

# UMUCU Mental Health Network

## Welcome by Vicky Knight, President UCU

In addition to her role in UCU and her post at Manchester College, [Vicky Knight](#) qualified as a psychological therapist. Her presentation provided an overview of the scale of mental health needs in the UK.

Vicky urges institutions to audit their provision of mental health support in the workplace



*In October we held our first meeting to explore how **UMUCU** can better support colleagues experiencing emotional distress or who have a mental health problem.*

*Our first newsletter profiles the advice and information provided by our speakers*



## Did you Know?

You can have regular access to a job coach for 9 months if you have a mental health problem which is affecting your work.



## A Personal Story of Mental Health Support at Work

Lawrence's mental health problem was prompted by bereavement. He was initially diagnosed as having depression and it took a further three years before being given a diagnosis of bipolar, by which time he was very ill. The intervening years before the correct diagnosis were very troubling for his family, friends and colleagues. By his own account, he was not easy to live or work with at this time.

The support at the University was mixed as he experienced it. The levels of support from the University's counselling and DASS departments were excellent. Occupational health provided good support, although his line management support was varied.

### What support is available at the University of Manchester?

[Emma Woodward](#), Staff Adviser in the Disability and Student Support Office, identified a range of support providers in the University, including:

- Occupational Health
- Counselling and Wellbeing Services
- Disability and Student Support
- Training and Development Unit



**Lawrence Benson is a Senior Lecturer in Healthcare and Public Sector Management at University's Alliance Manchester Business School.**

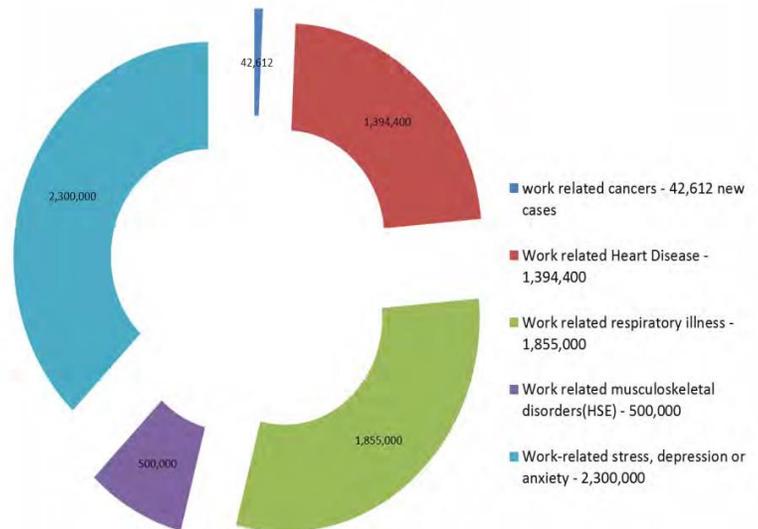
**At our event he told his personal story of discovering over a period of years that he had bipolar disorder.**

He now lives satisfactorily with this long term condition. He still has extended periods of feeling low and mania but has the support of family, friends and colleagues (many of whom he has met through our wonderful UCU branch!) and medication. He speaks openly and routinely now about living with his condition. He does this to help further challenge societal myths, prejudice and taboos about mental health and illness.

His academic subjects are healthcare management and policy and he also addresses mental health from a service-user perspective. Lawrence is now the mental health lead for our branch and looks forward very much to developing the network with everyone.

## Improving our working environment

Adam Lincoln from UCU highlighted the potential to secure changes in workplace support for mental health by campaigning under a health & safety at work agenda. Excessive workloads and poor working conditions are exacerbating mental health conditions and are contributing to increased stress among workers. UCU have put together a campaign strategy to tackle workload and workplace safety that we will be using to develop our work on mental health. We can also draw on the success of other branches. Liverpool UCU, for example, have had success in negotiating a policy on workplace stress which has been adopted by the University.



### Workplace Safety Resources

- [Manchester Hazards Campaign: Work-Related Injuries, Illness and Death.](#)
- [HSE: Stress, Anxiety and Depression Statistics, 2018.](#)
- [UCU: Workload Survey Results, 2016.](#)
- [UCU: It's Your Time](#)
- [University of Liverpool: Code of Practice on Managing Stress in the Workplace](#)

### Mental Health First Aid

UMUCU is exploring the possibility of funding 12 members to become qualified mental health first aiders. **Mental Health First Aiders are not therapists.** Rather, the mental health first aiders will be trained to spot signs of mental ill health, promote well-being. Training is likely to take place over two days. If you would like to be part of this initiative, please email [UCU@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:UCU@manchester.ac.uk) stating your name and role in the University, together with a few lines explaining why you are interested.

## Know Your Rights!

[Roger Walden](#), honorary lecturer at AMBS, highlighted the legal responsibilities owed by employers to provide support to colleagues who have experience mental health problems. Not only do employers have responsibilities under Equality Law not to discriminate against workers with mental health problems, they may also be sued in negligence or even face prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive.

## Next Steps – Join Us!

There is a lot we can do to bring about positive changes in our workplace. This will involve campaigning and negotiating with employers for improved working conditions, developing our expertise in mental health support, signposting available support and resources for staff, and to provide support for one another.

If you would like to be part of our mental health network, please email [UCU@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:UCU@manchester.ac.uk) and ask to be added to our mailing lists.



The image shows the cover of a guide titled "What's reasonable at work?" published by Rethink Mental Illness. The cover features a photograph of a woman with glasses sitting at a desk, talking to a man whose back is to the camera. The Rethink Mental Illness logo is in the top right corner. The title "What's reasonable at work?" is written in a large, blue, sans-serif font. Below the title, in a smaller red font, is the subtitle "A guide to rights at work for people with a mental illness."

Equality law requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to a disabled person's environment. [Rethink's guide](#) provides some useful examples of what can be done to support workers with a mental health problem

For more information, please contact:

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