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Working For A Healthier Tomorrow

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New Chair, Contacts, membership

## Funding Crisis resolved (for now anyway)

The Forum and the Bradford Occupational Health Project have, after a lot of pressure exerted from various quarters, including Labour MP Terry Rooney, Liberal Democrat Leader Jeannette Sunderland and Cllr Ian Greenwood have had their funding extended until September 2009.

Partly due to the funding crisis, Carol Duerdon, the chairman of the Forum decided to stand down at the AGM held in June 2008, as she wants to concentrate her efforts into the Workers' Health Advice Team.

We now need a longer term commitment. The small amount of funding required from the Council and the PCT to fund the Forum is an extremely efficient use of public money.

The Forum intends to talk to the new Health and Well-being Partnership over the summer about future work in the hope they see the importance of what we are doing.



## Dame Carol Black to Visit Bradford

### Working for a healthier tomorrow in Bradford –

A seminar is being organised by Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum for 24th September 2008 – 9.30am -1pm, at the Carlisle Business Centre, Bradford

We are very privileged in Bradford to have Dame Carol Black agree to speak at the seminar about her review of the health of Britain's working age population which was published in March 2008.

Dame Carol Black is the author of the major review of the health of Britain's working age population 'Working for a healthier tomorrow' which lays out 10 challenges and 10 recommendations to 'remedy, the human, social and economic costs of impaired health and well-being in relation to working life in Britain'.

At the seminar the main speaker Dame Carol Black and two or three other strategic speakers from Bradford Council/NHS will be followed by a question and answer session, and a general flip charted discussion to answer the question - **"Is there anything we need to do in Bradford to help make the aspirations in Dame Black's report a reality?"**

Through the seminar it is hoped that we can identify what needs to happen in Bradford to make the aspirations in Dame Black's report a reality and agree where Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing fits in to the new joint planning arrangements. (Article on the review on page 2&3).

## Excerpts from the 'Review of the health of Britain's working age population' - Dame Carol Black

'At the heart of this Review is a recognition of, and a concern to remedy, the human, social and economic costs of impaired health and well-being in relation to working life in Britain... to identify the factors that stand in the way of good health and to elicit interventions, including changes in attitudes, behaviours and practices – as well as services – that can help overcome them'

### Chapter 1 Introduction

Families without a working member are more likely to suffer persistent low income and poverty. There is also evidence of a correlation between lower parental income and poor health in children. Prevention of illness is part of the three principal objectives at the heart of this review.

Page 23 'Healthy workplaces, designed to protect and promote health and well-being, are key to preventing illness arising in the first place. It is important that employers provide and maintain them. Allied with this is the importance of jobs being 'good jobs' .....

### Chapter 2- The health of the working age population

The review sets out the first ever baseline for the health of Britain's working age population. Common mental health problems and musculoskeletal disorders are the major causes of sickness absence and worklessness due to ill-health. This is compounded by a lack of appropriate and timely diagnosis and intervention.

The annual economic costs of sickness absence and worklessness associated with working age ill-health are estimated to be over £100 billion. This is greater than the

current annual budget for the NHS and equivalent to the entire GDP of Portugal.

Page 36 'There is considerable evidence that there is a fundamental link between health and other socio-economic indicators such as educational qualifications, job status and income.'

Page 41 'There is an obvious link between an individual's health status and ability to work. However, this relationship is not always straightforward and is influenced by a number of factors. First, work itself can be a cause of illness.....'



### Chapter 3 The role of the workplace in health and well-being

Great progress has been made in improving health and safety at work. A new approach to health and well-being at work is now needed. Research specially commissioned for this Review, found considerable evidence that health and well-being programmes produced economic benefits across all sectors and all sizes of businesses: in other words, that good health is good business. Safety and health practitioners could play a more expanded role in promoting these benefits, as could trades union safety representative wherever present.

Page 51 'The arguments for preventing work-related injury, disease and death are morally, socially and economically irrefutable.'

Page 57 'The pragmatic way forward is to ensure that the stron-

gest players are asked to build a new interface with SMEs in order to encourage their participation in occupational health.'

Page 57 'The way in which the workplace affects someone's health and well-being is not simply a medical issue. The quality of the experience that someone has in their workplace can also impact on health and well-being.'

### Chapter 4 - Changing perceptions of fitness for work

Tackling stigma around ill-health and disability will be key to enabling more people with health conditions find work and stay in work. Changing perceptions will also require greater public engagement on the benefits of work for health, raising expectations of what makes a good job and of the support people with health conditions should expect to enable them to remain in or return to work.

A ground-breaking Consensus Statement signed by leaders of the healthcare professions represents a profound commitment to promoting the link between good work and good health (see page 67)

### Chapter 5 - Developing a new model for intervention

A proposed new Fit for Work service would provide treatment, advice and guidance for people in the early stages of sickness absence.

With many employers to date having failed to provide access to adequate occupational health, and the associated costs to the taxpayer and the economy being so substantial, there is a strong case for the NHS being involved in the provision of these work-related health interventions.

Page 75 'The issue of "fast track" access to necessary interventions (physiotherapy, counselling) needs to be addressed. The current situation of employees subjected to NHS waiting list times of 6-9

months for such treatments is currently a barrier.’

Page 79 ‘Occupational health has traditionally never been part of the NHS, other than for its own employees. When the NHS was set up, the view was that the provision of ‘industrial medicine’, as it was then known, was largely for the employers’ benefit and thus should be paid for by employers. One of the fundamental problems is the historical detachment of occupational health from mainstream healthcare provision and the resulting consequences for the provision of holistic care.’

### **Chapter 6 - Helping workless people**

Each year 600,000 people move onto incapacity benefits. 55% of those coming onto IB came either from work or a period of sickness absence from work, a further 28% were claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance or Income Support immediately prior to claiming IB. Evaluation of Pathways to Work pilots has shown an increase of around 8% points in six-month off-flow rates from IB compared with national averages.

Pathways to Work has had limited effect for those whose main health condition is a mental illness. Rehabilitation services and employer adjustments can be critical in enabling someone to return to and stay in work, not just addressing the specific health barriers to an individual’s employment, but also providing a source of information for the patient on the types of work which may be most suitable.

Page 89 ‘The Government has recently introduced a new local performance framework which places local partners in the heart of deliver of policy.... While the new framework is a very positive step, Government must encourage partnerships to consider the health

of working age people and the employment of people with health conditions within their LAA. Without doing so, the new partnership arrangements will be a missed opportunity for Government.

‘...we need to do more to encourage local partnership activity and help partnerships overcome the barriers they meet.’

### **Chapter 7 - Developing professional expertise for working age health**

If we are to fundamentally change the way we support the health of working age people, then we have to address a number of the challenges which face occupational health as it is currently configured. These include the historical detachment from mainstream healthcare, the focus only on those in work, uneven provision, inconsistent quality a diminishing workforce with a shrinking academic base and a lack of good-quality data.

Developing an integrated approach to working age health requires occupational health to be brought into the mainstream of healthcare provision.

### **Chapter 8 - The next generation**

When parents are prevented from working because of a health condition, the risk is not just that their children may end up in poverty, but that those children may experience worse health outcomes and face an increased likelihood that they themselves will be workless in the future. We should encourage young people to understand the benefits of a life in work and what a healthy workplace offers so they can make an informed decision about the organisations for which they choose to work.

Page 103 ‘Preventing workers being made ill and driven out of work, onto benefits, or into less well paid work or lifelong disability, would reduce the poverty, depriva-

tion and social exclusion that they and their families suffer. ‘

### **Chapter 9 - Taking the agenda forward**

Together we have the opportunity to deliver long-term change. We will not secure the future health of the working age population without it.

Page 109 ‘Health and safety professionals, trades unions and other representative bodies play a valuable part in influencing how employers tackle health and safety issues in the workplace. This review has highlighted the opportunity for these groups to play an expanded role in promoting the benefits of employers investing in health and well-being.’

‘The concept of ‘good work’ is fundamental to the evidence on the positive effects of work on health for individuals, and to the productivity of business. This provides trades unions, in particular, with an important opportunity to encourage employees to see healthy workplaces as a fundamental employment right ...’

Page 113 Government, healthcare professionals, employers, trades unions and all with an interest in the health of the working age population should adopt a new approach to health and work in Britain based on the foundations laid out in this Review.

(full report on Forum website)



## Carol stands down as Chair

Presents and thank you messages were given to Carol at the end of the Looking After Mental Health at Work Seminar/AGM held in June. Carol was presented with a bottle of champagne and a canvas photo of herself and other members of the WG receiving an award at the House of Lords. (See opposite). But we managed to persuade Carol to nominate herself as Treasurer on the new Committee.



### New Forum Committee

Andrew Mawson, from the PCS Union from HMRC Contact Centre in Bradford is the new Forum Chair (also pictured - 2nd from right opposite). Other posts were filled by John Blanchfield CBMDC Vice Chair and Lyndsey Bennett from the HSE minutes Secretary.

A big thank you to those members who served on the Working Group last year.

### Looking After Mental Health and Well-being at Work

The seminar on this subject held in June was well attended and interesting. Handouts and video clips from the seminar can be found on our website [www.baohsf.org.uk](http://www.baohsf.org.uk).

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 To receive newsletters, seminar lists and keep in touch please complete this forum membership slip

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