



Case Study – Strand B – ‘Resilience Training’ as part of Personal and Professional Development - Mental Health First Aid

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Setting the scene

One strand of the Courage Project was to develop, pilot and evaluate resilience training (i.e. training that would develop skills in managing stressful and challenging circumstances) as part of personal and professional development of PGRs at the University of East Anglia, University of Suffolk and Norwich Bioscience Institutes. This case study explains the Mental Health First Aid training. This is a reflection of the PGR experiences of the MHFA England Two Day course, this case study is not officially affiliated with or for MHFA England.

Action taken

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a training course that teaches you how to identify, understand and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue. MHFA won't teach PGRs to be a therapist, but it will teach you to listen, reassure and respond, even in a crisis – and even potentially stop a crisis from happening. Through the course PGRs learn to recognise warning signs of mental ill health and develop the skills and confidence to approach and support someone while keeping themselves safe.

PGRs also learn how to empower someone to access the support they might need for recovery or successful management of symptoms. This could include self-help books or websites, accessing therapy services through their GP, their school or place of work, online self-referral, support groups, and more. Moreover, PGRs gain an understanding of how to support positive wellbeing and tackle stigma in the world around them. Attendance at this course qualifies attendees as a Mental Health First Aider.

The skills gained as part of this course include:

- An in depth understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing
- Practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress

- Enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- Knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to further support - whether that's self-help resources, through their employer, the NHS, or a mix

Key impacts/ outcomes

The Courage Project commissioned two, two-day courses (total attendees = 32 people). Therefore, 32 people were qualified as Mental Health First Aiders as a result.

The MHFA course increased personal confidence in supporting others and knowledge and understanding of how best to support others with a mental health issue. As a result of the MHFA training course, personal confidence in how best to support others with a mental health issue increased by 43%. On average, participants rated their personal confidence as 4.9 before the course and 8.6 after the course. Knowledge and understanding increased by 45% on average. Before the course knowledge and understanding was 4.9 on average and 8.8 after the course.

After the course, 72% of attendees strongly agreed that they were less likely to judge people with mental health issues negatively and 72% strongly agreed that mental health is a normal part of everyday life.

The MHFA course was important for enabling people who may be working with peers or colleagues who are experiencing mental health issues to feel well equipped in providing support and signposting knowledge. Moreover, the MHFA course was useful in reducing stigma and working to normalise mental health in higher education. The course was run with only postgraduates attending and created a safe space for open and honest discussions about experiences. It would be recommended that this course does not include staff / supervisors in the same course as many of the concerns raise related to supervisory relationship and having them in the room may have restricted openness of conversations and disclosures.

Mental Health First Aid England is the only provider of Mental Health First Aid. More information can be found here: <https://mhfaengland.org/>