STARTING THE CONVERSATION

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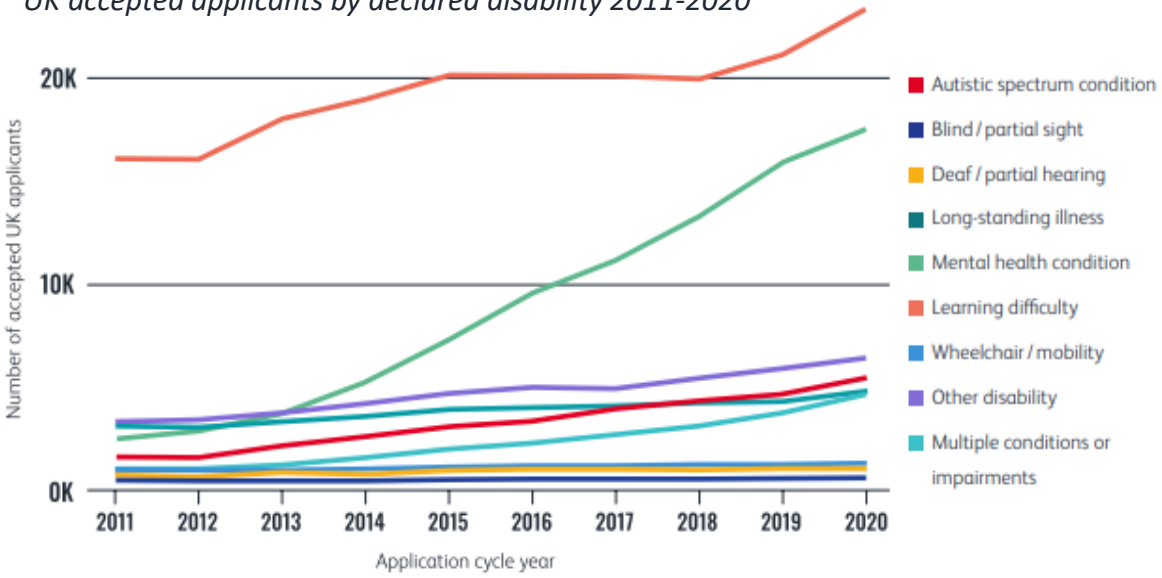
More applicants than ever are sharing a mental health condition …

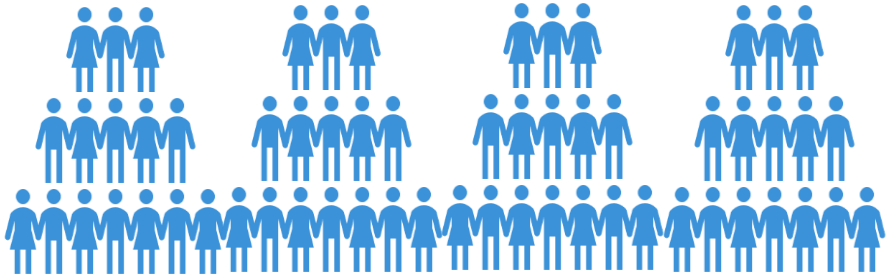
UK accepted applicants by declared disability 2011-2020



450%
increase since 2011

21,105
applicant declarations in 2020 (UK)

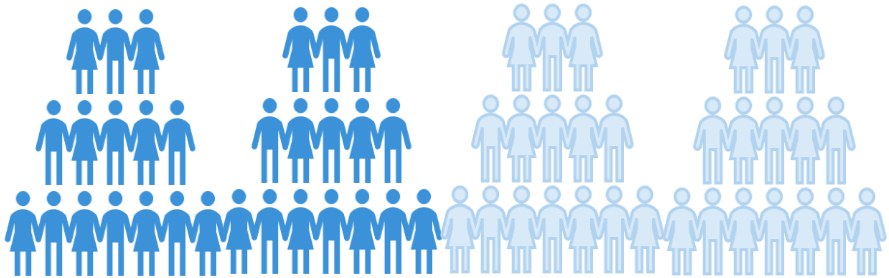
…but there's still more to do



74,000 UK students went to university with a mental health condition in 2020…

16% of all UK accepted applicants

…but there’s still more to do



… but **49%** of these students did not tell their university or college

Approx. **36,000** students

Differing declaration rates

Most likely to declare

Women	Men
Age 21-24	Age 18
Mixed and White ethnicities	Black and Asian ethnicities
Most disadvantaged areas	Least disadvantaged areas
Bisexual, gay women/ lesbian, transgender	Heterosexual, cisgender
Care experienced	No care experience
Students at medium tariff providers	Students at high tariff providers
Studying languages	Studying engineering / medicine and dentistry courses

Least likely to declare

Misconceptions abound!

Students thought it would negatively affect the outcome of their application

*I didn't want them to **discriminate** against me. I have depression and anxiety so I wouldn't want that to **jeopardise** my application for paramedic science.*

*Feeling as though I would be **judged**, or that people would first see my mental health before seeing me as a person and have **preconceived** ideas of what I'd be like, especially as a children's nurse.*

*I did not want to be **denied** a place due to **stigmas** such as lack of attendance, lack of interest, lack of self motivation etc. linked with mental health.*

*I was **afraid** that I would be rejected. I know they say they can't reject you, but I was applying to a very competitive course.*

***Fear** of **discrimination** especially on a medicine course.*

90% of advisers gave this as a common reason

78% of advisers were regularly asked if would affect their chances of receiving an offer

What happens when an applicant shares a mental health condition in the UCAS application?

1
After submission

Data is securely transferred to the university

2
Admissions decision

Health information is kept confidential and **never used to assess the application**

3
Interview /audition

Health information is shared with student support staff to arrange adjustments

4
After offer accepted

Student support team may contact student for (or with) more details

5
Before arrival

Support agreement and adjustments arranged and discussed with student

6
Prior to course start

“It’s not relevant”

Students don’t think they should (or need to) declare:

48% of advisers gave ‘no formal diagnosis’ as a common reason.

44% of advisers gave ‘not necessary to share’ as a common reason.

I felt like I had it under control enough to be able to cope by myself and wasn't serious enough to tell them about.

I was unsure if I had the proper diagnostic proof.

I’m not officially diagnosed and I didn’t know if the university would even be able to provide support that I would find beneficial.

I didn't want to be treated differently for it and wasn't sure why this was relevant.

Adviser survey: key findings

73% Confident they'd know or be told about students with a mental health condition

82% Felt their students were always, often or sometimes reluctant to declare

86% Encourage students to declare an existing mental health condition

78% Regularly asked if declaring a condition will impact chances of receiving an offer

64% Allow the student to make the decision about whether to declare

57% Discuss available support for mental health in HE with students

Next steps in brief

UCAS

Cross-sector engagement to unify messaging	Create a culture of positive disclosure, align terminology, address misconceptions
Targeted action in subject areas	Including fitness to practise requirements
Continued implementation of the Stepchange framework and MH Charter	UCAS to support with good practice guidance in collaboration with UUK and HELOA
Considerations around admissions reform	Transfer of information, building trusted relationships, supporting transitions
Improvements to the UCAS application process	Continued review on collecting this data, language, fluidity and functionality

What is UCAS doing?

- Improvements to student information and advice
- Adviser guidance
- Conferences and events
- Sector engagement
- Update to UCAS application process

Thank you

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