



Guernsey Mind's Community of Practice for Bailiwick MHFAiders®

How Effective are MHFA® Networks?

Wednesday 10th September 2025

Facilitator: Louisa Mace

Session Type: Interactive training, breakout discussions, and reflective exercises

Session Introduction

The purpose of this session is to review the findings from the *Every Mind at Work Mental Health First Aid Data Report* to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of mental health support in the workplace. We will discuss how effective MHFAider networks are in practice, examining both their successes and areas where they may fall short. Additionally, the session will focus on identifying barriers that may prevent these networks from functioning optimally, exploring the support mechanisms currently in place, and considering practical solutions and strategies for strengthening MHFA networks and processes. By the end of the discussion, participants will have a clearer picture of how to enhance the impact of Mental Health First Aid initiatives and foster a more supportive, mentally healthy workplace environment.

How Effective are MHFA® Networks?

Background

- Every Mind at Work, founded by Paul McGregor, supports mental health networks within workplaces.
- Paul's personal experience with grief, depression, and anxiety led to creating a company that provides the support he found lacking as an MHFAider.
- They work with large organisations such as Wates, Dreams, Superdry, Wagamama, and Unipart.
- The report discussed is the first independent study (outside MHFA England) exploring MHFAider network effectiveness.
- 740 HR professionals were surveyed for the research.

Key Statistics from the Report

- 500,000+ MHFAiders across the UK; around 1,000 in the Bailiwick since 2017.
- Only 19.6% of HR professionals believe their MHFA networks work effectively.
- 83% of MHFAiders would like more support.
- 50%+ feel emotionally drained by the role.
- 25% of HR professionals do not view MHFAider wellbeing as a business risk.
- Only 14% of organisations track mental health-related conversations.
 - Of those that do, 40% say their networks are effective.
- 37% of MHFAiders reported preventing a mental health-related absence.

Personal & Interpersonal Challenges

- Lack of support and emotional overload (especially for sole MHFAiders in small organisations).
- Unclear role expectations and limited engagement from managers or colleagues.
- Insufficient time or resources to carry out the role effectively.
- Cultural barriers and limited buy-in from senior leaders.

Suggested Solutions:

- Clear role alignment and inclusion in wellbeing policies.
- Manager and HR backing to legitimise and support the role.
- Emphasis on self-care for MHFAiders (time out, reflection, boundaries).
- Guidelines for both aiders and those seeking support—clarifying what MHFAiders can and cannot do.

Systemic & Process Barriers

- MHFA often seen as a tick-box exercise post-training.
- Lack of structured processes for follow-up or data collection.
- Difficulties recording impact and demonstrating ROI (Return on Investment).
- EAP reliance: 25% of companies refer MHFAiders to EAPs as their main support—though EAPs are not designed for this purpose.

Suggested Solutions:

- Introduce tracking systems for MHFA interactions (anonymised where necessary).
- Measure and share outcomes and trends to highlight MHFA impact (e.g. retention, engagement, wellbeing).
- Protect MHFAiders through supervision, peer groups, or reflection sessions.

Group Discussion Summaries

Group 1

- **Support:**
 - Larger organisations often have informal internal networks and peer support.
 - Variability in management understanding and support for MHFA across teams.
- **Tracking:**
 - Use of timesheets to log MHFA-related activity.

- Interest in developing a secure, anonymised database to record conversation themes.
- **Improvement Ideas:**
 - Develop process guidelines for managers and MHFAiders.
 - Ensure systems are transparent and protect confidentiality.

Group 2

- **Support:**
 - Smaller companies often have single MHFAiders with limited internal support.
 - Larger companies hold monthly or quarterly catch-ups across sites.
- **Tracking:**
 - Some have implemented trackers to discuss anonymised cases and share learning.
 - One organisation noted reduced MHFA usage but increased EAP uptake, suggesting a shift in help-seeking behaviour.
- **Improvement Ideas:**
 - Create a “buddy system”—pair or small groups of MHFAiders (especially for those in small firms) for quick peer support.
 - Establish a Teams-based communication channel for fast, professional connection.
 - Schedule bi-monthly reflection sessions (e.g. via breakout groups).
 - Enhance visibility of MHFAiders during onboarding and internal communications.
 - Develop an anonymous advice-sharing system for MHFAiders to seek guidance safely (e.g. sector-based forums).

Key Takeaways

- MHFAider wellbeing and support are critical but often overlooked.
- Tracking and reflection significantly improve network effectiveness.
- Companies should:
 - Build structured processes and policies around MHFA support.
 - Encourage peer reflection groups and buddy systems.
 - Improve awareness and visibility of MHFA roles.
 - Measure and share MHFA impact data with HR and leadership.

Next Steps & Future Sessions

Action Items:

- Facilitator to circulate this meeting’s notes and report link.
- Attendees to review their organisation’s MHFA processes and tracking systems.
- Consider implementing a buddy system or Teams channel for ongoing peer support.

Next Session (Wed 12th Nov):

Focus on “*Difficult Conversations*” – how to hold, manage, and recover from emotionally challenging MHFA discussions.

Upcoming Refresher Training:

Final session before February/March; attendees encouraged to check expiry dates and register.