

Guidance for CCC Staff interested in becoming a Mental Health First Aider

Employee Wellbeing – Health & Wellbeing
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Adult Mental Health First Aid Wales

The Role of a Mental Health First Aider

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Overview

The main aim of the Mental Health First Aider is to spot the signs of possible mental ill health and to provide initial support to staff who need assistance, in much the same way as a Physical First Aider responds to physical injury or illness. The Mental Health First Aider will be supported to promote a workplace culture where staff are free to discuss mental health issues openly and feel supported by their colleagues when they do so.

Key Attributes

As a Mental Health First Aider within the authority, you will:

- be a passionate advocate for mental health awareness within the authority.
- possess a high degree of empathy and sensitivity.
- have the ability to remain calm in a potentially difficult situation, such as dealing with a colleague who is distressed or upset.
- demonstrate strong organisational skills and time management; able to balance your normal work with your role as a Mental Health First Aider.
- possess a high degree of integrity, for example by recognising the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

Training

To become a Mental Health First Aider, you will be required to complete an award in Adult Mental Health First Aid through the organisation's accredited provider.

The course is designed to provide:

- an understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect mental wellbeing.
- practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues.
- confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress.
- enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgmental listening.
- knowledge to guide colleagues and signpost them to further support, whether through self-help resources, internal services such as Occupational Health, or the NHS.

The course covers a range of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, psychosis, and substance use problems. The course also covers mental health crises such as suicidal thoughts and behaviours, self-injury, traumatic events, panic attacks and aggressive behaviours.

Please be aware that the course covers some highly emotive topics which you may find distressing; please take care of your own wellbeing and be aware that the trainer will discuss having time out from the session as required.

On successful completion of training, you will receive a certificate which is valid for 3 years. To continue as a Mental Health First Aider, it is necessary to complete any refresher training as directed/required.

Key Tasks and Responsibilities

The key responsibilities of your role as a Mental Health First Aider within the authority will include the following elements. Given the new ways of working, it is likely that the following elements of communication and support will be via a virtual platform in many cases.

Early Signs

Spotting the early signs of possible poor mental health. Alongside managers and colleagues, the Mental Health First Aider should be alert to changes in colleagues' normal behaviour. This could include atypical behaviour for that individual, such as becoming more short-tempered than usual or withdrawing from their usual activities.

The Mental Health First Aider will provide a point of contact for an employee who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress, perhaps where the employee does not feel comfortable discussing the matter with their manager.

Offering Support

Having a conversation with the employee. The Mental Health First Aider can have an initial supportive and non-judgmental conversation with the employee. It may be that the employee simply needs someone to talk to.

The Mental Health First Aider will listen openly and without judgement, allowing the employee to voice their concerns, ensuring that the employee feels comfortable and supported.

Signposting

Signposting the employee to appropriate support as required. The Mental Health First Aider will encourage the employee to access appropriate [external help](#) initially and encourage them to speak to their line manager, who can advise them of internal assistance such as [Occupational Health support](#) where appropriate.

Relevant external support that can be highlighted by the Mental Health First Aider will include professional support such as a GP who may advise counselling, or other NHS mental health support services and helpline contact numbers.

Dealing with a Crisis Situation

Mental Health First Aiders are trained to respond appropriately to a crisis situation where an employee may be at risk of harm to themselves or, in rare circumstances, to others. The Mental Health First Aider should be able to step in and reassure an employee in distress, while maintaining their own safety and, if necessary, escalating the issue to the emergency services. The Mental Health First Aider should feel confident to assess the level of risk present, both to the employee and to others.

Promoting Good Mental Health

The Mental Health First Aider will make themselves known amongst staff. As a First Aider, you will be happy for the Authority to publicise your contact details internally, such as on the intranet. Both you and your manager will be responsible for ensuring that colleagues are aware of your role as a Mental Health First Aider, including the introduction of your position to any new staff.

As a Mental Health First Aider, you will liaise regularly and work closely with your fellow Mental Health First Aiders and the Health and Wellbeing Coordinators to champion the Authority's mental health first aid programme. You will also promote specific mental health support that the organisation offers, such as [Occupational Health](#) and the [Wellbeing Support Service](#).

You will be an advocate for mental health awareness. As well as taking part in formal initiatives, as a Mental Health First Aider you should be passionate about reducing the stigma that may be associated with mental health issues and normalising conversations around mental health.

Expectations of the Role

As a Mental Health First Aider within the Authority, you should not:

- *Attempt to diagnose or treat mental health issues.* Mental Health First Aiders are not mental health professionals and should not attempt to diagnose colleagues' mental health issues or provide other services such as counselling. The Mental Health First Aider should recognise that this is not in the remit of their role and should be aware of when to assist a colleague in accessing professional support.
- *Invade anyone's privacy.* As a Mental Health First Aider, you will provide support to your colleagues whilst remaining impartial to sensitive personal issues that may be disclosed. The Mental Health First Aider should recognise when the support is welcomed and acknowledge when the individual might not want to engage.
- *Disclose personal information.* Mental Health First Aiders should respect that the information that their colleagues share with them is confidential and must not be discussed with others. The exception is where there is a safety-critical situation, for example if you believe that someone is at risk of harm. Mental Health First Aiders must adhere to the organisation's policies surrounding [data protection](#).
- *Let your role as a Mental Health First Aider impact on your current work commitments and responsibilities.* Mental Health First Aiders will inform their manager if they are required to assist a colleague, without compromising confidentiality.