Networking and Practitioner Wellbeing Conference

Tuesday 27th October 2026

Online

9:00 **Online arrival and Introductions**

9:15 **All work and no play makes Jack a dull, depressed, anxious, unpopular boy: how 'overcontrol' is promoted and rewarded within educational and professional settings, and what we need to do about it.** *Ian Wootton; Founder and Director; Consultant Clinical and Forensic Psychologist, Flexible Mind Psychology Ltd*

> Educational and professional environments rely, and thrive, upon hard work and commitment. Those who are prepared to 'go the extra mile', who have very high standards, who pay attention to detail, and who make personal sacrifices in order to achieve their goals are not only valued, but are also rewarded with accolades and opportunities that others can only dream of. Moreover, some environments demand these characteristics as standard, with their resultant cultures often compelling their members to conform or otherwise risk being left out, left behind or labelled as 'not a team-player'. In doing so, goals are attained, but what are the consequences for the individual, and where does their wellbeing come into play?

10:15 **Understanding Neurodivergence in Higher Education -** *Gemma Spencer - Senior Lecturer in Adult Nursing, University of Lancashire*

> This interactive session explores neurodivergence in higher education through personal experience, student stories and current evidence, helping educators understand their legal, moral and ethical responsibilities while identifying practical ways to create inclusive learning environments where all students can flourish. Please note - This session includes discussion of neurodivergence, disability, stigma and the challenges some students experience during their educational journey, including academic difficulties and accessing support. These topics will be explored sensitively and respectfully, with participation in reflective activities entirely optional and delegates encouraged to engage at a level that feels comfortable for them.

11:00 **Break**

11:15 **Networking -** Breakout rooms

> Join fellow delegates in small breakout rooms - bring your insights, experiences, and questions for a relaxed yet meaningful conversation.

12:00 **Lunch**

12:30 **Breakout sessions**

- **Finding your balance- Putting yourself first during those busy periods -** Becci Williams, UK South Midlands Student Recruitment Officer, University of Leicester/ Finnuala Jenkins, University of Brighton

  In fast-paced roles that involve travelling, visiting schools, and navigating intense busy periods, wellbeing often slips to the bottom of the list. This session flips that script. Join us for an honest, practical conversation about what it really takes to put yourself first when your work keeps you constantly on the move. We'll explore simple, sustainable strategies for protecting your mental health, staying physically active, and making positive choices even when time, energy, and headspace feel limited. Expect real talk, relatable stories, and tools you can use immediately- whether you're on the road, in a school, or juggling a demanding schedule. You'll leave with a clearer sense of what looking after yourself can actually look like in your world, and how small shifts can lead to big improvements in resilience, confidence, and overall wellbeing. This session will cater for both those on the road and those supporting and managing staff during busy periods.

- **Imposter Syndrome: How to overcome and learn from it** - *Edesia Guest, UK Recruitment Assistant, University of Wolverhampton*

  This session looks into what imposter syndrome is. It's a personal talk which looks at the daunting feeling by sharing a personal experience of my first month of being a recruitment assistant after a career change from being an ex teacher. The session teaches people how to overcome imposter syndrome, and also advises on how we can learn from it and how we can improve performance from what imposter syndrome might reveal. It's a vulnerable session that is also educational.

- **Recruitment, Conversion and Chicken Nuggets -** *Ailsa Mackay - Student Recruitment Manager (Events), Mari Tait UK Student Recruitment and Widening Access Manager, Heriot-Watt University*

  Recruitment, Conversion and Chicken Nuggets (managing a career in HE alongside parenting). A light-hearted look at some of the challenges balancing work with parenthood and some useful strategies to help you make it work.

- **Wellness in Work.** *Anna Wightman, Outreach and Recruitment Officer, University of Bradford*

  Advising colleagues on how to look after their general wellbeing in work, particularly during busy periods of intense delivery.

13:15 - Session 3 - **Are your resources Gen Alpha friendly? The tools needed to run an engaging and successful session** Natasha Barcinska, UCL

This session aims to highlight the effects of Covid and technology on school students and how it may have affected their attention spans. It will explore how these influences may impact on student engagement in your sessions and whether the session's objectives are therefore met. Lastly, it will look at what young people may need from an outreach session and explore easy to use effective strategies and tools to improve engagement.

14:30 **Break**

14:45 **Sector updates and how Heloa can support you -** *Keir Robinson, UK Recruitment Manager and HELOA Chair, University of Edinburgh and HELOA*

As the conference draws to a close, Keir will run through some of the possible upcoming opportunities and challenges for the sector, as we plan work for the coming cycles. We will look at who HELOA is and the opportunities available to members to support you.

15:30 - 15:45 **Close**

*****Programme may be subject to change