self-harm is so important for everyone on the front line working with young people today.”

Noelle Doona
Assistant headteacher

Hendon School is a co-educational secondary school in the London Borough of Barnet with over 1,250 pupils and around 150 staff. The school is a leader in championing mental health, with an award-winning mental health team of staff and students who organise and host a mental health conference each year and have even created their own mental health app. With awareness at an all-time high, Hendon is now taking the next step in its mental health journey by training its community in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) skills.

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Hendon first explored mental health training in the summer of 2017 when it became one of the first schools to take part in the Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) in Schools programme. This national initiative was launched to train a member of staff in every secondary school in the country in Youth MHFA skills.

Assistant headteacher, Noelle Doona explains: “I first heard about the programme in the news. I’d known for a long time that there was a gap in our staff’s mental health knowledge, so I got in touch with MHFA England straight away to find out more.” A few weeks later Hendon hosted a Youth MHFA One Day course for Noelle and a colleague, and 12 staff from surrounding schools.

For Noelle, mental and physical health are both familiar topics. Her mother was a mental health nurse and she herself used to train others in medical first aid. “With my background and as someone in a pastoral role at school I could see the benefits immediately” she says. “Staff understand the need to come forward with concerns about their students’ mental health, but many don’t have the confidence to help directly. The framework that MHFA training provides is such a powerful tool, and it’s something I want all staff at school to have at their fingertips.”

“The framework that MHFA training provides is such a powerful tool, and it’s something I want all staff at school to have at their fingertips.”

Hendon's whole school approach

At Hendon, mental health support strategies are woven in to the fabric of school life. Noelle leads a team of 30 staff and students who champion mental health within the school, running events to mark awareness days, leading a kindness month in December, and acting as points of contact for peers.

Lessons on mental wellbeing and resilience are part of the curriculum for every year group and students also have access to a large student support department, which offers a range of services and links to external providers. Digital resources are used to complement this include online counselling service Kooth, as well as the Zumos platform, which provides regulated information on mental health and wellbeing support through games.

Noelle explains: “For an effective whole school approach, it’s so important to open up a variety of lines of communication and learning, including online or face-to-face. Some students want to learn and access support anonymously and in their own time. Some prefer having someone to talk to, so as well as our online resources we have a school counsellor available three days a week.”

Discussing the role of MHFA, Noelle says: “I want staff-student interaction around mental health and wellbeing to be robust. If staff don’t feel that

they have the appropriate knowledge or the confidence to communicate with students struggling with their mental health, relationships could be hampered. Our staff and students are very supportive, and I feel there’s a massive opportunity for us to use the MHFA approach at Hendon to build support and enhance relationships even further.”

Supporting the mental health of school staff is another key part of Hendon’s strategy. Staff are actively encouraged to join the wellbeing team and the school has a dedicated member of staff responsible for this. It also makes use of an employee assistance programme, which gives staff free access to a range of external support advisors. The return to work procedures have been redesigned to make sure staff are fully supported. “As well as thorough staff wellbeing policies, we run tea and talk sessions in our staff room every Friday, issue regular thank you notes and have a staff star of the week,” Noelle explains. “It’s really the small things like this that make a big difference in building community wellbeing.”

What the future holds

Noelle’s application to train as a Youth MHFA instructor has recently been accepted, and she now plans to roll out Youth MHFA courses across the school. “In the first instance I plan to train up our pastoral staff as Youth Mental Health First Aiders” she says. “I’ll then work towards delivering the shorter one day version of the course

for all staff to ensure that everyone is aware of key principles and understanding.” In the longer-term the school will also train a member of staff as an Adult MHFA instructor.

Noelle is also keen to train up students in her mental health team: “I know that MHFA England is currently developing a Teen MHFA course designed for young people. Our students are some of the most passionate mental health advocates in the country, so I know they’re looking forward to hearing more about this when it becomes available.”

Following the school’s engagement with the Youth MHFA in Schools programme, Noelle and her students were invited to share their insights at an event in July hosted by MHFA England and University College London, who are evaluating the programme’s impact.

As a firm advocate of the training, Noelle is taking part in a celebration of the programme’s impact ahead of World Mental Health Day: “I really believe that Youth MHFA can help every member of school staff,” she says. “Having the skills and the confidence to broach sensitive topics like suicide and self-harm is so important for everyone on the front line working with young people today. I’d like to see Youth MHFA included at the point of teacher training and I hope that this programme will help more education leaders to realise the value this would have.”

Case study: Leeds Inclusive Learning Service



“I strongly feel this training should be done in all schools. It could help stop many children being excluded in the first place.”

“Teachers perform extremely challenging roles and it’s important to be able to cope with what are sometimes distressing circumstances. We’re also more supportive of each other now.”

Liz O’Carroll
Head of Service

Started offering training

September 2015

Staff trained so far

All 18 specialist teachers
and support workers

At the Inclusive Learning Service in Leeds, Liz O’Carroll and her team work with approximately 30 primary school age children. Many of the children have gone through abuse and neglect, and all display significant behavioural issues and have social, emotional and mental health needs.

The Inclusive Learning Service actively seeks to re-integrate children into mainstream education, as well as intervening to prevent pupils from being excluded in the first place. This innovative approach to education is funded by The South Area Inclusion Partnership, with money devolved from Leeds local authority.

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Liz believes the training will give her team the tools to help the children better control their emotional outbursts, which can be destructive, violent and explosive. The outlook for these children, all previously excluded or at risk of exclusion from school, can seem bleak at times.

“The children we see have got huge emotional issues,” explains Liz. “Schools are expected to engage children like these in learning and hit government levels like every other child. But these expectations are unrealistic. They’re so emotionally damaged. How can you expect them to learn like any other pupil?”

“This new confidence in talking about mental health stopped us worrying about what to do and stopped things before they could get out of hand... It was a real breakthrough with this family.”

Feedback

The team has found the course's structured approach to building up a child's resilience has already reaped benefits. Developing 'Wellness Recovery Action Plans' for each individual boy or girl has started to significantly improve behaviour.

“All of the children have sat down and created plans for themselves with their key worker,” says Liz, a teacher with 20 years of experience.

“The pupils are really engaged in it. Now, when a teacher sees a child's behaviour deteriorating, they'll draw on the plan to prevent things getting worse. They will build an activity in to the day which benefits the child, such as exercise, baking, a musical instrument or whatever works for that individual child.”

Liz's team does a lot of outreach work at schools with struggling children at risk of exclusion, working closely with their parents. She believes the training has helped here too. It's enabled them to be more open, not just when talking to the children about their mental health, but also with their families, addressing issues head-on.

“Before there were questions that we might have shied away from asking because we were afraid of making things worse,” she says. “Now we're all more confident about asking direct questions about how someone feels.”

“There was one boy whom we suspected had been self-harming. He said he'd just fallen over. In private,

his key worker asked straight out the question everybody had been asking themselves and he opened up about it, and why he was doing it. We would have got there in the end but this new confidence in talking about mental health stopped us worrying about what to do and it stopped things before they could get out of hand.

“His key worker has also talked to his mum about it, and she now knows how to help him, which is great. Families and children tend to be very wary when you talk about their mental health. But he was able to talk to them in a de-stigmatising way in a language they could relate to, explaining everybody has got mental health needs. It was a real breakthrough with this family.”

One of the unexpected benefits of the MHFA training was how the team – including experienced teachers, behaviour support workers, and special needs teachers – were brought together by it.

“My team is pretty robust,” says Liz. “You've got to be fairly tough for this job. But during the course, they eased into being comfortable about talking about certain personal things. They're a new team and the course helped them develop a better understanding of each other really quickly. They're still talking about the course two weeks on, which is pretty unheard of for training in my experience.”

“It also helped many of them to deal better with their own emotions. They perform extremely challenging roles

and it's important to be able to cope with what are sometimes distressing circumstances. We're also more supportive of each other now. People are thinking more about how to look after each other, especially now we know more about how to help. We're talking to each other more about what we find stressful at work and what we can do about it.”

“I've also noticed people will say to me 'I'm really down today,' for example, which they would never have said before. One said to me 'you know that training couldn't have come at a better time. I've been really depressed, but it's helped me put things in perspective a bit and look after myself a bit better.’”

What the future holds

Liz is excited about the potential benefits for the children in their care: “I think we were all pretty good at looking after our children, but the course has definitely given us a lift and given us some really useful ideas,” she says.

“I hope we will now start getting a slightly greater proportion of our children back into mainstream education – and get them back quicker, whilst also helping schools to look at MHFA with all children in order to keep them in school in the first place. This is vital for us, it's our mission. It's how we can change children's life chances, which is what we're all about. I strongly feel this training should be done in all schools. It could help stop many children being excluded in the first place.”

Case study: Shirebrook Academy

“Taking the course really gave me a confidence boost in knowing that I’m already doing a lot of the right things in my role as safeguarding officer.”

“I think this is invaluable to building better relationships between staff and distressed students, and helping that young person feel supported and listened to.”

**Abi Grocutt
Safeguarding Officer**

Shirebrook Academy in Derbyshire is a coeducation secondary school and was one of the first schools in the country to take part in the Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) in Schools programme.

This government-funded programme was developed following Prime Minister Theresa May’s announcement of her intention to train a member of staff in every English state secondary school in MHFA skills. Starting in June 2017, MHFA England has been working alongside its instructor network to implement the programme, which will run over three years and train around 1,000 school staff per year. By 2020 over 3,000 staff will have received the training and be certified as Youth MHFA Champions.

Why the Youth MHFA in Schools programme

Abi Grocutt, Safeguarding Officer at Shirebrook Academy, explains how they first became involved in the Youth MHFA in Schools programme:

“As a school we’re always on the lookout for ways to improve our approach to student wellbeing. We know that mental ill health is a big issue for our pupils – this is borne out in the electronic recording system we use to log students’ concerns. These records tell us that mental health issues including self-harm and suicidal thought are some of the most common issues. Typically, concerns are logged and passed on to me as the Safeguarding Officer, but with mental health issues on the rise among young people, I think it’s important that school staff are equipped to do more than just log concerns for referral.

“When the Youth MHFA in Schools programme launched, we immediately applied to act as a host school to find out more about the MFHA approach to supporting young people with mental health issues.”

“Although we already have a strong focus on wellbeing in our school community, the training’s given us a renewed drive to raise awareness and break stigma, so more pupils feel able to come forward and talk to staff.”

Abi describes how she is herself no stranger to supporting young people in discussing mental ill health: “In my role I often deal with students presenting with suicidal thoughts and I know the questions to ask to assess risk. For many teachers, however, it’s a topic that is a source of great hesitation and concern, with many feeling untrained and unprepared to respond appropriately. I was interested to find out if my methods were in line with best practice advised by MHFA England, and to share any learnings with my colleagues.”

Working as a Youth MHFA Champion

Following the course, and thanks to Abi’s championing of staff and student wellbeing, Shirebrook Academy have since launched a programme of continuous personal development (CPD) sessions on mental health for staff, as well as a mental health champions programme for students. Abi explains: “My colleague Angela and I felt the course gave us some real impetus to begin a new CPD session to share our learnings with staff. The first CPD session we hosted on mental health was really well received with staff telling us that it helped them to reflect on their own practice and to think about the questions to ask to provide initial support to pupils coming to them with mental health issues.

“We also wanted to get students more involved in leading our wellbeing approach so have since started a student mental health champions initiative, which has also been well received.”

Abi now plans to run further CPD sessions specific to eating disorders, self-harm and suicide and also to involve the school’s student champions in this to better facilitate dialogue and understanding between staff and pupils.

Feedback and future plans

Talking about the impact of Youth MHFA training in her approach and the importance of awareness raising, Abi says: “Taking the course really gave me a confidence boost in knowing that I’m already doing a lot of the right things in my role as Safeguarding Officer. To be able to share information from a reputable, evidence-based source is something that will also benefit staff throughout Shirebrook”.

“Although we already have a strong focus on wellbeing in our school community, the training’s given us a renewed drive to raise awareness and break stigma, so more pupils feel able to come forward and talk to staff. We’ve also recently held assemblies presented by our staff and student mental health champions to ensure everyone knows who they are, as well as advertising these networks with posters and via our mental health noticeboard.”

Now at nearly six months following the training, Abi’s seeing the impact of her work as a Youth MHFA Champion in the wider school community. She explains, “The feedback in our electronic reporting system is a clear indicator that our CPD sessions and awareness raising activities following the training are benefitting staff and students. We’re seeing an increase in concerns logged, but crucially the notes alongside the concerns show that staff now know the questions to ask to sensitively explore the issues with pupils. Rather than defaulting straight to a referral to my department, staff are empowered to have that conversation themselves. I think this is invaluable to building better relationships between staff and distressed students, and helping that young person feel supported and listened to.”

Abi now intends to take the Youth MHFA Two Day course to become a fully qualified Youth Mental Health First Aider, with her local authority also planning to fund further training courses for schools in the area: “My vision is of a school community that has a student-led and informed approach to raising awareness and breaking stigma, and where there is a clear dialogue between staff and students at all levels. MHFA training is something that all staff and all schools would benefit from in achieving this, and I look forward to continuing my advocacy work in my school community and beyond to achieve this vision.”

Case study: St Philip's School

“Mental health has been brought into our consciousness and is enabling us to take a truly holistic approach to each child’s development.”

“Mental Health First Aid training is inclusive, in that it enables those who do not have a grounding in mental health to understand and feel empowered to act when they are concerned about the mental health needs of our students.”

Ben Walsh, Headteacher

Started offering training

September 2015

Staff trained so far

83

Located in a quiet, leafy corner of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is St Philip's School - a special educational needs school for young people aged 9-19 years. St Philip's is designated as a school for children with moderate learning difficulties and currently has 144 pupils on its roll, each with Statements, or Education, Health and Care Plans. Many of the pupils have additional needs such as mild to moderate Autistic Spectrum Disorders, language impairment or emotional issues; a few have sensory or medical needs. What is also special about this school is its approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Along with a deep understanding of how to provide the best education for each and every student, St Philip's also demonstrates an exemplary approach to protecting and supporting the mental wellbeing of all the young people who attend the school. It does this by implementing a number of preventative measures but also by intervening when a pupil is showing signs of emotional distress

or symptoms of mental ill health. As part of its whole school approach, St Philip's has chosen to train all its staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Ben Walsh, Headteacher at St Philip's, explains: “Supporting the emotional wellbeing of our young people is a whole school priority and is firmly embedded throughout the school's overall safeguarding agenda.

“Mental Health First Aid training is inclusive, in that it enables those who do not have a grounding in mental health to understand and feel empowered to act when they are concerned about the mental health needs of our students.”

Staff, including the caretaker at St Philip's School, have been trained by their local Health Link worker, a role funded by the local Public Health Authority. Debbie Battle, the school's Safeguarding and Prevention Officer considers the training an important

“Ultimately I wish for an education system where mental health is prioritised because we know it will have a profound impact on a child’s transition into adult life.”

part of every staff member’s Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and says:

“We know that emotions are the drivers of cognition and in some cases learning difficulties are the cause of mental health issues whereas in others it can be the reverse. It is really important for all our staff to be very aware of the signs and symptoms of a mental health issue so that an appropriate support plan can be put in place for each child’s emotional and educational needs.”

Feedback

Despite many of the teachers at St Philip’s having a wealth of expertise and knowledge around educational psychology and the relationship between mental health and learning, the school’s Senior Leadership Team is resolute in its opinion that Youth MHFA training has made a big impact.

A person at the heart of this subject area is Andy Hill, Deputy Head and PSHE teacher at St Philip’s. He explains how the training has helped in his role:

“MHFA training enabled me to develop my own understanding of mental health difficulties and illness. As a result I have been able to deliver a more relevant and meaningful PSHE curriculum on this most important subject.

“Students now speak far more openly about their own difficulties. They are able to seek extra support when they feel they need it which makes for a happier and healthier school.”

General feedback about the Youth MHFA training amongst staff has also been extremely positive and Debbie refers to a ‘cultural shift’ having taken place within the school around how to talk about mental health. She says:

“The overall benefit of staff attending the Youth MHFA course is that mental health has been brought into our consciousness and is enabling us to take a truly holistic approach to each child’s development. The language we are now using to talk about mental health is more appropriate and descriptive which in itself encourages conversations on the topic. We are also starting to identify potential mental health issues through our student’s written work which is a very powerful tool when it comes to early intervention and addressing a potential problem before it escalates.”

What the future holds

It is clear that St Philip’s is fully committed to the emotional and mental wellbeing of all its students and this will remain a core focus for the school for the foreseeable future. It is the school’s policy that as and when new staff join they will be asked to attend a Youth MHFA training

course to develop their skills and awareness around children’s mental health.

From a wider perspective Debbie would like to see mental health become a core part of the teaching curriculum and for it to be considered a key element of the safeguarding work that all schools must undertake to protect their students. She concludes by saying:

“Progress from my point of view will be when staff and students in all schools can talk freely about mental health without feeling any stigma. Ultimately I wish for an education system where mental health is prioritised because we know it will have a profound impact on a child’s transition into adult life.”

One year 9 student sums up his feelings about his own mental health difficulties through a wonderful piece of poetry:

Depression is like water that makes you drown in despair and misery. Keep seeing into the dark which is impossible to shatter and impossible to come through unscathed. This was the old me that I had to shed the skin of. It wasn’t easy but I finally feel lifted and no longer heavy and chained to my own despair.

Case study: Bradfield College

“Every teacher in every school in the country should be trained in Mental Health First Aid. Our teachers get training in physical first aid – and a good thing, too. Accidents happen, children become ill, but why on earth do we disregard their mental health?”

“There has been a real shift in the atmosphere. It’s changed the whole teacher-student relationship. Conflicts between teachers and pupils happen far less.”

Kevin Collins
Deputy Headteacher

Started offering training

2013

Staff trained so far

120

Bradfield College is an independent co-educational school in Berkshire. Most of the 770 pupils aged 13 to 18 board under the care of a Housemaster or Housemistress, although there are a number of day pupils.

Initially, Bradfield College trained 32 members of staff in Youth MHFA. The College was so delighted with the results, it has embedded the training for all staff and has since put almost all of its full-time teachers, as well as large numbers of its support staff, through the two-day course. Deputy Head, Kevin Collins, is a qualified Youth MHFA instructor, and delivers the course to Bradfield staff.

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Kevin Collins realised that over the last 10 years it had become more commonplace to encounter children with emotional issues. Often it was to do with eating and food, or relationships with their peers or parents. Anxiety about their studies was being felt much more keenly. “It would seem that there has never been a more difficult time to be young,” explains Kevin.

“Expectations of young people today are ever increasing, bringing with them competition and anxiety. Also, the ubiquitous nature of social media means children can never switch off and escape the scrutiny of their peers. Add to this relationships, drugs, alcohol and fluctuating self-esteem – everything that comes with adolescence – then perhaps it’s not surprising that their mental health isn’t in great shape.”

“After attending a Youth MHFA course, teachers are much better at spotting early warning signs, like a change in mood of a child, which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and intervening.”

Bradfield College recognised that its teachers may not be adequately equipped to best manage the issues they encounter. It decided the stakes were too high and acted.

Feedback

“After attending a Youth MHFA course, teachers are much better at spotting early warning signs, like a change in mood of a child, which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and intervening,” says Kevin. “Acting quickly and effectively, just as with physical health, can make the difference between a good recovery and prolonged mental illness.”

He adds: “It’s also taken away teachers’ fear of mental illness. If they think a child might have self-harmed, they won’t succumb to the urge to run away. Now, if a pupil knocks on any of our teachers’ doors wanting to talk, they will always make the time to listen to them. You just can’t know what is going on in their heads. It could be a life-saving conversation.”

Kevin describes the unexpected changes brought about at the school by MHFA as a “cultural transformation”, creating a much

more “cohesive and collaborative” school, with pupils being disciplined less often.

“There has been a real shift in the atmosphere,” he enthuses. “It’s changed the whole teacher-student relationship. If there are problems, teachers are more likely to work through them with pupils and support them, rather than punish them. Conflicts between teachers and pupils happen far less.”

The school was recently awarded a rating of ‘outstanding’ in all aspects of its pastoral care during an inspection. The experience has made Kevin evangelical about the benefits of the training.

“I think every teacher in every school in the country should be trained in Mental Health First Aid,” he says.

“Every three years our teachers get training in physical first aid – and a good thing, too. Accidents happen, children become ill, but why on earth do we disregard their mental health?”

What the future holds

What’s the next step for Bradfield? Training their sixth-form students, so they can look out for younger pupils more and look after themselves better. As they embark upon adult life, going to university, what could better prepare them for the pressures and challenges ahead?

And for other schools and wider society? Kevin thinks the problems of mental ill health are definitely not going away.

“This isn’t a flash in the pan,” he says. “I think addressing mental health will in the future be expected of all organisations. Employers will increasingly put more resource into looking after their employees’ mental wellbeing, reaping the economic rewards of more productivity.

“I believe schools, too, will look very different from how they do today for this same reason. It’s easy for any teacher to get lost in obsessing about academic results, for schools to become exam factories. But this misses the point. What, after all, can be more important than our children being happy?”

Case study: City of London School

“Never before has a training course elicited such glowing appraisals from our teachers. Many of our trained Mental Health First Aiders are already putting their newfound skills into practice in their pastoral and teaching roles.”

“It is the structured approach of the course and the supporting materials that makes it so practical and a fantastic tool to have at our fingertips.”

Andrew McBroom
Head of Sixth Form and
Staff Development

Started offering training

April 2015

Staff trained so far

90 Youth Mental Health Aware
40 Youth Mental Health First Aiders

City of London School (CLS) is a selective independent boys' day school situated on the banks of the River Thames. CLS was involved in the initial pilot of the newly designed Youth MHFA course. Andrew McBroom, Head of Sixth Form and Staff Development explains how he first heard about the training:

“It was at a Teachology inset conference that I first heard about the Youth MHFA course and I was so inspired by the speaker highlighting the importance of early intervention in mental health that I went back to school with a mission to find out more. I visited the MHFA website and decided that this was exactly the kind of training that our teachers would benefit from, so I contacted the organisation to explore the options. The feedback from staff was hugely positive, so we decided to invest in rolling the training out among a cohort of 25 staff.”

Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Aware of the fact that most independent schools pride themselves on their pastoral care offerings, Andrew explains:

“It's very in-vogue for schools to talk about resilience and mental health and of course that's a good thing but it shouldn't just be something that looks good on the surface, but when

you dig deeper is nothing more than rhetoric. I truly believe that at CLS we practice what we preach and one of our most valuable offerings is the gift of time. If a student knocks on the door and needs to talk, we as teachers prioritise that because in the most extreme case it could be a life-saving decision and if nothing else we have taken the time to listen and hopefully offer some sound advice. Listening non-judgementally is one of the five steps of the process taught on the Youth MHFA course and I think it is one of the most valuable.”

Feedback

Feedback from teachers who have attended the course at CLS has been extremely positive. Andrew says: “Never before has a training course elicited such glowing appraisals from our teachers, and I know for a fact that many of our trained Mental Health First Aiders are already putting their newfound skills into practice in their pastoral and teaching roles.



Andrew McBroom talks about how he uses his MHFA skills to support pupils. Watch video at mhfaengland.org

“As a student, what really stands out at our school is the feeling that there is always someone you can turn to, whether it’s your form tutor, a subject teacher or head of year. It’s very comforting to know that.”

“There is total parity between the feedback that our teachers are giving the course through the evaluation form and the verbal feedback I am getting once the course has been delivered, all complimentary and very positive. It is the structured approach of the course and the supporting materials that we are left with that makes it so practical and a fantastic tool to have at our fingertips.

“A two day course doesn’t make you an expert on mental health but it certainly empowers people. Since completing the training, myself and other staff members have encountered conversations with students where the subject matter is serious and unnerving but the processes we have been taught to deal with such situations have been invaluable. We would have had those conversations regardless of having taken part in the training, but being Youth Mental Health First Aiders means we now have the knowledge and confidence to deal with the situation in a much better and effective way. Teachers are very good at giving advice but on the Youth MHFA course you are taught first and foremost to be a good listener and that is something I have really benefited from.”

The students at CLS are positive about their experiences in a school where 100% of the staff have MHFA

training. Peter Kandunias, a student in the Sixth Form offers his view: “Teachers play such an important part in our lives, we spend so much time with them so there is definitely a need for some kind of training around mental health issues. As a student at CLS I feel there are so many options for me to talk to teachers if I have a problem and there seems to be a general ethos in the school that it’s OK to talk about these kinds of things.”

Marcus Knight-Adams, also a Sixth Form student, agrees: “I think the expectation to achieve academically alongside all the other things that we have going on in our lives can sometimes lead people to feel overwhelmed and can result in more serious issues, but what really stands out at our school is the feeling that there is always someone you can turn to, whether it’s your form tutor, a subject teacher or head of year. It’s very comforting to know that.”

What the future holds

Going forward, CLS intends to keep its MHFA training up to date with refresher courses and there are also plans to involve parents to a greater degree in the school’s approach to pastoral care.

Andrew says: “Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and rolling out the MHFA training

to all our staff has created a culture where we can openly talk about the issues facing children and potentially ourselves. This leads to a mutually supportive environment where the issue of mental health is discussed, problems can be addressed and not ignored, with the risk of getting worse.”

Speaking in September 2018 Andrew detailed further actions taken by the school to strengthen the wellbeing agenda. “Our relationship with MHFA England has, alongside other influences, encouraged us to focus more consciously on this area of school life. Over 10 staff per year (on a rolling programme) now complete the Youth MHFA Two Day course; we have full-time counselling provision; specialist training has been provided to key pastoral staff (for example suicide awareness, self-harm, technology addiction and bereavement); the PSHE curriculum has revamped; we regularly have expert visiting speakers to address parents and staff are now offered ‘supervision’ opportunities to discuss the complex cases they encounter. Just this month we have appointed a full-time Pastoral and Wellbeing Advisor.”

Andrew continues to be struck by the quality of the MHFA training and the impact it has.

Youth MHFA courses

There are a variety of options for Youth MHFA courses to suit your organisation. All courses are delivered by an experienced associate instructor who has attended the seven day instructor training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health. Our quality assured associates have been recruited due to their diverse backgrounds in education and youth work, experience in mental health, and ability to engage and motivate participants.



Two Day

Youth Mental Health First Aiders

Who it's for

Everyone who teaches, works, lives with or cares for 8 to 18-year-olds. The course is open to anyone age 16 and up. We need consent from a parent or guardian for people under 18.

Capacity

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

Learning takes place across four manageable sessions. Through a mix of group activities, presentations and discussions, each session is built around a Youth Mental Health First Aid action plan.

Everyone who completes the course gets:

- A Youth MHFA manual to refer to whenever they need it
- A certificate to say they are a Youth Mental Health First Aider

What you will learn

- An in depth understanding of young people's mental health and factors that affect wellbeing
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to reassure and support a young person in distress
- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help a young person recover their health by guiding them to further support - whether that's through self-help sites, their place of learning, the NHS, or a mix - engaging with parents, carers and external agencies where appropriate
- Ability to support a young person with a long term mental health issue or disability to thrive
- Tools to look after your own mental wellbeing

Course structure

Session 1: Youth MHFA

- About Youth MHFA
- Context: England's child health care policy
- About mental health - facts and figures
- Risk factors for mental ill health
- Protective factors for mental health
- Preventing mental health issues and promoting wellbeing
- The Youth MHFA action plan

Session 2: Depression and anxiety

- About depression - facts and figures
- Signs and symptoms
- Risk factors
- About anxiety disorders - facts and figures
- Signs and symptoms
- Risk factors
- The MHFA action plan for depression and anxiety

Session 3: Suicide and psychosis

- About suicide
- Risk factors and warning signs for suicide
- First aid for suicidal crisis
- About psychosis
- Risk factors and warning signs of psychosis
- Types of psychotic disorders
- Crisis first aid for acute psychosis
- The MHFA action plan for psychosis

Session 4: Self-harm and eating disorders

- About self-harm - facts and figures
- Risk factors
- Signs and symptoms
- The MHFA action plan for self-harm
- About eating disorders - facts and figures
- Different types of eating disorders
- The MHFA action plan for eating disorders
- Recovery



One Day

Youth MHFA Champions

Based on our Youth MHFA Two Day course, this training has been designed specifically with schools and colleges in mind. As a one day course, it fits perfectly into school inset training days and busy school timetables, making it accessible for state and privately funded primary, secondary and further education settings.

At least one member of staff in every secondary school has access to a free place on a one day course (see **page 7** for details).

Who it's for

Teachers, support staff and parents

The course is open to anyone age 16 and up. We need consent from a parent or guardian for people under 18.

Capacity

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

The day includes a mix of presentations, group discussions and workshop activities.

Everyone who completes the course gets:

- A Youth MHFA manual to refer to whenever they need it
- A certificate to say they are a Youth MHFA Champion

What you will learn

- An understanding of common mental health issues and how they can affect young people

- Ability to spot signs of mental ill health in young people and guide them to a place of support
- Knowledge and confidence to advocate for mental health awareness
- Skills to support positive wellbeing

Course structure

Session 1

- Why Youth MHFA One Day?
- What is mental health and mental ill health?
- Stigma and discrimination
- The Mental Health First Aid action plan
- Depression
- Suicide

Session 2

- Anxiety
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis
- Recovery
- Resilience



Half Day

Youth Mental Health Aware

This introductory three hour session is designed to raise awareness of young people's mental health and the issues that can affect this age group.

Who it's for

Everyone who teaches, works, lives with or cares for 8 to 18-year-olds. The course is open to anyone age 16 and up.

We need consent from a parent or guardian for people under 18.

Capacity

We limit numbers to 25 people per course so that the instructor can keep people safe and supported while they learn.

What you will learn

- A basic understanding of some common mental health issues and how they can affect young people
- Skills to work more effectively with young people living with mental health issues
- Ways to support young people with a mental health issue and relate to their experiences

Course structure

- Language and mental health issues
- What is mental health?
- Mental health conditions:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Psychosis
 - Self-harm
 - Eating disorders
 - Personality disorders
 - Alcohol, illegal drugs and mental health
- Supporting young people in distress
- Mental and emotional wellbeing

For details on Youth MHFA course bookings and delivery options, please contact us at info@mhfaengland.org, or visit our website mhfaengland.org

Instructor Training programme



Instructors

Although many organisations are keen to have our experienced associate instructors deliver our courses, some decide to train their own staff to become Youth MHFA instructors. Once qualified they can deliver our courses in a timeframe and method which 100% suits the needs of the organisation. Accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health, our Instructor Training programme gives participants all the tools needed to deliver successful Youth MHFA courses.

Instructor Training takes place over seven days and is usually spread out over six weeks. This allows you to become familiar with the material and reflect on your learning. You'll have access to a mentor throughout who will be happy to help if you need any guidance along the way.

Days 1-2

Experience the Youth MHFA course as delivered by our highly experienced national trainers.

Day 3

Hear from a variety of speakers from a mental health related background. These sessions could include discussions with people who have experienced mental health issues, a carer of someone with mental ill health, or someone from a medical background. Topics will cover a range of factors contributing to mental ill health.

Days 4-5

Your chance to deliver a session on a relevant topic followed by a one to one feedback session with your mentor.

Days 6-7

Deliver a section of a Youth MHFA course, gain peer to peer feedback and have another one to one session with your mentor.

You will be expected to do approximately 20 hours of your own study outside of the seven days, including time spent on preparing delivery materials for days 4-5 and 6-7.

Requirements

Following the training, you'll be required to co-deliver two Youth MHFA courses within a year to become an approved instructor. Once approved, instructors can deliver courses solo, both in their own organisation and externally.

To remain a Youth MHFA instructor, you will need to do the following each year:

- Deliver two courses, or as many as possible
- Ensure everyone who attends your courses receives a manual and workbook that can be purchased from MHFA England

- Renew your annual membership. The membership fee is **£80 as of April 2020**
- Attend a continuing professional development event. MHFA England offers CPD events to expand your portfolio of courses (e.g. Adult MHFA, Higher Education MHFA, Armed Forces MHFA). Or you can attend an external event relating to mental health or training skills

How to apply

To learn more about Instructor Training in your organisation, please contact us at training@mhfaengland.org or visit our website mhfaengland.org.

Mental Health First Aid starts with you

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course bookings, prices,
and delivery options,
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MHFA England