



PeopleUnboxed



Selecting your Mental Health First Aiders

Why is it important?



Only 16% of people feel able to disclose a MH problem to their managers



1 in 3 of the UK workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime

Poor mental health affects us all. Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) can have a profound and positive impact on the overall wellbeing and mental health of their organisations and their communities.

Our courses are open to everyone, however asking employees to apply will help you to recruit the people who are best suited and those who will help support a **positive mental health culture** within your workplace.

What will you look for?



People who want to learn more about mental health to support others – this may be due to personal experience of mental ill health or an experience close to home. Make sure people (not just those who have disclosed personal experience) understand what the role will involve and have considered their own wellbeing to decide if now is the right time for them.

A diverse group of individuals – encourage applications to represent the diversity of your workforce, from different seniority levels, locations, genders and ethnic backgrounds.



People who are approachable, good listeners and able to empathise - people who can demonstrate an ability to relate well to others and who can maintain confidentiality, as well as people you can rely on to offer ideas and support for wider organisational wellbeing initiatives.

People who are available – this could be people who spend the majority of their time at the workplace for which they are nominated, or it could be people that are available on the end of the phone and can be called away from their normal duties or into the workplace, at short notice as required.



People who can commit the time and who have the support from their line manager to fulfil the role once trained.

What is required of them?

To become qualified MHFAs, your employees will need to undertake the relevant training. Most commonly this is a two-day course and, with our FAA Awards, they will receive an Ofqual-regulated qualification in mental health.



Find out more:

Level 2 'FAA Award in First Aid for Mental Health'

Carrying out the role responsibly involves the following:

- ✓ Keeping themselves safe and well
- ✓ Communicating any concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of anyone, e.g. to an appropriate manager
- ✓ Following workplace policies and procedures on how MHFA is implemented
- ✓ Upholding their role as a MHFA alongside their other responsibilities
- ✓ Establishing appropriate boundaries with those they're supporting

- ✓ Positively and openly advocating for mental health, for example raising awareness and talking about it
- ✓ Contributing as required to wider organisational wellbeing activities
- ✓ Refreshing their skills every three years on a MHFA course



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

It's important to remember that MHFA courses **do not teach people to be therapists or counsellors**, or treat mental health conditions, as this can only be carried out by healthcare professionals.

Instead, they will gain the knowledge to identify when a person may have a condition and know where they can go to get help. Their role is to act as a point of contact and reassurance for a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.



How many do you need?

Currently there is no legislation for Mental Health First Aid provisions in the workplace, so how many Mental Health First Aiders you need will largely depend on the makeup of your organisation.

No doubt you will want to demonstrate that you **view mental health as equally important to physical health**, plus you will need to consider your organisational structure, your work locations and work patterns, as well as the demands on your people.

Some organisations aim to have as many Mental Health First Aiders as physical first aiders.



For **multisite** organisations it is important that there is always a Mental Health First Aider available to support employees at each location.

For other organisations, where there is **a high demand on people's time, or more complex working arrangements**, 1:15 is a more suitable ratio.



As long as every employee in your organisation has access to someone they can go to for support, there really is no limit on how many people you train in mental health first aid.



How to recruit for the role



Invite employees to apply for the MHFA training via an **application form**. You could follow this up with informal interviews and a reference check with their line manager.



When advertising the training you should outline:

- ✓ What the Mental Health First Aider role entails
- ✓ Who should apply
- ✓ How it fits in with other strategies such as your employee training and development programme or your employee wellbeing programme
- ✓ The time commitment involved
- ✓ The topics covered on the course

On the application form, ask questions to determine why the person would like to become a Mental Health First Aider, what they feel they can bring to the role, and whether they have their line manager's approval to apply.



If you choose to follow up with interviews, this is a good opportunity to assess the person's suitability for the role and discuss in more detail what the role will entail.

Example questions

Why do you think mental health in the workplace is important?

What do you feel you will bring to the role of Mental Health First Aider?

Why are you interested in becoming a Mental Health First Aider?

What would success as a Mental Health First Aider look like to you?



Use our 'Becoming a Mental Health First Aider' Guide, to share the role details with your employees, and our suggested Application Form.



For **every £1 invested** in workplace mental health interventions, organisations see an **ROI** of between **£1.50 and £9**.



How much time will it require?

To be effective and have a sustainable impact, MHFA training needs to be implemented as part of a strategic, holistic organisational approach to wellbeing. The time each MHFA will need to commit will depend on your wider strategy.

Initial training:	One full day for the level 2.
Ad hoc conversations with colleagues:	Best practice is conversations of up to 30 minutes. Encourage Mental Health First Aiders to record how much time they are spending on these conversations and review this regularly. You may wish your Mental Health First Aiders to proactively have conversations to help normalise talking about mental health, or conduct drop-in sessions at a certain frequency.
Taking part in an internal MHFA network:	Varies depending on the organisation but monthly or quarterly meetings are most common.
MHFA Refresher training:	One day every three years.
Supplementary training:	Optional, as required by the organisation. For example, would it be beneficial to include effective communications training on the personal development plans of your Mental Health First Aiders?

What now?

Check out our resources for your employees, to start recruiting your Mental Health First Aiders. You can share these resources as part of your selection process.



‘Becoming a Mental Health First Aider’

‘MHFA Application Form’



Are you ready to make a difference?