



### **Mental Health First Aid at the University of Glasgow**

The University of Glasgow, as part of its Mental Health Action Plan, undertook to develop a holistic, multi-stranded approach to employee and student mental health and wellbeing.

One of the agreed strands was the introduction of Scotland's Mental Health First Aid training for a core number of employees, to raise awareness of mental health issues and create a point of contact for initial assistance and guidance to professional help, for those staff and students seeking help for poor mental health.

### **What is Mental Health First Aid?**

NHS Scotland describes Scotland's Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) as being "like any other type of first aid, the help given to a person before appropriate professional help or treatment can be obtained. The main difference is that it is the initial support for someone who needs support for a mental health issue rather than a physical one" <http://www.smhfa.com/>

Like first aiders, mental health first aiders aim to:

- Preserve life
- Prevent deterioration of mental health – by providing help
- Promote recovery – i.e. support the first steps to regaining good mental health
- Provide comfort, to a person in distress

As well as:

- Promoting understanding of mental health issues.

It is important to appreciate that mental health first aid is not designed to treat or offer long-term support for mental health issues, but to help an individual through the immediate distress and assist and guide them to appropriate professional help.

### **How can I find my nearest mental health first aider?**

You may have a local dedicated mental health first aider, in which case your School/ Institute or Service will have publicised this. Alternatively, you will find a list of all trained mental health first aiders who have volunteered to join the SMHFA Network here

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/health/>

You may contact any of the Mental Health First Aiders listed on the network, and are not restricted to those within your local area, but we recommend selecting one fairly close to your usual base at the University for ease of access. Please bear in mind that all the Mental Health First Aiders are volunteers, and have other roles, therefore your first choice may not always be available. In this case please do not give up, try other First Aiders on the list. They all want to help. .

### **What will happen when I meet with a mental health first aider?**

First of all they will ask you how you are feeling and what it is that is troubling you and then they will listen to you. This is your opportunity to explain anything about your mental health that is worrying you. They will ask you some questions to find out whether your mental health is putting you at serious risk. Then, they will help you to consider coping strategies and techniques that you think will help you in the short term until you find professional help, how to access that, if needed. They will also help you consider some self-help measures you also might find helpful in the long-term.

### **Is this mental health first aid a confidential service?**

Yes. No personal details will be shared from your meeting with a Mental Health First Aider. They will note some details, such as the type of issue you are dealing with, and of any advice or guidance they have given you, so that the University can monitor any emerging trends across the campus and where we need to focus our efforts to best respond to particular issues.

Please note that a First Aider will not promise secrecy if it emerges during your conversation that there is risk to life, yours or others.

### **Do I have to tell my manager or course supervisor I have spoken to a mental health first aider?**

Not if you don't want to, but we would recommend that if you do feel able to discuss your mental health with your manager, principal investigator or course supervisor/ adviser of studies, it may be helpful. They are then better able to help you at work, maybe by adjusting your duties, work patterns or hours etc. for a period of time while you are recovering from a period or episode of poor mental health.

**And remember, it's ok not to be ok**