



Annual Report 2023/2024

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About UMHAN

The University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN) was founded by professionals in mental health work and has been instrumental in maintaining and improving the professional development and standards of mental health specialists and services in Higher Education (HE). UMHAN was first established in 2001 as an information-sharing network for mental health specialists working in HE and became a registered charity in 2003.

UMHAN was a key part in a series of important firsts in HE including the emphasis on practical and whole institution approaches to mental health, the development of mental health specific services in HE, facilitating awareness raising of mental health, and increasing the appropriate uptake of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for students with mental health conditions.

While UMHAN has broadened its membership to include other types of mental health specialist roles, its core aims have remained persistent over the years; these reflect the needs of specialists working in education, the requirements of people with mental health conditions undertaking education, and the benefits of positive action in education and mental health to students, education and society at large.

Aims and Objectives

The object of the charity is to advance the education of people with mental health conditions through improving access to HE.

Our aims are to:

- Influence policy development in the fields of education, mental health, disability, and beyond, to proportionately and accurately represent the needs and interests of people with mental health conditions.
- Ensure mental health support staff working in education are equipped with the tools, support, and empowerment to best support students, and ensure national representation to influence the sector for good.
- Remove the barriers to the full participation of people with mental health conditions in HE and beyond, encouraging the development of a culture in which people with mental health conditions studying in HE is a mainstream notion.

Key Activities

UMHAN is primarily a membership organisation and seeks to fulfil its aims by enabling the sharing and promotion of best practice through our networks, ensuring that members are kept up to date with the latest developments in the sector. We offer our members online meetings, forums and tailored resources.

We also actively seek to collaborate with key stakeholders and influencers in order to promote the needs and interests of people with mental health conditions, and to achieve the best educational outcomes for students with mental health conditions.

Funding

Our work is funded almost exclusively through membership fees. This income largely pays the salaries of our three staff all of whom work part time: Charity Manager, Policy & Engagement Officer and Administrator who undertake all day to day development and administration work.

Public Benefit

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We believe that by empowering mental health professionals working in education to develop their skills and expertise, and practice safely by providing networks, training and resources we advance the inclusion of people with mental health conditions in education, positively affecting health outcomes and life opportunities.

Organisational Developments 2023/2024

Governance

Trustees

This report covers the period September 2023 to end August 2024. We have seen some movement within the Board this year due to changes in the circumstances of Trustees.

We started the year with seven trustees, led by Chair, Dr. Anna Matthews. Phil Scarffe took over as Chair when Anna stepped down in December 2023. In July 2024, Hannah Borkin took over as interim Chair when Phil Scarffe relocated to a new post in Dubai.

The Board of Trustees included:

- Tessa Bartlett (Marketing and Communications)
- Hannah Borkin
- Matt Kempen (Marketing and Communications)
- Anna Matthews
- Lydia Pell
- Andrew Plumtree (Treasurer)
- Phil Scarffe.

Recruitment

A recruitment exercise for new Trustees is planned to take place in early 2025. Tessa Bartlett wishes to step down from the Board at the AGM in December 2024.

Membership

Members

We have seen a steady increase across all of our membership types and across geographical locations. This reflects our unique position representing multidisciplinary mental health practitioners in education. We hope to continue to develop and increase our inclusive community over the next year, while upholding our key principles as described in our Conduct & Capability Framework.

Due to the timing of renewals and invoicing, it is more accurate to provide data from April to April rather than our year end (31st March).

At the end of April 2024 we had:

- 331 Accredited Practitioner (Adviser) - 16% annual **increase**
- 198 Accredited Practitioner (Mentor) - 6% annual **increase**
 - 93 Associates - 43% annual **increase**
 - 78 Managers - 50% annual **increase**
 - 700 members - 19% annual **increase**.

The Memberwise Retention Calculator calculates the following figures for UMHAN membership:

- Membership recruitment rate: **27.1%**
- Membership retention rate: **82.7%**

How do you compare with other UK membership organisations?

- Average member recruitment rate = **12.5%**
Average member retention rate = **86%**

Our retention rate is largely based on employers' retention of staff, as the large majority of members remain with us until they move roles. This year's retention rate is slightly higher than for 2022/23 (80.8%).

Our recruitment rate reflects work done to highlight our value to members, and raising our profile more generally. It also indicates member's satisfaction with UMHAN, as the majority of new members find us through word of mouth. The recruitment rate is slightly lower than it was for 2022/23 (34.5%) which may be an indication of well publicised financial pressures on the HE sector but is still very high when compared with other membership organisations.

There has been an increase across all membership types. Our most popular form of referral is by word of mouth predominantly via other members including colleagues. A small but significant proportion find out about membership via a search engine.

Value

Our annual member surveys show that UMHAN members highly value the networking opportunities offered by membership, specifically the Community Forum, members' meetings and Lunch & Learn sessions - all of which are hosted online. This gives members an opportunity to share best practice, ask questions,

share resources and ideas and help improve the support provided to students with mental health conditions, and thus their educational opportunities and outcomes.

UMHAN also provides up to date resources and information about sector developments relevant to mental health and education:

The sense of community and being able to learn from other UMHAN members' approaches, and being able to share with them potentially useful experience and knowledge.

(Quote from Member Survey, 2023)

Our audit of members provides a quality assurance mechanism which helps to professionalise the roles within HE. Members' interests (and by association those of students with mental health conditions) are represented in our strategic and collaborative work with other organisations, where we seek to give a voice to students and those who support them.

Engagement

Meetings and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions

Our meetings and CPD sessions for members are varied, and form a core benefit of membership with UMHAN. In **2023-24** we held **65** separate meetings for members, with **937** attendees. Members have been able to watch the recordings of these meetings at a later date if unable to attend in person. An additional **581 individual views** of meeting recordings also took place during the year.

We hold regular meetings for individual role types - Mental Health Advisers, Specialist Mental Health Mentors, Managers and Associates. Topics discussed in these member meetings this year have included universities' duty of care, supporting international students and students who have reported an incident of sexual violence, the Department for Education Non-Medical Helper consultation and supporting anxious students, amongst many others:

It's just great. I started out alone as an MHA; it's a community/network, I LOVE the managers' meetings, great solidarity, like-mindedness, shared experiences, and similar challenges. So the meetings come top for me.

(Quote from Member Survey. 2023)

Our monthly Lunch & Learn sessions also continue to prove very popular. Topics are based on feedback and requests from members, such as supporting students with borderline personality disorder (BPD), self-harm, ADHD, male mental health and the

University Mental Health Charter. Many of these sessions were delivered by experts by experience; this underlines our commitment to create a whole person and inclusive approach where people with mental health conditions can thrive and their contributions are valued and respected. The best attended session was our event for **University Mental Health Day in March 2024** with **198 attendees**. Recordings of these sessions which are edited and hosted on the UMHAN Event Recordings page of the website means that they can be accessed by members unable to attend.

We have also built on our specialist meetings for professionally registered staff, with regular termly meetings for Occupational Therapists, Social Workers and Nurses this year with the aim to ensure members can easily remain professionally registered through networking, sharing best practice and reflective sessions with peers.

Additionally, we provide opportunities for members to receive specialist training from partnerships with other organisations. This year members were able to access training including *Safeguarding, Active Bystander* and *Using Outcome and Feedback Measures Effectively*.

We also re-established our Advisory Group, led by Rachel. This is an opportunity for members to get further involved in the charity by giving insight, ideas, feedback and support to the Manager and Trustees. During 2023/2024 the Advisory Group has been involved in a number of consultative exercises including the UMHAN Awards, the NMH Call for Evidence, supervisor documentation and the UCAS mental health declaration wording.

Survey

At UMHAN we regularly survey our members on issues such as caseload, working conditions and their membership. Results are presented to the Board of Trustees to inform development work.

This year, in addition to revisiting the standard questions we have asked before in order to analyse patterns and trends we delved deeper into research and evaluation practices particularly in relation to the use of Routine Outcomes Measures. This data has been shared with sector partners including SCORE, IMS and a new relationship with the What Works Centre for Student Access and Outcomes, TASO, to highlight the realities and challenges for members when evidencing improvement and impacts to student mental health outcomes. We also asked about NHS waiting times and current sector initiatives.

Headline findings from the [Member Survey 2023](#) include:

- A total of 104 members completed the survey, a response rate of 16.9 per cent, consistent with prior member survey response rates from 2022 and 2021
- 75.5 per cent of SMHMs caseload was made up of up to 50 per cent of 'high risk' students - over the last 12 months this proportion has stayed roughly the same for most SMHMs
- Mentors highlighted the increased numbers of students who are neurodivergent (primarily Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)) presenting with mental health conditions or awaiting formal diagnoses
- Mentors cited listening to students, building relationships and employing support strategies tailored to the individual as their most effective interventions and activities
- For almost 70 per cent of MHAs, their caseload was made up of up to 50 per cent of 'high risk' students - over the last 12 months this proportion had either increased or stayed about the same
- MHAs reported dealing with more students who presented with complex or higher needs than in the past. Their caseload was complicated by the fact that it was harder to refer them to NHS or other services
- MHAs felt that listening to students and the one-to-one nature of support was important. The use of reasonable adjustments and liaison with university staff and departments was also popular
- For most Managers the service caseload had increased by some degree since the last academic year
- Referrals by UMHAN members to NHS services was an ongoing source of concern. Some were unable to refer directly to NHS services whilst others described how their referrals were ignored or not accepted
- The majority of respondents are collecting, monitoring and evaluating data in relation to their support for student mental health. Lack of time and multiple data collection systems hamper efforts to successfully measure the impact of interventions and activities
- A flexible working environment was favoured by the majority of survey respondents and almost half of members worked flexibly including working from home for a set number of hours
- Two fifths of members are considering leaving their role in the next five years. Pay was the most cited reason
- The largest number of members responding to the survey were in agreement that UMHAN's meetings, training and CPD are useful to them, however, almost 70 per cent of respondents struggled to fit in CPD although they did manage to do some.

Feedback

Overwhelmingly, members value the sense of community UMHAN creates through being part of a friendly group of similar professionals across institutions brought together at online meetings and in the Community Forum where they can share information, experiences and resources in a safe space and grow with support from UMHAN. Members describe the online sessions as ‘friendly’, ‘informative’, ‘useful’, ‘valuable’, ‘well-facilitated’ and ‘supportive’. The largest number of members responding to the survey were in agreement that UMHAN’s meetings, training and CPD are useful to them.

This was the first year a question to generate a Net Promoter Score (NPS) was included in the Member Survey. NPS is a market research metric which measures customer experience by asking a single question of members - would they recommend the organisation to a colleague? The NPS for UMHAN was 74.0 per cent; a NPS of 70 plus “means your customers love you and your company is generating a lot of positive word of mouth from their referrals” (retently.com, 2023):

I like the Lunch and Learn sessions as they are good CPD and recorded. The mentor meetings are also really good to keep up to date with what is happening in the sector.

Regular online meetings, both role-based (i.e. MHA) and professional background-based (i.e. OT, Social Work etc.)

It's just great. I started out alone as an MHA; it's a community/network, I LOVE the managers' meetings, great solidarity, like-mindedness, shared experiences, and similar challenges. So the meetings come top for me.

The feeling of togetherness, of understanding for the role we do and continued support and training.

It feels personal and it has its members' well-being at its heart.

That I feel UMHAN understands my role in a way that sometimes my employer doesn't anymore. That you fight not only for us but for the students we work with. That you provide varied CPD opportunities.

Celebrating Members

UMHAN’s first Mental Health in Education Awards were set up during 2023/2024 by Sam Gamblin. The awards consisted of 9 categories recognising and celebrating the range of work that UMHAN members do to support student mental health. A page was set up on the website and the UMHAN Advisory Group checked the wording and categories for the awards. The awards were promoted heavily on social media and in member communications. A panel of experts including a UMHAN member were

approached to form the judging panel. Nominations closed earlier in 2024 and the winners were selected in July 2024. Due to the change in UMHAN staff personnel the Awards ceremony was postponed until November 2024. Winners will receive certificates and a £50 e-shopping voucher. The Awards will be accompanied by an active social media campaign.

Other Work

Publications

This year with the appointment of the Policy & Engagement Officer we have capitalised on the findings of the Member Survey 2023 Report to articulate the practical and strategic benefits of the specialist roles we represent in more detail as well as drawing attention to the challenges they face, We had two pieces published in Wonkhe, the ‘home of Higher Education debate’ authored by Rachel and Sam ([18 Oct 2023](#) and [2 May 2024](#)) to coincide with UMHAN’s 20th birthday and the Member Survey results. We also had a piece published by the [HE think tank, HEPI](#), to coincide with University Mental Health Day 2024, on why UMHAN continues to campaign to encourage students and university applicants to disclose a mental health condition to their HE Provider.

We have continued to build on our [Blog](#) with posts by staff, members and students on issues related to student mental health including our continuing campaign, ‘I Chose to Disclose’.

A substantial amount of staff time and effort went into co-ordinating a [response](#) to the Department for Education’s Non-Medical Help (NMH) consultation which took place in summer 2024. UMHAN worked collaboratively with a number of other third sector membership organisations (NADP, PATOSS, ADSHE and ANMHP) to publish guidance for members wishing to respond to the consultation as well as publishing UMHAN’s own response.

Research

This year has seen the development of a number of research projects and initiatives led by our new Policy & Engagement Officer, Rachel Spacey. Rachel scoped the research into members’ roles and proposed a project exploring ‘the role and benefits of Mental Health Advisers’. During the year she has devised the ethics protocol, undertaken a literature review, gathered data in focus groups and via a survey. The final report will be published in September/October 2024.

Rachel has also attended meetings of a research nature including Nurture-U, SCORE and SHARE as well as collaborating with TASO for a workshop at the SMaRteN, Student Mental Health Conference held in June 2024 in London. She has also created research collaboration guidelines which are available on the UMHAN

website which set out our position regarding research partnership. Rachel has delivered presentations at a number of conferences including ‘Access, participation, and student success’ (Universities UK), ‘The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference 2024’ (Government events) and the ‘Student Mental Health: Implementation Toolkit Conference’ (HE Professional).

Newsletter and external communications

Our monthly newsletter is now sent to all members and 1071 non-members (a 59% annual increase compared with 47% for 2022/23). The open rate for the newsletter is 41% for members and 39% for non-members (calculated as a yearly average) for 2023/2024 which is over the benchmark rate of 36% for email marketing.

We use the newsletter and our social media channels to increase awareness of the work done by our members, to report current trends and themes and to engage in relevant sector topics. This helps to not only increase UMHAN’s profile and our key principles, but that of our members.

External Representation

Former Charity Manager, Sam Gamblin and Policy & Engagement Officer, Rachel Spacey along with past Chairs, Anna Matthews and Phil Scarffe have undertaken the majority of external representation/collaboration work but with some vital additional input from other Trustees and members. For example, Sam chaired an Open Forum Conference on ‘Supporting Student Mental Health’ in Q3 2023 whilst Phil and Sam met with the lead researcher from the student suicide project related to HEMHIT and fed back on guidance for HE providers in Q1 2024. Rachel was invited by TASO to attend the online, inaugural ‘Student wellbeing dialogue UK-NL’ held in Q2 2024.

Our input with external organisations tends to focus on the specialist roles which make up our membership, multidisciplinary team working, practical strategies for supporting students, the need for good data and evidence, mental health conditions through a disability lens and removing barriers to successful education for students with mental health conditions.

Regular Attendance

Disabled Students Stakeholder Group

The Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Expert Group

Student Counselling Research, Outcomes & Evaluation (SCORE)

SHARE (Students' mental Health Assessment, Reflection & Experiences) project

Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce (HEMHIT)

Nurture-U (was the University Student Wellbeing Project) - UMHAN is on the External Advisory Board for this four-year research flagship project funded by UKRI.

Ongoing/Ad-hoc

We have catch up and partnership meetings with:

British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy - Universities and Colleges division/Head of University Counselling Services (BACP-UC/HUCs)

Association for the Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE)

National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP)

Universities UK (UUK)

Universities and Colleges Application Service (UCAS)

Association of Colleges (AoC)

Student Minds

Office for Students (OfS)

Charlie Waller Trust (CWT)

Independent Higher Education (IHE)

TASQ (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes)

Academic Registrar's Council (ARC)

Impact Measurement Scale (IMS) with Newcastle University

Bipolar UK

Impact of our work

The impact of our work during 2023/2024 was gauged in a number of ways including our reach (e.g. by social media metrics), growth (e.g. membership numbers) and influence (e.g. collaboration requests/working arrangements).

However, we appreciate that as UMHAN has grown we need to develop an effective and rigorous way to demonstrate our impact. We hope to prioritise this development in early 2025.

In the meantime, the impact of our work can be partially demonstrated in the following:

Growth

- Between April 2023 and end April 2024 we had a 19% annual increase in memberships (n=700)
- We held 65 separate meetings for members, with 937 attendees, compared to 53 separate meetings for members with 813 attendees during 2022/2023
- An additional 581 individual views of meeting recordings took place during the year, compared to 435 views during 2022/2023.

Reach

- Between April 2023 and end April 2024 we had a 19% annual increase in LinkedIn followers (n=1861 compared to n=1564)
- Between April 2023 and end April 2024 we had a 3% annual increase in X followers (n=2924 compared to n=2841)
- The number of subscribers (non-members) to the UMHAN newsletter increased by 25% during 2023/24 (from n=665 to n=890)
- We had 450 registrations to attend our free University Mental Health Day Webinar with 198 people attending on the day. We also saw 14.2k X (Twitter) impressions in March 2024 - our best performing post was about staff mental health being as important as student mental health.

Influence

- The Charity Manager was involved in a HEMHIT (Mental Health Taskforce) round table meeting to discuss methods of identifying students at risk. Sam has had regular conversations with the Taskforce project manager and UMHAN are scheduled to be involved with ASMOSSHE on HEMHIT guidance relating to case management later in the year
- The UMHAN background note to the DfE NMH Call for Evidence resulted in our best performing Tweet in Q2 2024 with 1.5k impressions. We have also had feedback from other organisations (including IHE) that our document was helpful in informing their own response to the consultation. Similarly, our best performing LinkedIn post during the same period was where we shared a



document we had written with other third sector organisations. This received 978 impressions

- The Member Survey 2023 Report and our associated articles (in Wonkhe and on the HEPI blog) were picked up by other organisations including the Times Higher Education (THE). The THE piece resulted in our best performing LinkedIn post in Q1 2024. It was also mentioned in the Committee of University Chairs Newsletter: February 2024.

Key Developments for 2024/2025

Name Change

Members were consulted on a name change at the end of 2023 and were encouraged to vote for their preferred choice. A total of 220 votes were cast of which the winning name was 'Mental Health in Education' or MHinE (pronounced mine). Following a resolution at the AGM in December 2024 this change will be progressed.

As we continue the process of changing our name, the Trustees and staff will consult with members on our new strategy for 2025 onwards which will help drive our policy, research and engagement activity.

Staff

Trustees agreed to the funding of a fixed term, part time Policy & Engagement Officer post, to help demonstrate the impact of UMHAN and its members, as well as helping to provide a more dynamic response to sector policy developments. Rachel Spacey was appointed to this post and began working at UMHAN in August 2023. The post was recently extended for a further year following a role review.

In July 2024, Sam Gamblin, UMHAN Charity Manager left and a new appointment, David Barker, began in September 2024. UMHAN's Administrator, Michelle Davies also moved on to a new role and left UMHAN in early September.

Planned developments for 2024/2025 include the recruitment of a new Administrator (12 hours) and the creation of a volunteer role - social media intern to assist the team with social media/marketing. It is anticipated that Rachel's hours (currently at 4 days as an interim measure) will be reviewed in March 2025.

Membership

We will continue to aim our recruitment efforts at a wide range of staff, to promote the benefits of our network in supporting individuals and teams in particular at those HE institutions where we are not currently represented.

We will continue to develop our resources and training for members to ensure that their skills and knowledge are relevant and up to date.

Financial Review

Overview

Income has primarily increased due to membership development and some smaller one-off payments for consultancy and involvement in research projects.

Our accounts have been independently examined and can be viewed in a separate document.

Future Plans

Our reserves mean that we are able to employ the Policy & Engagement Officer for one more year; we are hopeful that their work may in turn help to ensure membership continues to increase. They will also be looking to secure alternative funding streams through research collaboration.

[See UMHAN Annual Accounts 2023/2024 Final].