

Mental Health First Aiders – Policy

The Department of Materials believes in the importance of supporting mental health at work and the creation of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) is a key component for creating a safe, healthy workplace where the mental health and physical health of employees are valued equally. It gives people the tools to support their own mental health and that of their colleagues, and encourages them to access timely support when needed.

Departmental MHFA Coordinator(s)

The Department nominates a MHFA Coordinator(s) – may be a joint role, whose responsibility is to coordinate the Department MHFAs, working closely with the HR Manager. The role of the coordinator(s) would include:

- Recruiting and appointing MHFAs.
- Point of contact to ensure MHFAs contact details are up to date.
- Ensuring that MHFAs have attended the specific course and any refresher needed.
- Ensuring that the MHFAs are advertised locally in department using the most appropriate method of communications e.g. posters, inductions, staff newsletters.
- Chairing the Department of Materials MHFAs Network.
- Raising mental health awareness and tackle stigma throughout the Department to help create an environment where people feel empowered to contact their MHFAs for support.

Recruiting new MHFAs

It is important to appoint the right people to act as MHFA, as the role can be a pivotal in opening up discussion about mental health and ensure everyone feels supported, a negative experience could prevent an individual seeking further help.

The Department is committed to maintain a diverse cohort of MHFAs in terms of gender, age, ethnic background, level of seniority, job role and location.

The decision to become involved as a MHFA must be voluntary and colleagues should not inherit the role from a predecessor. Whenever possible, new vacancies will be advertised as a call for volunteers and the MHFA Coordinator(s) will then assess their applications for the most suitable candidate.

Calls for volunteers should include an overview of the role (Appendix A), information on training, support and commitment requirements for the role. The Coordinator(s) should then have a discussion with the candidates to find out why they are interested and to assess their suitability for the role. You may find the matrix and suggested questions in Appendix B useful in this process.

If a volunteer has suffered from previous mental ill health, it is important to find out if they feel able to support others without compromising their own mental health. Whilst individuals can learn from previous experiences, it may have a detrimental effect on their own mental health. This will be discussed with the HR Manager.

Whilst there is no set expiry date on the MHFA role, it is important that the Coordinator(s) checks in with the MHFAs annually to ensure they still have capacity to continue in the role and their training is up to date. MHFAs will also be offered the opportunity to step down at any time.

Training for MHFA

The Coordinator(s) is responsible to ensure the training is up to date.

Training

To become a MHFA colleagues must complete a [two day MHFA course](#). This is the most comprehensive awareness and skills course, which includes a mix of presentations, discussions and group work activities. Every MHFA course is delivered by a quality assured instructor who has completed our Instructor Training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health. On completion of the course, participants will receive a certificate to confirm that you are a trained MHFA and a fold-out card summarising the five-step MHFA action plan.

Every three years, MHFAs will be required to attend an half a day [refresher course](#).

MHFAs could be asked to attend additional training at the discretion of the Department.

Talk and Support

MHFAs are encouraged to familiarise with the MHFA England "[Being a Mental Health First Aider](#)" guide.

MHFAs will be invited to participate to the Department of Materials MHFAs Sessions, which will be taking place at regular intervals (termly) and chaired by the MHFA Coordinator(s). This will be an opportunity to gain additional training and support both from the Department and the central University MHFAs. MHFAs are encouraged to seek guidance and support from the Coordinator(s) if they feel their role is negatively impacting on their health.

In terms of divisional support, MHFAs from the cross-MPLS cohorts and the cohorts within departments will have opportunities to interact and learn from each other. Then there is also a cross-University Teams site (accessible [through this link](#)) which people who are trained as MHFAs can request access to. It is currently run by the Equality and Diversity Officer from the Humanities Division and a College (All Souls) Faculty Member.

Dealing with cases (refer to Appendix A)

It is important that MHFA are able to meet with individuals in confidential spaces, meeting rooms, offices etc. MHFAs should only make themselves contactable during work hours and should not give out personal contact details.

Initial and follow up meetings should not exceed one hour. It is difficult to predict how many cases a MHFA might deal with as it can depend on how accessible they are and how many other MHFAs there are. MHFA are encouraged to exercise self-care and manage the number of cases they agree to take on, to ensure they are not overwhelmed. If they are unable to pass a case on to another MHFA in the Department, the Coordinator(s) will be able to assist.

Counselling Guidance

External counselling sessions (for staff) should be treated as medical appointments, and guidance is to follow the [University's guidance for 'Visits to doctor, etc.'](#): *If it is necessary for you to arrange to visit, during the normal working day, to your doctor, dentist or a hospital to receive treatment, or for medical screening (eg, tests for cancer), attempts should be made to arrange the visit in such a way as to disrupt the work of your department as little as possible. Permission to attend will not be unreasonably withheld.*

If the absenteeism is a half day or more (each session), it can be logged in [TeamSeer](#) as:

- planned - a 'Medical Appointment' (under the MISC category), or
- unplanned - 'Mental Health (stress) or (not stress)'

If it is less than half a day absenteeism (per session), the member is to make suitable and appropriate local arrangements with their line manager/supervisor, and to contact HR if necessary/for further support/information.

Note: counselling sessions as mentioned above are provide by professional counsellors, not MHFAs.

Mental Health Data

MHFAs should log the support conversations they have with colleagues/students in an anonymised way only. No personal data (used to identify an individual) should be recorded. All anonymised data must be held securely and discussed only with the relevant people (Departmental and divisional MHFA Coordinator(s), HR Manager, DSO and the HoD). This will allow the Department (and Division) to see how much the support is being used and spot any patterns in specific areas of business.

MHFAs are to use the support log in **Appendix C, 'Interaction Recording Form'**, which is supported and used by MHFAs in the MPLS Division. This data is stored by **JISC Online Surveys**, which is certified by the recognised information security standard ISO 27001.

The notifications of recent activity can enable the Department to be more agile in their response to tackling mental ill health through specific training and targeted communications.

Annual reports can complement the information attained through the biennial Staff Experience Survey.

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Appendix A

MHFA role

In general, the role of a MHFA in the workplace is to be a point of contact for any individual in the workplace who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.

This interaction could range from having an initial conversation through to supporting the person to get appropriate help. As well as in a crisis, MHFAs are valuable in providing early intervention help for someone who may be developing a mental health issue. MHFAs are not trained to be therapists or psychiatrists but they can offer initial support through non-judgemental listening and guidance.

The MHFA role could require to:

- Understand the important factors affecting mental ill health
- Spot the early signs and symptoms of mental ill health
- Start a supportive conversation with a colleague who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress
- Listen to the person non-judgementally and hold supportive conversations using the MHFA action plan
- Assess the risk of suicide or self-harm
- Encourage the person to access appropriate professional support or self-help strategies. This might include encouraging access to internal support systems such as the University Employee Assistance Programme
- Escalate to the appropriate emergency services, if necessary
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate

MHFAs will need to demonstrate:

- Willingness to learn more about mental health to support others, whether or not they have experienced mental ill health themselves
- Understanding what the role will involve and have considered their own wellbeing to decide if now is the right time for them
- Ability to be contactable during the working day and can be called away from their normal duties at short notice if needed
- Ability to maintain confidentiality as appropriate and demonstrate an ability to relate well to others
- Ability to commit to the time required and who have the support from their line manager/supervisor to fulfil the role once trained.

At no time does the MHFA role (or anyone trained in MHFA skills) supersede the Department or University policies: first and foremost they are all members of the University.

Appendix B

Suggested questions for the Coordinator(s) to ask when assessing the candidate	Score	Notes
<p>What motivated you to volunteer? This is an exploratory question which is difficult to measure but it is useful to know their motivation is to help and support others. Suggested exploratory questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you think mental health in the workplace is important? ○ Why are you interested in becoming a Mental Health First Aider? 	n/a	
<p>What is your understanding of the role and its parameters? Criteria - They understand the key aspects of the role (Appendix A). In particular look for an acknowledgement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confidentiality ○ A non-judgemental approach ○ The need to listen and be empathetic ○ Encourage the person to access appropriate professional help and support ○ Resilience and coping mechanism 	1 Fully Met 2 Partially Met 3 Not Met	
<p>Did you read through the training requirements? Do you have the capacity to take on the training and cases? Can you see any challenges or conflicts in your current role? Criteria – They understand the training and the ongoing commitment of the role. They have capacity to complete the training and deal with cases. If there are conflicts, they have thought through how that might be addressed</p>	1 Fully Met 2 Partially Met 3 Not Met	
<p>Do you have the support of their line manager to take on the role?</p>	1 Fully Met 2 Partially Met 3 Not Met	
<p>Do you have any experience in similar roles or training which would complement this role? If not can you give an anonymised example of where you have supported someone who has experienced mental health or a difficult situation and how you were able to help?</p> <p>Criteria - Previous experience or relevant training could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching • Mentoring • Listening skills • Helpline volunteer • Trained facilitator • Resilience 	Additional 1 point for each example.	
Total		

Appendix C

Interaction Recording Form - For mental health first aiders

Pilot initiative co-implemented by the EDU and MPLS under the 'What Works to Support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Research Careers' Project

	<p style="text-align: center;">Questions and notes (Unless specified, continue to the next question in line.)</p>
1.	<p>Purpose of data collection and data privacy notice</p> <p>Thank you for using the interaction recording form. This form should take you less than 3 minutes to complete. Your help is appreciated.</p> <p>This form is created by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Coordinator of the Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU) of the University of Oxford. All your responses are anonymous; both you and those who sought your support will not be identifiable. The data collected will only be seen and managed by the EDU and individuals working on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division (referred to as 'we' hereafter).</p> <p>This form is for recording interactions between mental health first aiders (MHFAs) and those who sought support from the MHFAs. The information collected will be used to improve and optimise the provision of mental health first aider support and training for MHFAs. We will only retain your data for as long as we need them to meet our purposes.</p> <p>Your data will be stored by JISC Online Surveys, which is certified to ISO 27001, a recognised information security standard; JISC stores its data within AWS within the Republic of Ireland. You can read more about the security of the data you are about to provide following the link: https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/security/</p> <p>If you have any questions about the use and privacy of the data to be collected, please contact Dr Alvin Leung, the M&E Coordinator of the EDU at alvin.leung@admin.ox.ac.uk, or Dr Amy Hink the ED&I Data Analyst and Athena Swan Coordinator at the MPLS Division at amy.hinks@mpls.ox.ac.uk.</p>
2.	<p>Do you understand the statement above and agree to proceed?</p> <p>I understand the statement above and agree to proceed. [Continue to 3]</p>
3.	<p>There are two sections in this form. The first section is only shown if the interaction that you are recording was with an individual that you had not given support as a MHFA before. If you choose 'other' below, you will still fill in the first section, but we will know that the yes/no question does not apply to the interaction you are recording.</p> <p>Was the interaction with an individual that you have <u>not</u> given support as a MHFA before?</p> <p>Yes, that was an interaction with an individual that I have <u>not</u> given support as a MHFA before.</p>

	No, that was an interaction with a ' <u>returning</u> ' individual. Other
4.	Section 1 of 2 This section contains questions on the staff member or student who you interacted with to provide mental health support. (This form refers this person who came to you for support as 'the person' for clarity.)
5.	Which of following best describes the person whom you provided mental health support to? [Select one] Student [a]; Staff member [b]; I am not sure [c]
6.	Is the person a staff member or student of the MPLS Division? [Select one] Yes [Continue to 7]; No [Skip to 9]; I am not sure [Skip to 9]
7.	Which department does the person belong to? [Select one] [Provide a list of all MPLS departments]
8.	Does the person work in the same department as you do? [Select one] Yes; No
9.	Did the person approach you directly? [Select one] Yes, the person approached me directly [Continue to 10]; No, I approached this person directly first [Skip to 11]
10.	How did the person first approach you? [Select one] In-person; Through e-mail and/or other electronic communication channels; In writing; Other [open text box] [For all options, Skip to 12]
11.	How did you know about the person's need for support? (If you are choosing 'none of the above', please make sure that the other three boxes are not ticked) [Select all that apply] [Show the following options if 5=a] A colleague of mine within MPLS referred this person to me; A colleague of mine outside MPLS referred this person to me, this includes colleges and university services; Another student referred this person to me; None of the above [Show the following options if 5=b] A colleague of mine within MPLS referred this person to me; A colleague of mine outside MPLS referred this person to me, this includes colleges and university services; None of the above

	[For all options, continue to 12]
12.	Did the person mention how he/she/they knew about mental health first aiders? [Select one] Yes [Continue to 13]; No [Skip to 14]
13.	How did the person know about mental health first aiders? [Select all that apply] Emails; Webpages; Posters; Other staff members or students [For all options, continue to 14]
14.	Section 2 of 2 This section contains questions on the interaction.
15.	When did the interaction happen? [Provide a date picker]
16.	How did the interaction take place? [Select one] It was an in-person meeting; It was a phone call or an online meeting without video; It was an online video call; It was an exchange of emails (excluding their first approach to you directly and other people's referral of this person to you); It was an exchange of texts other than emails (this includes texts written on paper or digital communication platforms such as Teams) None of the above
17.	Which of the following describe(s) why this person sought support from you? The person was struggling with personal, family and/or social issues; The person was experiencing work and/or study stress/anxiety; The person was having difficulties managing alcohol and/or substance use; The person was experiencing depression; The person was experiencing anxiety disorder; The person was experiencing psychosis The person was having suicidal thoughts; The person recently made suicidal attempts.
18.	How would you describe the person's need of mental health support? [Select one] Mild [a]; Moderate [b]; Severe [c]; Very severe [d]
19.	To what extent do you think you achieved the following in this interaction alone? [Select one for each statement]

	<p>[Options: Not at all; Some extent; Large extent; Very large extent; This is irrelevant to the interaction]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provided comfort to the person. ii. Promoted recovery of good mental health; iii. Provided help to prevent the mental health issue of the person from becoming more serious; iv. Preserved life where the person may be at risk of harm to themselves or others;
20.	<p>To what extent did you use the following skills in this interaction alone? [Select one for each statement]</p> <p>[Options: Not at all; Some extent; Large extent; Very large extent; This is irrelevant to the interaction]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Listened and communicated non-judgementally; ii. Gave support and information; iii. Encouraged to get appropriate professional help; iv. Encouraged to use self-help strategies and to seek support of family, friend and others (excluding professional help).
21.	<p>To what extent did the mental health first aid training prepare you for the following? [Select one for each statement]</p> <p>[Options: Not at all; Some extent; Large extent; Very large extent; This is irrelevant to the interaction]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Listened and communicated non-judgementally; ii. Gave support and information; iii. Encouraged to get appropriate professional help; iv. Encouraged to use self-help strategies and to seek support of family, friend and others (excluding professional help).
22.	<p>End of form note</p> <p>You have completed the interaction recording form. Thank you again for your time.</p>