



## **Briefing from Council meeting held on 18 May 2016**

The meeting was chaired by Diana Kloss and the following items discussed:

### **Invited guest presentation - Professor Sir Anthony Newman Taylor**

Professor Sir Anthony Newman Taylor (ANT) talked about the work of the newly-formed Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC), the industrial injuries scheme, and the armed forces' ill-health compensation scheme.

WHEC is a new committee set up by the Health and Safety Executive and reports to the Government Chief Scientist. The purpose of WHEC is to provide independent expert opinion on new and emerging workplace health issues, and also to review the evidence on existing workplace health issues and to review the quality and relevance of the epidemiological evidence.

ANT informed the Council that the primary causes of occupational lung cancer were asbestos (highest occupational cause), and silica (second highest occupational cause). Diesel exhaust and shift work were the highest occupational causes of breast cancer.

WHEC were open to any approach through their website about concerns that people wished WHEC to consider, preferably with reasons for those concerns.

Currently WHEC are reviewing the following topics:

- Silica - to consider if the current workplace exposure limit to prevent silicosis is correct. This request came from the HSE.
- Risk to bakers of heat stress and asthma. The incidence of occupational asthma has fallen, except for bakers, and many of the current cases are coming from supermarket bakeries. This request came from the bakers' trade union.
- Musculoskeletal disorders and stress. This request was initiated by ANT.
- Quality of evidence. The evidence considered by Lesley Rushton ranged in quality from excellent to poor.

The Chair thanked Professor Sir Anthony Newman Taylor for his very informative presentation.

### **Response to consultations**

The Council were informed about a Work and Pensions Select Committee consultation: "Closing the gap between disability and work". It was agreed that the Council should submit a response.

### **Update on Council projects: Occupational Health Workforce Planning Group**

The Council was updated on the OH Workforce project. The second report had been published and launched at the Health & Wellbeing Conference in March.

### **Council membership update**

Council members unanimously agreed that the National School of Occupational Health should be invited to be a member of the Council.

**The next meeting of the Council will take place on Thursday 28 September 2016**