

Psychological first aid in emergencies training for frontline staff and volunteers

- Free online psychological first aid training from Public Health England (PHE) available to frontline staff and volunteers
- Training will equip staff to provide support and recognise people at risk of distress
- Follows globally recommended model for supporting people during emergencies, tailored to the specific challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Frontline staff and volunteers at the forefront of the national coronavirus response across England will be able to access a new Psychological First Aid (PFA) training course, the Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries announced today.

From today the course, which has been developed by PHE, will be available to frontline workers and volunteers dealing with the public during the coronavirus pandemic.

The free online course enables responders to develop their skills and confidence in providing key psychological support to people affected by coronavirus, including on issues such as job worries, bereavement or isolation as they carry out their vital work as part of the ongoing coronavirus response.

It will also help to develop understanding of how emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic can affect us all, how to recognise people who may be at increased risk of distress, and how to offer practical and emotional support.

Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries said:

“Supporting each other’s mental health and wellbeing is more important than ever during these challenging and uncertain times. Staff and volunteers in many different roles are working tirelessly to provide crucial support at this time and are often a critical touchpoint in identifying those who may be affected.

“This new training course will help to support the incredible work of frontline workers to support those most in need both through the coronavirus outbreak and beyond, equipping them with vital tools to deliver psychological first aid.”

Psychological First Aid is being used worldwide to support those in need of mental and wellbeing support in emergency situations. The World Health Organization and United Nations are supporting its use in response to coronavirus.

The new course has been developed by PHE with support from NHS England and Health Education England and is being made available to frontline workers across England by social learning platform, Future Learn.

Frontline responders can access the training materials for free through the [Future Learn website](#).

Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at PHE, said:

“The current pandemic has had a profound impact on all of our daily lives and none more so than our frontline workers who are seeing the effects of the outbreak first hand.

“Our training course aims to provide frontline staff and volunteers with additional resources on how to take care of their own mental health and wellbeing, how to provide support to those who need it most and advice on how to cope with difficult situations.”

Claire Murdoch, NHS England’s National Mental Health Director, said:

“NHS staff have been working around the clock in the face of the biggest challenge our health service has ever faced, which is why it’s so important that staff are properly supported with their mental health.

“Psychological first aid training and a new text, online and telephone support service are just some of the many ways staff can be supported and I would urge anyone with concerns about their mental health to come forward to a colleague, your occupational health team or our helpline so that we can get you the help and support you need.”

Helen Fuller, Global Healthcare Lead at FutureLearn, said:

“The pandemic has impacted the mental health and psychological wellbeing of countless individuals. FutureLearn is proud to partner with Public Health England to develop this Psychological First Aid training course, which we hope will enable people to have the conversations that count at this time of uncertainty and stress for so many.”

The course is free for all frontline workers and volunteers and no previous qualifications are required to be enrolled.

Learners who join the course will also receive a free digital upgrade so that they can gain unlimited access to the course and any articles, videos, peer reviews and quizzes, as well as a PDF Certificate of Achievement.

Training should be considered as part of wider workplace learning.

The course takes approximately 90 minutes to complete. There are 3 parts which can be done in intervals or all in one go.

For guidance for the public on the [mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus](#) please visit GOV.UK and [Every Mind Matters](#).

Every Mind Matters

Every Mind Matters provides simple and practical advice to follow in order to improve mental wellbeing and deal with challenges like feeling stressed, low, anxious or having trouble sleeping.

The campaign directs people to a new, interactive tool on Every Mind Matters' website that will give people a free action plan to improve their mental wellbeing. The website also provides advice on common concerns and on how to help others who are struggling with their mental wellbeing.

PHE and NHS England have come together to develop Every Mind Matters with support from leading mental health charities, community organisations, academics and clinicians, including Mind, Mental Health Foundation, MHFA England, Samaritans, The Royal Foundation, Centre for Mental Health, Rethink, Time to Change, NSUN, What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Good Thinking.

For more information, visit [Every Mind Matters](#) to create your personalised Mind Plan.

About Public Health England

PHE exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-leading science, research, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services.

PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care. It provides government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.