



# A Whole Organisation Approach to Young People's Mental Health

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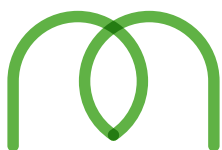


**MHFA England**

# Mental Health First Aid starts with you

Welcome to Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). Here you will find a practical framework to support the mental health and wellbeing of the young people you work with.

Within, you will see best practice examples of how schools, colleges and youth organisations in England are using Youth MHFA training to build healthy, supportive environments.



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# Why children's mental health is important

In the past year, over

## 22,400

young people contacted Childline about suicidal thoughts and feelings - the highest ever number

## 1 in 10

children and young people experience a mental health issue at any one time

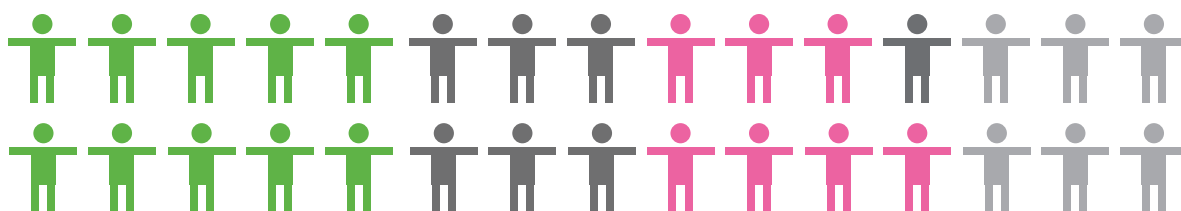
In an average group of 30 15-year-olds:

**10** are likely to have watched their parents separate

**6** may be self-harming

**7** are likely to have been bullied

**1** could have experienced the death of a parent



Public Health England, 2015

Mental health and emotional issues often develop during adolescence. Half of young adults with mental health issues have symptoms by the age of 15, and nearly 75% by their late teens. For those aged 5-19 years, suicide is the second most common cause of death (**ONS, 2015**).

Social media peer pressure, bullying, family units breaking down and an increased number of children in the care system have all been suggested as contributing factors to the rise in mental health issues in younger people. Many of these issues affecting mental wellbeing are multiple and often remain undetected and untreated unless agencies such as schools take an active role (**Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools, 2015**).

Despite the focus in recent years, some young people still do not get the support and care they need. This can happen because there is a stigma associated with mental ill health. Young people may be reluctant to seek professional help or discuss mental health with friends and family because of their concerns about what others will think.

Young people may lack the insight to realise that they need help or that help is available. Some mental health issues can cloud clear thinking and decision making. A young person experiencing such issues may not realise that they need help, that effective help is available, or may be so distressed that they are unable to think clearly about what they should do.

GPs, counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals can all help young people experiencing mental health issues. However, just as with accidents and

other medical emergencies, such assistance is not always immediately available when an issue first arises.

This is when key figures in the young person's life, such as parents, teachers, tutors, carers, and youth workers, can offer aid and guide them towards the appropriate professional support.

Although once seen as an optional extra, it has become clear that work in schools to promote mental health and wellbeing is central to overall effectiveness and should be prioritised. Recent evidence from **Public Health England** confirms that:

- Children with greater wellbeing and lower levels of mental health issues achieve higher grades, better examination results, better attendance, and drop out less frequently
- Academic achievement is more accurately predicted by social and emotional skills than by IQ
- The quality of PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education) in a school is strongly correlated with the school's overall effectiveness

As mental health becomes an increasingly recognised concern, the most recent **Ofsted inspection framework** includes a new judgement on "personal development, behaviour and welfare". Section 6.9.2 states that inspectors will be "**looking to see that learners are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically**".

# What works: A whole organisation approach

Evidence shows the only effective long term way to improve mental health is to adopt a 'whole organisation approach' where all parts of the organisation and its community are encouraged to work together in their commitment to wellbeing.

The diagram below outlines the whole organisation framework, as set out in the **'What Works'** advice issued by the Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools coordinated by the National Children's Bureau.

Although this set of guidance is tailored to schools, any organisation that works with or supports young people can be guided by these principles.

## Engage the whole community





**“Youth MHFA has  
provided me with extra  
tools to understand and  
support young people  
- something so valuable  
in my line of work.”**



# How we can help

## Youth Mental Health First Aid training can be the foundation of your whole organisation approach to mental health.

As a globally recognised training course, Youth MHFA is designed to teach staff, volunteers and parents alike how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health. The training gives people the skills and confidence to safely address mental health issues in young people aged 8 to 18, with a strong practical focus on how to support a young person experiencing mental distress.

We have training options to suit a range of timescales and budgets, from basic mental health awareness sessions to a full Mental Health First Aider qualification. You can find out more about the different options for Youth MHFA courses on **page 12**.

### What will I learn on a Youth MHFA course?

Youth MHFA is the help given to a young person experiencing a mental health issue before professional help is obtained. The aims of Youth MHFA are to:

- Preserve life where a young person may be a danger to themselves or others
- Provide help to prevent the emotional or mental health issue developing into a more serious state
- Promote the recovery of good mental health
- Provide comfort to a young person experiencing a mental health issue
- Raise awareness of mental health issues in the community
- Reduce stigma and discrimination

Youth MHFA does not teach people to be therapists. However, it does give people the tools to:

- Recognise the symptoms of mental health issues
- Intervene early to provide initial help and reassurance
- Guide a young person to access appropriate professional support, for a faster recovery
- Stop preventable issues arising by building a supportive culture of wellbeing
- Embed positive, long term cultural change in policy and procedure
- Proactively support their own wellbeing and that of their colleagues

### Instructor training

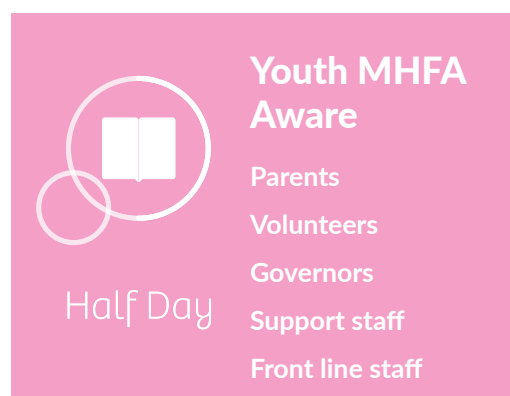
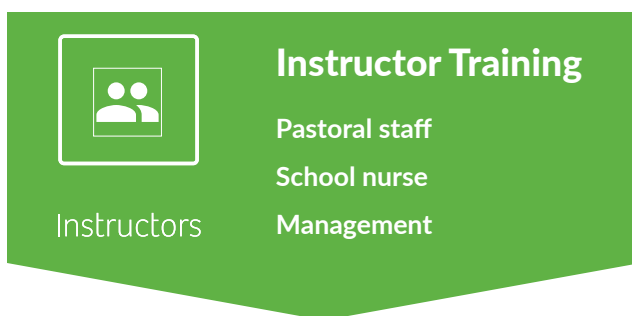
Many organisations are now choosing to train a member of staff as a Youth MHFA instructor who can deliver the course to colleagues, partner organisations and other members of the community, such as parents. Having a qualified instructor on staff is a cost-effective and self-sustaining way to roll out Youth MHFA training to larger numbers as demand requires. Learn more about our Royal Society for Public Health accredited instructor training programme on **page 14**.

# Training framework for the whole organisation

Training people at a blend of levels throughout your organisation is the most effective way to safeguard young people and foster whole organisation wellbeing.

Choosing the most suitable Youth MHFA course for each person will depend on their role, responsibilities, level of involvement and opportunity to support young people. An example can be seen below of a mental health skills and awareness framework for a whole organisation and its wider community.

Please note that the framework shown here is not prescriptive - it can be adjusted based on the level of commitment you are able to free up for individuals and how much interaction with young people they are likely to have in their role. With our consultation and guidance we can help you arrive at a training framework to suit the needs of your organisation.





# Youth MHFA in education

As part of an initiative to transform mental health support, the government has committed to fund over 3,000 places on Youth MHFA One Day courses so that by 2020 there will be at least one person in every secondary school in England with MHFA skills.

From Easter 2017, MHFA England is offering secondary school staff the opportunity to attend a Youth MHFA One Day course at no cost. In the first of this three year programme we aim to train at least one member of staff in over 1,000 secondary schools to become a **Youth MHFA Champion** - someone who is skilled in understanding how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental health issues in young people and will have the confidence to guide the young person to a place of support. By the end of 2020 every secondary school in England will have been offered the opportunity to attend this important skills based training.

If you work in or with a school who would be willing to host one of the first 100 training courses we would love to hear from you. In return the school will be offered up to four additional places per course. Schools should register their interest by emailing [schools@mhfaengland.org](mailto:schools@mhfaengland.org), stating where in England they are located.

## Resources for schools

Visit [mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/schools-programme/](http://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/schools-programme/) for updates on the programme and to access our set of free downloadable resources for mental health in schools, including film clips, infographics and a list of support sources.

## Youth MHFA as part of initial teacher training

Our goal is for these vital skills to be part of initial teacher training so that every teacher knows what to do when faced with a young person who needs support - and every young person has access to a Youth Mental Health First Aider.

The British Youth Council's **Select Committee report on Young People's Mental Health** recommends that there be mandatory minimum training for teachers on young people's mental health:

**"Identifying young people with mental health problems is a known difficulty. Most young people attend school and interact with teachers on a regular basis. Teachers are key professionals, working with young people who can help to close the treatment gap. They do not need to be mental health experts. They do need a basic understanding of mental health, how to spot warning signs and where to refer."**

**We recommend that there be mandatory minimum training for teachers on young people's mental health. The training should focus on how to respond to a young person who asks about mental health, how to spot problems and where to refer. This training should form part of the core content of Initial Teacher training."**

Each of these vital skills are taught on a Youth MHFA course.

# Evaluation and outcomes

Youth MHFA has been evaluated internationally since it was first developed in Australia in 2000.

In England, the course was independently evaluated in December 2013 when it was delivered to 224 people across 18 venues in North East England. The venues were schools, colleges, clubs and other organisations holding activities for adolescents. Responses showed that:

- The course, training manual and content of the sessions were rated as 'very good' by the participants, with a median rating of 4/4
- Participants reported a 60% increase in confidence and knowledge in their ability to help and support young people with mental health issues (median rating 5/10 pre-training; 8/10 post-training)

At follow-up, participants were asked whether they had been able to change the way they supported young people, and to give examples of how they have implemented their new knowledge in practice. You can read some of their feedback below.

The full North East England evaluation, along with international research into Youth MHFA outcomes, is available at [mhfaengland.org](http://mhfaengland.org).

The **WISE Project** run by the University of Bristol is currently evaluating the effect of MHFA training on both student and staff wellbeing. Pilot results show that after the training, staff had improved mental health knowledge, confidence, less stigmatising attitudes, and provided many examples of successful peer support among teachers.

## Feedback three to six months after Youth MHFA training:

"I developed observational and listening skills to pick up signs of difficulties at an early stage (and) further developed close links with external agencies."

"I have led assemblies on mental wellbeing to raise the issue and revive my pupil drop-in and parent drop-in after school."

"Gaining more up-to-date knowledge about mental health has given me more confidence in myself. The information discussed has certainly made me look at how I can improve my practice to best support others."

"The sessions that covered the different types of mental health disorders have all been very useful as I now have a better awareness and know what advice/help to give."

“I suggested my senior coach give me the groups of kids who are shy or hyperactive; I take it as a challenge to explore the talent of those kids.”

“Confidence to challenge students and staff about their behaviours so that they feel confident to seek support.”

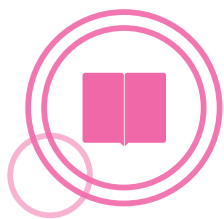
“I have been able to ask the ‘right’ questions and openers to engage individuals in an honest discussion about their needs.”

“Straight after the first session I was able to use the ALGEE technique with a student (who) had anxiety and panic attacks for a number of years. By listening, reassuring her and helping her to recognise her mental health she became more confident in discussing her concerns and we were able to give her the appropriate help during her examinations.”



# Youth MHFA courses

We have training options to suit a range of timescales and budgets, from basic mental health awareness sessions to a full Youth Mental Health First Aider qualification, all with a focus on supporting the mental health of young people aged 8 to 18. Every course is delivered by a quality assured instructor who has attended our seven day Instructor Training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health.



## Two Day

### Youth Mental Health First Aiders

The original Youth Mental Health First Aid course is an internationally recognised training course designed to teach people how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health in young people and provide help on a first aid basis. The focus is on promoting young people's emotional wellbeing and the factors that help safeguard and protect them.

#### Who is it for?

Anyone who teaches, works, lives with or cares for 8 to 18-year-olds, including young people themselves from age 16 upward.

#### What will I learn?

The training is designed to fit into four manageable chunks:

**About mental health and young people**

**Depression and anxiety**

**Suicide and psychosis**

**Self-harm and eating disorders**

Within each section there is clear focus on the issues faced by young people today, including bullying/cyber bullying and substance misuse. The course also teaches the importance of promoting protective factors and good parenting.

Everyone will receive a copy of the Youth MHFA manual which is an excellent support resource and when you have completed the course you will be a Youth Mental Health First Aider.

#### How will it help?

The course will:

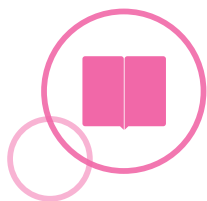
- Give a deeper understanding around the issues that relate to young people's mental health
- Teach practical skills that can be used every day, including being able to spot the signs and symptoms of mental health issues

Research and evaluation shows that taking part in an MHFA course:

- Raises awareness and mental health literacy
- Reduces stigma around mental ill health
- Boosts knowledge and confidence in dealing with mental health issues
- Encourages people to start a conversation with a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue
- Promotes early intervention which enables recovery

#### Maximum capacity

**16**



## One Day

### Youth MHFA Champions

Based on our Youth MHFA Two Day course, this training has been designed specifically with schools and colleges in mind. As a one day course, it fits perfectly into school inset training days and busy school timetables, making it accessible for state and privately funded primary, secondary and further education settings.

At least one member of staff in every secondary school has access to a free place on a one day course (see **page 9** for details).

### Who is it for?

Teachers, support staff and parents

### What will I learn?

The key topics covered are:

#### Session 1

- Why Youth MHFA One Day?
- What is mental health and mental ill health?
- Stigma and discrimination
- The Mental Health First Aid action plan
- Depression
- Suicide

#### Session 2

- Anxiety
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis
- Recovery
- Resilience

The day will include a mix of presentations, group discussions and workshop activities, with our instructors providing a safe learning environment where participants are supported throughout the whole course.

At the end of the day, everyone will receive a copy of the Youth MHFA Schools and Colleges manual which is an excellent reference and support resource.

Participants also receive a certificate to say they are a Youth MHFA Champion - someone who is skilled in understanding how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental health issues in young people and will have the confidence to guide the young person to a place of support.

### Maximum capacity

**16**



## Half Day

### Youth MHFA Aware

This introductory course is designed to raise awareness of young people's mental health and the issues that can affect this age group. It is not intended to replace our Youth MHFA Two Day course but is a good introduction to those interested in young people's mental health.

### Who is it for?

Anyone who teaches, works, lives with or cares for young people, including young people themselves from age 16 upward.

### What will I learn?

Our Youth MHFA instructors deliver training that enables you to:

- Gain an understanding of some issues surrounding young people's mental health
- Interact more effectively with young people who are experiencing mental health issues

- Get an insight into the full Youth MHFA Two Day course and the benefits of becoming a Youth Mental Health First Aider

### How will it help?

The course will:

- Explore the issues around young people's mental health and how to relate to them
- Help you to support young people who may be experiencing mental health issues

### Maximum capacity

**25**

# Instructor Training programme



## Instructors

Although many organisations are keen to have an independent instructor deliver our courses, some decide to train their own staff to become MHFA instructors. Once qualified they can deliver our courses in a timeframe and method which 100 percent suits the needs of the organisation. Accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health, our seven day Instructor Training programme gives participants all the tools needed to deliver successful MHFA courses.

### How will I learn?

Instructor Training takes place over seven days and is usually spread out over six weeks. This allows you to become familiar with the material and reflect on your learning. You'll have access to a mentor throughout who will be happy to help if you need any guidance along the way.

### Days one–two

Experience the Youth MHFA course as delivered by our highly experienced national trainers.

### Day three

Hear from a variety of speakers from a mental health related background. These sessions could include discussions with people who have experienced mental health issues, a carer of someone with mental ill health, or someone from a medical background. Topics will cover a range of factors contributing to mental ill health.

### Days four–five

Your chance to deliver a session on a relevant topic followed by a one to one feedback session with your mentor.

### Days six–seven

Deliver a section of a Youth MHFA course, gain peer to peer feedback and have another one to one session with your mentor.

You will be expected to do approximately 20 hours of your own study outside of the seven days, including time spent on preparing delivery materials for days four–five and six–seven.

### Requirements

Following the training, you'll be required to co-deliver two Youth MHFA courses within a year to become an approved instructor. Once approved, instructors can deliver courses solo, both in their own organisation and externally.

To remain a Youth MHFA instructor, you will need to do the following each year:

- Deliver two courses, or as many as possible
- Ensure everyone who attends your courses receives a manual and workbook that can be purchased from MHFA England
- Renew your annual membership. The current membership fee is £69.00 as of April 2017
- Attend a continuing professional development event. MHFA England offers CPD events to expand your portfolio of courses (e.g. Adult MHFA, Higher Education MHFA, Armed Forces MHFA). Or you can attend an external event relating to mental health or training skills

### How to apply

To learn more about Instructor Training in your organisation, please contact us at [info@mhfaengland.org](mailto:info@mhfaengland.org), telephone **020 7250 8062**, or visit our website [mhfaengland.org](http://mhfaengland.org).



# Prices

Course	Cost per person
Two Day - Youth Mental Health First Aiders	
One Day - Youth MHFA Champions	
Half Day - Youth MHFA Aware	

# Bookings

To learn more or book onto a course, please contact:

a qualified provider of MHFA training in your area.

**If your organisation is looking to roll out in-house training on a large scale, or to book onto an Instructor Training programme, please contact MHFA England directly on:**

**info@mhfaengland.org**

**020 7250 8062**

**or visit our website [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org)**

# Mental Health First Aid starts with you

For details on MHFA courses, bookings and delivery options, please contact:

a qualified provider of MHFA training in your area.

For large-scale bookings please contact  
MHFA England directly on:

**[info@mhfaengland.org](mailto:info@mhfaengland.org)**

**020 7250 8062**

or visit our website **[mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org)**



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# Mental Health First Aid case study:

## Bacup & Rawtenstall Grammar School

“Because the school has such a positive and open minded approach to mental health, there is lots of opportunity to become a centre of excellence around student and staff wellbeing.”

**“To ensure that students do not have any barriers to their learning we need to support them holistically in providing top-quality pastoral care and this excellent course effectively raises awareness and understanding of mental health issues.”**

Alan Porteous  
Headteacher

### Started offering training

February 2015

### Staff trained so far

16

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School (BRGS) is a selective co-educational state school which is renowned for its high achieving exam results. A larger than average secondary school, BRGS has over 1,200 students on its roll, drawing from a wide catchment in the borough of Rossendale in the rural setting of the South Pennines. What is also larger than average for a typical state secondary school is the proportion of staff trained as Youth MHFAiders.

BRGS's Pastoral Manager, Siobhan Robinson, is responsible for the training. Since qualifying as a Youth MHFA instructor herself, Siobhan is able to deliver the course internally to her colleagues.

Siobhan has always been passionate about improving young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. On the school wide initiative, she comments: “The Headmaster at BRGS is so supportive around the development of good pastoral care

and this creates a more open dialogue around mental health and wellbeing. The staff and students feel able to have conversations about issues that relate to mental health and it's not a taboo subject.”

### Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Giving recognition to the idea that young people will thrive academically if they have good mental health, and the role that a school can play in this, headteacher Alan Porteous says:

“Our aim is for students to ‘enjoy and achieve’ whilst at school. To ensure that students do not have any barriers to their learning we need to support them holistically in providing top-quality pastoral care and this excellent course effectively raises awareness and understanding of mental health issues.”



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**“I believe Youth MHFA has provided me with extra tools to be able to better understand and support young people - something so valuable in my line of work.”**

Siobhan says: “Being able to recognise and help a young person with mental ill health is so important, and raising awareness around mental health issues will help to reduce the associated stigma.

“At BRGS we believe that teaching and support staff can play a really important role in supporting young people who may be experiencing mental health issues and by investing in some simple but effective training, we are giving our staff the tools they need to feel confident to open up that conversation and guide a person to appropriate help.

“The fact that we have Youth Mental Health First Aiders in our school is a really positive demonstration of our commitment to creating an environment where children’s emotional wellbeing is truly valued.”

### Feedback

100% of BRGS staff who evaluated the training ‘agreed strongly’ that the course met their needs, through developing their knowledge and skills in dealing with student mental health issues.

One staff member commented: “I believe Youth MHFA has provided me with extra tools to be able to better understand and support young people – something so valuable in my line of work.”

Another colleague believed that it had changed their “outlook and perception of mental health and wellbeing in others” raising their confidence to deal with issues such as self-harm, depression and anxiety.

### What the future holds

Siobhan believes that because the school has such a positive and open minded approach to mental health that there is lots of opportunity to become a centre of excellence around student and staff wellbeing.

Siobhan says: “My vision is that we continue to develop all aspects of pastoral care, including training all staff in Youth MHFA and perhaps even engaging some of our sixth form students in a peer-to-peer training course.

“I am also keen to investigate different ways to build resilience within our school community because I think there are lots of really helpful strategies and tools to improve our sense of wellbeing and promote positive mental health.”

# Mental Health First Aid case study:

## Leeds Inclusive Learning Service



"I strongly feel this training should be done in all schools. It could help stop many children being excluded in the first place."

**"Teachers perform extremely challenging roles and it's important to be able to cope with what are sometimes distressing circumstances. We're also more supportive of each other now."**

Liz O'Carroll  
Head of Service

### Started offering training

September 2015

### Staff trained so far

All 18 specialist teachers  
and support workers

At the Inclusive Learning Service in Leeds, Liz O'Carroll and her team work with approximately 30 primary school age children. Many of the children have gone through abuse and neglect, and all display significant behavioural issues and have social, emotional and mental health needs.

The Inclusive Learning Service actively seeks to re-integrate children into mainstream education, as well as intervening to prevent pupils from being excluded in the first place. This innovative approach to education is funded by The South Area Inclusion Partnership, with money devolved from Leeds local authority.

### Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Liz believes the training will give her team the tools to help the children better control their emotional outbursts, which can be destructive, violent and explosive. The outlook for these children, all previously excluded or at risk of exclusion from school, can seem bleak at times.

"The children we see have got huge emotional issues," explains Liz. "Schools are expected to engage children like these in learning and hit government levels like every other child. But these expectations are unrealistic. They're so emotionally damaged. How can you expect them to learn like any other pupil?"



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**“This new confidence in talking about mental health stopped us worrying about what to do and stopped things before they could get out of hand... It was a real breakthrough with this family.”**

## Feedback

The team has found the course's structured approach to building up a child's resilience has already reaped benefits. Developing 'Wellness Recovery Action Plans' for each individual boy or girl has started to significantly improve behaviour.

“All of the children have sat down and created plans for themselves with their key worker,” says Liz, a teacher with 20 years of experience.

“The pupils are really engaged in it. Now, when a teacher sees a child's behaviour deteriorating, they'll draw on the plan to prevent things getting worse. They will build an activity in to the day which benefits the child, such as exercise, baking, a musical instrument or whatever works for that individual child.”

Liz's team does a lot of outreach work at schools with struggling children at risk of exclusion, working closely with their parents. She believes the training has helped here too. It's enabled them to be more open, not just when talking to the children about their mental health, but also with their families, addressing issues head-on.

“Before there were questions that we might have shied away from asking because we were afraid of making things worse,” she says. “Now we're all more confident about asking direct questions about how someone feels.”

“There was one boy whom we suspected had been self-harming. He said he'd just fallen over. In private,

his key worker asked straight out the question everybody had been asking themselves and he opened up about it, and why he was doing it. We would have got there in the end but this new confidence in talking about mental health stopped us worrying about what to do and it stopped things before they could get out of hand.

“His key worker has also talked to his mum about it, and she now knows how to help him, which is great. Families and children tend to be very wary when you talk about their mental health. But he was able to talk to them in a de-stigmatising way in a language they could relate to, explaining everybody has got mental health needs. It was a real breakthrough with this family.”

One of the unexpected benefits of the MHFA training was how the team – including experienced teachers, behaviour support workers, and special needs teachers – were brought together by it.

“My team is pretty robust,” says Liz. “You've got to be fairly tough for this job. But during the course, they eased into being comfortable about talking about certain personal things. They're a new team and the course helped them develop a better understanding of each other really quickly. They're still talking about the course two weeks on, which is pretty unheard of for training in my experience.”

“It also helped many of them to deal better with their own emotions. They perform extremely challenging roles

and it's important to be able to cope with what are sometimes distressing circumstances. We're also more supportive of each other now. People are thinking more about how to look after each other, especially now we know more about how to help. We're talking to each other more about what we find stressful at work and what we can do about it.”

“I've also noticed people will say to me 'I'm really down today,' for example, which they would never have said before. One said to me 'you know that training couldn't have come at a better time. I've been really depressed, but it's helped me put things in perspective a bit and look after myself a bit better.’”

## What the future holds

Liz is excited about the potential benefits for the children in their care: “I think we were all pretty good at looking after our children, but the course has definitely given us a lift and given us some really useful ideas,” she says.

“I hope we will now start getting a slightly greater proportion of our children back into mainstream education – and get them back quicker, whilst also helping schools to look at MHFA with all children in order to keep them in school in the first place. This is vital for us, it's our mission. It's how we can change children's life chances, which is what we're all about. I strongly feel this training should be done in all schools. It could help stop many children being excluded in the first place.”

**Visit [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org) to learn more**



# Mental Health First Aid case study: St Philip's School

“Mental health has been brought into our consciousness and is enabling us to take a truly holistic approach to each child’s development.”

**“Mental Health First Aid training is inclusive, in that it enables those who do not have a grounding in mental health to understand and feel empowered to act when they are concerned about the mental health needs of our students.”**

Jude Bowen  
Headteacher

## Started offering training

September 2015

## Staff trained so far

62



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Located in a quiet, leafy corner of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is St Philip’s School - a special educational needs school for young people aged 11-19 years. The school currently has 143 pupils on its roll, each with Statements, or Education and Health Care Plans, for moderate learning difficulties. Many of the pupils have additional needs such as mild to moderate Autistic Spectrum Disorders, language impairment or emotional issues; a few have sensory or medical needs. What is also special about this school is its approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Along with a deep understanding of how to provide the best education for each and every student, St Philip’s also demonstrates an exemplary approach to protecting and supporting the mental wellbeing of all the young people who attend the school. It does this by implementing a number of preventative measures but also by intervening when a pupil is showing signs of emotional distress or symptoms of mental ill health.

As part of its whole school approach, St Philip’s has chosen to train all its staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

## Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Jude Bowen, Headteacher at St Philip’s, explains: “Supporting the emotional wellbeing of our young people is a whole school priority and is firmly embedded throughout the school’s overall safeguarding agenda.

“Mental Health First Aid training is inclusive, in that it enables those who do not have a grounding in mental health to understand and feel empowered to act when they are concerned about the mental health needs of our students.”

Staff, including the caretaker at St Philip’s School, have been trained by their local Health Link worker, a role funded by the local Public Health Authority. Debbie Battle, the school’s Safeguarding and Prevention Officer considers the training an important part of every staff member’s

**"Ultimately I wish for an education system where mental health is prioritised because we know it will have a profound impact on a child's transition into adult life."**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and says: "We know that emotions are the drivers of cognition and in some cases learning difficulties are the cause of mental health issues whereas in others it can be the reverse. It is really important for all our staff to be very aware of the signs and symptoms of a mental health issue so that an appropriate support plan can be put in place for each child's emotional and educational needs."

### Feedback

Despite many of the teachers at St Philip's having a wealth of expertise and knowledge around educational psychology and the relationship between mental health and learning, the school's Senior Leadership Team is resolute in its opinion that Youth MHFA training has made a big impact.

A person at the heart of this subject area is Claire Capper, Personal, Social and Health Education Co-ordinator at St Philips. She explains how the training has helped in her role:

"MHFA training enabled me to develop the mental health teaching and learning in our school by putting it at the forefront of enhanced and specialised PSHE.

"We run a wide range of groups now, each focusing on a different issue which is interlinked with mental health. An example of this would be the session we run on 'Body image' and the one to one work we do with students about self-esteem and confidence."

General feedback about the Youth MHFA training amongst staff has also been extremely positive and Debbie refers to a 'cultural shift' having taken place within the school around how to talk about mental health. She says:

"The overall benefit of staff attending the Youth MHFA course is that mental health has been brought into our consciousness and is enabling us to take a truly holistic approach to each child's development. The language we are now using to talk about mental health is more appropriate and descriptive which in itself encourages conversations on the topic. We are also starting to identify potential mental health issues through our student's written work which is a very powerful tool when it comes to early intervention and addressing a potential problem before it escalates."

### What the future holds

It is clear that St Philip's is fully committed to the emotional and mental wellbeing of all its students and this will remain a core focus for the school for the foreseeable future. It is the school's policy that as and when new staff join they will be asked to attend a Youth MHFA training course to develop their skills and awareness around children's mental health.

From a wider perspective Debbie would like to see mental health become a core part of the teaching curriculum and for it to be considered a key element of the safeguarding work that all schools must undertake to protect their students. She concludes by saying:

"Progress from my point of view will be when staff and students in all schools can talk freely about mental health without feeling any stigma. Ultimately I wish for an education system where mental health is prioritised because we know it will have a profound impact on a child's transition into adult life."

**Visit [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org) to learn more**



# Mental Health First Aid case study: Bradfield College

“Every teacher in every school in the country should be trained in Mental Health First Aid. Our teachers get training in physical first aid – and a good thing, too. Accidents happen, children become ill, but why on earth do we disregard their mental health?”

“There has been a real shift in the atmosphere. It’s changed the whole teacher-student relationship. Conflicts between teachers and pupils happen far less.”

Kevin Collins  
Deputy Headteacher

## Started offering training

2013

## Staff trained so far

120

Bradfield College is an independent co-educational school in Berkshire. Most of the 770 pupils aged 13 to 18 board under the care of a Housemaster or Housemistress, although there are a number of day pupils.

Initially, Bradfield College trained 32 members of staff in Youth MHFA. The College was so delighted with the results, it has embedded the training for all staff and has since put almost all of its full-time teachers, as well as large numbers of its support staff, through the two-day course. Deputy Head, Kevin Collins, is a qualified Youth MHFA instructor, and delivers the course to Bradfield staff.

## Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Kevin Collins realised that over the last 10 years it had become more commonplace to encounter children with emotional issues. Often it was to do with eating and food, or relationships with their peers or parents. Anxiety about their studies was being felt much more keenly. “It would seem that there has never been a more difficult time to be young,” explains Kevin.

“Expectations of young people today are ever increasing, bringing with them competition and anxiety. Also, the ubiquitous nature of social media means children can never switch off and escape the scrutiny of their peers. Add to this relationships, drugs, alcohol and fluctuating self-esteem – everything that comes with adolescence – then perhaps it’s not surprising that their mental health isn’t in great shape.”



MHFA England

**“After attending a Youth MHFA course, teachers are much better at spotting early warning signs, like a change in mood of a child, which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and intervening.”**

Bradfield College recognised that its teachers may not be adequately equipped to best manage the issues they encounter. It decided the stakes were too high and acted.

### Feedback

“After attending a Youth MHFA course, teachers are much better at spotting early warning signs, like a change in mood of a child, which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and intervening,” says Kevin. “Acting quickly and effectively, just as with physical health, can make the difference between a good recovery and prolonged mental illness.”

He adds: “It’s also taken away teachers’ fear of mental illness. If they think a child might have self-harmed, they won’t succumb to the urge to run away. Now, if a pupil knocks on any of our teachers’ doors wanting to talk, they will always make the time to listen to them. You just can’t know what is going on in their heads. It could be a life-saving conversation.”

Kevin describes the unexpected changes brought about at the school by MHFA as a “cultural transformation”, creating a much

more “cohesive and collaborative” school, with pupils being disciplined less often.

“There has been a real shift in the atmosphere,” he enthuses. “It’s changed the whole teacher-student relationship. If there are problems, teachers are more likely to work through them with pupils and support them, rather than punish them. Conflicts between teachers and pupils happen far less.”

The school was recently awarded a rating of ‘outstanding’ in all aspects of its pastoral care during an inspection. The experience has made Kevin evangelical about the benefits of the training.

“I think every teacher in every school in the country should be trained in Mental Health First Aid,” he says.

“Every three years our teachers get training in physical first aid – and a good thing, too. Accidents happen, children become ill, but why on earth do we disregard their mental health?”

### What the future holds

What’s the next step for Bradfield? Training their sixth-form students, so they can look out for younger pupils more and look after themselves better. As they embark upon adult life, going to university, what could better prepare them for the pressures and challenges ahead?

And for other schools and wider society? Kevin thinks the problems of mental ill health are definitely not going away.

“This isn’t a flash in the pan,” he says. “I think addressing mental health will in the future be expected of all organisations. Employers will increasingly put more resource into looking after their employees’ mental wellbeing, reaping the economic rewards of more productivity.

“I believe schools, too, will look very different from how they do today for this same reason. It’s easy for any teacher to get lost in obsessing about academic results, for schools to become exam factories. But this misses the point. What, after all, can be more important than our children being happy?”



# Mental Health First Aid case study:

## City of London School

“Never before has a training course elicited such glowing appraisals from our teachers. Many of our trained Mental Health First Aiders are already putting their newfound skills into practice in their pastoral and teaching roles.”

**“It is the structured approach of the course and the supporting materials that makes it so practical and a fantastic tool to have at our fingertips.”**

Andrew McBroom  
Head of Sixth Form and  
Staff Development

### Started offering training

April 2015

### Staff trained so far

90

City of London School (CLS) is a selective independent boys' day school situated on the banks of the River Thames. CLS was involved in the initial pilot of the newly designed Youth MHFA course. Andrew McBroom, Head of Sixth Form and Staff Development explains how he first heard about the training:

“It was at a Teachology inset conference that I first heard about the Youth MHFA course and I was so inspired by the speaker highlighting the importance of early intervention in mental health that I went back to school with a mission to find out more. I visited the MHFA website and decided that this was exactly the kind of training that our teachers would benefit from, so I contacted the organisation to explore the options. The feedback from staff was hugely positive, so we decided to invest in rolling the training out among a cohort of 25 staff.”

### Why we train our staff in Youth MHFA

Aware of the fact that most independent schools pride themselves on their pastoral care offerings, Andrew explains:

“It's very in-vogue for schools to talk about resilience and mental health and of course that's a good thing but it shouldn't just be something that looks good on the surface, but when you dig deeper is nothing more than rhetoric. I truly believe that at CLS we practice what we preach and one of our most valuable offerings is the gift of time. If a student knocks on the door and needs to talk, we as teachers prioritise that because in the most extreme case it could be a life-saving decision and if nothing else we have taken the time to listen and hopefully offer some sound advice. Listening non-judgementally is one of the five steps of the process taught on the Youth MHFA course and I think it is one of the most valuable.”



MHFA England



Andrew McBroom talks about how he uses his MHFA skills to support pupils. Watch video at [mhfaengland.org](https://mhfaengland.org)

**“As a student, what really stands out at our school is the feeling that there is always someone you can turn to, whether it’s your form tutor, a subject teacher or head of year. It’s very comforting to know that.”**

## Feedback

Feedback from teachers who have attended the course at CLS has been extremely positive. Andrew says: “Never before has a training course elicited such glowing appraisals from our teachers, and I know for a fact that many of our trained Mental Health First Aiders are already putting their newfound skills into practice in their pastoral and teaching roles.

“There is total parity between the feedback that our teachers are giving the course through the evaluation form and the verbal feedback I am getting once the course has been delivered, all complimentary and very positive. It is the structured approach of the course and the supporting materials that we are left with that makes it so practical and a fantastic tool to have at our finger tips.

“A two day course doesn’t make you an expert on mental health but it certainly empowers people. Since completing the training, myself and other staff members have encountered conversations with students where the subject matter is serious and unnerving but the processes we have been taught to deal with such situations have been

invaluable. We would have had those conversations regardless of having taken part in the training, but being Youth Mental Health First Aiders means we now have the knowledge and confidence to deal with the situation in a much better and effective way. Teachers are very good at giving advice but on the Youth MHFA course you are taught first and foremost to be a good listener and that is something I have really benefited from.”

The students at CLS are positive about their experiences in a school where 100% of the staff have MHFA training. Peter Kandunias, a student in the Sixth Form offers his view:

“Teachers play such an important part in our lives, we spend so much time with them so there is definitely a need for some kind of training around mental health issues. As a student at CLS I feel there are so many options for me to talk to teachers if I have a problem and there seems to be a general ethos in the school that it’s OK to talk about these kinds of things.”

Marcus Knight-Adams, also a Sixth Form student, agrees: “I think the expectation to achieve academically

alongside all the other things that we have going on in our lives can sometimes lead people to feel overwhelmed and can result in more serious issues, but what really stands out at our school is the feeling that there is always someone you can turn to, whether it’s your form tutor, a subject teacher or head of year. It’s very comforting to know that.”

## What the future holds

Going forward, CLS intends to keep its MHFA training up to date with refresher courses and there are also plans to involve parents to a greater degree in the school’s approach to pastoral care.

Concluding, Andrew says: “Adopting a whole school approach to mental health and rolling out the MHFA training to all our staff has created a culture where we can openly talk about the issues facing children and potentially ourselves. This leads to a mutually supportive environment where the issue of mental health is discussed, problems can be addressed and not ignored, with the risk of getting worse.”