

Safety Info Sheet:	13-01	Simple. Sensible. Safety.	
Mental Health and First Aid		SITK Ltd t/a Safety is the Key Health & Safety Consultants www.safetyisthekey.co.uk	

A £15 million, 3-year programme to help members of the public respond effectively to mental health issues has begun. What is mental health first aid and what does the training involve?

The programme, which runs from autumn 2018 to March 2021, will be delivered by Public Health England and other partners. It will utilise an online learning module which will help participants assess their own *mental* wellbeing and learn proven techniques to reduce stress. It will also help learners to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of *mental* illness in others.

The programme will improve personal resilience and help participants to support others suffering from *mental ill health*. The online course will be a very basic version of a tried and tested *mental health* first aid (MHFA) programme.

MHFA is simply the *mental health* equivalent of physical first aid. The course was first developed in Australia and is now followed in 22 countries with an estimated two million trained so far, including 200,000 in the UK.

Most full-length courses involve two days of classroom activity. After training in MHFA individuals can offer initial support by:

- *recognising the warning signs of common mental health issues*
- *non-judgmental listening; and*
- *guiding towards the right support, whether self-help or professional services.*

Details of the different courses (two-day MHFAider course; one-day MHFA Champion; and half-day MHFA Aware option) can be found on the MHFA England website.

The courses are a good introduction to the subject for anyone who may have to deal with mental ill health at work, e.g. managers, HR and safety professionals.

In employment legislation *mental health* is covered by the Equality Act 2010 (EA), which specifically deals with disability discrimination. Managers should be aware that long-term *mental health* conditions may well constitute a disability.

In addition, the Management of *Health* and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that risk (including stress) must be effectively controlled.

Note. There is no legal requirement to appoint a MHFAider, but doing so may help you to comply with the EA and health and safety legislation, and increase staff moral in the workplace.

More info: <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/useful-resources/>

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