

WORK'S MENTAL Conference

workplace mental health - the journey

Biographies



John Brown

**Welder's Shop Steward
& Safety Rep**

BAE SYSTEMS

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I am a 58 year old father of two boys 21 and 23 married to a Scottish Bengali woman bio chemist and teacher, I am an committed trade unionist, socialist, anti fascist and yes supporter , I have been a shipyard welder since 1982 , have MS and have suffered from bouts of depression since I was 12 I seem to have inherited it from my father who was hospitalised and given ECT, I am a mental health first aider safety rep and shop steward, I love music, classical, jazz, electronic, world, dance, etc, anything but country which I loath, I have a love of gardening and wildlife and I read a lot of history anthropology the sciences and humanities ,when I'm a bit blue I put on dance music, anything by Pete Tong, and try to clean the house from top to bottom before the album ends, it works for me, top tips for staying stable ,don't self medicate that includes Peruvian marching powder and dope and don't try to drown your sorrows with booze, for as the song says your sorrows will learn to swim.



Dr Ian Bushnell

**Senior Lecturer in
Psychology**



I am a Chartered Psychologist who has researched and lectured on leadership, deception and applications of psychology to well-being, including medical decision making, occupational stress and burnout. I have consulted on leadership effectiveness and organizational development in many European and Asian countries, including China and Singapore and across diverse organisations. I have also worked extensively as an executive coach, helping senior figures perform more effectively, especially in times of transition. In both my academic and my practical experience, I have seen how leaders at all levels are capable of damaging, even destroying, the lives of those with who they come in contact and the damage to mental health that is an integral part of this. I have also seen how organisations frequently fail to recognise and certainly fail to deal appropriately with these leaders. I have been Chair of the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology and have organised many academic and practitioner conferences including one on Hubris in Leadership with Lord David Owen.

A long-term passion has been to ensure my students develop self-awareness plus the knowledge and skills to ensure they have a competitive advantage for their career path after university.

I keep myself somewhat physically and mentally fit by eschewing the gym in favour of the great outdoors - mountain biking and hillwalking. The challenge of climbing our Munros and getting back down again safely, and roughly at the point where I started, exercises mind and body quite sufficiently.



Sarah Cave

Director

Head of Leadership



I have been in the business of learning and helping others to learn for over 25. Currently I am a Director of Primeast and also fulfil the role of Head of Leadership. Helping leaders to be great is my passion - I often describe myself as a leadership geek. I believe that it is the duty of leaders to create great places to work and if I can help a few people really enjoy their jobs by helping their leaders to be the best they can be, then I will be a happy lady! I believe that great leaders have an academic understanding leadership models and theory but most importantly they have the ability to breathe life into these within their organisations. I have had the privilege of working with some amazing people in my years of practise and I learn as much from them as they do from me. My client list includes some of the worlds best known organisation – Google and YouTube - as well as companies who are not well known or large – but good leadership has an impact no matter what size the organisation.

3 years ago, I experienced my own mental health challenge. It was both the worst time of my life and the greatest gift. These days to keep myself mentally well I exercise (running and cycling are my go to activities,) and I have learnt that time and space to think and reflect is time well spent so being kind to myself and indulging in peace and quiet always helps me. I hope that sharing some of my story will help others to learn and lead in a stronger and more compassionate way.



Peter Kelly
Senior Psychologist



I work as a Senior Psychologist for the Health and Safety Executive and am a technical expert on mental health and wellbeing and prevention of work-related stress.

I have been part of the small team of psychologists involved from the beginning in developing the scientific knowledge base for the management standards approach to tackling work related stress in Great Britain, and am a co-author on a number of papers published on the management standards, health and wellbeing.

I have sat as a co-opted expert on National Institute of Clinical Excellence Review of Mental Health Promotion within the Workplace 2009 and 2019 and on the Department for Health's United Kingdom SHIFT Expert review panel on workplace mental health guidance.

I am Practitioner Chair of European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology and have been involved in working across the EU on a number of initiatives in relation to psychosocial risk and prevention. I am an Expert advisor to international standards 45003 on Psychology health and Safety and well-being .



Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive Officer



My 35-year Public Sector career began with Falkirk District Council. It has since included the roles of Director of Leisure and Culture at Birmingham City Council, and President of The Institute of Leisure Management, as well as the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at four major local authorities: North Tyneside, Wiltshire, Cornwall, and now my dream job as CEO here at the City of Edinburgh Council (since July 2015).

In my last four authorities, I have led transformation programmes worth more than £200m. I have also delivered a £900m joint venture in waste management, led the UK's first rural devolution deal in Cornwall worth £1.8bn, and more recently, delivered the successful Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal worth £1.2bn.

I am currently leading a £147m Transformation Programme for Edinburgh Council and I am at the heart of Edinburgh's Launch of its City Vision initiative 2050.

I believe that mental wellness begins at home. Myself and my family do a lot of healthy activities and there are no phones allowed over dinner. A healthy body supports a healthy mind, so I think nutrition is very important and I make time for regular fitness by exercising 4 times a week.

Making time for yourself at work and at home is important too. One of the key things for me is planning – my wife and I work together to plan our week, which makes us more resilient. And another way I maintain my resilience is shutting off from problems and stress. I learned a lot about how to handle stress from my career as an athlete and my approach is to take a problem, put it in a box, put it on a shelf and leave it there until I want to go back to it."



Stephen McAllister

**Chair, Lifelink
Trustee, Samaritans
Board Member, NHS
Special Advisor, Headtorch**

**Former Divisional Commander,
Police Scotland**



I am a former Police Officer, retiring from Police Scotland as a Divisional Commander in June 2017 after a 30-year career during which I held a variety of uniform and specialist roles. I was a Hostage and Crisis Negotiator for 16 of those years and part of the United Kingdom's International Negotiating Cadre for 8 years.

I have significant operational experience of negotiation incident and crisis management in addition to the training, coaching and mentoring of Police Negotiators. I have a BA (Hons) in Psychology, a Masters in Forensic and Legal Psychology, a certificate in Counselling Skills. I am an experienced mediator, and hold an NVQ in the delivery of adult learning. I am trained in both Trauma Response and Post Incident Management and a graduate member of the British Psychological Society and a current member of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcements expert panel on Counter Terrorism specialising in negotiation and leadership.

My experience in leadership, crisis management and negotiation encouraged me to develop a second career in the provision of strategic leadership and governance advice and I currently work with the National Health Service, the Risk Management Authority and two charities, the Samaritans in relation to suicide prevention and Lifelink who provide stress management and counselling mostly in areas of high deprivation within my home town of Glasgow and in all Glasgow High Schools, in addition to bespoke employee assistance packages. I am also an adviser to the Scottish Institute of Business Leaders a not for profit leadership development organisation who are acknowledged as being one of the UK's top leadership organisations.

I have recently launched with former colleagues a negotiated resolutions training company to assist organisations in empowering and emboldening their people to reach their fully potential.

I am a keen yoga practitioner and meditate regularly, I enjoy going to the gym, playing golf, watching football, reading, travelling and a glass of wine in the company of family and good friends. With my most recent mental health endeavour being a stand up comedy course.



Matina Nomikos

Senior HR Officer



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I'm at the beginning of what I hope to be a long career in HR - but I haven't always been on the HR path. I studied Economics in Athens (my hometown) and started my career in the shipping industry. Although I enjoyed what I did, I couldn't help notice that the most disruptive challenges originated from poor people management. Employees either received too little support or too much of the wrong kind - which led to team tensions and of course affected the service we provided. I thought that if my work could address these issues, I could have more of an impact than I was currently having. My fascination with HR was then born.

I started by completing an MSc in HRM at the University of Edinburgh, shortly after, I began my first job in L&D. 5 years on, my role has transformed into overseeing areas such as: performance, health & wellbeing, employee relations, conflict management, occupational health whilst continuing to manage L&D. I love being involved in these areas as I believe they have the biggest impact on people's experiences at work. I aim to help SLAB run more smoothly and efficiently by resolving difficult issues and providing support, but also, ultimately I strive to help employees achieve a better working life. This is especially true in the cases where physical or mental health concerns are involved, as I've seen how the impact of positive workplace initiatives can have a ripple effect into people's wellbeing and personal life - this is something I am truly passionate about.

To maintain my own mental wellbeing, I dance my worries away and spend time with loved ones, in Scotland and back in Greece. I also try to patiently meditate or do yoga (and fail most of the time).



Professor Frank Pollick

School of Psychology



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I am an experimental psychologist and an educator. In recent years I have been working in the area of cognitive neuroscience where I've used tools like fMRI to look at brain activity while people perform various tasks. The goal of this is to relate what people do, to what happens in their brain. One area that I've explored is empathy, particularly as it relates to watching others and how brain mechanisms might change with expertise or developmental conditions such as autism. Empathy, or how we experience the feelings and thoughts of others is a broad area and this research brought me in touch with an opportunity to work with Amy and Angus of Headtorch where we explored how a workplace programme could positively influence empathy and attitudes towards mental health. Improving mental health in the workplace is an important issue that has many dimensions. Currently, my work on mental health at work includes research into how to minimize the psychological impact of viewing distressing imagery in workers, such as the police and content moderators, who are regularly exposed to such content. One possible solution is the development of advanced tools using artificial intelligence (AI) and this leads to another research interest. How do we develop AI tools that can be trusted and what does trust mean in human-AI teams?

I am fortunate that one part of my job is to do research and this is something I really enjoy and find satisfying. So one thing I do to keep mentally fit is to find time to do enough of the research that I enjoy (and call it work). Otherwise, walking the dogs and relaxing at home with some gardening or cooking helps to keep my head clear.



Dominic Quilty

Ticket Examiner



I am a Dublin man who has lived in Glasgow for the past 15 years, along with my partner Laura who works with children with additional support needs.

I have 2 children Caragh, who is 13 and Cian, who is 11.

I am a Ticket Examiner for abellio Scotrail and I am a Mental Health First Aider and also a safety leader.

I am passionate about customer service and believe that you should treat everyone as you would like to be treated yourself. I enjoy listening to music especially 60's and have a wee soft spot for the Beatles.

I also enjoy playing the guitar and keyboards.

For my mental health wellbeing I enjoy relaxing and spending time with my family.

I also enjoy interacting with the public and try to laugh most days. My mantra in life is simple : It's nice to be important...but it's more important to be nice !(and it doesn't cost anything!)



Andrew Rodgers

reenvisage Ltd.
connecting minds and hearts with business objectives

**Former Wellbeing Director,
Group Insurance
HSBC**

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Following an eventful and rewarding twenty one years and one day at HSBC, I have ventured into launching my own wellbeing company, specialising in helping leadership teams achieve their full potential. There are a plethora of excellent services on offer to help businesses with mental and emotional wellbeing, however, there seems to be a gap in helping teams achieve long-term strategic healthy change, which is where my work focuses - linking hearts and minds with character and culture. I have had the opportunity to work with a number of leadership teams across the UK, Europe and Asia, helping identify unhealthy behaviours, and re-envisaging with good practices which underpin the values and aims of the business, whilst supporting healthy and sustainable outcomes.

Prior to re-envisage I joined HSBC in 1998 where I gained broad international experience across country, region and global business lines. During 2018 I transitioned from business management to focus on Sustainability and Wellbeing within the banks insurance function. In 2019 my work become exclusively people and team development focused, concentrating on supporting the strategic initiative of developing the Healthiest Human System in financial services.

From 2014-17 I held strategic partnership relationship responsibilities, establishing a central management function and governance platform to enable effective management of the global insurance partnership portfolio.

From 2009 to 2013 I lived in Cairo as Head of Insurance, Egypt and subsequently Dubai as Head of Insurance for the Middle East region. In addition to insurance business management, I established new partnerships across the region, leading to the development of a new standard of sustainable customer centric products delivered through a digital distribution platform.

I was born in New Zealand, studied music at the University of Canterbury and Theology in a monastery in mid-west America, and now live in London with my wife Angela and our four children. I serve as Music Director in my local parish, Secretary of the 1863 Boat Club and 'chief driver' for my children.



Dr Wolfgang Seidl

Partner

**Leader Workplace Health
Consulting
UK and Europe**



I'm a Partner at Mercer Marsh Benefits and lead Workplace Health Consulting for UK and Europe advising companies on health & well-being strategy, integrated models of healthcare, absence management and proactive interventions, such as resilience programs. I'm a member of the Global Health Management team, founded the European Health & Well-being Network and serve as board director of the Employee Assistance Research Foundation (EARF, St Louis, Missouri) and as Visiting Professor in applied psychology.

Before joining Mercer, I managed Employee Assistance Programs as executive director of the Validium Group and director for consultancy, sales and clinical programs at Accor Services. Prior to that I worked in primary and secondary care and in academia and became a member of various national and international research organisations.

My training includes a doctorate in medicine, a master's degree in psychiatry, philosophy & society, and I am a BACP accredited counsellor and psychotherapist. My work includes quality enhancement measures in workplace health and the evaluation of the business impact of health management programs in terms of return on investment (ROI).

Outside work, I enjoy skiing, running, gym, art, travel and being surrounded by good friends who also keep me up to date with various insights from the latest research.



Amy McDonald

Founder & CEO



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Dedicated, determined, dramatic – using live performance and stories to mirror behaviours and stimulate change in our attitude and approach to mental health at work is always rewarding. It's not a straight forward journey but I have always enjoyed climbing mountains so it's no surprise that Headtorch offers me the opportunity to climb another one. I thrive on variety and feel privileged to work with such an amazing range of talented people and organisations including: Abbott, Abellio - ScotRail, BAe Systems, Baillie Gifford, BrewDog, City of Edinburgh Council, Forth Valley College, News UK (News International), the NHS, Notting Hill Genesis, PepsiCo, Police Scotland, the Scottish Government, Scottish Legal Aid Board, Tayside Contracts, Volvo Construction Equipment, and West Dunbartonshire Council.

Engage, educate, enthuse - I love breaking stigma; working with people at all levels within an organisation; watching the penny drop; reversing injustice; enabling people to steer cultural change; creating organisations where support is everything; and doing nothing is not an option.

Outside of work I've taken up cross-fit - an addictive endorphin-booster. Other ways of staying mentally fit include enjoying time with family and friends, cycling, mountain climbing, ski-ing, jigsaws and singing - in French!



Angus Robinson

Chairman



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I'm from Glasgow:

Direct, straight forward, genuine & there's no BS;

A clear & original thinker, finding ways, a creative and decisive problem solver;

Calm under pressure, personable & easy going;

Passionate, a maverick & always keep an eye on the big picture;

A path finder, taking ideas that are ahead of their time & finding ways to scale them.

I'm proud of what we're doing at Headtorch, and honoured to work with the many amazing organisations and people we meet.

To be mentally fit, I connect with my family and friends, I learn from working at Headtorch, I'm physically active doing bootcamp and riding mountain bikes, I notice by riding motorbikes, I give by talking to people.



Angie Strachan

Performance Poet



Writing and performing poetry is a creative outlet that helps to keep me well while living with Bipolar Affective Disorder. It gives me permission to reflect on my own life experiences and observations and make sense of the ups and downs that life can bring.

My journey started with putting pen to paper and following my heart. I am now a regular performer in the Scottish Spoken Word Scene where my witty and quirky style is popular. I have performed with The Loud Poets, Sonnet Youth, Flint & Pitch, and The Poetry Circus as well as at the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 2019 I was the runner up in the Scottish Poetry Slam Championships. Poetry gives me the opportunity to raise awareness of mental health issues and I perform poetry on this theme at corporate events for organisations such as The Royal Bank of Scotland, Glasgow City Council, Student Mental Health Nurse Forum and The Society for Personnel and Development Scotland. I'm also a guest vlogger for Headtorch. At present, I am in the process of self-publishing a collection of my spoken word poems and I am writing a poetic comedy for theatre. When I am not playing around with words in my poetry shed, I can be found either running around after my children or walking my dog.

I am always in awe of the power of poetry and its ability to inspire, motivate and connect with people. It has served me well and has now become my passion, my healer and my career.

Follow me on Facebook and YouTube at Angie Strachan Poetry, Twitter @AngieStrachan75, Instagram angiestrachan_poetry and LinkedIn Angie Strachan

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