



Briefing from meeting on 8 February 2012

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

- **Council strategy and business plan**

The working group reported on progress. It was agreed that the Council should be set up as a company limited by guarantee, which is not for profit, and may have 4-6 directors.

The sub-group recommended that there should be a maximum of 6 directors, who would be elected by the Council. This would include a chair, secretary, treasurer and 3 others, with terms varying from 1 to 3 years to ensure continuity. The chair would hold the casting vote.

Nominations could be:

- Limited to members of the sub group
- Self nomination by members
- Nomination and seconding by other members

All nominees would require the agreement of their professional bodies and employers.

It had been agreed that member organisation should be asked to make a contribution to running costs for the Council but the sub group recommended that this should be done after the company was set up.

- **Guidance for employers on communication with general practitioners**

Diana Kloss summarised the project to date. It was felt that the fit note did not provide sufficient clarity for employers, to help them make appropriate adjustments so that employees could return to work as early as possible. A method of communication between employers and GPs was therefore required and the Council was well placed to provide guidance. A sub group had developed a guidance document and sample letters for communication between employers and GPs.

Members of the sub group felt that the Council should continue to promote the use of standard letters from employers to GPs to provide clarification of fit notes. Rob Hampton is a member of the sub-group and is Clinical Lead for the Leicestershire Fit for Work Service. He gave a presentation to the Council on research which the service is undertaking (copy to follow) using information from fit notes issued by the service and by local GPs. He proposed that this could include piloting and research on the benefits of standard letters.

- **Training and qualifications for occupational health nurses**

Diana Kloss summarised the context for this project. It had developed because of widespread concern about the quality of training for occupational health nurses. Anne Harriss had led the development of a paper which explored the issues and a small group (Diana

Kloss, Anne Harriss and Helen Kirk) had met with the NMC last year to raise the Council's concerns.

The NMC suggested that OH nurses should take on advanced practitioner status and Helen Kirk was conducting a survey to gather their views. An update had been circulated, which indicated that she was preparing a report for submission to the Journal of Occupational Medicine.

No further action was proposed, pending a further update from Helen Kirk. However, it was suggested that the following should be discussed at the next meeting:

setting up a sub group to look at OH training modules and nurse training curricula and setting up a meeting with the new NMC CEO

- **Advanced practitioner in occupational health**

Jan Vickery provided an update on progress of the competency framework which was presented at the last meeting. It is now in a consultation phase until the end of March and is available on the Council website.

OTs, physiotherapists and psychologists contributed to the framework and each group is conducting its own consultation process. OTs and physiotherapists have used workshops to refine the framework. It has been a more difficult process to engage psychologists, since this includes occupational psychologists, clinical psychologists and health psychologists, but they aim to provide feedback from the broader membership.

- **AHP fit form**

Leonie Dawson gave an update on progress with the AHP fit form, which has now been piloted and received positive feedback from GPs and employers.

The fit form is similar to the GP fit note but will provide more detailed information. The AHP completing the form must include their HPC registration number for validity. An electronic version will be available to use through secure networks, such as NHS mail, and paper copies will be provided for employers. It is hoped that GPs will refer patients to AHPs and will be able to use the information provided to complete their fit note.

A draft version is available on the COT/CSP website but this is currently only available to members.

- **Health at Work – an independent review of sickness absence**

The above report was published in November 2011 and the Government (DWP and BIS) are deliberating their response. An interim response should be published in March/April and a green paper later in the year. There will be an opportunity to respond to consultation on these but it was agreed that, in the meantime, the Council should write in support of the findings of the report, which highlighted complex issues around disincentives to work and benefits.

The next Council meeting was scheduled for 3 May 2012.