

Thoughts from an outgoing C4WH Director

I strongly believe that it is vital that we promote multidisciplinary working in occupational health. There are many of us in different clinical and non-clinical health professional groups. Working together we are much more effective than working individually.

I am therefore a huge fan of the Council for Work and Health (C4WH). I first got involved in its development several years ago, when it was still being hosted and funded by the Department of Health, implementing a recommendation from Professor Dame Carol Black's report, Working for a Healthier Tomorrow. At that time, I was representing the Society of Occupational Medicine. I was elected to the Board in 2013 and have now completed my three year tenure as a Director.

Over the years C4WH has developed a strong identity, opening its membership to all organisations who represent health professionals working in occupational health, and to others with an interest in the interface between health and work. I believe that we are unique in getting all the health professionals involved in occupational health round the table as equals.

Our focus has been primarily on education and workforce. Professor John Harrison is leading a project under the auspices of C4WH, the funding for which was obtained through Dr Richard Heron's good offices in successfully lobbying PHE. This work describes the need for and the shape of the occupational health workforce of the future. Two reports have been published and a third phase of the work is being planned. At a recent C4WH meeting, the policy lead for the government's new joint Work and Health Unit, Julie Alexander, stated that our latest publication could not have come at a better time to influence government thinking on this issue.

The Council's newest member is the National School of Occupational Health (NSOH). Mandy Murphy, Deputy Head of School, tells me that NSOH is currently identifying those competencies which are shared across clinical OH professional groups and those that are unique to each group. We've struggled with this for years. The Council is in an excellent position to promote the outputs of this work.

I feel very proud to have been associated with C4WH's work to date. Funding remains difficult; I'm sure some solutions will come to the fore. I'd like to thank Diana Kloss for her commitment to her role as our Chair, Anna McNeil for her hard work, and my fellow directors for their good humour and persistence in taking our work forward. I will be cheering from the sidelines as the Council goes from strength to strength.

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