

**COI LIVE EVENTS AND BROADCAST FACILITIES  
TRANSCRIPT OF GOOD JOBS, GOOD HEALTH CONFERENCE  
HELD AT THE INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS  
IN LONDON  
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## FACILITATOR

Thanks very much for that Will, I think firstly for putting it in a broader, maybe political context, and secondly for outlining the work that you are doing within the Work Foundation over the coming year which I am sure will complement much of what we are trying to do. So thank you very much.

Before I ask Geoffrey to conclude, two housekeeping things. Can I ask all of you to please fill in your evaluation forms. These do have a purpose and honestly we do read them. There have been requests, will the proceedings of the workshop be on the website, and I am informed that they will be as of tomorrow morning, so read away.

Can I now welcome and introduce Geoffrey Podger, who is going to identify some of the emerging themes for today and to conclude our day. Thank you.

## GEOFFREY PODGER

Well Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it is probably good advice to somebody who has an impossible task like I have to keep it short, so that is what I am going to do.

But I just wanted really to pull out of what has really been quite an action packed programme some of the points that have struck me, many of the points that have been made by the speakers and by the feedback sessions, just really I think so we have a sort of snapshot of where we have got to in the morning and this afternoon.

And I think a very good place to start is actually in Parveen Kumar's keynote speech, and I have to say there was one point during that speech, which I thought was excellent, where I winced, I suspect my neighbour noticed this, and it was when we were actually looking at the pictures of the various safety disasters found in factories and elsewhere, and Parveen said, no doubt absolutely rightly, that these were taken abroad and we shouldn't worry. But the trouble, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that I have seen very similar pictures and I have seen them looking through the digital cameras of our HSE Inspectors. So I think we have to start this debate by recognising that a great deal has been achieved on the safety front, for which people in this room bear considerable credit, but actually we haven't cracked the problem yet and I think it is important that we actually emphasise that conventional safety issues are still terribly important and there is still much to do.

And it is interesting, looking now as I am to my right hand side over there, to the Workplace Health Connect stand, that we have been looking at the preliminary evaluation of the services, which remember is offered to small businesses free of charge and essentially is designed to assist people with occupational health issues. And what have we actually found? We have found a lot of people first contact the service because they have basic safety issues. So I think in looking at this there is a key issue not to forget the safety in health and safety. But of course the other thing which we have all learnt through our experience, and indeed which Michael Roberts mentioned during the debate today, is that actually there is a link between all this: people don't actually manage health and safety separate from each other, and people

actually manage their organisations as they should do, as a coherent whole. So it is very important I think that we realise that if we actually achieve good management systems to look after employees in the safety area, we actually have a much better chance in the occupational health area as well.

The second point which came up very considerably in Group 1, the discussion group I was in on, "What is a Good Job", which I notice also appeared in other people's discussion groups, is that just being virtuous is fine, I am sure everyone in this room is deeply virtuous, but in itself it ain't going to achieve very much. And there are others, not least let me say Professor Cox pointed out I thought very ably on many occasions, we do actually have some help here in actually designing good jobs, there is a literature, there is research and there is evidence. So I think we need to be very careful that we don't take the view that everything is up for grabs, that we really have no starting point and that everyone can just start from where they like. In fact it is a very good thing to actually be evidence-based and build on what we have. I remember when I used to work in the Department of Health in the 1980s it used frequently to be said, needless to say as it was the Department of Health we used to say it of the National Health Service which was then separate, that the National Health Service is very good at reinventing the wheel and many of them turn out to be square. I couldn't possibly comment whether that is still the situation, but I think it does bring out quite strongly to us that we actually need to use the knowledge we have, but also build on it and take things forward.

The other point which I wanted to make is inevitably the key to actually advancing this very worthwhile agenda is who is going to do what, and in my experience what you tend to find in all these discussions is that people say it is not me it is them, and "them" say no it is you, and so it goes on. What I think has emerged very clearly from today, it is no surprise but it is worth saying, is that actually a whole variety of players have responsibilities here. If everyone does their bit it will be complementary, it will advance the agenda, if all of us do too much or too little we will get in the way and we will actually make a mess of it. And I thought Rosie Winterton did very well to segregate these issues into things which need to be done at the individual level, the organisational level and the national level, and I think it is just worth thinking a bit about that.

I thought Carol Black, who after all speaks with considerable authority as a past President of the Royal College of Physicians, was very good in stressing the fact that actually people are more complex than the medical model allows. We don't just get some physical ailment and it has some physical effect and that is the absolute result as to how we can perform at work. In fact there is a much wider range of factors as to how we are treated by others, as to how we are supported, which are the keys as to how actually we can come back to work and not only help the economy but some of us might say, even more importantly, actually have worthwhile lives.

And I was much struck, listening to the discussion in Group 1, by the fact that we spoke not only about individuals' responsibility, which as we all know is

often regarded by others as a great cop-out for anybody else doing anything, but we also spoke about those close to people at an individual level, i.e. line managers actually having particular responsibilities. And I think in taking forward this debate we really have to recognise two things: one is that there are actual general measures generally applicable that we ought to adopt at higher levels; but secondly, that actually we are all mercifully individuals, we all have our faults and weaknesses and we all need people who know about them and will actually be supportive and constructive towards us. So I think we shouldn't regard some discussion at the individual level as a cop-out because actually it is a responsibility of all of us.

The second point which I think quite naturally arose and inevitably turns into what you might call the major area for dispute, is the issue about what do we do at the organisational level. As Judith Donovan I thought rather characteristically pointed out, there are actually real issues if we are going to ask employers to become effectively the social workers of the nation, we have to recognise that. Conversely as she herself I thought well illustrated, the economic case for many interventions in this area are clear and they are very clear to people running businesses of whatever size. So I am afraid, not for the first time, it is a question actually of striking a balance, and not for the first time it is actually a question of not being complacent.

But it doesn't I think equally get us out of the issue that it is not just what people do as individual employees, what organisations do as employers, it is also what we can do at the national level. And I don't think I am going to follow the previous speaker, if only on grounds of self-preservation, in commenting on Departments of State who aren't here today, but I think it is worth making the point that we have been fortunate in having Rosie Winterton, and as anyone who knows Lord Hunt will tell you, he really has a really difficult time if he can't be with us because his support for this agenda has been absolutely unflinching. So there are certainly I think strong allies and I think the real issue for today is not whether the thing has to be dealt with at individual, organisational, national level, it is about getting the balance right, and I think that actually is what today has given us considerable food for thought.

So I think what we have to do, to be frank, is not say to you now that we have instant answers based on this debate, but that what we will actually do is to actually prepare the outcome, but most important of all to reflect on it because I think this is an area which does actually need some reflection if we are actually to go forward together in a way which is synchronised and actually has some effect. And I think really that is all I wanted to say, other than the most important thing, which is first of all to thank Bill Callaghan and the Commissioners on behalf of everybody for organising the event, to thank our speakers, to thank everyone, not least my own colleagues who helped organise it, and I think in particular to thank you all very much for coming. I think there are many hopeful signs in the debate today that by far the most hopeful one is actually you all gave up the time to come and that we appreciate very much indeed.

So can I thank you all again for coming, and to pick up a favourite message of ROSPA, could I point out to you the extreme dangers of travelling when you leave your workplace, so please journey home safely!