

Youth Mental Health First Aid launched

Safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people across Wales took an important leap forward as the Welsh Assembly Government announced the expansion of its flagship Mental Health First Aid programme, in conjunction with Mind Cymru.

Following the success of the existing Mental Health First Aid (Wales) programme, Mind Cymru has been awarded the contract for the administration of the Mental Health First Aid Programme 2009-11. This includes the current adult programme and the development of Youth Mental Health First Aid designed for people caring or working with Children and Young People.

So far 64 trainers are available to deliver the existing course and over 2,500 people have attended the 12-hour Mental Health First Aid Wales course, which helps frontline workers recognise the symptoms of mental distress and how to provide initial help and support while guiding people towards appropriate help.

Feedback from those who have attended the course, including North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, HSBC, Corus and Wales TUC as well as many statutory and voluntary agencies and services, has been overwhelmingly positive.

It is hoped that more than 50 trainers will soon also be able to deliver the new Mental Health First Aid training aimed specifically at those people caring or working with Children and Young People.

Edwina Hart, Minister for Health and Social Services, said:

“The continuation and expansion of Mental Health First Aid demonstrates our commitment to promote the emotional and mental wellbeing of young people in Wales.

“Providing support for people in the community who are experiencing mental distress and widening the understanding of mental illness is crucial if we are to tackle the stigma often associated with mental health problems.

“The development of Youth Mental Health First Aid is important to help those who work or care for young people to recognise the early warning signs of mental distress. This will work in tandem with the Assembly Government’s schools counseling strategy to ensure that all pupils across Wales will have someone to turn to if they need help or support.”

Kim Pugh, Mind Cymru's Mental Health First Aid Project Manager, said:

“We are delighted to be working with the Welsh Assembly Government and to be able to continue this vital training. Equipping people with the skills needed to identify and provide the initial support to people experiencing mental distress is crucial, not just because of the immediate help and relief it can provide to individuals, but also in our longer-term aim of tackling the stigma often associated with mental health.

“When faced with someone experiencing a mental health crisis, often people are unsure what to do. Their actions can have a huge effect on how quickly the individual experiencing difficulties gets the help that they need. Mental Health First Aid gives people the confidence to deal with these situations.

“We know that, across Wales, children and young people are not immune from mental distress. The additional new Youth Mental Health First Aid course, aimed at anyone working with children and young people, provides specific help on how to spot a young person showing signs of mental distress and what to do to help.”

For more information on Mental Health First Aid (Wales), please contact Kim Pugh, Project Manager, Tel – 029 2034 6581, E – k.pugh@mind.org.uk or visit <http://www.mhfa-wales.org.uk>

Notes for editors

1. Mental Health First Aid (Wales) was introduced in Wales in 2007 and is one of the Welsh Assembly Government's flagship programmes. In November 2009, following a competitive tender process, Mind Cymru was awarded the contract to train trainers to teach Mental Health First Aid and co-ordinate its roll-out across Wales.
2. There are 64 approved trainers available to provide the course.
3. Mental Health First Aid is one of the Welsh Assembly Government's key actions in supporting implementation of the Suicide and Self-Harm Reduction Action Plan.
4. **One in four** people is likely to experience a mental health problem every year.
5. Mind Cymru is Mind's force for change in Wales. Informed in everything we do by people with direct experience of emotional distress, we campaign vigorously to create a society that promotes good mental health and that challenges mental health stigma. Mind works for better mental health for everyone. We rely on voluntary funding and public donations. http://www.mind.org.uk/mind_cymru