

Questions an organisation needs to consider before bringing in a peer to peer mental health support training course such as MHFA or First Aid for Mental Health.

Are you going to create these as official roles as an adjunct to someone's job or just offer the training to anyone to improve awareness of mental health and listening skills?	If you do appoint officially you need to consider the below more carefully. Some organisations just train anyone who would like to be trained and don't officially appoint mental health first aiders. Another option is to call them wellbeing ambassadors or coaches and ensure they continue their wellbeing learning journey.
Are you going to allow line managers to volunteer?	If so, it should be clear that they are there to support their peers – a management conversation has different legal parameters. You should also train line managers in their own legal responsibilities related to mental health and also to sickness absence.
How are you going to engage volunteers?	Normally this is not a difficult process – there is a lot of interest in mental health. Normally from announcement of dates to filling a course is 6-8 weeks.
How many volunteers do you need?	Some organisations will run a pilot course and then, when they are satisfied that this is the right course of action for them, they will then agree a number of first aiders required. You should consider ensuring sites are appropriately covered – some might need more than others; consider shift workers and job roles – e.g managers needing their own peer support. A general rule of thumb would be about 10% of the work force.
How do you ensure this is part of an overall training strategy?	Consider other general mental health awareness training for all staff; management training for people managers; training for directors. Some organisations run general mental health awareness training and then see if people wish to be first aiders at these sessions.
Are you going to look at selection criteria?	Some organisations prefer a formal process, most find that the right people come forward and if they are not the right people (with the right listening skills) they are not utilised.
Are you going to formally ask people to commit annually?	This is an approach which some organisations have started using, aware that not everyone wants to continue once they have started or may want to take a break from the role.
Are you going to put a formal role description together?	This should happen and should be part of your recruitment of volunteers – it should cover aspects such as confidentiality, boundaries, role modelling wellbeing (we can support with this).
Are you going to ask volunteers to record numbers of conversations?	This is increasingly considered useful. Obviously confidentiality is a big issue, but at least if

	<p>numbers are collected it can be helpful to understand if more promotion of the services needs to happen or if there are indeed more members of the cohort needed.</p>
<p>Are you going to pay people additional money to do this role as you may already do with physical first aiders?</p>	<p>A few, not many, organisations have taken this route. It is not always necessary and some first aiders actively dislike it – and may donate their money to charity for example.</p>
<p>How are you going to publicise those who are your first aiders internally?</p>	<p>There are so many options here; from putting pictures on the intranet, to above the photocopiers, to asking them to wear badge identifiers or different colour lanyards. Some require a more proactive approach from the first aiders – asking them to hold e.g. coffee mornings. Some organisations even launch them using an internal town hall or conference where they are all on the stage.</p>
<p>What support is there for people in your organisation beyond first aid?</p>	<p>The role of a first aider is to signpost for further support – not to provide that support. If you do not have an EAP in house, can you consider offering a drop in counselling service or access to other counselling services? At the least can you offer a list of phone numbers and websites /groups in your local area which provide specialist support? Make sure your instructors knows options you have internally so that they can ensure first aiders are also clear and can communicate them to those seeking support.</p>
<p>What support are you offering your first aiders?</p>	<p>As well as being a privilege to support others it can also be emotionally draining – as well as ensuring they know about the options to support them internally available, you might suggest buddy or other support networks within the group. Getting the group together to share learnings twice a year is also good practice and you can also provide CPD at these sessions.</p>
<p>Are you going to provide access to some CPD for first aiders?</p>	<p>Organisations are now considering this at the outset of the programme. We can offer additional half day modules for example deepening understanding of such issues as resilience.</p>