



City Mental Health
Alliance UK



Making it Work – building
a better future for mental
health in the workplace

Foreword

Poppy Jaman OBE, co-founder and
CEO of the City Mental Health Alliance



We already know that mental health issues are one of the biggest challenges facing the workplace today. In the UK, mental ill health is responsible for 91 million working days lost every year and costs employers £34.9 billion each year. We also know that starting a first job can bring its own particular stresses, which is why the transition from study into the workplace is a focus area for the CMHA.

To better understand the depth of the concern that people might have about their early careers, we surveyed students and graduates who are about to enter the workplace for the first time about their concerns. The results are worrying but also provide an opportunity for business to shape the future of the workplace to continue to attract, retain and grow talent.

Our survey found that 69% of job seeking students and graduates say they have lived, or are living, with mental health issues. Yet 64% believe that disclosing this will hinder their chance of securing a job. It is clear that workplaces need to communicate that mental health support is available and give clear guidance on how young people can access support. To create a culture of openness is to encourage people with any health issue to feel confident that their workplace will provide environments where they can flourish.

The transition from university to work can include moving to a new city, managing student debt, leaving family and friends and getting to grips with the expectations of working life. It can be a stressful time and can exacerbate existing mental health issues or lead to new ones.

Employers must start to play a bigger part in supporting the mental health of employees as they embark on their early careers, whether it be someone who has been living with a long-standing mental health condition, such as depression or bi-polar disorder, or someone who is experiencing a mental health issue brought on by environmental factors.

I am confident that work can be part of the solution rather than the problem. A mentally healthy workplace can provide a supportive space that encourages ongoing positive mental health, prevent issues arising and support recovery. When I was recovering from post-natal depression, my early career played a significant part in my recovery. My job made me feel more confident, had increased my sense of purpose and it reminded me that I was more than my depression. If employers get it right, workplaces can play an important part in helping employees to flourish and stay healthy, both at work and also in their personal lives.

City Mental Health Alliance members, which employ a combined total of over 250,000 people across the UK, are working to create mentally healthy workplaces in financial, legal and professional services. A significant part of our work includes a commitment to improving the early careers transition. To this end, we have produced this short report. Here we bring together facts, survey results and insight from experts to shine a light on the issues. It's only by understanding the issues we can work to address them. Our members are already paying attention to this area and this report will help shape and inform our efforts.

Patrick Watt, leader of the CMHA graduate mental health programme and Commercial Director, Bupa Global

These survey results clearly show that students and graduates planning to start careers within the traditionally stressful financial, legal and professional services industries are conscious about the potential impact on their mental health. They are also, quite rightly, judging a potential employer on their organisation's mental health and wellbeing policies. The message to law firms, banks, insurance companies and accountancy firms is clear – if they don't prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of potential new recruits, and talk about it from recruitment stage, they may well lose out on recruitment of talent and miss out on having a thriving workforce.

People entering the workplace for the first time should feel able to talk openly about their mental health issues from day one, without fear of damaging their career prospects. This is important, first, because we know that early intervention and support is the key to recovery and, in the case of long-term mental health issues, is critical for the management of the condition and allowing people to thrive. Second, these job seekers are the business leaders of the future. If employees experience an open culture from the very start, then good practice will be embedded into organisational culture for future years.

I am working with a working group of CMHA members to help improve the early careers transition into the workplace for graduates.

This will include engaging with the leadership of the higher education sector to see how employers and universities can collaborate to ease the transition from study into the workplace. We will also be working with member organisations to look at how we can ensure there is good practice in creating mentally healthy workplaces for young applicants, from the recruitment stage right through to induction and early careers career development. This report will help to guide our thinking.

There is an opportunity here for both improving the nation's mental health and for business. By being more welcoming and supportive of new recruits with past, present or possible mental health issues, employers have an opportunity to create healthy workplaces where people can flourish. And it will help to create better business managers and leaders of the future.

“People entering the workplace for the first time should feel able to talk openly about their mental health issues from day one, without fear of damaging their career prospects.”

The CMHA has undertaken research to gain insight into the current mental wellbeing of students and graduates in the UK and what they expect from future employers when it comes to mental health support. We surveyed 519 graduates and students aged between 18 – 26, who are studying at degree level or above, and who hope to work within the Banking, Asset management, Insurance, Law, Regulations, Accountancy, Consulting, Fintech or the Civil service. Responses were also recorded for those hoping to work in professional or financial services within Marketing, Advertising and PR and Human relations sectors. This is what we found...

Introduction

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year¹ and in England, 1 in 6 people will report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.²

Despite the excellent work of charities, politicians, campaigners and others there is still a stigma associated with mental health. We're still much more likely to know if someone is suffering from the flu than depression. And this stigma is apparent in the workplace, and our survey shows the negative impact on ambitious job seeking students and graduates.

Our survey of 519 18-26 year olds seeking careers in financial, legal and professional services suggests that a majority of students and graduate job seekers have experienced some form of mental ill health. They worry that the strains of working life could cause mental health issues; but on the other hand, they worry that speaking openly about these concerns or issues could harm their future career.

This report looks at the concerns which students and graduates are living with, and some of the steps which they would like employers to take to address those concerns.



69% of students and graduates would **not** describe themselves as **completely fit** and healthy from a **mental health** perspective



36% have sought **professional help** from GP, counsellor or psychiatrists

1 McManus, S., Meltzer, H., Brugha, T. S., Bebbington, P. E., & Jenkins, R. (2009). Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey. The NHS Information Centre for health and social care.

2 McManus S, Bebbington P, Jenkins R, Brugha T. (eds.) (2016). Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult psychiatric morbidity survey 2014. Leeds: NHS digital.

The role of work

Employers have an opportunity to play a positive role in supporting the mental health of employees, at every stage in their career. How employers manage the mental health of employees, how they talk about it, and how they support those with issues has a profound impact on the mental health of, not only employees, but the wider population and attitudes in society.

The City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA), a coalition of 24 City businesses which aim to create mentally healthy workplaces. We asked students and recent graduates looking to work

in financial and professional services about their mental health and history, and their expectations of employers around mental health and wellbeing policy.

In doing so, we hope to reveal something of the nature of the challenge, and how businesses might address it more successfully – in the City among professional and financial services firms, but elsewhere and in other industries, too. We hope this research will help all employers develop happier, healthier workplaces for this generation and the next.

A common issue

Our survey revealed that students and young graduates are living with a variety of mental health issues.

CMHA found that fewer than a third – just 31% – say they are completely free from mental health issues. Another 38%, say they have rare instances of issues such as anxiety, panic attacks and depression; one in five (21%) say they suffer

from these occasionally. One in ten have regular, chronic or severe issues.

Moreover, when asked about whether they have experienced mental health issues at any point in their lives, only 18% say they have not. More than half say they've experienced anxiety; almost half say they've experienced depression; and a third have had panic attacks. Almost one in five say they have self-harmed.

The most common mental health issues for students and graduates include:

58% anxiety

48% depression

33% panic attack

New job, new pressures

University is the first time living away from home for many, and the transition brings a whole host of new pressures, from meeting and living with new people, to managing finances and balancing study commitments with work and caring responsibilities.³

It's less often noted that the transition from university to work is another significant upheaval, taking place just a few years later. There are few times in adult life where people experience so many unfamiliar pressures and experiences for the first time, all at the same time. Respondents to our survey had a range of worries when applying for a new job:

About three quarters were concerned (46%) or very concerned (28%) about meeting the expectations of their new employer

Close to half (48%) worry about living in a new city

Over three quarters are concerned (47%) or very concerned (31%) about the cost of living.

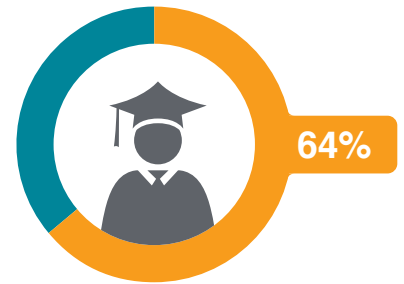
Close to two thirds also say they're concerned (44%) or very concerned about their mental health (18%). That's at least partly because most (55%) recognise that work commitments will leave them with less time to look after this aspect of their wellbeing.

Worries for early career job seekers:

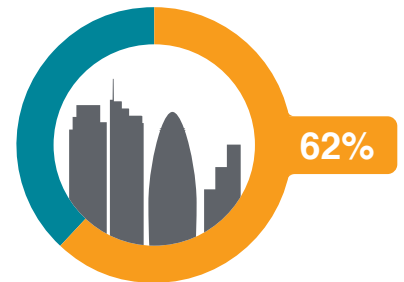
74% meeting the expectations of new employers

78% cost of living in a big city

62% the impact on their mental health



64% of students and graduates believe disclosing past or current mental health issue will **hinder** their chances of securing a first job in financial, legal and professional services



62% are concerned about the **impact** a career in financial, legal and professional services will have on their **mental health**

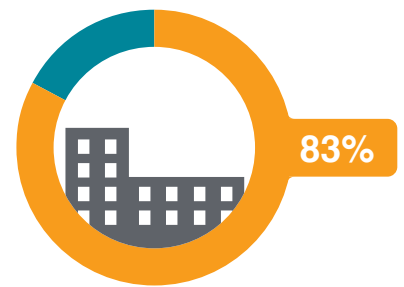
³ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/>

Victoria Sinclair, Charity Manager at Nightline Association said:

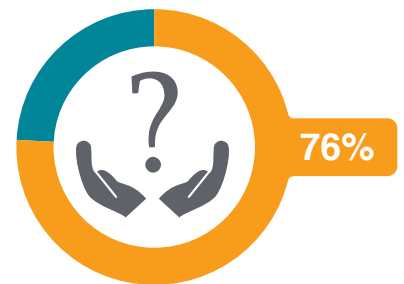
“Nightline peer-support volunteers took over 36,000 calls from students in 2017, and the main topic they wanted to discuss was issues with their mental health. These survey results are concerning, but I’m afraid they are not surprising given the numbers of students reporting problems with their mental health and the potential for the transition from university into the workplace to exacerbate this.

Nightline Association welcomes these survey results from the CMHA, which shine a light on the vital work that needs to be done to address the transition for graduates entering the workplace. This is an opportunity for businesses to promote themselves to graduates by, firstly, acknowledging the potential impact of this transition and, secondly, considering what they can do to attract those who may be looking at employer’s mental health policies as they embark on new careers.

“Environments and communities have a big influence on our mental wellbeing, and workplaces are a big part of that. Employers can play their part in supporting young graduates to thrive in the workplace - getting this transition right will help improve wellbeing and reduce stress in the long run”



83% more likely to apply to employer who is **open** about its commitment to **mental health**



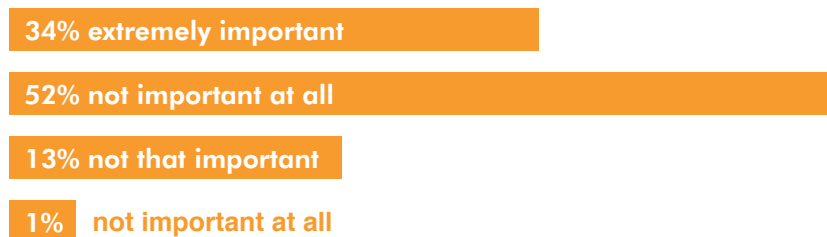
Although mental health is high on the agenda for new jobseekers, **76%** said that they didn't have **any information** about any mental health or wellbeing **support** from prospective employers

Opening up the conversation about mental health at the graduate recruitment stage

The survey results also suggest to employers what they can do to make a positive difference.

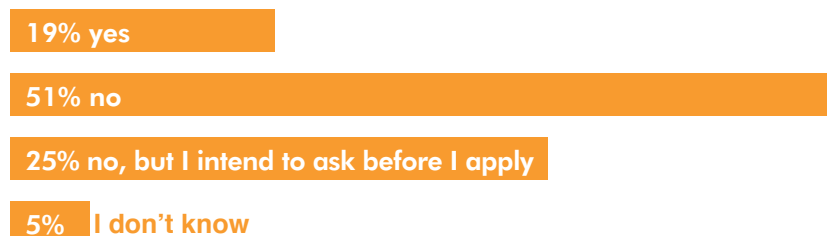
For those considering applying for early career roles, more than half (52%) say the prospective employer's approach to the mental health of its employees is important to them, while a further third (34%) say it's "extremely important". Despite this, fewer than one in five – just 19% – said they had any information about relevant support offered by any of the employers they were planning to apply to.

When you're applying for new roles, how important is a prospective employer's policy or approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its employees?



A significant proportion of respondents – a quarter – said they intended to proactively ask about a prospective employer's policies and approach to mental health before applying.

Are you aware of any mental health and wellbeing support offered by any of the employers you are planning to apply to?



Anastasia Vinnikova, a member of the Early Careers Recruitment Team and the Mental Health Network Co-Chair at the Bank of England said:

"As a recruiter, over the last few years I have noticed that the student narrative on campus is changing. Increasingly, students approaching us are concerned about how their mental health and wellbeing needs are going to be met by future employers. We are fortunate that at the Bank of England we have a holistic and broad mental health offering, but it is deeply concerning that this surprises students – they simply don't expect organisations to care about their mental wellbeing.

"Mental health issues can affect anyone, at any level of an organisation, but we must acknowledge that a transition from education into work can be particularly impactful, and it is imperative that employers help to support Early Careers entrants through this.

Fear of stigma

Failing to talk about mental health policies and culture with job applicants and even new joiners can have a number of consequences.

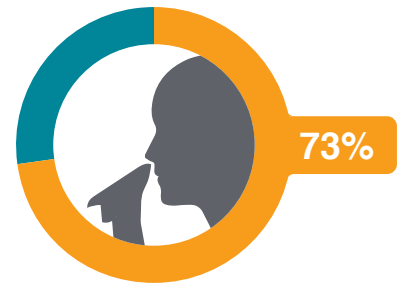
First, and most important, it allows the stigma around mental health problems to go unchallenged. Despite the prevalence of mental health issues, only a minority (40%) of young jobseekers say they would feel comfortable discussing their mental health with their manager. Whereas three quarters (73%) meanwhile say they would be happy discussing a physical illness.

The data goes on to show that two thirds (64%) say they believe telling a prospective employer about their past or current mental health issues would hinder their chances of securing a role. And, even after getting the job, a majority (56%) who took a day off for a mental health issue would prefer to use physical illness as the reason for absence instead.

When asked at what point they would feel comfortable telling a prospective employer about a mental health issue, only one in five said they would do so on their application (8%) or at interview stage (12%). Another one in five would tell them on accepting the job (12%) or in their first week (8%). The lion's share, however, (41%) would try to avoid ever mentioning that they lived with a long-term mental health issue.



Only **40%** would feel comfortable discussing mental health concerns with their **manager**



Compared to **73%** who would be comfortable talking about **physical health issues** (such as flu, diabetes and back pain)

Open conversations

While a majority (58%) say they would get professional help if they developed a mental health issue in their first year of a new job, one in five or fewer say they would go to their manager (19%), HR (17%) or even a colleague (15%) at work. Not having open conversations in the workplace is bad for business. Recent research from LSE showed that those suffering from depression were likely to take an additional 4.1 days off in cases where managers avoided talking to employees about mental health.

In fact, across a whole range of conditions, relatively few say they would be happy discussing them in the workplace:

51% workplace stress

50% anxiety

33% depression

7% bipolar

5% psychosis

If employers want the best from staff, they need to encourage and support them to come forward about mental health issues as they do about physical health issues.

A business imperative

When employers don't know about employees' mental health issues, opportunities to support them are missed. In some cases that means problems will get worse.

Quite apart from the human cost, the financial costs of this to business are well known: Mental health problems in the UK workforce are estimated to cost employers 34.9bn a year.⁴ On the other hand, when new joiners are able to talk openly about their mental health issues from day one, without fear of negatively impacting their career prospects, there are clear benefits to both the employee and the business. Early intervention and support is the key to recovery and, in the case of long-term mental health issues, is critical for the management of the condition and allowing people to thrive.



41% would try to **avoid ever disclosing** that they lived with a long term mental health issue.

Asked what services prospective employers could offer that they felt would promote positive mental health and wellbeing, those surveyed supported a variety of measures:



The most powerful contribution businesses could make, however, is a change in culture: 56% said a culture of openness around mental health – with teams and senior leaders talking about the issue freely – would support positive mental health and well being.

⁴ <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/mental-health-problems-work-cost-uk-economy-ps349bn-last-year-says-centre-mental-health>

Conclusion

Employers have an important role in supporting and promoting the mental health of their employees. That role needs to begin at the outset of their employees' careers, when many are handling the stressful transition from student life into the workplace.



1 in 4 students and graduates intend to ask prospective employers about dedicated **mental health policies**

Businesses need to think about how they are talking about mental health and ensuring their recruits are comfortable raising issues. In fact, in most cases, businesses need to start the conversation themselves; job applicants are understandably nervous about raising any problems themselves. Openness about mental health is needed at all levels of the organisation.

It will be a challenge, but also an opportunity for employers. If businesses can get the conversation going, they'll find they're rewarded. If they can offer the adjustments and support required, they can help their workforce to thrive and make themselves an employer of choice for an even wider pool of young candidates: 83% in our survey said they would be more likely to apply to a potential employer that was open about its commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its employees.

And, importantly, employers can make a significant contribution to changing the way society manages mental health and kick start a wider, more open, more honest conversation on the issue.

About the research

The research was conducted by Censuswide, with 519 UK Graduates/students aged 18 - 26 (studying at degree level or above) who want to work within the Banking, Asset management, Insurance, Law, Regulations, Accountancy, Consulting, Fintech and the Civil service. Responses were also recorded for those hoping to work in professional or financial services within Marketing, Advertising and PR and Human relations sectors. The data was collected between 12.09.2018 - 18.09.2018. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

About City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA)

The CMHA is a not for profit alliance of organisations which work together to eradicate the stigma of mental health in the workplace, improve mental health literacy and identify practical steps that businesses can take to create healthy workplaces where employees flourish. The Alliance was founded, and is led by, senior leaders from City businesses, and is closely supported by two leading UK mental health organisations, Mental Health First Aid England and Mind. Together, they aim to create a culture of good mental health for City workers, to share good practice and increase mental health understanding.

The members include Allen & Overy, Bank of America, Bank of England, BNY Mellon, Bupa, City of London, Deloitte, EY, FCA, Goldman Sachs, GLA, Hogan Lovells, HSBC, KPMG, Legal & General, Linklaters, Lloyds Banking, London Stock Exchange Group, Morgan Stanley, PWC, Schroders, Slaughter and May and White & Case LLP.

About Nightline

Nightline Association is the charity that supports, promotes and develops Nightlines - confidential and anonymous listening services for students across the UK and Ireland. Nightlines are a safe space for students to talk about their feelings at night, when they need it most and when other university welfare services are usually closed. Nightlines are run by trained students providing the unique peer-to-peer support that students want. We aim to ensure that every student can talk about their feelings in a safe, non-judgemental environment; fewer students have their education compromised by emotional difficulties and fewer students die by suicide.

Helpful resources

Nightline

Phone: Numbers vary, check website for local
nightline numbers available
Website: www.nightline.ac.uk

The Nightline association provides listening, support and information helplines run by university students for university students, including about mental health related issues.

Samaritans

Phone: 116 123
(Freephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
Email: jo@samaritans.org
Website: www.samaritans.org

Provides emotional support allowing people to talk about feelings of distress and despair and are confidential and offer non-judge mental support.

SaneLine

Phone: 0300 304 7000
(Local call rates, 6am-11pm, 7 days a week)
Website: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline/

Provides out of hours mental health and emotional support to anyone affected by mental ill health, including family, friends and carers.

Mind Infoline

Phone: 0300 123 3393
(Local call rates, 9am-6pm, Mon-Fri)
Text: 86463

Provides information on types of mental health issues, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments and advocacy.

Student Minds

Email: info@studentminds.org.uk
Website: www.studentminds.org.uk

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity, aiming to provide students with the skills, knowledge and confidence to talk about their mental health and support their peers.

Depression UK

Email: info@depressionuk.org
Website: www.depressionuk.org

Depression UK is a national self-help organization that offers support to everyone affected by depression.

Health Talk

Website: www.healthtalk.org

Health Talk provide free, reliable information about health issues, by sharing people's real life experiences.

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

Phone: 0300 123 1100
Website: www.acas.org.uk

Acas provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. Supports good relationships between employers and employees, but also provides conciliation services to resolve workplace problems.

BITC (Business in the Community)

Phone: 020 7566 8650
Email: info@bitc.org.uk
Website: www.bitc.org.uk

BITC is the Prince's Responsible Business Network. Its members work together to tackle a wide range of issues essential to building a sustainable future.

Fit For Work

Phone: 0800 032 6325
Website: www.fitforwork.org

Fit For Work is a voluntary service that offers the wider working population access to occupational health advice and support. Employers can refer employees who've been off work for four weeks or more a free 'fit for work' assessment. The website includes an employers guide and a stress risk assessment tool.

Mindful Employer

Phone: 01392 677 064
Email: info@mindfulemployer.net

Mindful Employer aims to increase awareness of mental health at work and provides easily accessible information to organisations and supports staff who experience stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions.

Mental Health Foundation workplace resources

Website: www.mentalhealth.org/tags/workplace

The Mental Health Foundation has developed a range of resources aimed at tackling mental health in the workplace. This includes the helpful guide 'Managing mental health in the workplace', produced with employee benefits specialist Unum.

Mind's guide to workplace mental health

Website: www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work

Mental health charity Mind's dedicated website section on workplace mental health provides guidance to help employers take care of themselves and their staff.

This is Me

Website: www.thelordmayorsappeal.org/power-of-diversity/this-is-me

A City wide mental health campaign, first developed by Barclay's as part of the Lord Mayor's 2016 Power of Diversity programme, run in partnership with Business Healthy and the City Mental Health Alliance and supported by City A.M.. It aims to reduce stigma around mental health in the workplace and raise awareness of wellbeing.

Rethink Mental Illness

Phone: 0121 522 7007
Email: info@rethink.org
Website: www.rethink.org

Rethink Mental Illness provide a range of support, advice and information services relating to mental illness. Rethink runs over 200 mental health services and 150 support groups across England, including therapy services, peer support groups and many more.

Action for Happiness

Website: www.actionforhappiness.org

Action for Happiness is not-for-profit creating a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society, by helping people to take practical action drawing on the latest scientific research. It's website provides resources and ideas for actions we can take to feel happier and help to reduce and prevent mental illness in workplaces and communities.

Heads Together

Website: www.headstogether.org.uk/

A mental health initiative spearheaded by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke of Sussex, which combines a campaign to tackle stigma and change the conversation on mental health with fundraising for a series of innovative new mental health services.

Mental Health At Work Gateway

Email: mentalhealthatwork@mind.org.uk
Website: www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk

Curated by Mind and supported by the The Royal Foundation, Heads Together and partners, the gateway can be seen as the first stop to find documents, guides, tips, videos, courses, podcasts, templates and information from key organisations across the UK, all aimed at helping businesses get to grips with workplace mental health. Whether your business has 10 people or 10,000 people, paying attention to mental health in the workplace has never been more important. Mental Health at Work can help businesses find the information and resources they need.

Together for Mental Wellbeing

Phone: 0207 780 7300
Email: contact-us@together-uk.org
Website: www.together-uk.org

Together is a national charity working alongside people with mental health issues. It provides a range of specialist support services, including peer support services, accommodation based support and more.

Mental Health First Aid:

Phone: 020 7250 8062
Email: info@mhfaengland.org
Website: <https://mhfaengland.org/>

Mental Health First Aid's mission is to train one in ten of the population in England in Mental Health First Aid skills, as we all have mental health. Mental health education empowers people to care for themselves and others. By reducing stigma through understanding, MHFA aim to break down barriers to the support that people may need to stay well, recover, or manage their symptoms – to thrive in learning, work and life. MHFA's vision is to normalise society's attitudes and behaviours around mental health, by developing the skills we need to look after our own and others' wellbeing.