

Chair's Report, Council for Work and Health 2014/2015

1. The Council met on three occasions, 14 May 2014, 23 September 2014 and 4 February 2015. Professor Diana Kloss was in the chair on all three occasions.
2. The Board of Directors worked well together. Christina Butterworth continued to take the lead on the Council Business Plan, ably assisted by Nattasha Freeman who also deals with communication. Anna McNeil continued as our highly efficient Company Secretary. Hilary Todd assumed responsibility for finance, but decided in January 2015 that pressure of her work at the Society of Occupational Medicine made it necessary for her to resign. Natalie Beswetherick decided not to stand for re-election for similar reasons. In April 2015 elections were held for these vacancies and Jan Vickery and Joanna Wilde were elected to the Board. Nattasha Freeman's term of office came to an end, but she was re-elected for another three years.
3. The Council continued to gain recognition. A leaflet was printed and distributed at conferences and meetings to give publicity to the Council. The Chair followed a deliberate policy of representing the Council at a number of events in order to raise the Council's profile. She was appointed to a NICE Public Health Advisory Committee and to the Board of the National School of Occupational Health in her capacity as Chair of the Council. She was invited to speak at a number of conferences on occupational health law and ethics at which she publicised the Council's work.
4. The discussions between the Faculty of Occupational Medicine and the Society of Occupational Medicine towards the creation of a single organisation to represent all OH practitioners narrowly failed to achieve the necessary majority from members of the Society where a two-thirds majority voting in favour was needed. This means that the Council is currently the only body that represents all the organisations involved in the provision of occupational health services, though the Faculty and Society are now working closely together. The Council shares their vision of the creation of a multi-disciplinary College of Occupational Health. At the February meeting Christina Butterworth announced the setting up of a committee to develop a Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing under the auspices of the Council which received unanimous and enthusiastic support from Council members.
5. The Council Working Group on the occupational health workforce chaired by Professor Harrison and partly funded by Public Health England continued to meet. Leonie Dawson was appointed Research Fellow for a year. The first report was published in 2014 and is available on the Council's website. The second report is due to be published shortly. The Council received the final report from the Leicestershire Fit for Work GP/employer communication project at its February meeting and this is also available on the website. The creation of a Fit for Work Service funded by the Department for Work and Pensions has significantly changed the 'fit note' climate and the Council will continue to keep the situation under review.
6. The Council and the National School of Occupational Health jointly sponsored a conference on education in occupational health in London on 9 March 2015. This was very successful, and it is hoped will lead to developments in training sponsored by the National School.

7. The Council continued to be an important communication tool. The Secretary distributed information to members and the website was expanded. Presentations were given by Emma Donaldson-Feilder from the British Psychological Society, Tom Stewart from the Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors and Professor Anthony Woolf, consultant rheumatologist, speaking about musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace.
8. Finance continues to be a problem and the situation has not improved. We received a demand for corporation tax, despite our not for profit status, but we are hopeful that this will be returned to us. The Board decided to explore the possibility of achieving charitable status. IOSH, which has been very generous in funding half of the Secretary's post, gave notice that the current arrangement would cease in April 2016. Several member organisations have been generous with donations and providing premises for meetings but our financial situation is still very precarious. Public Health England has stated that they are unable to fund core costs. Approaches will be made to a number of organisations asking them to support particular aspects of the Council's work, like the website and the Secretariat.
9. Despite these difficulties the Council has established itself as an important player in the occupational health arena and we look forward to another productive year in a fast developing field. My thanks are due to all those who have supported me, especially Anna and fellow directors.

Professor Diana Kloss
Chair