

Physiotherapy group shares its experience of the SEQOHS accreditation process

## Blazing a trail – first provider of physio services to obtain ‘gold standard’ accreditation

Crystal Palace Physio Group (CPPG), a national provider of OH physiotherapy services, has become the first physiotherapy provider to be awarded the Safe, Effective, and Quality Occupational Health Service (SEQOHS) accreditation.

This announcement is a testament to how far the accreditation body has come since its launch in 2010. Here, we look back at the history of SEQOHS, explore the assessment process from an OH professional’s perspective and see what is on the horizon for SEQOHS.

### Background and history

SEQOHS is the set of standards and a voluntary accreditation scheme for occupational health

services in the UK and beyond. Dame Carol Black’s review of the health of Britain’s working-age population, *Working for a*

*healthier tomorrow*, published in March 2008, advocated clear standards of practice and formal accreditation of all providers who support people of working age. The Government’s response to the review, *Improving Health and Work: changing lives*, endorsed that recommendation.

In response to this, a broad stakeholder group led by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) developed standards and accreditation for occupational health services. The standards were launched as SEQOHS in January 2010 and the FOM commissioned the Royal College of Physicians to develop and manage the accreditation scheme, which was launched in December 2010.

Since then, the SEQOHS accreditation scheme has rapidly become an integral part



**Stuart Paterson, CPPG Director, and Kathryn Moore, CPPG Clinical Governance Lead, display the certificate of accreditation alongside Miles Atkinson, CPPG Head of OH Physiotherapy Services**



### Author

#### MILES ATKINSON

Miles Atkinson works as Head of Occupational Health Physiotherapy Services at Crystal Palace Physio Group. Originally from South Africa, he has been working in the occupational health field in the UK for the past 10 years. He sits on the ACPOHE committee and is passionate about promoting the role of physiotherapy in work and in health.

of the occupational health service landscape, accepted in both the public and private sectors as the recognised industry standard. In fact, SEQOHS is nearing the 200th occupational health service accreditation – a testament to the success of the programme.

### Physiotherapy's involvement in SEQOHS

As part of the launch of the 2015 SEQOHS standards, SEQOHS opened up and extended the scheme to occupational health physiotherapy services.

The decision followed a successful pilot scheme run in collaboration with The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Occupational Health and Ergonomics (ACPOHE) in 2015. That trial tested the applicability of the SEQOHS standards and

“SEQOHS is nearing the 200th occupational health service accreditation”

underpinning processes for this type of service.

SEQOHS and ACPOHE worked in collaboration to ensure that the support tools for OH physiotherapy services were service-specific and practical. Although the SEQOHS standards are identical for all types of OH services, a bespoke evidence guide was designed for OH physiotherapy services.

### A timeline of occupational health physiotherapy's SEQOHS experience

**2014** – A pilot scheme launched by SEQOHS and ACPOHE to test the applicability of assessment to the physiotherapy profession. There were independent physiotherapy providers that put themselves through this process.

**October 2014** – CPPG undertakes pilot assessment as proof of concept for SEQOHS assessment.

**May 2015** – SEQOHS accreditation planned to be opened to all physiotherapy service providers. Twelve providers register for assessment.

**June 2016** – CPPG the first physiotherapy provider to be



assessed for SEQOHS accreditation.

**July 2016** – CPPG officially becomes accredited; a number of other OH physiotherapy providers are lined up to be assessed in the remaining months of 2016.

### CPPG's experience of undergoing the assessment

CPPG provides OH physiotherapy services to a variety of public and private sector organisations in the UK. Its services include on-site physiotherapy, network physiotherapy, workstation assessments, functional restoration/work hardening programmes, and health and wellbeing services.

CPPG took part in this pilot scheme and was keen to follow this up and achieve accreditation. Subsequently, as soon as full accreditation was made available to all physiotherapy providers, it wasted no time in getting the assessment booked in.

After months of preparation,

the assessment was undertaken at its site in south-east London on 7 June. Miles Atkinson, Head of Occupational Health Services, and Kathryn Moore, Clinical Governance Lead, were the two members of the team closely involved in undergoing the assessment procedure.

The assessment team comprised an experienced occupational health nurse practitioner and a newly trained occupational health physiotherapy assessor. This element is unique for the SEQOHS assessment procedure, where a variety of OH practitioners are involved in the assessment. It is necessary to ensure that profession-specific elements are considered and has the benefit of allowing for cross-profession learning.

Miles Atkinson said: “We found the whole experience extremely thorough yet ultimately very rewarding.”

“The process forces you to really examine the service you are delivering and view it in a more holistic manner. It ensures that you consider multiple stakeholders when delivering effective OH services, including the client who is purchasing the

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service, the employee who is accessing the service, right through to the members of staff delivering the service.

“By measuring yourself against a set standard you ensure that the services you are delivering to your customers/patients are of a high standard.

“It also ensures that your own staff's health, safety and professional development are considered, thereby allowing them the optimal working environments to better meet the clients' needs.

“We also hope that as more physiotherapy providers undergo the assessment – and the importance of using a SEQOHS-accredited provider is promoted – the overall profile of occupational health physiotherapy is raised. It is hoped that being a SEQOHS-accredited provider will afford

us some commercial advantage by putting us at the forefront of quality assurance. It will allow purchasers of OH physiotherapy confidence in the standard of services they are investing in.”

### What others have said about the process

**Dr Robert Hardman**, Chair of SEQOHS, said: “Congratulations to Crystal Palace Physio Group on becoming our very first occupational health physiotherapy service to achieve SEQOHS accreditation.

“This is a significant achievement, which is testament to the company’s hard work and commitment to deliver a high-quality care service, and is something it should be immensely proud of.

“We now look forward to working with and supporting other occupational health

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physiotherapy services towards the accreditation standards set by SEQOHS.”

**Stuart Paterson**, Founder and Director of CPPG, said: “SEQOHS is recognised as the gold standard assessment in the OH industry and it is fantastic now that it has been extended to OH physiotherapy.

“As a result, we are thrilled and delighted to be the first occupational physiotherapy provider to be assessed and accredited. To achieve this and be recognised is quite an achievement for our team.”

### What does the future hold?

For SEQOHS and OH physiotherapy providers, the future looks bright. SEQOHS is going from strength to strength and is even looking abroad to become an internationally recognised set of standards. Providers in Canada in particular are interested in using the service to measure themselves against.

For physiotherapy, many more OH physiotherapy

providers are signed up for assessment and, hopefully, will achieve accreditation within the next few months. SEQOHS accreditation is a unique opportunity for improved cross-professional learning and collaboration and will hopefully build on the multidisciplinary approach required when delivering an occupational health service.

At a time when cost is often given priority over quality, it is encouraging to see that there is an organisation that puts quality at its core. This can only be a positive result for all those involved:

- for the providers who can feel confident they are delivering a high-quality service
- for purchasers of services who will know they are paying for a service with an independent stamp of approval
- for the individual employees who will ultimately receive a service of the highest possible standard.

Clearly a win-win for all those involved.

**Mark Armour**, ACPOHE Chairman, said: “The SEQOHS standards allow OH physiotherapists to demonstrate

their commitment to excellence and quality. It a great opportunity for physiotherapy services to work towards an established and respected mark of accreditation. The benefits of SEQOHS are diverse. It is a process that can help to generate a culture of continual improvement, and offers independent validation of a safe, effective and quality service.”