



Briefing from meeting on 29 September 2010

The meeting opened with a presentation and Q and A session by Dr Steve Boorman, Director of Corporate and Social Responsibility, Royal Mail, on his review of the health of the NHS workforce.

The Chair welcomed members, and especially representatives from the Defence Medical Services and NHS Plus to their first meeting.

The Chair spoke about the issue of funding for the Council. She had written a brief business plan which had been taken by Dr Kit Harling to the Director for Health Work and Wellbeing at the Department of Health, which provides funding for the Council through NHS Plus. He had been pleased with the plan and felt that the Council had developed a relevant and useful work programme. He agreed that in principle NHS Plus would continue to fund the modest needs of the Council for the time being. It was agreed that to save on the costs of meetings it would be useful if member organisations could provide venues free of charge. The representative from COHPA had indicated that they may be able to assist, as did the representatives from the Faculty/Society of Occupational Medicine, the Royal College of Nursing and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

There was a general discussion of the minutes of the meeting of the sub-committee on communication between employers and GPs with respect to the completion of the 'fit note'. The aim is to develop simple forms which employers without access to occupational health advice can use to ask GPs about the functional capacities of employees who are not yet fully fit to return to work, but are able to work on a limited basis. Leonie Dawson reported that the Chief Medical Officer is working on the development of a fit note that can be completed by health professionals other than doctors, who at present hold the monopoly. The sub-committee was due to meet again on 9 December.

The report on the training for and qualifications of occupational health nurses had been sent to the four Chief Nursing Officers, and replies were awaited. The Chair had spoken with Professor Dickon Weir-Hughes, Chief Executive of the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and it was hoped to arrange a meeting in the New Year.

Nicola Hunter presented a preliminary paper developed by a small working group on training and qualifications for occupational therapists, occupational physiotherapists and occupational psychologists. The working group supports the development of cross professional training, a core curriculum and post registration career pathways. The Council commended the paper and looked forward to seeing it in its final form. Tom Stewart said that the ergonomists would be interested in joining the group. Cynthia Atwell reported that

some occupational health courses for nurses are closing due to insufficient numbers and that modular courses for all professions might be more attractive to universities.

There followed a presentation by Dr Debbie Cohen from the University of Wales about the programme that has been developed there for training GPs in issues of health and well-being at work. An open access website, www.healthyworkinguk.co.uk has been created. Wendy Coleman reported that the Council for Work and Health's website was about to go live.

David Coggon reported that he, as outgoing President, and Olivia Carlton, as newly elected President, of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, were to meet with Ann Milton, Minister for Public Health.

Under AOB Cynthia Atwell announced her retirement. The Chair spoke about the huge contribution that Cynthia had made to occupational health over many years, and this was acclaimed by all.

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 3 February 2011.