

Mental Health First Aiders Guidance

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Policy Author(s) and Owner	Mary Agnew, Health Safety and Wellbeing Manager Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer - Organisational Development
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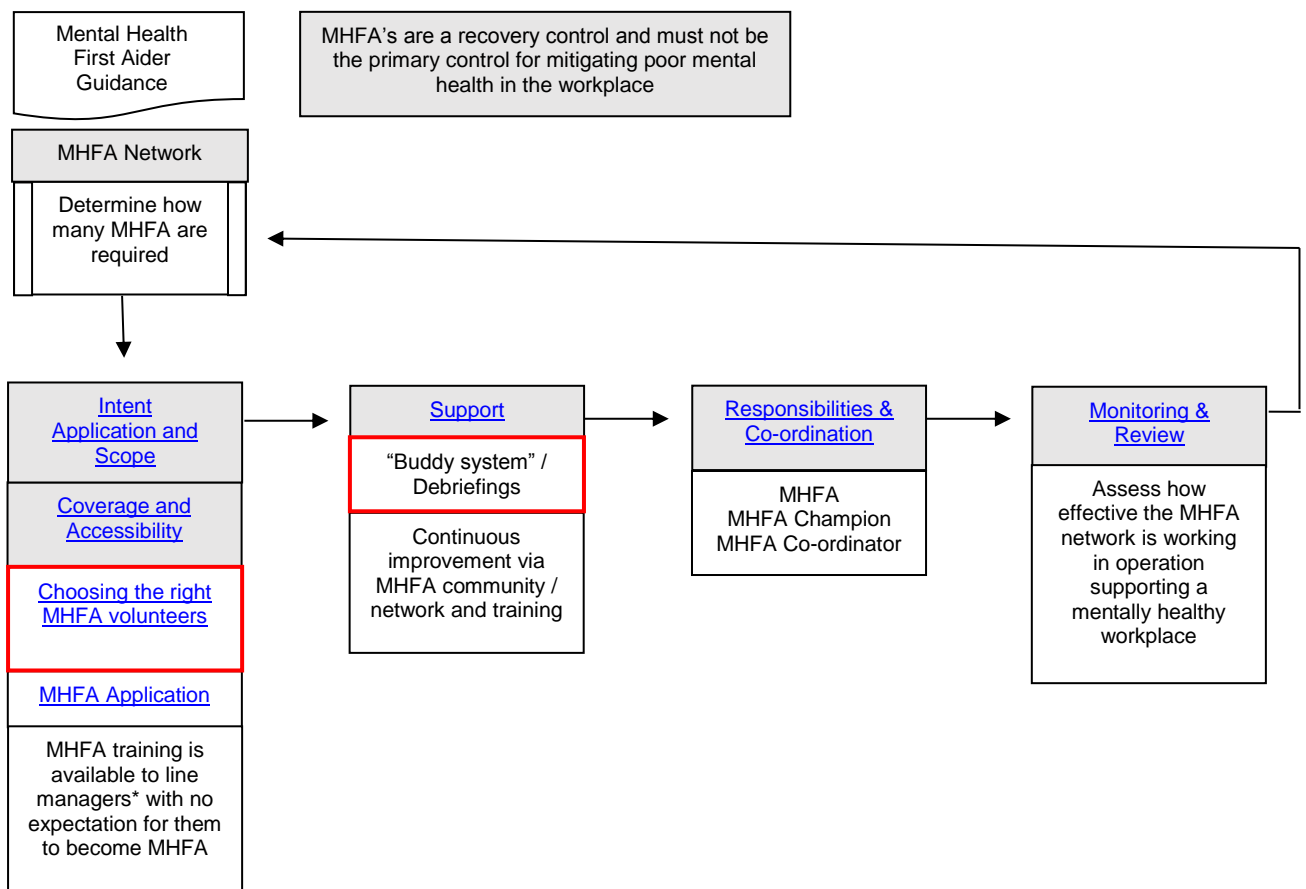
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1 Description

1.1 This document the Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) - Guidelines provides guidance on the Council’s Mental Health First Aider network. It is linked to the Wellbeing Plan outcomes, the MHFA is an initiative promoting positive employee mental health. The related Mental Health Action Plan includes implementation of a MHFA network across the organisation as part of a programme of work creating a mentally healthy workplace.

Figure 1 – Process Flow of Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) – Guidelines (outline with dependencies)



* to upskill themselves in their understanding and dealing with mental health in the workplace

High risk area

Sub process

[Link](#) Electronic link to documents (link on hyperlink to access)

2 Intent

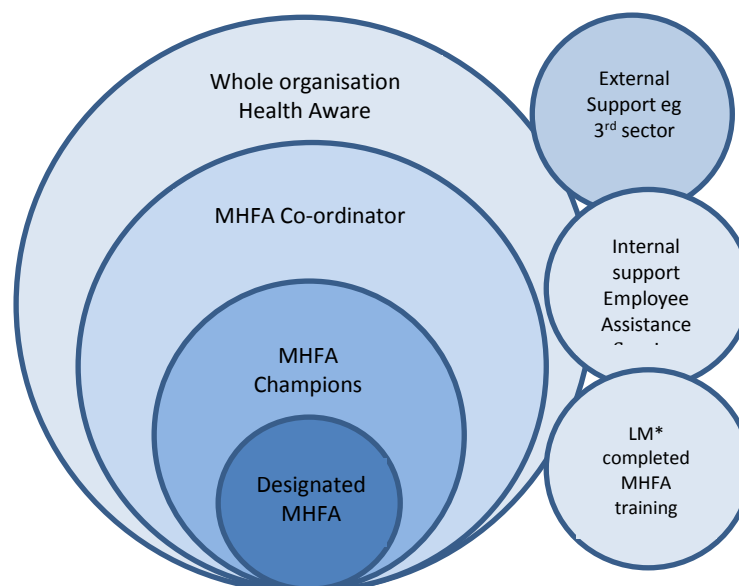
2.1 The Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) - Guidelines provides guidance on the Council's framework for establishing a MHFA network across the organisation.

3 Application and Scope

3.1 The information contained in this document applies to all employees. It provides an opportunity to upskill volunteers and support employees in crisis.

4 Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Coverage and Accessibility

4.1 MHFA's will comprise a range of unpaid volunteers who have been through a selection process to ensure that they hold the right qualities to support employees experiencing a mental health issue or crisis in the workplace. This will be done via the [MHFA criteria](#) (Appendix 1) and [MHFA application](#) (Appendix 2). The training opportunities will be proportionate to the size and geographical spread of the workforce. Numbers will be driven by assessment of need and suitable volunteers. Ideally an equal number of Mental Health First Aiders as physical first aiders will be supported to show commitment and equality between mental and physical health.



*Line Managers

4.2 Accessing MHFA will be advertised alongside First Aiders in the workplace. Contact will be restricted to the MHFA during their substantive role working hours. Arrangements for coverage during holidays, work tasks or training will be made. Demand will be

shared between all those appointed to prevent an individual MHFA being inundated. Generally, the most convenient and local MHFA will be used unless there is a good reason why this should not be the case. Where demand is high the MHFA Champion will co-ordinate centrally. A range of contact means will be available to ensure suitable provision for remote employees.

- 4.3 Where there is the potential opportunity to link to TU trained MHFA as part of the network, this may be accommodated to extend coverage and access.
- 4.4 The MHFA training will be open to all line managers to upskill themselves in their understanding and dealing with mental health in the workplace. There is no expectation for them to become a MHFA and can access the training without providing references. Feedback from other organisations suggests that employees other than line managers work best as MHFA.

5 Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Support

- 5.1 As well as providing support to employees it is critical that MHFA are supported to ensure their own mental health and wellbeing to maintain their resilience. Support to MHFA will include being part of a “buddy system” or internal MHFA community / network. This remit is for support and idea sharing and will be overseen by someone with a People and Organisation background or the person leading the initiative (MHFA Co-ordinator). The MHFA will be allocated a MHFA Champion as an initial means of contact to raise concerns about any aspects of the MHFA role, or if they need support themselves. Depending on cases support may require the need for group or 1-2-1 debriefing session(s). These will be delivered through a combination of internal and external support.
- 5.2 Continuous improvement will be through opportunities to learn from other MHFA and perfect their skills and approach via the internal MHFA community / network. Regular refresher training or related training / practice in MHFA techniques will be available as appropriate.
- 5.3 By supporting an application for MHFA training the employee’s line manager is showing commitment to release the MHFA to undertake the role.

6 Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Responsibilities & Co-ordination

- 6.1 MHFA training does not teach people to be counsellors or provide ongoing support or diagnosis. Responsibilities of MHFA’s include:
 - Raise awareness of mental health and support available;
 - Act as a point of contact, to reassure a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress, and signpost them to provisional support;

- Looking after your own mental health – keeping yourself safe and well;
- Communicate any concerns about mental health and wellbeing of anyone in your workplace, eg to an appropriate manager;
- Follow internal arrangements on how MHFA is implemented within the organisation eg Confidentially logging support conversations for monitoring purposes;
- Uphold your role as MHFA alongside other responsibilities;
- Maintain confidentiality (unless an employee becomes a danger to themselves or others);
- Establish appropriate boundaries between yourself and colleagues that you may be supporting; and
- Refresh your skills every 3 years

6.2 Responsibilities of MHFA Champion include:

- Initial point of contact for MHFA to raise concerns about any aspect of the MHFA role, within a set location;
- Supporting MHFA in group and 1-2-1 supervision; and
- Co-ordinate demand within set designated area across MHFA

6.3 Responsibilities of MHFA Co-ordinator include:

- Promoting and training opportunities;
- Facilitating training and additional post-training support (internal / external as appropriate);
- Providing guidance on using MHFA skills in the workplace;
- Leading the MHFA network; and
- Keeping records of MHFA provision for monitoring and evaluation purposes

7 Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) Monitoring & Review

7.1 Arrangements to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and data protection will be implemented and managed by MHFA Co-ordinator. Wellbeing surveys and employee feedback will be used to gauge effectiveness along with related metrics of use. Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 are covered by the Employee Privacy Notice.

8 Housekeeping and Maintenance

8.1 This guidance will be reviewed bi-annually, and any necessary updates applied.

9 Communication and Distribution

9.1 The guidance will be communicated through the normal Channels to ensure that all relevant parties are aware of its contents.

Mental Health First Aider training - Choosing the right volunteers

The provision of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) is part of a range of mental health and wellbeing interventions to support and promote positive mental wellness. This is an unpaid volunteer role.

What does a Mental Health First Aider do?

- Encourages a person experiencing mental health issues to talk, accept what they are feeling and then to seek professional medical help;
- They help the person experiencing mental or emotional distress to take personal ownership and act;
- They signpost to where a person can obtain specialist help and advice in their area;
- Provide support during their normal working hours; and
- There is the potential for delivering awareness programmes and MHFA train the trainer training.

What support is a Mental Health First Aider provided with?

- Part of a “buddy system” or internal MHFA community / network;
- Opportunities to learn from other MHFA and perfect their skills and approach;
- Regular refresher or related training or practice in MHFA techniques; and
- Commitment from Line Management to be released to undertake their MHFA role and training.

Do you have the following qualities to be a Mental Health First Aider?

- Genuinely interested in helping and supporting people who may be in crisis, and not undertaking MHFA training for self-help;
- Desire to learn about mental health;
- Good communication and listening skills;
- A listening ear that is non-judgemental;
- Personally, resilient eg able to deal with sensitive possibly harrowing information / situations;
- Display compassion, kindness and empathy in the right way depending on the situation;
- Able to maintain confidentiality;
- Look after your own mental health and feel undertaking this role would suit you;

Undertaking the role may result in a MHFA being called away from their normal duties at short notice and incur absence from work for potentially a longer period than just a few minutes (typically 30-minute conversation). Do you have the time to invest and can this be accommodated within your existing role?

If you meet the above and would like to be considered for the MHFA training, you need to complete the Mental Health First Aider application which requires the following:

- a. A reference from your line Manager that you would be an appropriate person to be a MHFA volunteer and can be provided with time off to undertake the training and role;
- b. A reference from a colleague that you would be an appropriate person to be a MHFA volunteer;
- c. Please click on the following link to complete your [MHFA Application](#)

Mental Health First Aider Application

The Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) 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. The MHFA encourages a person experiencing mental health issues to talk, accept what they are feeling and then to seek professional medical help. This is an unpaid volunteer role. The MHFA training does not include counselling.

Mental Health First Aid Training outcomes are that the delegate can:

- Understand the important factors affecting mental health;
- Identify the signs and symptoms for a range of mental health conditions;
- Provide Mental Health First Aid to someone experiencing a mental health issue or crisis;
- Listen non-judgementally and hold supportive conversations; and
- Signpost people to professional help, recognising that the MHFA role does not replace the need for ongoing support.

Are you happy to commit to the following?

Expected time commitments for Mental Health First Aiders	
Initial training	2 days
Adhoc conversations with colleagues	Variable. Best practice of adhoc conversations is approximately 30 minutes.
Internal MHFA community / network	Monthly / quarterly meetings Group / 1-2-1 supervision (internal) Group/ 1-2-1 debrief (external)
MHFA Refresher training	½ day at least every 3 years
Supplementary training	Optional, decided by the organisation

Please answer the following questions to support your [MHFA training application](#):

1. Why do you think mental health in the workplace is important?
2. Why are you interested in becoming a Mental Health First Aider?
3. How do you see yourself using these new skills in your role?
4. What would success as a Mental Health First Aider look like to you?

Please also submit by email to eghg@aberdeencity.gov.uk the following as part of your application:

- a. A reference from your line Manager that you would be an appropriate person to be a MHFA volunteer and can be provided with time off to undertake the training and role; and
- b. A reference from a colleague that you would be an appropriate person to be a MHFA volunteer;

Line Manager Application

The MHFA training is available to upskill line managers in understanding and dealing with mental health in the workplace, not necessarily to become MHFA. This training is available via contacting peopledevelopment@aberdeencity.gov.uk