



Annual Report 2020-2021





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



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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 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-to-day 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 20-21

Governance

Trustees

We have 6 trustees, led by Chair Anna Matthews.

They are:

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

Strategic Review

A review of UMHAN's strategy was undertaken by the Board of Trustees and Charity Manager during 2020-21. This was a routine review coinciding with the end of the



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last strategic plan. This activity included redefining our mission and values, as well as identifying our priorities for the next 3 years. These are:

- To use our mission and values to develop and maintain policies and procedures.
- To provide transparent accountability to our members, students/people with mental health conditions and all stakeholders.
- To develop and grow our membership to provide an active forum of support across the UK.
- To facilitate online and in person opportunities for the sharing of best practice, collaboration, and peer education.
- To ensure that members of UMHAN are kept up to date with key information about current policy and disability rights and equipped to apply this knowledge in their work.
- To support the recruitment and retention of experienced staff in the sector to best support students.
- To advocate for people with mental health conditions across the Education, Mental Health, and Disability sectors through our collaborative work.
- To respond to opportunities to liaise with relevant organisations and contribute to initiatives, working groups, conferences, and training.

Our Strategic Priorities document can be downloaded in full on our website.

Volunteers

UMHAN values volunteering as a vital way of achieving our aims, both short and long term. We benefit from volunteers from within the membership, who help us develop resources and policies, but also from external volunteers who assist with campaigns and project development.

Partly due to Covid but also reassessing our structure as part of our strategic review, our member/volunteer working groups have not been active in the same way as previous years.

However, members have still played a part in volunteering their time, for example, feeding back on the new forum, reviewing books and writing blog posts, and other material.

We have also benefited from a recent graduate volunteer, who helped reinvigorate our I Chose to Disclose Campaign, and Uni Mental Health Day.



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Our volunteers are instrumental in ensuring that key developments, including new guidance and practices, are member-led and representative. We believe they are an invaluable resource and will continue to ensure that we support and recognise volunteers in our organisation.

Membership

Who are our members?

During 2020-21 our membership types expanded: Mental Health Advisers (MHAs) and Specialist Mental Health Mentors (SMHMs) memberships were renamed Accredited Practitioner memberships to reflect the wide range of job titles and roles that have developed. We also introduced a Manager type, for those directly line-managing MH practitioners, and an Associate type for people who work with students and have an interest in mental health.

We have seen a steady increase across all of our membership types and across geographical locations (we have welcomed our first international member!). 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](#).

At our year end (31st March) we had:

238 Accredited Practitioner (MHA)

157 Accredited Practitioner (Mentor)

19 Associates

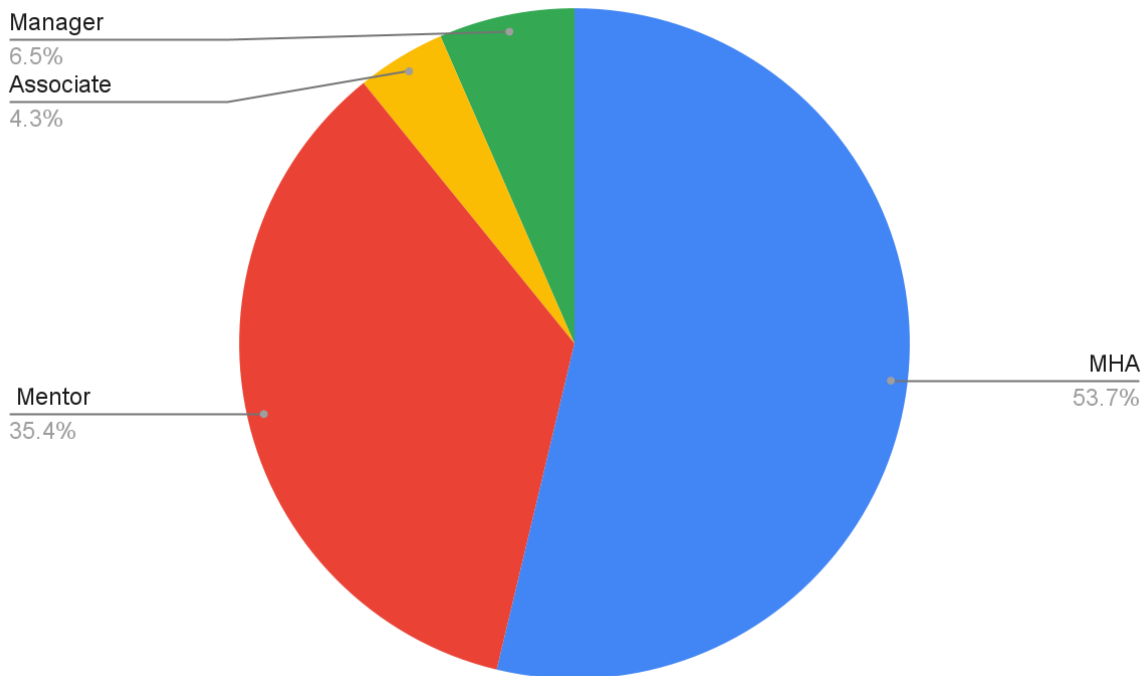
29 Managers

443 Total

This is a 19% increase on last year.



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There has been an increase across all membership types, partly due to a recruitment drive with the launch of our new membership types. Additionally, we have been refining our external messaging about membership benefits (including remote meetings) and the importance of ensuring quality support provision for students.

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 outcome 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.



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Member engagement

Meetings

Due to the fact that UMHAN already used Zoom, we were able to transition quickly to online member meetings - in fact we had our first online Mentor meeting on 26th March.

Topics have included the challenges of remote working, risk assessment, changing job roles and service reviews. Members have been able to watch the recordings of these meetings at a later date if unable to attend in person.

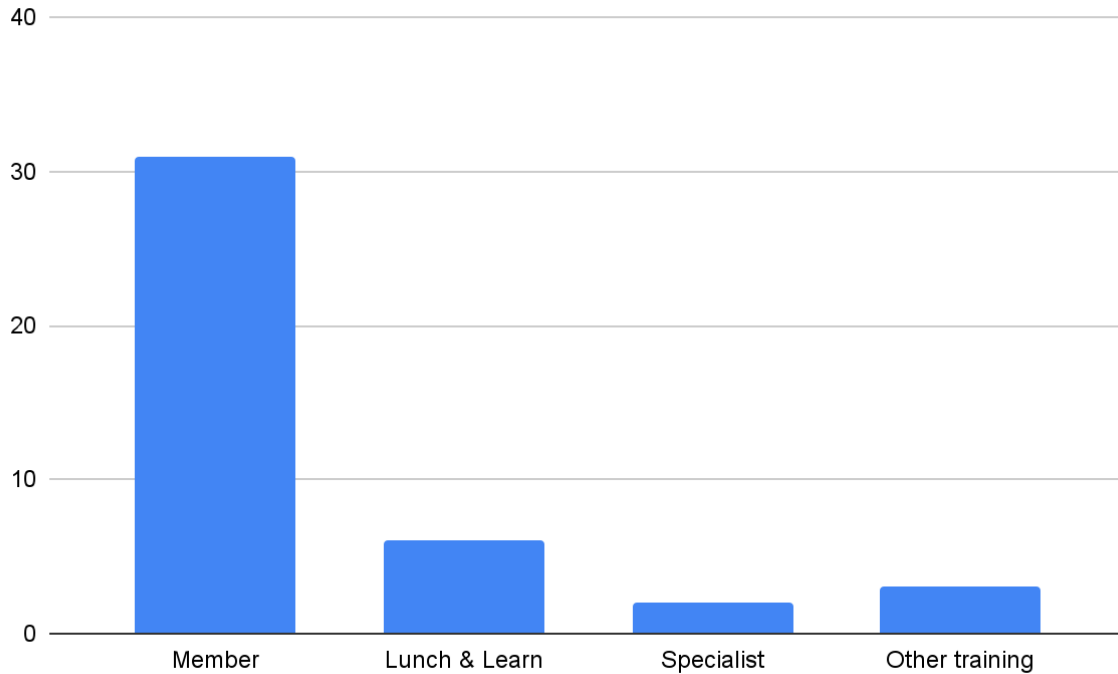
Comments made during these meetings led to UMHAN funding some tailored training on working remotely with students, which was free for all members. Recent feedback from members shows they are broadly very satisfied with remote meetings, especially being able to interact with peers. As a result of this feedback, we will be continuing to hold remote meetings post-pandemic, even if some in person meetings are reintroduced.

At the start of the Autumn term 2020 we introduced a monthly Lunch & Learn slot to provide further CPD for members. The best attended session was delivered by Dr Sarah Cassidy on Autism Adapted Safety Plans.

We have also recently started developing our networks for members from a particular professional or other specialist background, with the aim to help ensure members can easily remain professionally registered through networking, sharing best practice and reflective sessions with peers.



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Our online AGM was also far better attended than an in-person event with 55 attendees. Online voting has also ensured we are more representative, with 295 voters.

Forum

Our new online forum was launched just over a year ago, with a few teething problems! The benefits of the new forum include being able to follow/unfollow topics of interest, and having a better visual format making it easier to read and search old posts.

Although slow to get going, we have now had good engagement from members.

Topics 310

Replies 551

Posts 861

However, our statistics show us that 40% of members have never visited the forum - it's hard to compare this with our previous Jiscmail email forum as we couldn't



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measure this in any way. Our aim will be to increase the numbers of members using the forum, and our next member survey will be asking for more feedback on this.

Other work

External representation

Charity Manager, Sam, and Chair, Anna, 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

- Future of DSA Working Group - separate working 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](#)

[Student Space](#) Advisory Panel

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

Ongoing ad-hoc

We have regular catch up and partnership meetings with:

[BACP/HUCS](#)

[AMOSSHE](#)

[ADSHE](#)

[NADP](#)

[UUK](#)



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Government DSA team

[UCAS](#)

Association of Colleges

Student Minds

Office for Students

Consultation

We have provided expertise in the following:

- The Royal College of Psychiatrists' "[Mental Health of Higher Education Students](#)" report
- The [Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition](#) annual consultation
- The Centre for Social Justice Disability Commission's report "[Now is the Time](#)"
- "[Arriving at Thriving: Learning from Disabled Students for the Benefit of all](#)"
Policy Connect/Higher Education Commission

One off

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

All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health - meeting

Student Mental Health: Developing an Effective Support Strategy conference

Student Mental Health: Minding the Gaps conference

MH In HE Westminster Insight conference (international students and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds)

Supporting Students Transitioning to University webinar (AoC)

Assistive Technology in Education Conference (ATEC)

Think Positive NUS Scotland - Student Mental Health conference



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Student Minds Eating Disorder Audit panel

The One Show - interview

LBC Radio - interview

Research

We were delighted to host the launch of the White Paper “The Role & Impact of Specialist Mental Health Mentoring on Students in UK HEIs” written by UMHAN's Chair, Anna Matthews. This paper has brought together a decade's worth of research about Specialist MH Mentoring and has helped to promote the need for good quality support provision for students.

- UMHAN has identified the need for common data sets and outcome measures to be able to produce similar research on the impact of work undertaken by Mental Health Advisers, and have worked with the SCORE project to advocate for this. In the meantime, we have instigated our project looking at long standing members, with case studies to highlight the varied nature of the role.

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.

UMHD 2021

UMHD 2021 was very successful, in terms of social media and media coverage, with 63 media/press pieces. With events moving online, not so many were registered on the map (61) but we know from our members that some of these events were very successful and enabled them to do “something different” this year.

The main themes discussed on the day were Covid-related MH/wellbeing, the need for action over awareness and inequalities.

Newsletter and external communications

Our monthly newsletter is now sent to all members and 313 non-members. Member Duncan Little writes most of the content. The newsletter has around a 40% open rate, which we're told is extremely good.

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



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sector topics. This helps to not only increase UMHAN's profile and our key principles, but that of our members. The main platform we use is Twitter where we have seen a 32% increase in followers this year. We are starting to use Google analytics more to be able to better understand the impact this communication has.

Key planned developments for 2021-22

Governance

Advisory Group - our strategic review has led to the development of an Advisory Group. Our aim is that this will enable us to draw on the expertise of current practitioners and members to enable the charity to remain responsive and relevant to members and the Student Mental Health community as a whole. The first cohort of members have been recruited, with the aim that their work will start over the summer.

Impact measures - we will develop a suite of impact measures to enable us to meet our aims effectively. This also depends on more refined data collection.

Trustees - we will support our trustees to ensure their understanding of good governance is sufficient and up-to-date.

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.

Supervision - we aim to create a list of available supervisors for members to be able to access good quality supervision

Policy development

We will continue developing resources around students' rights; this includes ongoing work on Disabled Students Allowances reforms, and developing our external webpages.

University Mental Health Charter/schemes in devolved nations - we aim to provide guidance to members who are involved in their University's development of the charter, including advice on how to promote their roles and their existing practices where needed.



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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.

This has enabled us to fund a part time administrator and also some tailored training for members based on feedback.

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.