

UMHAN 2025-2030: Driving Excellence in Mental Health Support

- the UMHAN Strategic Plan

UMHAN: Working together to maintain high standards of mental health professional support in education.

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About UMHAN

UMHAN (University Mental Health Advisers Network) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and membership organisation with approximately 800 members from over 100 organisations.

We equip mental health professionals in tertiary education (Higher and Further) with the networks, resources, and continuous professional development (CPD) they need to excel and practice safely.

Our work focuses on members, students and the wider community of tertiary education professionals.

About Our Members

The collective experience and expertise of our members form our core strength.

We have over 600 Accredited Practitioner members who work as a Mental Health Adviser (MHA) or Specialist Mental Health Mentor (SMHM). They have professional or postgraduate qualifications in a mental health related field and/or extensive experience and some have undertaken specialised mentoring accreditation.

Around half of our members retain professional registration with another regulatory body, such as Social Work England, Social Care Wales, Social Work Scotland, NISCC (Northern Ireland Social Care Council), The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC), British Psychological Society (BPS) or British Association of Counselling Professionals (BACP).

Additionally, we provide membership options for Managers, including those directly supervising Mental Health Advisers (MHAs) and Specialist Mental Health Mentors (SMHMs), alongside an increasing contingent of Associate members

comprising other education professionals with mental health-related responsibilities, such as staff in Student Support, Student Wellbeing, and Student Accommodation.

All UMHAN members agree to abide by our Capability and Conduct Framework. This framework broadly encompasses the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by mental health practitioners working in education and the conduct expected of UMHAN members. These are based on the 10 Essential Shared Capabilities for the Mental Health Workforce, which enables this framework to reflect a wide range of member qualifications and experience but is modified to focus more on the specific context-based approach of supporting students with mental health conditions in tertiary (Higher and Further) education, and UMHAN's aims.

Our Strategic Plan

Our 2025 to 2030 strategic plan outlines the following:

- Our vision (the ideal state we would like to see)
- Our mission (the role we will play to work towards the vision)
- Our outcomes (the changes we hope to bring about)
- Our values (how we will act)
- Our activities and outputs (what we plan to do)
- Our impact (how we will measure it).

Our Vision

Remove the barriers to the full participation of people with mental health conditions in tertiary education and beyond, encouraging the development of a culture in which people with mental health conditions studying in higher and further education is a mainstream notion.

Our Mission

- To ensure students with mental health conditions are aware of their rights and how to access available support.
- To ensure students with mental health conditions receive support from well-trained, knowledgeable, and professional practitioners, to reduce risk and increase safety for them as they study.
- To enhance the tertiary education sector's understanding of mental health conditions, encompassing their potential impact on study and the capacity for individuals with these conditions to lead meaningful, positive, and productive lives.
- To increase understanding among the general population, especially prospective students and their families, friends, and supporters, regarding mental health conditions and the support available at educational institutions.
- To establish UMHAN as the leading membership organization for multidisciplinary mental health practitioners in tertiary education, recognised for promoting and enabling effective, high-quality, and diverse support.

Our Outcomes

Strategies to identify and better support student mental health continue to be a key focus for government and the tertiary education sector. Formal disclosure of mental health conditions by applicants to universities and colleges and by students on course, continues to increase, year on year. Additionally, the tertiary education sector continues to deal with multiple challenges including the cost of living crisis and increased financial burdens on universities and colleges such that there has been an unprecedented number of Higher Education Providers undertaking cost cutting measures such as staff redundancies including professional services staff.

During the next five years our outcomes include the following. They will adapt in response to the changing landscape and to feedback from our members and other stakeholders:

1. To advocate for the rights and support of current and future students with mental health conditions across the education, mental health, and disability sectors.
2. Strengthen student mental health support in tertiary education through improved recruitment and retention of experienced staff.
3. Strengthen the evidence base showcasing our members' impact on the access, progression, and success of students with mental health conditions in tertiary education.

Our Values

Our values shape our interactions with our staff, members, trustees, students and stakeholders. They underpin our strategy and our day-to-day operations.

Collaboration

We believe in collaboration, partnership and innovation to achieve sustained change for people working in education within the field of mental health and for student mental health.

Equality

UMHAN believes that mental health conditions should not be a barrier to accessing tertiary education, experiencing it positively or to benefitting from the opportunities that it creates. We actively work to address inequalities for students with mental health conditions.

Principles and public benefit

We follow the Seven Principles of Public Life, known as the Nolan Principles:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership.

We follow relevant legal frameworks and best practice guidance for charities.

We champion the inclusion of individuals with mental health conditions in education and employment, thereby enhancing health outcomes and expanding lifetime opportunities.

Representation

We recognise the positive contributions people with mental health conditions make to education and wider society. We believe in creating a whole person and inclusive approach where people with mental health conditions can thrive and their contributions are valued and respected.

Trust

We are committed to transparent decision-making and practices, and continual improvement through challenge and debate.

Our Activities and Outputs

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030			
Outcome	Activities	Outputs	Goals
1. Advocate for current and future students with mental health conditions	Continuously review and enhance the content and navigation of the UMHAN website to ensure prospective students, their friends, families and supporters can easily find accurate, relevant, and supportive information about mental health resources in tertiary education. Review/rebranding of the website in 2025/26 will make the website more user friendly.	<p>This will be measured by increasing our website click rate to over 1000 a month (currently 700).</p> <p>We will also track the Open Rate of our newsletters which currently stands at a 7% average across the board. We will look to increase this to over 10% as we increase our engagement further.</p>	Short term

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030			
	Utilise our social media channels to promote website and podcast content, alongside other relevant information, to raise awareness of mental health stigma and encourage disclosure among students.	Launch of the UMHAN podcast by Q1 2027. This includes content from past CPD and new content with a range of guests.	Medium term
	Drive greater awareness and engagement through the annual University Mental Health Day in collaboration with Student Minds.	UMHD 2026 will consist of pre-and post-events to help drive engagement. Impression metrics across social media will continue to be captured.	Short term
	Continue to engage and strengthen relationships with diverse sector stakeholders to increase awareness of mental health stigma and promote transparency regarding disclosure rates amongst students in tertiary education.	Aim to work with at least ten new stakeholders.	Long term

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030

2. Support the recruitment and retention of experienced staff	To enhance support for mental health practitioners in tertiary education, we will develop and grow UMHAN membership, particularly in the Further Education sector.	Increase membership base to 1000 members.	Long term
	Empower UMHAN members with up-to-date knowledge of relevant policy and disability rights, enabling them to apply this knowledge confidently in their practice.	This will be defined in partnership with the UMHAN Advisory Group and measured in the annual member survey.	Long term
	Continue to actively create, promote and facilitate online, low-cost, or free opportunities for members to share best practice, collaborate, and engage in peer education.	This includes at least one Lunch & Learn per month and one free training opportunity per annum.	Medium term

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030

	Support the recruitment of experienced staff through free job postings for UMHAN member institutions (on our website, social media channels, newsletter and forum).	This will be relaunched as part of our rebrand. We will aim to promote at least 12 job postings per annum.	Medium term
	Leverage our mission, values, and member expertise to create and uphold relevant policies and procedures. Involve the UMHAN Advisory Group in a range of developmental activities including insight, ideas, feedback and support to the Board of Trustees and Head of Research and Engagement.	Our existing policies will be updated as part of our rebrand in 2025.	Long term
	Build upon the success of the inaugural UMHAN awards by making them an annual event, actively promoting them across the tertiary education sector to acknowledge, celebrate, and disseminate best practice in student mental health support.	The UMHAN awards have been scheduled for 2025 to coincide with the AGM. Their format and content will continue to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees and the UMHAN Advisory Group.	Short term
	Continue to develop partnerships with a range of relevant sector organisations in order to facilitate a range of engagement opportunities for members.	We aim to increase the number of working partnerships we have including with commercial organisations in the next five	Long term

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030			
		years.	
3. Advance the evidence base	Sustain and strengthen collaborations to advance the evidence base of our members' work including existing collaborative work with SCORE, Nurture-U, and other academic partners.	We will continue to work with existing partners and scope relevant collaboration opportunities via the membership and externally.	Long term
	Actively seek and engage in research and development projects with academics, third sector organisations, research consultancies, practitioners and other organisations to enhance the evidence base for student mental health support.	We will actively promote our research credentials and our willingness to engage in research collaboration with a range of stakeholders. We aim to be included in at least one research tender per annum.	Medium term
	Launch and develop the UMHAN Research Network to actively promote and support research into student mental health, ultimately strengthening the evidence base for our members' work.	The first year of the Network will include a launch event, social media presence, newsletter and timetabling of future sessions. We aim to secure membership of at least 100 members in the first year.	Short term
	Raise awareness of the range of support delivered by members of UMHAN across the tertiary sector through social media and the website and	Rebranding of UMHAN in 2025/26 and refresh of the website and social media	Short term

Outcomes, Activities, Outputs and Goals 2025-2030			
	engagement with a range of diverse sector partners.	channels is the first stage in this process.	
	Measuring the impact of UMHAN amongst members and other stakeholders.	Creation of an impact evaluation plan including a Theory of Change for UMHAN in collaboration with staff, Trustees, members and stakeholders to gauge the impact of UMHAN.	Medium term

Our Impact

This strategy sets out the impact we plan to make. UMHAN is not just a reporting organisation but a learning organisation and we consistently collect and analyse data to improve the benefits that we provide to our members and to our stakeholders.

We currently undertake an annual survey of members (generating both qualitative and quantitative data) which we use for both internal and external purposes including developing membership benefits and guiding the advocacy, research and development work we do with sector partners.

We collect data in relation to the range of CPD opportunities we provide for members including member meetings, engagement with social and other media and charity growth which we share with the Board of Trustees for quarterly review.

We are committed to developing our understanding of our impact within the next five years through the creation of a UMHAN Impact Evaluation plan which will include our Theory of Change. This will be led by our Head of Research & Engagement.

Final version approved: November 2025.