

“The training gave me the knowledge I needed to carry out my job role more effectively.”

Since I started working with vulnerable adults, some of whom have mental health issues, I developed an interest in mental health and wellbeing. Before I started this job, I didn't have much knowledge about mental health and wellbeing, so the training gave me the knowledge I needed to carry out my job role more effectively. Before I did the training, I did not realise how important it is to have awareness of your own mental health and that of family members. Before, I did not have any knowledge of warning signs, diagnosis, anything like that. I had gone travelling and worked in a different area, and mental health did not have any prominence in my life. Now I am in this job, I have more awareness and interest in mental health and wellbeing. It is also down to the training provided. There was nothing about it in school, no awareness sessions. If you don't know anything about mental health, how can you deal with it?

The first training course I did was safeTALK about three years ago. This gave me a good general awareness of suicidal thoughts, delivered in a way which was not too intense. Two years ago, I did Scotland's Mental Health First Aid: Adults. Because of safeTALK, I felt equipped enough to follow the course but still learned more, and gathered more tools to use in my job. About eighteen months ago, I did Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). This was really good, specifically the role play which allowed you to develop confidence to approach the topic of suicide. It reinforced the message that you are not there to fix a person's problem and find a solution, which can be your natural reaction. You are there to listen, have a conversation, and help them identify their own solution. The role play helped prevent you from clamming up, and it was helpful to get guidance and feedback from others on the training course too.

“With the training, I knew to ask directly about suicide.”

The training has equipped me to do my job – I am more aware of changes in a person's moods, in their medications, in their behaviour, so I can recognise if someone is becoming unwell. On 3 occasions at work, I have been able to identify changes in a person's behaviour and had the confidence to ask if the person involved had suicidal thoughts. Before going on SMHFA and ASIST, I would not have felt comfortable raising the subject and avoided it, or beat around the bush and asked 'are you thinking of doing something silly?' With the training, I knew to ask directly about suicide. When the individual said yes, I was able to apply the training – by listening and not trying to fix the problem, getting them to a place of safety, and following up with support and through-care following a visit to the GP and the hospital. Reflecting on it, I felt confident in approaching the situation and my decision making – and I think this helped the individual as well.

Just recently, I have been recommending SMHFA training to new colleagues, and explained how I found it beneficial as it covers lot of areas mental ill health. I have shared the manual with a colleague as well. I was anxious initially about going to the training, but it gave me a confidence boost the learning I got, and the trainers did well to involve everyone on the course.

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If you are affected by any issues raised in this case study or are worried about someone, please contact the Samaritans on 116 123, Breathing Space on 0800 838587 or NHS 24 on 111. In an emergency call 999. For information about mental health and suicide, visit www.suicidehelp.co.uk or download the Suicide? Help! app by searching in your app store.

To find out about training opportunities please email MHTraining@pkc.gov.uk