
Council Elections at the Chartered Society of Pysiotherapy

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In 2011, EMPC Partner, Judith Pitt-Brooke, was elected by members of the Physiotherapy profession, to its governing body, the Council of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. She was also invited to join the PhysioWorks Board, by the Chair of Council, to represent Physiotherapists in the Private Sector. Judith is standing for re-election this year, and she has taken some time here to talk about why she has decided to stand for a further 4 year term, and what she hopes to achieve if re-elected.

If you are reading this article, then hopefully it is because you are interested in the professional profile of the Physiotherapy team at EMPC or because you are a physiotherapist interested in deciding who to vote for in the forthcoming elections to Council of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

I have spent the last 4 years as an elected member of Council, offering my experience as a small business owner to try to help members understand how the enormous changes affecting our working environments have led to those of us running small clinical businesses to evolve and grow to compete with the bigger business and increase in competition. I have tried to encourage Council and CSP officers to try to see the value of looking at opportunities through the eyes of a successful but small private clinical practice, which I am proud to be able to say, is respected and valued by both patients who refer themselves to us, and our medical colleagues and insurance companies who refer their patients to us. During my current term on Council, I have witnessed a growing realisation amongst Council members that a cultural shift in thinking amongst members in the direction of increasing business mindedness, is likely to help ALL members and enable us to successfully tackle the challenges that lie ahead for our profession in an NHS that may need to make hard choices soon.

When I first joined Council 4 years ago I was overwhelmed by the prevailing culture at the time, which seemed fearful of commercial thinking, and a little blind to the inevitability of the need for cost saving. Innovative thinking, and the need to demonstrate cost benefit in all areas of our practice and service delivery was less valued than protecting the status quo. There was lots of talk about fantastic quality services across the UK in the NHS, but little evidence that commercial and entrepreneurial thinking was valued.

Therefore, I have deliberately and sometimes provocatively canvassed in Council, over the past 4 years, for the acceptance that a commercial approach to the development of our profession, is needed, if we are to compete against the throng of other therapeutic voices, in a commissioning environment that is likely to have to pick and choose much more what it chooses to provide.

I have made a decision to put myself forward for re-election to Council, because I think I have been one of a small number of council members who have started the ball rolling on this change and I feel I could contribute well to building the momentum of change.

The success that our Profession has in the next few years, in navigating its way through some very likely, choppy waters, is dependent on us developing a clear vision of what our unique value is both to patients, who may choose to pay for our services, those who we need to support to demand our services in the NHS, and to those larger organisations who will decide how to value us in their commissioning plans. .

Having worked as a Physiotherapist for over 30 years, in the NHS, University Sector and now the Private Sector, I have never been so aware of the potential impact of changes, both in the public and commercial sectors. Both sectors are being squeezed financially. This is real and unlikely to change in the next few years. Our focus must stay on the needs of our patients and our professional growth must be led by patient need and patient demand. Our job is to create that demand by being fantastic at what we do. Every CSP member has a responsibility here, and as Council member, I expect to take responsibility for ensuring members feels empowered and motivated to take that responsibility.

The Chartered Society has won us as Physiotherapists, the right to become independent prescribers. We are capable of qualifying to give injections. As autonomous professionals we are uniquely skilled in terms of clinical reasoning and providing detailed rehabilitation and recovery plans from a wide range of conditions and injury states, using holistic approaches, working with minds and bodies through physical means, which no other healthcare professional can do. We are also 'action and activity' focused. What a gift we are for decision makers who are seeking solutions to massive illness epidemics arising from inactivity and over medicalisation. So let's take up the opportunity this gives us and accept responsibility for what we have fought for.

So, massive opportunities ahead – but only if collectively, as a professional group, whether based inside the NHS or outwith, we become our own sales force. This means breaking down the old tensions that still exist in some corners, about approaches and drivers in different sectors and building TRUST within our membership.

I believe I have helped to start a shift in attitudes and cultural thinking within Council in the last 4 years but business is unfinished. If re-elected to Council, I will strongly pursue further trust and acceptance of a more commercial approach generally within the profession that helps enable all members to feel confident to broaden their shoulders and welcome competition - and rise to it.

I hope you will feel able to support me.

Yours in earnest,

Judith Pitt-Brooke