

Chair's Report, Council for Work and Health 2015/2016

1. The Council met on three occasions: 20 May 2015, 8 October 2015 and 3 February 2016. The Board of Directors also met three times a few weeks in advance of those meetings. Professor Diana Kloss was in the chair on all six occasions.
2. The Board of Directors saw several changes. Jan Vickery and Joanna Wilde were elected in April 2015 and will serve for three years. At the same time Nattasha Freeman was elected for a second term of three years. In April 2016 Tom Stewart was elected as Deputy Chair, taking over from Christina Butterworth who stepped down from the Board, though she will remain a member of the Council. Christina has been a splendid Deputy Chair who led on the business plan. Olivia Carlton retired from the Board, having been a very active and valuable member for six years. Robin Cordell, John Pilkington and Joy Reymond were elected as directors for a period of three years. Diana Kloss announced that she would be stepping down as Chair after six years in the post, though she was willing to continue until a new Chair was found. Anna McNeil continued as Company Secretary.
3. The Council continued to gain recognition. The Chair attended a number of conferences and meetings and spoke about the Council whenever she was invited to speak. The Council was well represented at the Health and Work conference in Birmingham in March 2016 and the organisers gave us publicity in the conference documentation.
4. The Faculty of Occupational Medicine and the Society of Occupational Medicine worked closely together and both were represented on the Council. The Employee Assistance Professionals Association was elected a member of the Council. The group of senior nurses working to establish a Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing under the auspices of the Council was enthusiastically supported by Council members. The plan is to launch the Faculty formally in 2018.
5. At the same time the National School of Occupational Health under the auspices of Health Education England was active in recruiting and training doctors in occupational medicine with modest success. A deputy director, Mandy Murphy, was appointed to develop multi-disciplinary occupational health training. The National School is seeking membership of the Council. The Chair of the Council is a member of the Board of the National School ex officio.
6. The Council Working Group on the occupational health workforce chaired by Professor John Harrison published its second report in March 2016. It was given publicity at the Birmingham conference and elsewhere and can be accessed on the Council website. Thanks are due to Professor Harrison, the research fellow

Leonie Dawson, and the members of the working group, all of whom gave a considerable amount of time and energy to the project.

7. The role of the Council as a disseminator of information remains important. We are grateful to Joanna Wilde for setting up a Council Twitter account. Keith Johnston spoke at the May meeting about Syngentis, the not for profit company that supports the NHS Occupational Health Network, We received presentations in October from John Pilkington on Rehabilitation and Nattasha Freeman on the IOSH campaign: Occupational cancer: no time to lose. At the February meeting Dr Pui Ling Li from the Department for Work and Pensions led an interactive session where members were invited to exchange views on such issues as the Fit for Work Service.
8. I am afraid that finance continues to be a problem. We operate on a shoestring and in fact made a small loss in the last financial year. We are very grateful to IOSH which continues to fund half of the Secretary's post and to members who contributed varying amounts to our funds. It is important that these are voluntary as otherwise we should have to pay tax on them. Members were generous with their premises and providing lunch, thus saving a considerable amount in catering costs. We dismissed our previous accountants and have appointed a new firm which is cheaper and more reliable. Details can be found in the finance report. Grants can be sought for projects, but a minimum amount to cover core costs will always be needed. The Board has decided that at present the cost and complications of obtaining charitable status are not worth the effort though this can be revisited if necessary in the future.
9. Now that the Council has established itself it is necessary to look to the future. Where do we want to be in another five years? Is it sufficient to be a fairly low key representative body, or do we want to be more proactive in research and influencing policy? The Board of Directors has arranged a special meeting on 10 June to discuss future policy. We shall formulate some basis questions about how members see the role of the Council and ask for replies so that there can be a discussion at the autumn meeting.
10. Finally, as this will be my last AGM, I wanted to thank everyone who has supported me over the past six years, especially Anna McNeil. Anna and I have both had a difficult year with health problems, but we have managed to keep the show on the road. I hope that the Council will go from strength to strength and continue to be an important player in the fast developing field of occupational health and safety.

Professor Diana Kloss MBE