

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Role Description

MHFA in the NAO

Mental health issues are common. 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience some form of mental ill health in any given year, yet stigma and discrimination still exists. The NAO is committed to championing the mental health agenda by: raising awareness, promoting mental health and wellbeing and supporting recovery and social inclusion for people who have experienced mental ill health. We believe MHFA is an important step to help us do this and to continue to build our diverse and inclusive workforce.

What is MHFA?

MHFA is the help offered to a person developing a mental health issue, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health issue or in a mental health crisis. First aid is given until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis appears to have been resolved. Like physical first aid, the primary aims of MHFA are to:

1. **Preserve life** where a person may be at risk of harm to themselves or others
2. **Prevent further harm** by reducing the risk of a mental health issue becoming more serious
3. **Promote recovery** of good mental health through timely intervention
4. **Provide comfort** to the person at time of need

MHFA also aims to:

5. **Raise awareness** of mental health issues in the workplace and community
6. **Reduce stigma and discrimination** in the workplace and community

Scope of role

- MHFA is a voluntary role undertaken alongside your full job requirements.
- MHFA provides safe support to an immediate situation by listening and signposting someone experiencing mental health issues to support services.
- MHFA interventions will normally focus on signposting conversations and immediate support. Acting as a friend, mentor, or counsellor and providing on-going support is beyond the MHFA role.
- MHFA should not diagnose or speculate about the diagnosis of mental health conditions or offer medical advice or suggest treatments to an individual.

Tasks

1. Responding to requests for MHFA or initiating conversations where there is a wellbeing concern

- **Implement the ALGEE action plan*** to help a person in a mental health crisis or who is developing mental health issues.
- **Establish clear boundaries** at the outset of any contact explaining the purpose of MHFA to signpost people to support services, usually in a single conversation.
- **Explain the boundaries of confidentiality** that information discussed with a MHFA is treated in confidence, unless: the individual has consented to disclosure, disclosure is necessary to safeguard the individual or others; or a legal duty exists.
- **Complete the MHFA log** to record anonymous details of each time you give MHFA to enable HR to evaluate the effectiveness of MHFA and identify any issues that need to be addressed at an organisation level.

- **Take personal responsibility for your own mental health**, opting out of any MHFA work if you are not well enough to provide support to others and helping to identify an alternate MHFAer who can provide assistance.
2. **Actively promote your availability** to offer mental health support, raising your profile by: wearing MHFA coloured lanyard to enable identification at work, having your name included on a list of MHFAers on the intranet/posters in common areas and including standard wording about the MHFA role in your email signature.
 3. **Proactively raise awareness of mental health** in the workplace in collaboration with the DisAbility Network and Mental Health Interest Group so people become better informed about mental health, promoting wellbeing through early identification and access to support and/or professional help. Activities may include: facilitating L&D events, staffing 'pop up' stands, volunteering to speak at cluster events, grade forums, EL stand ups and team meetings and writing blogs and Green articles.
 4. **Proactively tackle stigma and discrimination** by talking openly about your experiences of mental health and encouraging others to do so; challenging any prejudice or harmful attitudes to mental ill health which you witness.
 5. **Chair quarterly MHFA governance meetings** on rotation.
 6. **Undertake regular CPD** to maintain best practice, for example, signing up to MHFA newsletters and attending training and workshops.

Key Skills

1. **Strong communication skills** to develop rapport, demonstrate empathy and compassion in an objective, non-judgmental manner.
2. **Active Listening** to facilitate open, honest and sensitive conversation eliciting responses rather than telling a person what to do or imposing your own idea.
3. **Composure** when discussing emotive issues, including self harm and suicidal feelings.
4. **Observant** to assess if there is a serious risk to self-harm or to others.
5. **Good judgement** to decide the order and relevance of each ALGEE step to be flexible and responsive to the person they are helping.
6. **Self awareness** to understand the scope of the role and to express these limitations in a constructive manner providing relevant signposting.

Resources

- Adult MHFA manual
- HR (Attendance and Wellbeing Team)
- [BDF guide on mental health at work and other disabilities](#)
- [Employee assistance programme](#)
- [NAO disAbility network and Mental Health Interest Group](#)

Governance

- All MHFAers should hold the Adult MHFA qualification awarded by MHFA England.
- MHFAers should book time taken for MHFA activities in their time cards to: Project: "MHFA casework"
- Quarterly meetings chaired by a MHFAer on rotation to: share experiences, discuss challenges and solutions, agree actions to progress the mental health agenda and complete CPD activities.
- Line managers of MHFAers should be aware of the importance of the role and the need to allow MHFAers time to respond to an incident.

- MHFA should seek help if they are advised or realise they are becoming too involved in a case and/or an employee is becoming overly dependent on their support.

***ALGEE Action Plan**

