



# **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**

**Health, Safety and Compliance Arrangement**

**December 2025**

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# Introduction

The University of Portsmouth is committed to supporting good mental health. Having trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders) is a key component in creating a safe, healthy workplace where the mental and physical health of employees and students is valued equally. MHFAiders give staff and students the tools to support their own mental health and that of their colleagues and peers, encouraging them to access timely support when needed.

When staff or students are experiencing poor mental health, it is vital to have access to somebody with accurate and helpful information about support and resources. Having the ability to speak to someone who can signpost staff and students to the correct support and help is essential for a healthy learning and work environment. Our MHFAiders have been trained to actively listen without judgment and signpost to appropriate services where necessary.

## Scope

This arrangement applies across all areas of the university, the services that it provides and to all staff and students connected to the work undertaken by the university.

## Responsibilities

### Health, Safety and Compliance

Health, Safety and Compliance are responsible for:

- Providing an appropriate University-wide MHFA training and recertification programme.
- Maintaining a central list of MHFAiders available via a QR code on the first aid signs.
- Creating and championing the University of Portsmouth MHFA Network.
- Ensuring further support is available for MHFAiders, where required.

- Ensuring this arrangement and associated documentation are updated every three years or sooner if required.

## Deans, Heads and Senior Managers

Deans, Heads and Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring:

- This arrangement is effectively and suitably implemented by their respective faculties.
- Managers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to this arrangement.
- They signpost MHFAiders to additional support, if their own wellbeing is impacted by an MHFA interaction.

## Managers and Supervisors

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring:

- This arrangement is effectively implemented in the area they manage.
- All first aid signage is prominent, and details of designated MHFAiders are identifiable.
- They signpost MHFAiders to additional support, if their own wellbeing is impacted by an MHFA interaction.
- Induction of new staff or students includes the awareness of MHFA provisions in their area, including any names and contact details.
- They raise any concerns regarding the MHFAider role with Health, Safety and Compliance.
- There is enough workload flexibility for MHFAiders to attend incidents and complete associated tasks such as the interaction record, maintaining own wellbeing through self-care/reflections and time to attend networking/support events. If a role does not offer flexibility, it may be that becoming a MHFAider is not a suitable option at that time.

## Staff Well-being Team (HR)

Staff Well-being Team (HR) are responsible for ensuring:

- They proactively participate in and champion the University of Portsmouth MHFA Network.

- They assist with raising awareness of MHFA events and key dates in collaboration with Health, Safety and Compliance Advisors.
- They raise mental health awareness and reduce stigma to create an environment where staff and students feel comfortable contacting MHFAiders.

## Mental Health First Aider(s)

A MHFAider role is voluntary; however, those appointed into the role must ensure:

- They get approval from their line manager to become a MHFAider.
- They follow the appropriate escalation procedure outlined below.
- They agree to become a member of the University's Mental Health First Aid Network.
- They agree to be named on a central list of MHFAiders.
- They attend training sessions as required.
- They uphold the University MHFA values, this arrangement and guidance.
- They provide confidential and non-judgemental emotional support (upholding the values and qualities of the role; being approachable, impartial, confidential, empathic, trustworthy, patient and a skilled listener).
- They set and maintain appropriate boundaries to manage expectations and ensure understanding of the MHFA support provision, such as only responding to enquiries during appropriate working hours.
- They provide temporary, immediate support similar to physical first aid. They do not establish ongoing support relationships or provide therapeutic interventions.
- They support other MHFAiders to debrief and provide emotional support to them if necessary. All MHFAiders will automatically be added to the MHFA network to facilitate this.
- They liaise with the appropriate support/wellbeing services, Health, Safety and Compliance and Occupational Health as necessary.
- If a MHFAider feels someone is in immediate danger (crisis situation), they call 999 immediately.
- They report all contacts on a MHFA interaction record.
- They seek out further support if their own wellbeing is impacted by an MHFA interaction.
- They advise their line manager and Health, Safety and Compliance if they wish to cease being a MHFAider.

# Arrangements

## Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Becoming a MHFAider is voluntary. It is important to emphasise that this role is to listen to people and signpost accordingly. It is not to provide advice or counselling. Any member of staff who would like to be a MHFAider should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. Once approval has been granted, training can be arranged by contacting Health, Safety and Compliance. MHFAiders may step down from the role at any time.

MHFAiders will be expected to participate in the University of Portsmouth Mental Health First Aid Network, which offers ongoing guidance and peer support. Health, Safety and Compliance will also be available to assist should an MHFAider feel that the role is harming their own wellbeing.

MHFAiders should have access to private spaces to meet confidentially with individuals seeking support. These meetings should take place during working hours and are generally recommended to last no longer than one hour. If additional support is needed, a follow-up meeting can be arranged. MHFAiders should be mindful of the number of interactions they undertake. MHFAiders should balance their first aid responsibilities with their primary job duties. MHFAiders can direct individuals to other available MHFAiders when appropriate such as if they are unavailable or a fresh perspective would be beneficial.

MHFAiders will log support conversations on the interaction record. The name of the MHFAider will be noted; however, no personally identifiable information about the individual accessing support will be captured. All data will be stored securely and used to monitor utilisation of the University's MHFA provision, identify trends, and inform training and communications to further enhance mental health support.

## Mental Health First Aid Network

All qualified MHFAiders will be automatically added to the University's Mental Health First Aid Network. This network is designed to provide mutual support among MHFAiders, enabling them to discuss challenging cases and address any concerns when needed. MHFAiders should be accessible to one another for this purpose. Health, Safety and Compliance will also run regular drop-in sessions for

the network, offering additional opportunities for peer support and discussion.

## Emergency Escalation

In an emergency, MHFAiders are advised to call 999.

If the person seeking support is a student, this should also be accompanied by reporting the interaction to Security, who hold an on-call rota for Student Support Services.

## Non-Emergency Escalation

If the person seeking support is a student, MHFAiders are able to complete a [‘Concerned about a student’](#) form with the student’s consent. The completion of this form ensures the University provides a suitable follow-up with the student.

# Training Requirements

Health, Safety and Compliance are responsible for providing MHFA courses. Health, Safety and Compliance staff have undergone extensive MHFA training with Mental Health First Aid England to enable them to provide MHFA training to the rest of the University. Mental Health First Aid England provides the MHFA training content.

To become a MHFAider, staff must gain line management approval and complete a two-day recognised MHFA training course delivered by certified instructors. MHFAiders must complete a half-day refresher course every three years. Additional training may be required as determined by the University.

If you want more information or to book onto a MHFA course please contact Health, Safety and Compliance at [hsservicedesk@port.ac.uk](mailto:hsservicedesk@port.ac.uk) or call ext. 3075.

All training in relation to MHFA will be recorded on Itrent must be kept on the individual’s employment record where appropriate.

# Monitoring Compliance

Element to be monitored	Lead	Tool	Frequency	Reporting Arrangements
Responsibilities as per arrangement	Head(s), Line Manager(s), Those with Line Management Responsibilities, Faculty Managers and Health and Safety Co-ordinators	Determined by each school/service.	Ongoing or following a significant change or incident, whichever soonest.	Faculty Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee(s) quarterly reports and minutes of meetings submitted to the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.
Arrangement Suitability, Effectiveness and Implementation	Health, Safety and Compliance Specialist Officers (where applicable)	Audit and Inspection Programs, Staff News, H&S Newsletters, Communications. Risk assessments, SSOW, SOPs, COSHH and health surveillance (as applicable)	Periodically at least every three years or following a significant change or incident, whichever soonest.	University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report, Audit reports and inspection reports. Occupational Health reports submitted to the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.
Incidents and complaints	Managers in conjunction with Health, Safety and Compliance	Incident reports, reviews and investigations. Risk Register(s). Occupational Health cases and data analysis of statistical management information.	When reported; ad-hoc and periodically when necessary.	University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report, Individual incident reports and Faculty quarterly reports.

## Associated Documents

### Legislation

The relevant sets of legislation are:

- [The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)
- [The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)

## Industry Guidance

This arrangement should be read in conjunction with the following Industry guidance:

- [Being a MHFAider: Your Guide to the Role](#)

## University Documents

This Arrangement should be read in conjunction with the following university documents:

- [Mental Health Interaction Record](#)

# Document Control

This arrangement is issued and managed by Health, Safety and Compliance.

## Change Record

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## Reviewers / Contributors

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