

**UMHAN**  
University Mental Health Advisers Network

# Annual Report 2022-2023





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



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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 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.



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### 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 22-23

### Governance

#### Trustees

We started the year with 5 trustees, led by Chair Anna Matthews.

They were:

Lydia Pell, Hannah Abrahams, Hannah Wilson (resigned June 2022), 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 recruited 3 new Trustees who all started in the summer of 2022, with their recruitment confirmed by members at our AGM. The new Trustees are Hannah Borkin, Tessa Bartlett and Matt Kempen.

The Board was also delighted to reappoint Phil Scarffe as a Trustee in October, bringing our total number of Trustees to 8.

### 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](#).



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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 2023 we had:

285 Accredited Practitioner (MHA) - 16% annual increase

186 Accredited Practitioner (Mentor) - 5% annual increase

65 Associates - 47% annual increase

52 Managers - 18% annual increase

**588 Total**

This is a 15% increase in total from last year.

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

Membership Retention Rate: 80.8%    Membership Recruitment Rate: 34.5%

*How do you compare with other UK membership organisations?*

Average member recruitment rate = 12.5%

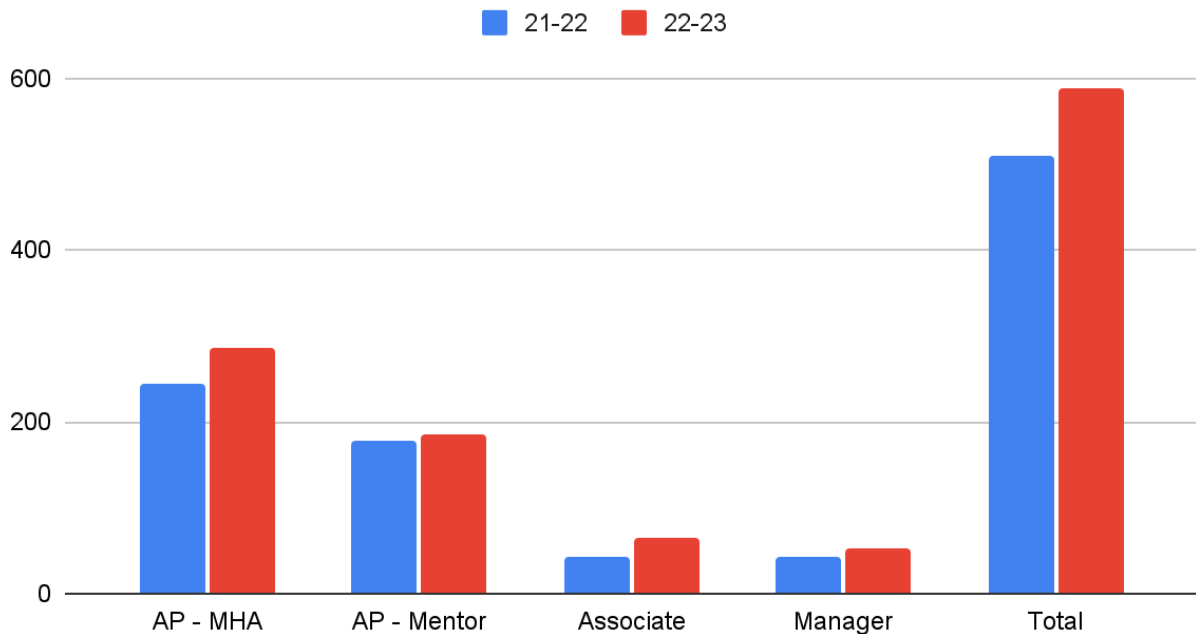
Average member retention rate = 86%

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Our retention rate is largely based on employers' retention of staff, as the large majority of members remain with us until they move roles. These figures confirm our [2022 member survey results](#), where we highlighted potential retention issues, due to staff burnout.

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.

## Annual membership



There has been an increase across all membership types. As in previous years, the majority of new applicants (67%) have found out about UMHAN through word of mouth; this is usually another member, but may be a line manager or administrator. 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.



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*“A forward thinking and truly supportive organisation who has the best interests of the students always in mind, The sharing of best practice is also invaluable”*

Quote from Member Survey 2022

## Member engagement

### **Meetings and CPD sessions**

Our meetings and CPD sessions for members are varied, and form a core benefit of membership with UMHAN. In 2022-23 we held 53 separate meetings for members, with 813 attendees. Members have been able to watch the recordings of these meetings at a later date if unable to attend in person. An additional 435 individual views of meeting recordings also took place during the year.

We hold regular meetings for individual role types - Advisers, Mentors, Associates and Managers. Topics discussed in these member meetings this year have included Disabled Students Allowances' reform, risk and safety, transitions and information sharing

*“I love the meetings and training but sometimes find it really difficult to fit them in. They are so useful and very much appreciated though. I always access the recorded versions of training and meetings when available.”*

Quote from member survey 2022

Our monthly Lunch & Learn sessions continue to prove very popular. Topics are based on feedback and requests from members, such as supporting Autistic transgender and non-binary students. We have ensured that half of our 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 ADHD, led by Joseph Aquilina from Neuroknowhow. Recordings of these sessions means that they can be accessed by members unable to attend.

We have also built on our specialist meetings for professionally registered staff, with our meetings for Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Nurses, Counsellors and Psychologists, 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 members were able to access Self-Harm Awareness training delivered by Battle Scars, and The Young Gamers & Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM) University Student Engagement Programme.

## Member survey

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

This year, in addition to standard questions, we included 2 additional sections: one on role tasks, and another on evaluation. The roles of Mental Health Adviser (MHA) and Specialist Mental Health Mentor (SMHM) are not well defined or understood, and we hope data about tasks performed will help improve awareness of the scope and importance of both roles. Collating more information about how members and services evaluate their work will, we hope, help to provide insight into a frequently discussed topic in the sector, and to establish a more consistent approach.

This survey period covered a time of flux and recovery; members have been reporting unusual patterns of student referrals/registrations, appointment access and student mental health presentation throughout the year. As such, the survey data may also demonstrate unusual patterns that may not continue in the coming academic years

Key points from our 2022 survey findings are:

- 81% of MHAs had 50% or more proportion of their caseloads in the high risk category
- 26% of respondents said that this number had increased over the past 12 months
- Risk assessments and mental health/wellbeing assessments are the most commonly performed tasks by MHAs.
- Psychoeducation/ psychological interventions were felt to be the most effective task
- 58% of respondents felt their service was under-staffed
- Just over a third of respondents plan to leave their role between now and 5 years time

### Member feedback on UMHAN

As well as our good levels of engagement with our meetings/CPD sessions and newsletter, our survey findings show members have a positive view of UMHAN, and the benefits of membership. Perceived benefits mentioned in our survey include access to role-relevant CPD, networking and sense of community, resources and being kept up to date, benchmarking and sharing best practice.

*“Honestly, the regular communication and knowledge of the field has been incredibly valuable to me as a member. I feel like this is a professional membership that actually has a benefit to me and the profession!”*

*“It focuses my practise, I think about supervision and CPD much more profoundly.”*





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*"I have always found the members very friendly and when I have engaged I feel less alone."*

*"I like newsletters and the suggested readings, almost all of which I buy and read. These are tremendously helpful and have taught me so much."*

## Quotes from member survey 2022

*"UMHAN provides invaluable training and also fantastic opportunities to liaise with colleagues from all over the country. Sharing good practice in this way would not be possible without UMHAN. Their resources are helpful and they listen carefully to the needs of their members, keeping us up to date with any changes to rules and legislation. I feel that in UMHAN I always have someone "watching my back". "*

*"It's amazing to feel part of such a helpful unit for others, such a supportive endeavor that clearly has student satisfaction and mental health at the heart of all they do. It feels remarkable to join the meetings held and reflect with people doing the same role as you but from different backgrounds, bouncing ideas off each other of how to make the student experience the best it can possibly be."*

*"UMHAN has been a constant source of support throughout my career...It really helped me to understand what this role might represent and also how the values, skills and practices I had developed in health and social care would translate to an education setting, which is very different from those areas in terms of remit, legislative frameworks and resources."*

## Quotes from blog case studies 2022

### Other work

#### UMHAN Publications

Information Sharing and Student Suicide Report - After a period of collaborative work with BACP-UC/HUCs and a joint survey of members our Information Sharing and Student Suicide Report was launched in April 2022. The report was well publicised, with an online launch and pieces in the WONKHE podcast and CYMPH newsletter. The work was further disseminated via conference presentations, including AMOSSHE (May 22 - UMHAN presenting) and MBWHE (May 22 - BACP presenting). It has also been referenced in the CWT Mental Health Policy Toolkit.

Clinical Governance for Mental Health Services in Education - this extensive piece of work was undertaken by Charity Manager and a working group of Manager members from different professional backgrounds. It was launched on Uni Mental Health Day 9th March 2023 and has been widely welcomed by the sector. In March alone there were 272 downloads. This piece of work was shared by WONKHE, Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, the University & College Counselling journal

This year we have continued to build on our [Blog](#), creating a series of member case studies, to highlight and improve understanding of the roles we support. We have also



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had ad hoc posts by staff, members and Trustees on issues related to student mental health.

#### Newsletter and external communications

Our monthly newsletter is now sent to all members and 672 non-members (a 47% annual increase). The newsletter has around a 40-60% open rate which is well over 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.

In April we launched a short explainer video on the Role of a Specialist Mental Health Mentor, which has been viewed over 500 times. This is in addition to our video explaining the role of a Mental Health Adviser.

#### 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:

- DSA reform group - SLCs working group looking at procurement and student journey
- We have also worked with other membership organisations from DSSG to feedback and challenge SLC on this process, and potential impact on both staff and students

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

Mental Health in Higher Education (Universities UK Advisory Group)



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## 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](#)

[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 \(CWT\)](#)

## Consultation

We have provided expertise in the following:

- Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee [inquiry into Mental Health support in Higher Education](#)
- Office for Students - [Equality of Opportunity Risk Register](#)
- [Student Space](#) Advisory Panel
- Text for Body Dysmorphic Disorder Foundation website
- [Glasgow Standard article](#) about student mental health support in Scotland
- [NASEN Connect article](#) - "Can Mentoring Fill the Gap?" - collaboration with [Power 2](#)

## Research

[Positive Digital Practices](#) - UMHAN was on the Advisory Board for this research funded by the Office for Students, with a member, Ashley Cave, as Project Officer. Our aim was



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to ensure the usability and sustainability of outputs from the project strands, and Ashley shared information with members about the project in meetings, and blog posts.

[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.

## Key planned developments for 2023-24

### Governance

Trustees agreed to make an interim appointment of a further Trustee, Phil Scarffe, in October 2022, with his appointment to be put to member vote in the next AGM.

Over the year Trustees reviewed our strategic priorities, to ensure they are fit for purpose. This has included a progress review on key areas. One of the key results of this review is additional staffing (see below).

### Staff

Trustees have agreed to the funding of a fixed term 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. This post will initially be funded for 12 months, with the potential to extend.

### Membership

We will continue to aim our recruitment at a wide range of staff, to promote the benefits of our network in supporting individuals and teams.

Jobs board - our Jobs Board has continued to grow. We are the only specialist jobs board for student mental health, at a time when recruitment and retention of staff is a top priority. To reflect the resource spent in ensuring this operates efficiently, and to enable us to effectively promote this, we are making some changes to how the board operates, including introduction of a small fee.

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

### Policy development

Following on from our Clinical Governance document, we will be working on a document to promote key principles for risk assessment in HE. As before, this document will be formulated by a working group of UMHAN members.

We will also be looking at our research priorities, including the impact of both UMHAN and our members' work on the sector.



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## Financial review

### Overview

Income has increased due to membership development and some one-off payments for consultancy and project work.

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

### Future plans

Our reserves mean that we are recruiting a new fixed term Policy & Engagement Officer; we are hopeful that their work may in turn help to ensure membership continues to increase. They will also be looking at alternative funding streams for development work.