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## **HSE Report (RR1135) Published on the Effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training in the Workplace:**

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

### **Introduction**

This report produced by the HSE is described by the authors as nothing more than a "rapid scoping review" - extracting data from 'selected' articles. It concludes that it is not possible at the time of writing the report to state whether MHFA training is effective in a workplace setting or not. This, the report explains, is due to the limited scope of the study and the limited information it's based on.

As the regulator for workplace health and safety, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states that it wishes to understand the strength of the available evidence on the effectiveness of MHFA in the workplace and hence commissioned this recent study.

However, this inconclusive report won't help them much. The Report authors admit and accept that more robust research evidence is required on the use of MHFA training in workplaces and that's something that would be welcomed universally, in our view.

### **CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department Opinion of the report**

The opinion of the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department is that the report is of little or no significance. What is needed to draw definitive conclusions is an in-depth, detailed study and not a "rapid scoping review".

### **Positive Aspects**

On the positive side, the report finds and concludes that there is consistent evidence that MHFA training raises employees' awareness of mental ill health conditions and that MHFA trainees have a better understanding of where to find information and professional support, and those trained are more confident in helping individuals experiencing mental ill-health or a crisis.

The report does raise the valid question of needing to ensure that the introduction of MHFA training in workplaces results in sustained actions and outcomes of improved, wider management of mental ill-health and beneficial outcomes. Again, we can all agree on this.

### **Other Studies and Reports – Referred to in the HSE Report:**

Jorm *et al.* (2010) in Australia and Jenson *et al.* (2016) in Denmark reported that MHFA training improved trainee knowledge and their confidence in helping other people with mental ill-health conditions. Both studies found that positive changes were sustained six months after the MHFA training. Both studies also found improved positive attitudes.

Kidger *et al.* (2016) in the UK reported that both adult and youth MHFA courses were effective at improving the knowledge, attitudes, confidence and skills in supporting people.

Kitchener and Jorm (2004) in Australia demonstrated improved mental health literacy (concordance with health professionals in beliefs about treatment), increased confidence in providing help to others, decreased social distance from people suffering from depression, and greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help. The report found an improved behaviour towards those with mental ill-health and the training also benefited the mental health of the trainees.

Booth *et al.* (2017), Hadlaczky *et al.* (2014) and Kitchener and Jorm, (2016) all reported a positive improvement amongst public sector workers immediately following the training and up to six months after. These improvements included their knowledge, preparedness and confidence to intervene to help others.

### **A Study and Report not referred to in the HSE Report – Fire Service Study:**

The study, 'Promoting Well-being and Reducing Stigma about Mental Health in the Fire Service', published in the *Journal of Mental Health*, revealed the positive impact that Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) awareness training has on staff knowledge about poor mental health – an issue that affects 20% of the UK's workforce. The study also revealed a significant improvement in attitude towards the issue following the training and well-being programme. The research was developed by Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust Community Psychology Service. The study reported a significant improvement in attitude to mental health problems and increased ability and confidence to help someone experiencing mental health problems. The initiative has since been used with teachers and mental health nursing staff and has been shown to be consistently effective in positively influencing attitudes to mental health problems and knowledge and efficacy about mental health. Participants described how they were more able to recognise and respond to signs of mental health problems and to help their friends and colleagues, and that attitudes towards mental health issues were changing and they were more open-minded and less judgemental.

### **MFHA England**

MFHA England reported seeing a dramatic increase, over the last year, in the number and range of organisations, including the emergency services, police and many others, all seeking solutions to the increasing issue of mental ill health in the workplace. They said that it is through good quality, specifically tailored training that we are able to help employers raise awareness of mental health across their organisations and lift the stigma that has been long associated with mental ill health. It is estimated that in any one year approximately one British adult in four experiences at least one diagnosable mental health disorder.

### **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training**

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an internationally recognised, accredited and licensed training course. MHFA England has trained 70,000 people and has worked with many large employers to deliver mental health awareness training within the workplace. MHFA is the mental health equivalent of physical first aid training and provides participants with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support services.

### **Attachment:**

HSE Report "The effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training in the workplace

Yours sincerely



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**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**