

National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental Health First Aid 'Helping to Develop Mental Health Literacy across Scotland'

Project Brief

1. Background and Context

The National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being is a key part of the Scottish Executive's Health Improvement and Social Justice strategies. The key aims of the programme focus on promoting positive mental health and well-being, challenging and eliminating the stigma and discrimination which people with mental health problems can face, preventing suicide and promoting recovery. £24m over the next 3 years has been allocated from the Health Improvement Budget to continue the work of the National Programme from 2003 to 2006.

A three year action plan for 2003 –2006 has been prepared and will be disseminated in early September 2003. The action plan sets out the key aims and priority areas for the next three years. These are set out below.

The key aims for National Programme action during 2003-2006 are:

- Raising awareness and promoting mental health and well-being
- Eliminating stigma and discrimination
- Preventing suicide
- Promoting and supporting recovery

The National Programme aims to work with and through others to achieve these key aims in the following priority areas:

- Improving infant mental health (the early years)
- Improving the mental health of children and young people
- Improving mental health and well-being in employment and working life
- Improving the mental health and well-being of older people
- Improving community mental health and well-being
- Improving the ability of public services to act in support of the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness.

The Action Plan **Key Aim Number 1** – is **'Raising Awareness and Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being'**

“Over the next three years we wish to raise awareness about the need for good mental health and well-being amongst the general public. This requires improving the public's understanding of positive mental health, how to promote mental health, and to be more aware of both mental health and mental illness.

This improved awareness and understanding is essential to enable people to take care of their own mental health, to help others, to prevent mental ill-health and to be more aware of where and how to access support and help.”

The Action Plan sets out a key area for development as:

“The Development of a National Mental Health Literacy Project. This will develop and implement a programme of linked activities to support improving awareness through increasing mental health literacy in Scotland. This will involve three main components of work:

- Mental Health awareness training (building on the Mental Health First Aid course developed and validated in Australia)
- Consumer guides to common mental health problems
- Development of self help tools and manuals

A Project Group will be established by Autumn 2003 to take this work forward over the next three years.”

This Project Brief has been prepared to provide early information on how the Mental Health First Aid component will be taken forward.

We have developed this briefing as a set of Q and A's

The briefing gives details of the programme for Betty Kitchener's visit to Scotland from 8 – 19 September when a number of activities are planned, including a two day Mental Health First Aid Course and a five day course to train at least 10 Instructors in Mental Health First Aid in Scotland. This work forms the start of a pilot of the MHFA training in Scotland and will run until March 2004 with the aim of testing the Australian MHFA model for use in Scotland. Following the pilot phase, the National Programme and key partner agencies including NHS Health Scotland will evaluate the work and consider how best to take forward and support MHFA training across Scotland

What is Mental Health Literacy?

International research is beginning to demonstrate the importance of mental health literacy. Health literacy is where the general public have a good understanding of what promotes good health and what enables people to maintain good health. It also aids people's ability to know when to seek help and who to seek help from.

The same concept of health literacy applies to *mental* health literacy. This encompasses:

- having a good basic awareness of mental health and mental illness
- being able to recognise the common signs of distress and risk factors that may influence someone suffering from mental health problems
- the ability to distinguish between common mental health problems and more severe problems
- what to do to help support people who show signs of, or who have developed mental health problems
- where and how to seek help and also to understand what someone can do for themselves or to support others.

Significant work on mental health literacy has already been undertaken by the Australian National University's Centre for Mental Health Research in Canberra. This work has encompassed a large national survey of the general public to assess their mental health literacy combined with a survey of mental health professionals. The results showed that the general public displayed worrying misunderstandings and misconceptions about both mental health and both common and more severe mental illnesses, and that their responses were markedly different from those of mental health professionals who showed a greater degree of mental health literacy. As a result, the Australian National University has developed a Mental Health First Aid course which is now internationally recognised.

Tell me more about the original Mental Health First Aid training course developed in Australia?

As part of the challenge to address mental health literacy in Scotland, we plan to introduce this mental health first-aid training, which has already taken off in Australia. This Programme is based on the concept of first-aid training for Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation and extending this to provide first-aid training to increase people's awareness and understanding of mental health and mental illness. The course has been developed over the last 2 years and now has a manual and an instructors guide. The author and instigator of the Mental Health First-Aid Course, Betty Kitchener, has trained over 38 mental health first-aid trainers across Australia and the Course has now been rolled out (by the "trained trainers") to over 2,000 people across Australia. A randomised control trial is being undertaken with civil servants across the Australian National Government to test the validity of mental health first-aid in a workplace setting. The early research and evidence from the Course is very encouraging.

The Course has proved successful, not just for interested members of the general public, but also for teachers, front line public sector workers, health workers and those working in the mental health field. It is also being rolled out in a structured and centrally supported way,

whereby people trained in mental health first-aid are screened and trained and provided with ongoing support to undertake the training and are provided with back-up evidence from the Australian National University Centre for Mental Health Research. This ensures that the training is up-to-date, rigorous, evidence-based and that there is a database of trainers with regular monitoring and retraining. Each course is evaluated and the results are put in a central database.

Tell me more about Mental Health First Aid in Scotland?

In April 2003, Betty Kitchener was invited by the National Programme to deliver 2 awareness-raising seminars on Mental Health First Aid. Over 150 people from a range of backgrounds, including the NHS, Social Work, Education, Housing and the voluntary sector, attended these 2 events in Glasgow and Edinburgh. A large number of the attendees were people who have experience of mental health problems. At these events there was considerable enthusiasm not just for a programme of courses on Mental Health First-Aid, but also for training on Mental Health First Aid to be part of an overall programme on improving mental health literacy across Scotland. The demand for places at these events far outstripped the available places.

In May an article for The Point magazine (produced and distributed by the Scottish Association for Mental Health) was published on Mental Health First Aid. *A copy of the published article and the original draft are enclosed for your information.*

Mairi Todd, Health Promotion Officer in Shetland has been trained as a Mental Health First Aid Instructor (by Betty Kitchener in April 2003) and is now running Mental Health First Aid training programmes in Shetland. The initial evaluations from participants in the first set of courses in Shetland have been very encouraging and Mairi will be part of the Steering Group that begins to develop the work in Scotland.

So, how is the work on MHFA going to start in Scotland?

We will be holding an initial Steering Group meeting on 19 August 2003 in Edinburgh to begin to develop the Mental Health Literacy work, of which Mental Health First Aid is a key part. We have invited a group of around 30 people with different interests and backgrounds to this initial meeting. At the meeting we will be deciding on the remit and future core membership of the Group. The 19 August meeting will also help us in finalising the programme for Betty Kitchener's visit in September which is taking place from the 8 – 19 September 2003.

What will Be Happening during Betty Kitchener's Visit in September?

i) A Mental Health First Aid Training Course

On 8 and 9 of September Betty will be providing a two day Mental Health First Aid training course. There are 15 – 20 places available for this training programme. If you wish to apply for a place please complete the attached application. We will try and make sure that we have a good mix of people from different backgrounds and experiences and from different areas across Scotland. There will be a high demand for places so please don't be too disappointed if you are not selected. There will be more opportunities in the not too distant future both locally and nationally.

If you are selected and you live outside Edinburgh – your travel and accommodation costs will be met (within Scottish Executive rules).

If you are interested in applying please complete the application form and return it to us by 18 August (if possible). We intend to confirm successful places the week beginning 25 August.

ii) Training Mental Health First Aid Instructors

As well as the MHFA two day course on 8 and 9 September, Betty is also contracted to provide a training course for 10 MHFA instructors. This will take place after the MHFA course for three days over 10 – 12 September inclusive at the same venue in Edinburgh. We have 10 places available for the MHFA Instructors course. For the instructors course it is vital that all five days are attended from 8 – 12 September.

If you are interested in applying for a place on this course, please complete the attached application. Again demand is likely to be high. For the 10 people selected, all training, travel, accommodation and subsistence costs (within Scottish Executive guidelines) will be paid.

The 10 trained Instructors will form one key part of a 'pilot' of the MHFA training between October 2003 and March 2004. What we will do is work with these instructors and evaluate the course, the materials and use this experience and learning to test and then adapt the mhfa course for further use across Scotland from summer 2004 onwards.

What we are looking for from participants in the Instructors course is:

- Commitment from the person's employing agency
- An ability to run between 2 – 4 MHFA courses locally between October 2003 and March 2004 (The National Programme will pay towards local venue costs, and travel and subsistence costs for each locally run course).
- The ability to form part of the pilot of MHFA in Scotland
- Previous training experience.
- Commitment to mental health and relevant experience.

We will be selecting people on the basis of their experience, commitment and agency commitment and would expect a range of different people to be selected. This is likely to include – local and national voluntary organisation(s), local mental health service user / carer

organisations, NHS organisations (both mental health and general), primary care, emergency services, mental health promotion department(s). This will enable us to achieve a good spread of experience from which we can evaluate the mhfa course.

We would aim to ensure that the costs of being involved in this pilot exercise would be met by the National Programme and we will agree a work plan with each trained Instructor / and their agency / organisation for the period October 2003 – March 2004.

If you are interested in applying to the Instructor's Training course 8 – 12 September 2003, please complete the attached application form and return it by Monday 18 August (if possible).

We will aim to let you know the week beginning 25 August if your application has been successful.

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Summary Of Dates / Key Milestones

7 August Briefing and information distributed on MHFA Project

18 August – applications for MHFA two day course on 8 and 9 September to be returned.

18 August – applications for MHFA Instructor’s training course 8 – 12 September to be returned.

19 August – Mental Health Literacy and MHFA Steering Group Meeting

Week beginning 25 August – Successful course participants informed.

8 and 9 September – MHFA training course in Edinburgh (20 places)

8 – 12 September – MHFA Instructors Training course in Edinburgh (10 places)

19 September – Mental Health Literacy and MHFA Steering Group Meeting

October 2003 – March 2004 – MHFA piloted in a variety of locations and settings around Scotland.