

National Employment and Health Innovations network

One Wales

Occupational Health Task and Finish Group Report

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Marriott Hotel Cardiff. 14th July 2009



The Principal Task:

“ Explore opportunities to place occupational health services on a statutory basis in Wales.”

One Wales

- **One Wales** – 4 year programme for the Welsh Assembly Government
 - 8 themes:
 - o A strong and confident nation
 - o **A healthy future**
 - o A prosperous society
 - o Living communities
 - o Learning for life
 - o A fair and just society
 - o A sustainable environment
 - o A rich and diverse society
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One Wales

- **A Healthy Future**

.....explore opportunities to make the provision of occupational health services statutory in Wales.

Invited by Minister for Health & Social Services to chair a T&F Group

One Wales Occupational Health Task & Finish Group

- **The Health & Safety Executive**
- **Wales Centre for Health**
- **Welsh Assembly Government**
- **Faculty of Occupational Medicine**
- **Association of NHS Occupational Health Physicians**
- **Industrial Injuries Advisory Council**
- **Welsh Local Government Association**
- **Cardiff Work Environment Research Centre**
- **Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF)**
- **Wales RCN OHN Forum**
- **Wales NHS OHN Forum**
- **National Public Health Service for Wales**
- **Society of Occupational Medicine**

Task & Finish Group: Convened July, 2008

- **Legal issues**
 - **Enforcement & Capacity issues**
 - **Cost effectiveness**
 - **Profile of the working age population**
 - **The current approach in Wales**
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Definition of Occupational Health:

- In the context of Wales
 - For the purpose of the group's work and objectives
 - “Occupational Health aims
 - to maximise the health gains of being in work,
 - ensures a safe environment for work and removes
 - barriers to allow individuals to realise their potential whilst at and on returning to work.”
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Review of the Evidence:

Some principal sources:

- The occupational Health Advisory Committee's report on access to OH support (HSE, 2000)
 - *Is work good for your health and well-being?*
 - Waddell and Burton (2006)
 - *Working for a healthier tomorrow.*
 - Dame Carol Black (2008)
 - *Work and Common Health Problems.*
 - Waddell, Burton and Aylward (2007)
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Current Picture of Occupational Health in Wales:

- *A mapping exercise of occupational health service and training provision across Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government (2006)*
 - **Public Sector: majority**
 - **Private Sector: 17%**
 - **Significant variability: comprehensive in 6% of private sector;**
 - of which : 94% by large production organisations**
 - : 14% in retail and hotel sector**
 - : 5 % in construction**
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Current Picture:

- **OH Staff:**
 - **Largest category: Nurses**
 - **Less than 50% hold OH qualification**
 - **Limited capacity occupational health physicians.**
 - **Mapping exercises limited by sample sizes and focus on OH nurses and physicians.**
 - **Contemporary approach includes and should involve:**
 - ❖ **broader range of professionals**
 - ❖ **multi-and interdisciplinary approach**
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Legal Implications: OH Services Statutory in Wales

- Existing powers of Welsh Ministers:
 - Health Services: devolved
 - Health & Safety at work: not devolved
 - Scope of existing legislation in relation to health
 - “ would not enable Welsh Ministers to impose duties and obligations on employers.”
 - Legislative Processes:
 - Primary legislation (Act of Parliament)
 - Assembly Measures
 - Sub ordinate legislation (enabling powers)
 - “ likely to take 18 months to complete”
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Cost Effectiveness of Occupational Health Services

- **Lack of high quality evidence**
 - **Impact on SMEs:**
 - **costs outweigh savings**
 - **undermine competitive position**
 - **alternative approaches needed**
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Profile of Working Age Population in Wales:

- Overall health improving
 - Inequalities between communities and social groups are not decreasing
 - Employment rate: 71.2 % (3% below UK)
 - Economically inactive: 427,000 (2008)
 - 33% long term sickness (25% UK)
 - 200,000 in receipt of IB (March, 2009)
 - Two thirds sickness absence: Common health problems
 - musculoskeletal
 - mental health
 - cardio respiratory
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Recommendations

- **Changes in legislation are not an effective way of improving health and reducing ill health at work.**
 - **Developing and augmenting Occupational Health Services in Wales**
 - **A national occupational health service**
 - **Public Sector leading by example**
 - **Existing bursary programme for nurses-extended**
 - **Capacity building**
 - **Academic and research base: investment**
 - **Mapping of professionals across Wales**
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The Wider Context

- **Occupational health- important component of integrated approach:**
 - **focus on the working age population**
(in work, or not)
 - **health & work interventions**
 - **advice: employers, health professionals, workers and citizens**
 - **support at work**
 - **rapid access to work-focused services**
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The Welsh Assembly Government's response to *'Working for a healthier tomorrow'*.

- **Integrated approach to engage health professionals, individuals and employers**
- **Occupational health commitments include:**
 - **a long-term delivery model for Workboost Wales**
 - **rolling out the online health and work centre for GPs**



Healthy Working Wales

.....promoting wellbeing in the workplace



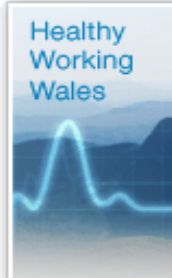
[Cymraeg >](#)

Healthy Working Wales has been developed to support employers, employees and health professionals to improve health at work, prevent ill health and to support return to work following ill health.



For advice and support on workplace health and well being, and to find out more about the Corporate Health Standard click here

[enter site >](#)



Health and work advice for GPs and health professionals. This site requires log in.

[enter site >](#)



For advice about managing backpain in your area, click here

[enter site >](#)



Workboost Wales
0845 609 6006

Free and impartial advice on workplace health from the Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with HSE

Free and impartial occupational health, safety and return to work advice for you

[enter site >](#)

Next Steps

- **The Minister for Health and Social Services accepted the three key recommendations from the One Wales Occupational Health Task and Finish Group report, that:**
 - **Changes to the current risk and evidence based legislation are not an effective way of improving health and reducing ill health**
 - **The integrated approach to Occupational Health outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government's response to Dame Carol Black's report should be further developed.**
 - **As part of this integrated approach, a national occupational health service, provided by the NHS and made viable by contributions from employers, should be established.**
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Acknowledgements:

Thanks to all the members of the T&F group and its administrative support.

An especial thank you to Matt Downton for his contribution.
