



Council for Work and Health May 2025 Chairman's report to AGM

This will be my eighth and final report as Chair to Council for Work and Health. I have agreed with your Board that a well-managed and timely succession is important, and the time is right to handover to my replacement within the next six months. The timing is partly personal, but also reflects the key work and health policy agenda that now deserves new engagement, energy and expertise.

I have been very proud to be the Chair in an exciting period - I think there is unprecedented recognition of the role that keeping workers happy, healthy and here can contribute to our future and it is genuinely a win / win /win to employers, employees or workers (and to society) that we tackle the issues that make work a challenge for too many.

With your Board in this report year, I have focused on keeping Council and its members involved in the multiple policy development activities occurring across many key organisations. Council relies on its officers and members giving their efforts freely and I value the commitment of colleagues willing to give such time and expertise generously. I do feel this is valued by policy leading colleagues.

I have also concentrated on forming collaborative relationships, ensuring that key organisations are joining together where appropriate to jointly debate and contribute consensus where possible. This has become a strength in recent years and was one of the reasons Dame Carol Black originally proposed a body such as Council be created many years ago.

I am extremely grateful to an able and sage Board – its members have given considerable additional time, as the pace and complexity of the various agendas this year has resulted in several additional meetings and interchanges. As an experienced Chair I have worked with many boards, but CWH is very fortunate to have the balance of a Board willing to challenge and seek the right way forward. I must also acknowledge particularly Anna McNeil who is an amazingly able and knowledgeable administrator, devoting much personal time to ensure our efficient running and Dr Robin Cordell, who has been a very loyal, trusted and capable Deputy Chair. I value their counsel and enthusiasm as inspiring.

I am pleased that despite being almost entirely reliant on member voluntary donations that our financial position remains relatively stable. We do minimise costs and whilst virtual working has many drawbacks it has also increased attendance, and we are improving our communications approaches. I thank all Council Members for their regular attendance – Council can only be a credible organisation if it is an active and open forum and I consider it to be such. I thank Members for their continued financial support and pro-bono contributions in what I know has also been constraining financial reviews for many.

Board has again reviewed the aims, mission and purpose of Council and these have been shared and discussed, but paramount for me has been to ensure we are regarded as a valuable, expert, truly diverse and multi-professional source of clear professional advice. I am pleased to receive feedback from senior contacts that this does seem to be the perception!

Diana Kloss left me “big shoes” to try and fill as a chair - she was key in establishing the diversity of Council and making it a safe place to share, consult and debate. In succeeding her, my aim was to continue to grow a truly multidisciplinary approach to the work / health needs and to shift the focus from considering workplace health as a reactive problem (trying to offer help to under- performing or absent people) to understanding that prevention is truly better than cure.

I do see this shift in policy intent now, but we as a Council now must strive to make this a reality. The economic landscape makes this difficult - but also gives the “burning platform” to seize the opportunity to drive improvement.

I have learnt so much from Council members in this period - your expertise and passion is wonderful and the Council has a massive role to help enable change for the better.

As we approached the latter part of this year, Board re-elections and its future needs enabled open and honest discussion with your Board. We will welcome re-election and new members to Board to be reported at this AGM and I thank sincerely those who end their term and stand down (Dr Robin Cordell and Joy Reymond have been longstanding reliable and passionate contributors for many years giving much time to assist Council in moving forward – THANK YOU!).

Succession is an important transition and represents opportunity to develop new strengths and approaches, I have worked with Board to plan this carefully – I welcome Kevin Brampton as our new Deputy Chair, with his considerable strengths to succeed Robin and I will work actively with Board to help them identify my successor in the early part of the forthcoming business year.

Organisations over a decade old deserve to question whether their original intention and purpose remains pertinent to continue. I strongly believe Council is achieving what it was created to improve and should remain a key organisation in the exciting opportunities ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to be your Chair



Dr Steven Boorman CBE