



Council for Work and Health Chairman's Report 2018/19

After succeeding Diana Kloss and her highly professional leadership of the Council from its establishment until just prior to this reported year, I must start this report by thanking the Board and Council Members for their active support and encouragement enabling us to make a smooth transition!

Council has continued to grow with continued enquiries about new membership from a number of organisations and we were joined by ACAS, Business In the Community and the Institute of Employability Professionals during the year, with CIPD having joined in the closing stages of the previous year. These organisations represent a further nearly 200,000 of their own professional membership and in early 2019 it is already impressive to see that Council member organisations represent some 750,000 with professional interest in work and health and a further 200,000 members with interest. So I think we can now confidently say that Council members represent over a million members working in aspects of work and health.

This makes Council a unique organisation in its reach, diversity and enables broad access to people with skills, expertise and experience. I have enjoyed (both in the meetings and in the online communications) seeing the power of active networking and information sharing and it is clear that Council members have been effective in informing policy makers, influencing direction and supporting training / recruitment to the multiple needs of the growing work and health agenda.

Inevitably the Government's "Improving Lives; work, health and disability" Command paper detailing an ambitious 10 year strategy has provided opportunity to involve Council members across a raft of significant project activities. Sighting members on these opportunities has ensured that stakeholders aren't "missed" in their contribution opportunities and I have been pleased to see very strong representation of Council members on all the key activity groups.

In 2018/19, Council members were active in the consultation on revisiting the 2008 "Work as a Clinical Outcome" consensus statement, in work to relaunch the AHP developed version of a fit note, on consultations on fit note need and promoting awareness relating to work and health needs for employees, employers and professionals working in the arena.

Two projects, in particular, saw significant input from Council professionals, demonstrating our expertise and professional contribution. The Deputy Chief Medical Officer led a major working group to consider what may be needed to "Transform Occupational Health" to enable more effective and wider support to the UK workforce in the future. This was a challenging, complex and ambitious task and the group undertook a detailed strategic debate. We now expect a further national consultation exercise, informed by the Task and Finish Group's work, to take place in 2019, with major opportunity to enable the over 50% of UK workers who currently lack occupational health support to have such access.

The second initiative that was directly led by Council involved research and development of a resource ("Talking Work") to support health professionals in identifying work adjustments to enable



effective completion of fit notes. This piece of work saw Council commissioning a researcher (Dr Devdeep Ahuja) to lead the literature review and development process, supported by a steering group of Council Board members. I must confess that despite working on many very difficult past projects, this proved a fascinating and extremely difficult exercise to ensure we produced a practical, well informed and evidence-based resource that was easily accessible and useful in supporting work and health conversations. Many stakeholders had very strong views on what should or should not be included and the collaborative working of Council members demonstrated the value of active debate and resolution to consensus. The evaluation feedback was strong and great comments have been received from users in relation to the simple checklist, case studies and links to useful resources that are key elements of the resource - hosted and freely downloadable from the Council website (<https://www.councilforworkandhealth.org.uk/work-modifications/>). The work is commendable and I think is another strong demonstration of the value of the multidisciplinary experience of our membership.

Going forward, the Council's Business plan supports continued engagement on further strategic projects and we hope that the model of using senior highly experienced professionals to lead work (with contribution and development opportunities for professionals from within our membership) will deliver similar success in the future.

During the year our three formal meetings were well attended and guest contributions enabled members to be informed on activities and developments from a wide range of organisations. Guest presentations included inputs from Louise Aston, BiTC Professor Tony Woolf – ARMA, Christian van Stolk - Rand Organisation, Dr Rob Hampton - PHE, GP Champion and Dr Julie Denning - Working to Wellbeing. We were also pleased to enable a number of observers from influential organisations to attend meetings and hear contributions.

Our active communication network has seen much traffic – representatives in member organisations have seen over 50 contacts informing on meetings, events, activities and consultations, but also many papers supporting awareness on the health and work agenda.

As professional organisations, our members are actively involved in training and networking contacts have ensured strong co-operation enabling professional training to benefit from inputs from other specialty contributors. During the year many Council members have been regularly seen representing Council on conference platforms as presenters and panel members and this year's NEC Health & Wellbeing at Work event saw Council members presenting across virtually all the work streams and actively chairing some of the most popular. The event also enabled the launch of the "Talking Work" resource. Anna McNeil very ably represented Council spending two very full days on the Council's stand and the fact that we distributed over 500 cards and flyers, with many other interested contacts and follow up visits subsequently, proved how worthwhile attendance was.

As Chair I have had the privilege of representing Council at many member events, a good example was a webinar that Tom Stewart our Deputy Chair led with the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF) in November – actively promoting the role of Council and the opportunities membership affords. I have also taken steps in my first year to meet as many senior directors in member organisations to thank them for continued support and encourage their future engagement.



I believe that the Council's reputation and influence has grown in recent years. It owes this to the enthusiasm and passion of its members. However, at a practical level, whilst the year has seen successful delivery across a range of projects and a small operating surplus, the Council is not an organisation supported by deep reserves or sources of guaranteed funding. It has to date relied solely on voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations, with this year also seeing a small contribution from well managed project work. Council operates within a very small and tight budget and I trust members will feel able to continue to support its activities going forward as without such generosity it is not sustainable.

Whilst many organisations made a greatly appreciated direct financial contribution, I would also like to thank those that supported Council by hosting meetings (especially Health Education England, The Royal College of Occupational Therapists and the Vocational Rehabilitation Association and also many other pro bono contributions. I should also like to thank my own employer (Empactis) which despite being an SME has very actively supported giving freely of my time, which has been crucial in this first year of my Chairmanship.

Looking forward, we have now launched our updated website, and are seeing increasing traffic in terms of visits not only to its content, but also in the use of links to other valuable resources hosted my members. Work has been completed to update our Council Business Plan, which in simple summary contains an ambition to continue to promote the role that our expert membership can contribute to the work and health agenda in the future. Most notable is our opportunity not only to work with policy makers, but also to be able to reach employers, employees and key stakeholders to enable heightened awareness and enhanced collaboration.

Work and Health are inextricably linked and 2019 sees growing awareness from most quarters that improvements may be key to future success and I look forward to another year in which the Council for Work and Health can be an effective voice.

Dr Steven Boorman CBE
Chair Council for Work and Health