

The logo consists of a light teal circle with the words "HEALTHIER MIND" in white, uppercase letters. The text is positioned to the right of the circle, with "HEALTHIER" and "MIND" separated by a small gap.

HEALTHIER MIND

# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER – ROLE PROFILE

November 2020

# Aim of Role

Mental health first-aiders are trained to spot the signs of mental ill health and to provide initial support to staff who need assistance, in much the same way as physical first-aiders respond to injury or illness.

Mental health first-aiders also promote a workplace culture where staff are free to discuss mental health issues openly and feel supported by their colleagues when they do so.

To become a first-aider, it is necessary to complete a mental health first-aid training course through an accredited provider.

The course is designed to give:

- an understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect 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; and
- knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to further support, whether through self-help resources, the employer, or the NHS.
- The course looks at specific mental health issues including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, psychosis and suicide, and covers how to identify early symptoms and options for professional treatment. Some may find aspects of the course distressing, perhaps because of personal experience.
- To continue as a first-aider, it is necessary to complete any refresher training as directed/required. We require first-aiders to complete a refresher course every two years.

# Key Tasks and Responsibilities

The role of a mental health first-aider includes the following elements:

## *Early signs*

- **Spot early signs of mental health issues.** The 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.
- **Be a first point of contact for employees.** The first-aider can be a first point of contact for an employee who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.
- **Be a first point of contact for employees who have concerns about a colleague.** Employees can approach the first-aider to discuss any concerns that they have about a colleague's mental wellbeing, when they are unsure what to do or say to help.

## *Offering support*

- **Have a conversation with the employee.** The 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.
- **Encourage the employee to access appropriate internal assistance.** The first-aider should be aware of what help the employer offers, for example our employee assistance programme (EAP). It may be that the employee needs encouragement to take the first step to seeking internal assistance, or is unaware of the support available within the organisation.
- **Encourage the person to access appropriate external help.** It may be appropriate for the first-aider to explore with the employee the external support available. In some circumstances, the first-aider could encourage the employee to seek professional support, for example via NHS mental health support services.
- **Take appropriate action where there is a risk of harm.** First-aiders are trained to respond to a crisis situation where an employee may be at risk of harm to themselves or, in rare circumstances, others. They 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.

# Support for Mental Health First Aiders

It is important to ensure our Mental Health First Aiders are supported and are not expected to continue the role without regular check in's

- **Follow up after the MHFA course:** Following any MHFA course a call / meeting will be arranged with all new First Aiders to make sure everyone feels comfortable in their new role, provide written documentation and answer any questions around how the first aid role it works with ESS. This will be an opportunity to inform first aiders of our support network and remind them that they need to look after their own wellbeing.
- **Set up a Mental Health First Aider network:** The Senior HSE Manager is responsible for setting up the network of first aiders and the allocation of a "Buddy System." Buddies will be allocated in people of 3, the buddies will be a mini support network to provide support to each other following a difficult conversation or situation. These 3 people will be encouraged to have more regular communication and will not be in the same unit or region to provide an external perspective. In addition to the buddy system the network will have regular communication via a Teams Group and quarterly meetings to discuss any trends, campaigns and welcome any new first aiders.
- **Regular Check In's:** First-aiders will get regular communications through the MHFA network but in addition there will be a system of regular check in's via email and phone calls with senior members of the MHFA network and HR Business Partners. These will form part of a calendar of check ins and records check ins to be kept i.e. date, time and concerns raised
- **Formal Escalation Process:** ESS to finalise a formal escalation process and provide this to all MHFA on completion of the course. This to highlight the process of dealing with people who are in crisis or at risk. The process to be developed in conjunction with HR to ensure all the wellbeing of both team members. Escalation process to be communicated to all line managers of any MHFA's and they are to support in the process where appropriate.
- **Protection for First Aiders:** All MHFA England material for First Aiders to be made readily available as part of the induction process i.e. Resources Folder on Microsoft Teams for first aiders only. Policies and escalation process provided to all first aiders as well as a bank of resources such as Conversation record documents to anonymously keep a record of conversations and signposting provided. Provide all MHFA's with Healthcare "Breakaway Training" Video and reading material.

# Support for Mental Health First Aiders

## *Limits to the role*

A mental health first-aider must not:

- **Attempt to diagnose or treat mental health issues.** First-aiders are not health professionals and should not attempt to diagnose their colleagues' mental health issues or provide other services such as counselling. First-aiders should recognise the limitations of their role and know when to help a colleague access professional support.
- **Invade anyone's privacy.** First-aiders need to strike the right balance between supporting their colleagues and intruding in their personal issues. First-aiders should assess when their support is welcomed and when they need to step back.
- **Breach anyone's data protection rights.** First-aiders should bear in mind that 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 the first-aider believes that someone is at risk of harm. First-aiders must abide by the [data protection policy](#) and [policy on processing special category personal data and criminal records data](#).