



Annual Report 2021-2022





University Mental Health Advisers Network
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About UMHAN

UMHAN was established in 2003 as an information-sharing network for mental health specialists working in Higher Education. UMHAN was a key part in a series of important firsts in Higher Education, including the emphasis on practical and whole-institution approaches to mental health and illness, the development of mental health-specific services in Higher Education, facilitating awareness-raising of mental health and illness, and increasing the appropriate uptake of Disabled Students' Allowances for students with mental health conditions. Importantly, UMHAN members connected the work being undertaken by specialists in Higher Education with national initiatives regarding social exclusion, health promotion, place- and context-based provision for people with mental health conditions and tackling mental health inequalities for students with mental health conditions.

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.

While UMHAN has broadened its membership to include other types of mental health-specialist roles and has been involved in consultations and initiatives undertaken by other organisations, its core aims have remained remarkably 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.

What does UMHAN do?

The object of the charity is to advance the education of people with mental health difficulties through improving access to Higher Education.

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 higher education and beyond, encouraging the development of a culture in which people with mental health conditions studying in higher education 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



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to date with the latest developments in the sector. We offer our members online forums, tailored resources and meetings.

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.

Who funds our work?

Our work is funded almost exclusively through membership fees. This income largely pays the salaries of our Charity Manager and administrator who undertake all day-today administration and any development 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-time opportunities.

Organisational developments 21-22

Governance

Trustees

We started the year with 6 trustees, led by Chair Anna Matthews.

They are:

Lydia Pell, Dan Doran (resigned December 2022), Hannah Abrahams, Hannah Wilson, Andrew Plumtree (Treasurer) and Anna Matthews.

Recruitment

A recruitment exercise was undertaken for new trustees, with an emphasis on trying to attract a diverse range of candidates. This included a skills audit of current trustees, and review of the role descriptions, recruitment process and marketing. We were impressed with the high calibre of applicants, and are in the process of onboarding 4 new Trustees.

Membership

Who are our 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-April rather than our year end (31st March). At the end of April 2022 we had:

245 Accredited Practitioner (MHA) - 12% annual increase

177 Accredited Practitioner (Mentor) - 13% annual increase

44 Associates - 120% annual increase

44 Managers - 51% annual increase

510 Total

This is a 20% increase in total from last year.

The [Memberwise Retention Calculator](#) calculates the following figures for UMHAN membership:

Membership Retention Rate: 98.8%

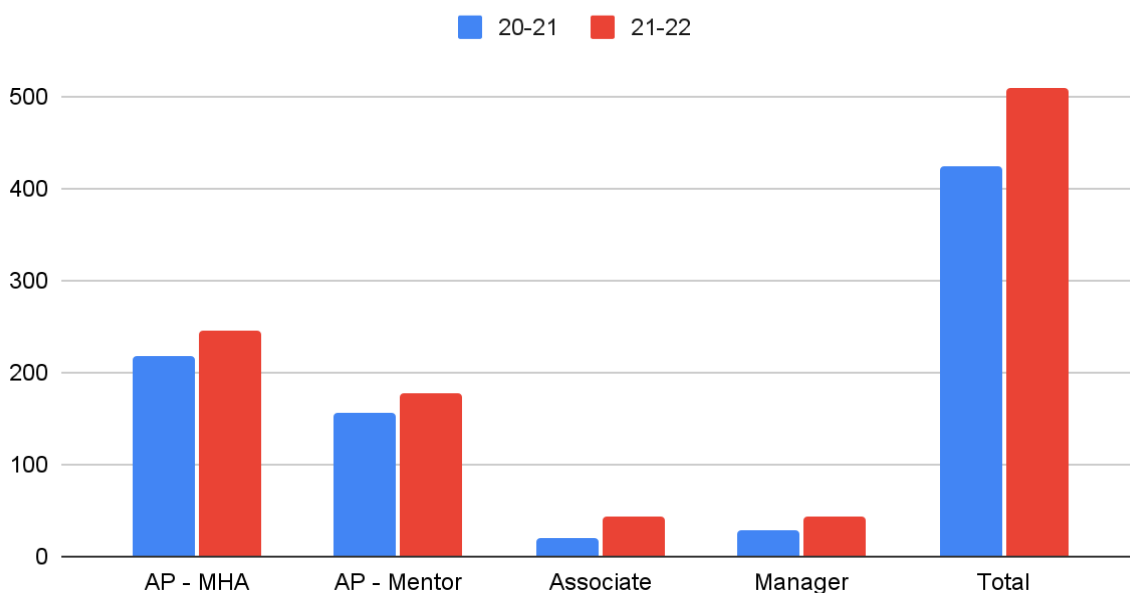
Membership Recruitment Rate: 23.9%

How do you compare with other UK membership organisations?

Average member recruitment rate = 12.5%

Average member retention rate = 86%

Annual membership





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There has been an increase across all membership types. The majority of new applicants have found out about UMHAN through word of mouth; this might be line managers, team members or peers. A significant number also find out about membership through conference presentations or via a search engine.

Why do they become members?

Our regular surveys show that members most highly value the networking opportunities offered by membership, specifically the online forum and meetings. This gives members an opportunity to share best practice, ask questions and share resources and ideas. The result is improving 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.

Our audit of members provides a quality assurance mechanism which helps to professionalise the roles within Higher Education. 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 the most unwell students and those who support them.

"I always feel UMHAN are there for me and ultimately this helps me as a professional, committed to continuous learning, staying up to date and informed as well as being included. I always feel my opinion is listened to and respected."

Quote from Member Survey 2021

Member engagement

Meetings

Topics discussed in member meetings this year have included the return to campus and flexible working; learning from service developments during lockdown; supporting autistic students and information sharing. Members have been able to watch the recordings of these meetings at a later date if unable to attend in person.

Satisfaction with member meetings is relatively high with 93% of respondents rating their overall satisfaction as Good or Excellent and 77% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that they can apply the material discussed to their everyday work.

"I've found those meetings I attended a powerful experience with a range of people and voices that all contribute well."

Quote from member survey 2021

Our monthly Lunch & Learn sessions have proved incredibly popular. We have ensured that 5 out of 7 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 about Borderline Personality Disorder/Emotional Personality Disorder, led by members Hannah Facey (independent Specialist Mental Health Mentor) and Lorna Zacharek (Mental Health Adviser, Middlesex University). Recordings of these sessions means that they can be accessed by members unable to attend.

We have also held specialist meetings for Occupational Therapist members and Social Work members, with the aim to ensure members can easily remain professionally registered through networking, sharing best practice and reflective sessions with peers. Meetings for practitioners working in the Creative Arts sector recognises the unique experiences and challenges of working in this area.

Additionally, we provide opportunities for members to receive specialist training from partnerships with other organisations. This year through our consultative role for Student Space we were able to offer Eating Disorders Training to UMHAN members and their colleagues, through a partnership with First Steps ED. 292 University Professionals working as Mental Health Support, Counsellors, and Tutors attended one or more of five 90 minute accredited eating disorder continued professional development training sessions delivered by First Steps. Funded by the Student Space service, UMHAN members were also able to directly refer students into First Steps specialist support programmes leading to 162 referrals from 34 different institutions.

CPD was also provided on the topics of Intercultural Competence and software Brain In Hand.

Other work

External representation

Charity Manager, Sam Gamblin, and Chair, Anna Matthews, have undertaken the majority of external representation/collaboration work but with some vital additional input from other Trustees and members.

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](#) - attendance at main meeting but also:

- Alliance on Quality Provision for Disabled Students and Inclusivity- separate group made up of practitioner bodies, NUS and other sector groups
- DSA reform group - SLCs working group looking at procurement and student journey

[The Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Expert Group](#)

HE Taskforce Mental Health & Wellbeing sub-group (Universities Minister)



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Mental Health in Higher Education (Universities UK Advisory Group)

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](#)

[Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education](#)

[National Association of Disability Practitioners](#)

[Universities UK](#)

Department of Education DSA team

[Universities and Colleges Application Service \(UCAS\)](#)

[Association of Colleges](#)

[Student Minds](#)

[Office for Students](#)

[Charlie Waller Trust](#)

Collaboration

[First Steps ED](#) - as above

BACP-UC/HUCS - drafting Information and Student Suicide Report

Consultation

We have provided expertise in the following:

- UCAS' [new Adviser Toolkit for supporting students with individual needs](#) and accompanying training module
- [Student Space](#) Advisory Panel
- Student Minds [Supporting Students with Eating Disorders](#) report
- Lord Chris Holmes "[Report into the Disabled Students' Allowance](#)"

Additional external work

We have also attended or presented in a diverse range of meetings and conferences:



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[Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition](#) (CYMPH) - CYPMH and Schools Wellbeing Partnership joint events

All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health - Mental Health Post Pandemic - meeting

ADSHE conference South - workshop on the role of a Specialist Mental Health Mentor with UMHAN member Jane Dye

Open University Seminar: Mental Health Declarations by Black Students

NHS Covid-19: international innovations in mental health - webinar

Radio interview by Radio Islam

Article published about University Student Mental Health Support in [NASEN Connect](#)

UUK Suicide Prevention Rountable with Minister for Universities

Student Futures round table on Student Mental Health: UPPF Student Futures

Commission

MWBHE - chaired workshop on Partnerships with Students as part of the the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference:Radical and Creative Partnership working

Mental Health in Higher Education conference presentation

Student Minds: International students roundtable meeting

Research

[Positive Digital Practices](#) - UMHAN is on the Advisory Board for this research funded by the Office for Students, and we have employed a Mental Health Adviser member, Ashley Cave, to work as Project Officer. Our aim is to ensure the usability and sustainability of outputs from the project strands.

[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.

Additionally, we have contributed to multiple research calls for evidence and questionnaires, on student mental health topics and promoted opportunities for members/students to take part where relevant.

Member survey

Our 2020-21 Member Survey report provided insights into the increasing workloads of university mental health support services. 71% of Specialist Mental Health Mentors and 58% of Mental Health Advisers identified an increased number of "high risk" students on their caseload. A large proportion also cited concerns about how increasing mental health problems due to lockdown



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would make their caseloads unmanageable. Our report was shared by the CYMPH in their newsletter.

Newsletter and external communications

Our monthly newsletter is now sent to all members and 456 non-members (a 74% annual increase). The newsletter has around a 40% open rate which is nearly double the benchmark rate.

We use the newsletter and our social media channels to increase awareness of the good 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.

This year we have commissioned a short explainer video on the Role of a Mental Health Adviser. Launched on 17th March, it has had 155 views up to end of March. The video has been used by UCAS to add to their training module for applicant advisers, and by university services to embed onto their webpages. In April this will be followed by a similar video on the Role of a Specialist Mental Health Mentor.

One of our key planned developments for this year was to improve our external facing resources. Pages now include information about the range of support services available, Disabled Students' Allowances and students rights under the Equality Act. As a result our "For Students" webpages are used by SHOUT, the text crisis service, on an open resources page on their website; it is also used as a resource for volunteers to share directly with texters. Our analytics show us that not only has this increased traffic to the pages, but that viewers are spending time reading the content and clicking links.

Key planned developments for 2022-23

Governance

With new Trustees currently being recruited we are planning on strengthening and developing our Governance and increasing the capacity of the Board. We will support our trustees to ensure their understanding of good governance is sufficient and up-to-date.

Research

As well as continuing the Advisory Board work (as detailed above) we are also supporting UMHAN member Apostolos Fournaris to conduct and promote his PhD research "The Impact of Specialist Mentoring on Anxiety and Academic Performance".

Membership

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



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20th Anniversary

2023 marks UMHAN's official 20th anniversary and we will be arranging a series of activities to celebrate our work and that of our members.

Policy development

After the launch of our paper on Information Sharing and Student Suicide we will be creating some accompanying guidance around Mental Health Service Governance. This has been adapted from a short piece by Dr Lucy Robinson, Newcastle University and drafted by Sam and a range of UMHAN manager members.

Financial review

Overview

Although this has been a difficult year for the charity sector and wider economy, careful financial management and forecasting has meant that UMHAN has managed fairly well financially. Income has increased due to membership development and some one-off payments for consultancy and project work. Some costs have been reduced due to Covid i.e. travel and office space rent.

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

Future plans

The charity will be looking to diversify its income through different streams than just membership fees, such as grants and other fundraising.

We will also be planning some developments based on our healthy reserves. This will include ensuring that the benefits we offer members are appropriate and continue to further our aims and objectives.