



2016 Survey Statement & Proposed Next Steps

The Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing Development Group

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Background

The Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing (FOHN) Development Group (FDG) published a Position Paper in October 2015 outlining our initial thoughts in relation to occupational health (OH) nurse education, regulation and funding. As a profession, we find ourselves at a point in time where the landscape of work has changed, employers are seeking alternative services and there is an increasing shortage of talent coming through to replace those who are leaving. Because OH nurses operate very differently to other nursing colleagues, in the past, the nature of our practice has often been misunderstood by professional and regulatory bodies alike. The FDG envisage that a FOHN would provide a much needed way of providing direction, voice and unity in future, and it was important for us to engage with fellow OH nurses to get their feedback about the possibilities and practicalities of building a FOHN before going ahead with our plans in earnest. In short, we wanted to ensure that the expectations of the profession were aligned with those of the FDG. Our stated ambition was (and is) to update the original Position Paper later this year (please see www.fohn.org.uk) to incorporate the views of others so that we establish a unified and representative way forward. It was therefore planned that we would conduct a large scale survey of nurses working in OH, the results of which could subsequently be used for lobbying purposes and to elicit the changes that we believe are essential for the longevity of the profession.

The Survey

This survey has now been completed and on behalf of the FDG, we would like to say a **massive thank you** to all those who completed this survey and provided helpful narrative to support their views. The survey represents the biggest of its kind with 1,429 responses and this is testament to your passion, enthusiasm for and commitment to OH. We are united in our motivation to improve the professional standing of OH Nursing for the benefit of the working population in the UK.

To re-cap, the survey aimed to gather feedback regarding:

- What OH nurses want and expect from a future FOHN.
- What OH nurses think about OH nurse education now and in the future, and
- To better understand the demographic characteristics of nurses working in the OH setting.

As you might imagine, the survey generated a lot of data. So we are also hugely grateful to Karen Coomer (on behalf of the FOHN) and Dr John Ballard (the At Work Partnership) who dedicated much of the summer to analysing the data and generating the survey findings which have now been set out in the first of two articles for publication this year (the second will focus on OH nurse education). We urge you to read them. In presenting the findings in article format, you will see that we have also deliberately chosen to include qualitative comments made by the many practitioners from diverse organisational settings who completed the survey. This includes some comments from respondents whose views are very different to ours! In the interests of transparency and equity, the FDG believes it is important that all voices are heard and because we want to maintain the ongoing debate about the most appropriate model of a FOHN.

The survey confirmed that whilst there was overwhelming support for the idea of having a FOHN, it was less clear that OH nurses would be prepared to pay an annual membership fee for it. Their decision is likely to depend on their assessment of the value of a FOHN at the time, given other demands on their resources and existing subscriptions to other organisations etc. The FDG has always recognised that funding could be an issue – especially if the FOHN is based upon a full membership services organisation model.

Next Steps

Having discussed the survey as a group, the FDG's next step is to engage with others – specifically the FOHN Consulting Group (FCG), the Association of Occupational Health Nurse Practitioners (UK) and others such as the Council for Work and Health etc. However, it is clear to us that there are three clear priorities going forward which should be the primary focus, namely:

- The need for professional direction, leadership and a voice for OH nursing.
- The need for agreement and consistency related to practice standards.
- To ensure that OH nurse education is fit for the future.

To this end, the FDG has already started work with the main stakeholders involved and we will continue to keep you updated and informed of developments in that respect.

The FDG will be meeting with the FCG and the FOHN Special Advisers in December 2016. At the moment our inclination is to set up the Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing as a small charitable organisation, select trustees, review the present vision, mission and strategy and develop a development plan accordingly. We will be looking for financial and non-financially based support to do this. Many of you have already sent in expressions of interest to volunteer to complete essential tasks. If you are one of these people then we will be getting in touch – thank you! Otherwise, if you have not already done so and would like to be involved in this important and valuable project please do contact the FDG at info@fohn.org.uk