

# MANAGING OH SERVICES

**A course leading to a Certificate in Managing OH Services organised by the At Work Partnership from 10-12 May 2011 is described by Diane Romano-Woodward, of Sunny Blue Sky Ltd**

Along with about 30 others, OH nurses, physicians and HR people I attended a three-day course on managing OH services run by the At Work Partnership. The location was Lion Court Conference Centre, a pleasant set of rooms near Holborn tube station in London. There were six separate modules with different specialists covering different aspects of management.

**Session 1** 'Objectives, Ethics and Delivery Options' was led by Dr Dipti Patel, who has worked for the BBC, Foreign Office and MASTA, gave an overview of the role of OH. It covered evaluating the OH requirements of an organisation and undertaking a needs review. There was discussion of the potential tension between the needs of the organisation and the professional and ethical responsibilities of the practitioner. Mention was made of the changing nature of the workplace and employees.

**Session 2** 'Problem Solving and Negotiation Skills' was led by Tilly Wood, a management consultant, who came across as being very experienced in the field. She explained the difference between selling and negotiating, and talked through the process of building the negotiating team and their roles. This was the area with which I was the most unfamiliar, and I found the session extremely useful.

**Session 3** 'Resourcing and Budget Management' covered the basics of a balance sheet and identifying costs. Also covered was proving your worth as an OH service, as for many there remains the threat of the outsourcing. This session was led by John Humphrey, who also hosted or chaired the three-day course.

**Session 4** had Dr Steve Boorman discussing 'Managing Internal Relationships and Communications'. In a lively presentation he discussed the stakeholders in an organisation, how to identify and improve relations with them. He suggested that we all develop a response to 'The Elevator Question' – when you have a short period of time in a lift (30 seconds?) with the MD to get across what you do in OH and how it contributes to the bottom line.

**Session 5** Diana Kloss presented 'Legal Frameworks' giving an interesting overview of the English legal system. She covered the differences between statute and codes of practice, employment law and European Union legal aspects. She was happy to answer questions as we went along as were all of the speakers.

**Session 6** saw the return of John Humphrey covering 'Managing OH Staff'. This was a broad range of topics from recruitment, teamwork, leadership, change and identifying and managing under-performance of OH staff. With such a broad scope it was only possible to touch on the subjects, but as the course slides were provided, it was easy to go back and reflect on what had been suggested.

## **Break out sessions**

During each session we would break out into two groups and work on a 20 minute challenge associated with the topic. This allowed for a rapid exchange of ideas from the participants who had very different experiences and challenges in their work.

Each group had a facilitator to encourage participation and keep and eye on time.

With groups of OH people there is really no need for encouragement as most people attending were voluble. You don't get into a management position in OH without being able to express yourself and this made the workshops lively.

At the end of each session there was a multiple choice 'test' which showed whether or not you had been awake. Apart from the one following Diana Kloss's session, these were straightforward. Kloss's questions required some thinking and delving back into the comprehensive course notes/slides to understand the subtleties of the law and the way it functions, but there were no time limits. She marked the tests herself and added helpful comments.

### Written assignment

In order to get the certificate there is a requirement to pass all of these mini tests and also to produce a 3000 word written assignment on one of six questions set on the topics covered by the sessions. Approximately two months are allowed to produce this essay, and I will admit that I found this challenging, as I know others on the course have.

I chose one on managing OH staff, setting out an approach to maximising productivity and maintaining high levels of quality. Having submitted it in July, I am awaiting the results, the pass mark being 50%. The marking is moderated by Professor John Harrison, Clinical Organisational Development, Brunel University.

### Worth every penny

The cost of the course was £1678.80 per delegate or £1438.80 reduced for NHS delegates. There is a reduced early bird rate for prompt booking and they graciously allow sole practitioners such as myself to pay the NHS rate. For the independent practitioner, the cost is only one consideration, as there will be the loss of three days earnings as well. My verdict on the course – worth every penny.

## Council for Work & Health

A meeting was held on 11 May and work continues on the following areas:

- Guidance for employers on communication with General Practitioners.
- Training and qualifications for occupational health nurses – the NMC is to be contacted regarding concerns over OH nurse education, as well as the consultation on changes to Part 3 of the Register. Helen Kirk is also developing a survey on Advance Nurse Practitioner status for OH nurses.
- An article on section 60 of the Equality Act, as it related to pre-employment health questions, has been added to the website under a 'helpful advice' section.
- CWH's long term strategy to be developed and a meeting was held on 25 July.

**Christina Butterworth, President**

## Central England OH Group Annual Study Day 6 June 2011

Well supported by over 45 delegates, the speakers were well thought out and gave excellent presentations:

- Dr Nerys Williams from the Health, Work and Wellbeing Directorate
- Sharon Wilday and Alan Dovey speaking from a cognitive behavioural background
- Dr Alistair Robertson spoke on occupational respiratory disease in the workplace
- Aziz Bashyr, a true OH fellow, creator of JISCMail
- Professor David Wilson enlightened us at the end of the day on his experience of serial killers.

On the whole a very informative and interesting day. I am already looking forward to next year's.

Well done everyone from CEOHG.

**Jeanette Penny**