



## DEBATE PACK

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# Mental health first aid in the workplace

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## Summary

On 17 January 2019, there will be a Backbench Business debate on a motion regarding mental health first aid in the workplace. This debate will take place in the Commons Chamber.

The Conservative Government under Theresa May has made commitments to spread the use of mental health first aid (MHFA) in schools and amongst the wider population. There have been calls to make MHFA mandatory in the workplace. Although not obligatory, the Health and Safety Executive's First Aid guidance was updated in November 2018 to encourage employers to think about their employees' mental health and wellbeing needs.

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Government policy on mental health in the workplace

Statistics from the Department of Work and Pensions indicate that around 300,000 people with a long term mental health problem lose their jobs each year. Poor mental health is estimated to cost the UK economy between £74 billion and £99 billion a year. Analysis commissioned by the recent independent review into mental health and employment, found that the cost to employers is between £33 billion and £42 billion of this number.<sup>1</sup>

The Prime Minister commissioned the independent review into mental health and employment in 2017. Led by the former Chair of HBOS, Lord Dennis Stevenson, and Mind CEO, Paul Farmer, the review was one of a range of measures aimed at transforming mental health support in schools, workplaces and in the community. The review's report, [Thriving at Work](#), was published in October 2017 and recommended 'mental health core standards' that all employers can adopt to better support the mental health of their staff.

The core standards include that employers should:

- Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan.
- Develop mental health awareness among employees.
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling.
- Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development.
- Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors.
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

The [Government response](#) to the review was published in November 2017 and the section on Health and Safety is set out below:

205. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) play a key role promoting and protecting workplace health which is also a key strand of our agenda. Their work in the following areas are key to supporting our strategy on employers:

- The HSE's new Health and Work programme and 'Go Home Healthy' campaign prioritises action to tackle work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders, as well as lung disease.
- HSE is working with industry sectors and the wider health and safety community to promote and encourage action on these issues through advice, guidance and tools that enable

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte, [Mental health and employers: The case for investment. Supporting study for the Independent Review](#) (October 2017)

employers, working with employees, to take effective, practical action.

- HSE will implement the three recommendations made by the Stevenson/Farmer review as part of its role in both raising employer awareness of their duty to assess and manage work-related mental ill-health and building on its guidance to help employers deliver the mental health core standards. They will also play a role in supporting local authorities to adopt the same recommendations.

Further information on the Government response to recommendations in this area can be found in annex C:

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Government response</b>
11	We recommend that the Health and Safety Executive revise its guidance to raise employer awareness of their duty to assess and manage work-related mental ill-health.	HSE accepts and will implement this recommendation.
12	We recommend that the Health and Safety Executive builds on its risk assessment guidance and Management Standards approach by highlighting how these actions will help employers deliver key parts of the mental health core standards.	HSE accepts and will implement this recommendation.
13	We recommend that Local Authorities adopt the same recommendations as the Health and Safety Executive throughout its guidance and practices, and ensure join up between public health and health and safety enforcement roles.	We agree that in principle it would be sensible for Local Authorities to mirror changes being made to HSE processes. Before any changes are implemented we will need to work with the Department for Communities and Local Government to assess the likely impact on Local Authorities, including how we might mitigate any increased burden.

In November 2018, the Health and Safety Executive updated their guidance to employers about First Aid in the workplace, adding a new section on mental health. It encourages employers to consider whether having staff trained in mental health awareness, including MHFA, would be beneficial for the company.<sup>2</sup> This followed the publication of an open letter by Mental Health First Aid England calling for such training to be made mandatory in the workplace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [First aid needs assessment](#), Health and Safety Executive, accessed 13 December 2018

<sup>3</sup> [HSE publishes first aid guidance on mental health](#), SHP, 22 November 2018

Answering a Parliamentary Question on this subject in December 2018, the Government responded,

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 already allow for the consideration of mental health alongside physical health when undertaking a needs assessment. On the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018 the Health and Safety Executive published guidance to clarify this point for employers.

Key evidence reviews of the impact of mental health-type training in a workplace environment show that there are a number of knowledge gaps which mean it is not possible to say whether the training is effective in improving the management of mental health in workplaces, or whether it is the only effective mechanism for support. The research also identifies additional prevention and management actions that employers should put in place to create a comprehensive approach.

In January 2017, the Prime Minister commissioned Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer, the Chief Executive of Mind, to conduct an independent review into how employers can better support all employees, including those with mental ill health or wellbeing, to remain in and thrive at work. "*Thriving at Work: The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers* was published in October 2017."

In November 2017, the joint DWP/DHSC Work and Health Unit (WHU) published "*Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability*" setting out plans for three key settings: welfare system, workplace and health system, and also set out the Government's response to "*Thriving at Work*". This response welcomed a key recommendation from the 'Thriving at Work' review for employers to adopt a set of core mental health standards that will provide a comprehensive approach to transforming mental health in the workplace. Government is committed to working with the authors of the review and key stakeholders across the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure that employers of all sizes act to implement the core and enhanced standards and help them, and their employees, realise the benefits of healthy, inclusive workplaces.

Therefore, the Government's view is that the best way to secure employer action is to engage with employers on a voluntary basis to implement the comprehensive mental health core standards approach rather than legislate on a single issue.<sup>4</sup>

An Early Day Motion tabled in October 2016 asked the Government to:

commit to the principle of equality for mental health in the workplace by amending first aid regulations and guidance to require every organisation to have trained Mental health first aiders, and to ensure that employers are aware that their first aid obligations relate both to physical and mental health issues.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 What is Mental Health First Aid training?

According to Mental Health First Aid England, the concept of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training was first developed in Australia, but has since spread globally.<sup>6</sup> Their website adds that

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<sup>4</sup> [HL11674 Mental Health Services: Employment](#), 5 December 2018

<sup>5</sup> [MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID](#), Early Day Motion 505, 10 October 2016

<sup>6</sup> [About MHFA England](#), MHFA England website, accessed 13 December 2018

MHFA came to England in 2007 and was launched under the Department of Health: National Institute of Mental Health in England (NIMHE) as part of a national approach to improving public mental health.

In 2009 we became a community interest company which allows us to be fully self-funded. We have since expanded our product range to offer tailored courses for supporting young people, students in higher education, people with learning disabilities, and the Armed Forces community, as well as the general adult population.<sup>7</sup>

Mental Health First Aid England say that the course “teaches people how to identify, understand and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue.” A learner will develop their ability to listen, reassure and respond to someone experiencing a mental health crisis, and may even be able to prevent a crisis from occurring in the first place. A First Aider can signpost people to support, self-help resources, and therapy services and be better equipped to “support positive wellbeing and tackle stigma in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Mental Health First Aid England has produced a ‘Workplace Wellbeing Toolkit’ <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/campaigns/wmhd17/>

[Mental Health First Aid England](#) is the only body licensed in the UK to train MHFA **instructors**. Other organisations that offer MHFA training in the workplace or other environments include [Health Assured](#), [St John Ambulance](#) and [GBS](#).

### 1.3 Other Government policy on Mental Health First Aid

In April 2013, the Government announced nearly £600,000 from the LIBOR fund to help Mental Health First Aid England rollout MHFA training in the armed forces community. The Government stated that it would “train 200 veterans, their families and people who support them over the next 18 months, who will then go on themselves to train around 6,200 members of the Armed Forces community by the summer of 2015.”<sup>9</sup>

On 9 January 2017, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced a number of measures to redevelop mental health support in schools, workplaces and communities. This included a promise that every secondary school in England would be offered MHFA training.<sup>10</sup> The intention was to have at least one member of staff trained in every secondary end by 2019.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [About MHFA England](#), MHFA England website, accessed 13 December 2018

<sup>8</sup> [Adult MHFA courses](#), MHFA England website, accessed 13 December 2018

<sup>9</sup> [Mental health first aid training for veterans and their families](#), Department of Health and Social Care press release, 30 April 2013

<sup>10</sup> [Prime Minister unveils plans to transform mental health support](#), HM Government Press release, 9 January 2017

<sup>11</sup> [PQ 59215 Schools: Mental Health Services](#), 12 January 2017

The rollout of training began in June 2017, backed with £200,000 of Government funding to train an initial 1000 staff.<sup>12</sup> Funding for future years would be discussed later with Mental Health First Aid England.<sup>13</sup> By July 2018, £450,000 had been invested in the rollout of training to secondary schools.<sup>14</sup>

In October 2017, the Government announced a further £15 million supporting Public Health England (PHE) in the delivery of MHFA training to 1 million people.<sup>15</sup> A year later, in October 2018, the Prime Minister announced that the £15 million would fund the [Every Mind Matters](#) campaign, a pilot of which began that month in the Midlands.<sup>16</sup> A national rollout is expected in Spring 2019. Every Mind Matters, led by PHE, aims to provide the public with techniques to deal with mental health issues like stress and anxiety, as well as expert advice.<sup>17</sup> **MHFA is no longer a feature of this campaign.** The Every Mind Matters initiative sits within the [One You](#) website, which delivers tips on how to make small lifestyle changes to improve public health.

## 1.4 Mental Health First Aid in schools

In the Government's 2017 [Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision](#), the Government outlined its plans to expand mental health awareness training in primary schools: in his statement to the House, Jeremy Hunt, the then Health Secretary, stated that this would be MHFA training:

The proposals as set out in the Green Paper would cost £215m over the next three years towards the creation of Mental Health Support Teams, piloting a four week waiting time standard and rolling out mental health first aid training to primary schools. Funding will be made available to take forward the final proposals following consultation. We will confirm the amounts to be provided to schools and colleges for training leads following consultation and development of training packages. However we will cover the costs of a significant training programme and provide up to £15-20m each year from 2019 to cover costs until all schools and colleges have had the chance to train a lead.<sup>18</sup>

The Green Paper also outlined the Government's plans to incentivise all schools and colleges to have a Designated Senior Lead for mental health: further details are in the paper. The Government has since earmarked £5 million to deliver MHFA in primary schools to at least one member of staff by the end of the Parliament.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [Secondary school staff get mental health 'first aid' training](#), Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education press release, 27 June 2017

<sup>13</sup> [PO 660, Teachers: First Aid](#), 26 June 2017

<sup>14</sup> [PO 163061, Mental Health: First Aid](#), 19 July 2018

<sup>15</sup> [New £15 million programme to help train one million in mental health first aid](#), Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England press release, 10 October 2017

<sup>16</sup> [PM's words at World Mental Health Day reception](#), Prime Minister's Office, 10 October 2018

<sup>17</sup> [New mental health campaign launched across the Midlands](#), Public Health England, 10 October 2018

<sup>18</sup> [HCWS306 Update on Children and Young People's Mental Health](#), 4 December 2017

<sup>19</sup> [PO 163061 Mental Health: First Aid](#), July 2018

## 1.5 Devolved administrations

### Scotland

The Scottish Government Minister for Mental Health, Claire Haughey MSP, noted the following in regards to MHFA training in the workplace, in response to a question in June 2018:

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of good health, both physical and mental, in the workplace.

Employers have a duty of care towards their employees and should take appropriate steps to ensure that mental health and wellbeing is protected and promoted.

Our 10-year Mental Health Strategy aims to improve uptake of, and access to, a range of services aimed at improving mental health in the workplace.

We fund the Healthy Working Lives programme in NHS Health Scotland (£1.6 million in 2017-18) to provide advice and support to employers on the measures they can take. This support includes a free and confidential advice line, and free training courses to help equip employers with the skills and knowledge they require.

Training programmes include Surviving the Pressures of the Workplace on work-related stress, Work Positive: Managing Organisational Stress which is based on HSE Stress Management Standards, and Mentally Healthy Workplaces which provides training for managers and supervisors.

It is at the discretion of individual employers as to whether they wish to access the Scottish Mental Health First Aid training for their employees.<sup>20</sup>

The Scottish Suicide Prevention Action plan committed to having MHFA training available in all local authorities for teachers by the end of academic year 2019-20.<sup>21</sup> John Swinney, Deputy First Minister, outlined the Scottish Government's actions on Mental Health First Aid training in schools since 2014:

Since 2014, the Scottish Government has supported delivery of mental health first aid training by offering a grant to local authorities to undertake the Scottish mental health first aid training programme. The training was initially offered to local authorities who were identified as being in the most need of immediate support, based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and on figures provided by NHS on the number of professionals trained within the authority. Following the first year, suicide rates were also included as an additional indicator to identify local authorities in need thereafter.

We are continuing to offer the grant to local authorities in need as part of our commitment within the Suicide Prevention Action Plan, published earlier this year, to offer every local authority this training by the end of academic year 2019-20.

<sup>20</sup> Question S5W-17572: Stuart McMillan, Greenock and Inverclyde, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 29/06/2018

<sup>21</sup> Scottish Parliament, Question S5W-18196: Annie Wells, Glasgow, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Date Lodged: 14/08/2018

This will be enhanced by our commitment to deliver school counsellors in every secondary school in Scotland, which was announced in the Programme for Government, along with the significant additional investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.<sup>22</sup>

## Wales

The [Delivery Plan](#) for the Welsh Government's Mental Health Strategy, [Together for Mental Health](#), contains an action for the Welsh Government (Public Health) and Public Health Wales NHS Trust to support workplaces to improve the mental health and well-being of their staff by March 2019.

## Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department of Health has published a [Service Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing 2018-2021](#).

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<sup>22</sup> Scottish Parliament, [Question S5W-19625](#): Ross Greer, West Scotland, Scottish Green Party, Date Lodged: 26/10/2018

## 2. News articles and press releases

['Mental Health First Aid has the power to save lives'](#), Independent, 4 July 2018

[One million people to receive mental health first aid training](#), Mind, 10 October 2017

[The mental health first aid programme is a pet project – if the NHS services were properly funded in the first place, it wouldn't be needed](#), Independent, 15 July 2017

### Schools

[The life-saving power of mental health first aid in schools](#), Independent, 10 October 2018

['Mental Health First Aid has the power to save lives'](#), Independent, 4 July 2018

[Government Announces £5 Million For Mental Health First Aid In Schools](#), Huffington Post, 2 February 2018

### Workplace MHFA

[Employers still 'unlikely to fund' mental health treatment](#), people Management, 9 January 2019

[It's time for employers to provide mental health first aid training](#), Times, 19 December 2018

- Written by Luciana Berger MP

[Research into mental health first aid in the workplace prompts new guidance](#), University of Nottingham/EurekAlert, 18 December 2018

[Will the new HSE guidelines on workplace mental health make any difference?](#) People Management, 27 November 2018

[Research exposes 'significant issues' with workplace Mental Health First Aid implementation](#), The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, 23 November 2018

[Mental health first aid presents 'safety concerns' for trained staff](#), Personnel Today, 23 November 2018

[Independent study reveals positive impact of mental health training](#), Open Access Government, 23 November 2018

[Every Office Should Have Mental Health First Aid Training, New Guidance Suggests](#), Huffington Post, 22 November 2018

[Why we need Mental Health First Aiders in the battle for wellbeing](#), Telegraph, 21 November 2018

[First aid must include mental health, firms tell Theresa May](#), Times, 19 November 2018

[Business leaders urge Theresa May to introduce new laws on mental health first aid in the workplace](#), Telegraph, 18 November 2018

[Mental health first aid should be mandatory in every workplace, business leaders tell Theresa May](#), Independent, 18 November 2018

[Why we need to put mental and physical first aid on an equal footing](#), Independent, 18 November 2018

[Make mental health as important as first aid, say business leaders](#), Guardian, 18 November 2018

['Workplaces need mental health first-aiders'](#), TES, 18 October 2018

[HSE publishes rapid scoping review on Mental Health First Aid in the workplace](#), MHFA England, 30 August 2018

- This piece pulls together several pieces of research

[Mental Health First Aid in the workplace: what the employers say](#), MHFA England, 30 August 2018

[Mental health first aid. Does it work?](#) TUC, 30 August 2018

[No evidence that 'mental health first aid' training helps support colleagues, says HSE](#), Health and Safety at Work, 29 August, 2018

[Impact of 'Mental Health First Aid' questioned as CITB offers more funding](#), Health and Safety at Work, 5 June 2018

## **Official press releases**

[Mental health first aid training for veterans and their families](#), Department of Health, 30 April 2013

[PM: mental health training for teachers will "make a real difference to children's lives"](#), Prime Minister's Office et al., 27 June 2017

[New £15 million programme to help train one million in mental health first aid](#), Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England, 10 October 2017

[Prime Minister unveils plans to transform mental health support](#), Prime Minister's Office et al., 9 January 2017

## 3. Further reading

### 3.1 Parliamentary material

PQ 168055 [[First Aid and Mental Health: Training](#)] 05 Sep 2018

**Asked by:** Berger, Luciana | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number members of the public who have been trained in basic mental health awareness and first aid by the Government since June 2017.

**Answering member:** Jackie Doyle-Price | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The information is not available. In October 2017, the Government announced plans to launch a new £15 million programme in 2018, which will see at least one million people trained in basic mental health ‘first aid’ skills. The programme is expected to launch later this year.

In addition, we are committed to training a member of staff in mental health awareness in every primary and secondary school by 2022. By April this year we had trained over 1,300 staff in over 1,000 schools. We aim to reach every secondary school by 2019 and every primary school by 2022.

### 3.2 Reports

Mental Health First Aid International has pulled together evidence regarding the efficacy of MHFA on their website [MHFA Australia Course Evaluations](#).

Mental Health First Aid England has also published a [Summary of evaluations](#) (November 2018).

Melanie Narayanasamy et al. [Mental health first aid in the workplace \(MENTOR\): A feasibility study](#), The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health/University of Nottingham, November 2018

Melanie Narayanasamy et al., [Mental health first aid in the workplace \(mentor\): A feasibility study, Summary report](#), The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health/University of Nottingham, November 2018

[Summary of the evidence on the effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\) training in the workplace](#), Health and Safety Executive, August 2018

[Thriving at work: The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers](#), HM Government, October 2017

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