

## The role of a Youth MHFA Champion

Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Champions are skilled in understanding how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental health issues in young people and have the confidence to guide the young person to place of support.

The role of the Youth MHFA Champion is to act as a point of contact for the young person who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. This interaction could range from having an initial conversation through to guiding a young person to get appropriate support.

- Youth MHFA Champions are invaluable in providing early intervention to help a young person who may be developing a mental health issue
- Youth MHFA Champions are not trained to be therapists or psychiatrists but they can offer initial support through non-judgemental listening, reassurance and guidance
- Youth MHFA Champions are encouraged to take on a role as a mental health advocate within their school to encourage adoption of approaches to ‘whole school’ wellbeing and to build on such approaches that may already be in place

## What do you learn on a Youth MHFA course?

Youth MHFA provides teachers and frontline professionals working with young people the skills and confidence to spot common signs and triggers of mental health issues, as well as the knowledge and confidence to help. Through a mix of presentations, discussions and activities, the course covers these key topics:

- What is mental health?
- Depression and anxiety
- Suicide and psychosis
- Self harm and eating disorders

Youth MHFA Champions are trained to:

- Spot the early signs and symptoms of mental ill health in young people

- Start a supportive conversation with a young person who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress
- Listen to a young person non-judgementally
- Assess the risk of suicide and self-harm in a young person
- Guide the young person to access appropriate professional support or self-help strategies
- Escalate to the appropriate emergency services if necessary
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate
- Protect themselves whilst performing their role

Everyone who completes the course receives a copy of the Youth MHFA manual which is an excellent reference and support resource. Participants also receive a certificate to say they are a Youth MHFA Champion. In supporting staff to address issues around health and wellbeing, this training has the potential to help staff work more effectively.