

2020 vision

The future of applied psychology

To introduce the new Careers section, **Society Division Chairs** gaze into their crystal balls to see how opportunities might develop for the psychologists of tomorrow

Over the years to come, we hope that many readers will find a career path and an ideal job through these pages. But is the future of applied psychology bright, and what kind of new opportunities and changing emphases might lie in wait? Here, Chairs of the Society Divisions give their views on their own areas and beyond.

Teachers and researchers

The future of psychology is bright, as is the future for psychology graduates. The increasing role of psychology in society,

along with (importantly) the increasing recognition of its value in a number of core areas of society will bring with it opportunities for psychology graduates. These will not only be in the 'traditional' arenas of health, social care and occupational psychology – our work will become increasingly apparent in businesses, economics, sport and traffic, for example.

Furthermore, psychology will have an impact on wider societal issues at both a national and international level. With these increasing opportunities there are growing expectations on psychologists to use the best research-based evidence to best effect. This will require, of course, an increasing number of researchers and teachers to provide that evidence and to ensure that it is communicated most effectively. As the scope of practice of psychology increases so do the prospects for researchers and teachers to find the evidence, enhance practice and enhance the learning opportunities for the growing generations of psychologists.

PROFESSOR DOMINIC UPTON

Occupational

Over the years, occupational psychologists have held a strong presence in the market with regard to assessment and psychometric tests. This is likely to continue as organisations increasingly need to demonstrate that people have been selected to jobs on the basis of merit and competence, and that the selection decisions are based on fair and objective assessment. Alongside selection, and in

the face of scarce leadership talent, organisations are also keen to identify and develop those with potential to take on more senior leadership responsibilities, and assessment of potential has a crucial role in supporting this. Occupational psychologists will continue to have a strong role to play in both arenas.

However, with online testing and the strategic nature of the HR business partner role, others outside the occupational arena can also undertake many of these activities. It is therefore critical that our profession also focuses our service provision on the other areas of OP capability such as job design, profiling organisation and job competencies, organisation design, workforce diversity and the impact of technology on work and organisations to ensure we have a diverse offering in the market place.

DAVID TOWNER

Counselling

Collaborative working, within psychology and beyond, will ensure that the heart of our practice is championed into the future. From a secure base, we can move away from reifying difference between ourselves and other psychologists, towards taking advantage of our critical mass and commonalities, in order to ensure the public (as NHS customers or private consumers) have access both to our evidenced-based efficacy and valuing of their personal subjective experiences.

We currently see counselling psychologists working in a broad range of settings (including, for example, the prison service, primary, secondary and tertiary care, specialist not-for-profit drug, alcohol and eating-disorder services), and I see little evidence that this will abate. What is likely to change is the further

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Print ads are available from just £300+VAT. The next deadline for job advertising is 16 January (for the February issue).

For more information, see p.48. To book, e-mail Kirsty Wright on psychapp@bps.org.uk or call +44 116 252 9550.

expansion of the numbers of counselling psychologists working in statutory services, particularly the NHS.

I anticipate the development of a common base for the training of applied psychologists, linked with further specialist training beyond our shared competencies. With this there may well be a reduction in the demand from trainees for doctoral level training and a significant expansion in the demand for threshold level training, enabling registration as an applied psychologist specialising in counselling psychology.

DR MALCOLM CROSS

Health

Health psychology is the fastest growing sector of applied psychology in the UK with health psychologists working in clinical settings, health promotion, teaching, and research toward the promotion of health. The Division is actively involved in promoting the training and regulation of health psychologists in the UK and is seeking new ways to promote career paths in health psychology. Training, through a Stage 1 master's level course and a Stage 2 supervised experience or professional doctorate, is producing highly qualified health psychologists with a wide remit of competencies, such as behaviour change and psychological interventions.

Current career initiatives pioneered by the Division include a secondment to the Department of Health to inform the government on the potential role of health psychology in policy. The Division has also secured an exciting new initiative for government funding to train a cohort of health psychologists in Scotland. We are also actively involved in discussions on the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. It is expected that this will yield future opportunities for health psychologists through the government's plan to roll out increased capacity within a workforce with skills to treat these conditions.

After the somewhat tumultuous period of transfer to statutory regulation, it is expected that health psychology will be in a strong position to provide services promoting health in many contexts, such as the NHS, the workplace and the government, and in preventive medicine.

DR MARTIN HAGGER

Forensic

Interest in psychology remains as high as ever, with psychology continuing to be the most popular undergraduate degree after law. Within forensic psychology we

FEATURED JOB

Job Title: Clinical / Forensic Psychologists

Employer: Cygnet Health Care

As one of the largest outsourcing providers to the NHS of acute and intensive care psychiatry, Cygnet Health Care offer a personalised service to patients with psychological, emotional and addiction problems.

Hospital Manager Mark Scally told us: 'Since 1988, Cygnet have built a business based on providing care, with care. We offer a range of specialist services to patients, both referred and funded by the public sector. We work closely with patients' local services with a view to their successful return to mainstream and local service provision as soon as possible. We are currently recruiting to two vital posts, with salaries of £38,000–£44,000pa dependent on experience and qualifications.'

Cygnet Wing Blackheath is a 30-bed unit in a purpose-built hospital. 'We are looking for a Clinical Psychologist to work with a group of male patients, all of whom are detained under the Mental Health Act,' Mark Scally said. 'The majority of them have a history of mental illness, substance abuse, revolving door admissions and repeat offending. We are looking for somebody to join the team in offering 1:1 therapy, either cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or psychodynamic therapy according to the patient's needs. They will also be required to co-facilitate the daily group sessions.'

He added: 'We welcome applications from psychologists with expertise or an interest in the following: CBT, dialectic behavioural therapy, cognitive analytic therapy, violence reduction and sex offender treatment programmes, and neuropsychology. The successful applicant will be innovative and dynamic – they will develop this role alongside the Therapy Department, effectively integrating psychology into the treatment pathway of this patient group.'

Cygnet Hospital Beckton is based in East London and has four 15-bed wards, including a female Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit, a female Low Secure Rehabilitation unit, a male Low Secure Rehabilitation ward and a ward for women diagnosed as suffering from borderline personality disorder. 'We are looking for a Clinical/Forensic Psychologist to work alongside the existing psychology teams,' Mark Scally said. 'The successful applicant would take a lead on assessments of patients on the low secure and PICU ward. This would involve neuropsychological and personality testing, and co-facilitating the existing groups. They will also be responsible for helping to develop the therapy teams to ensure that Cygnet Health Care remains at the forefront of psychological treatment for patients.'

According to Scally, one of the major attractions of the roles is the chance to join teams enhanced by the contribution of different professionals drawing from a diverse range of training and experience. 'We offer a very supportive working environment, as well as commitment to training and personal development.'

You can find this job on p.53, and with many others on www.psychapp.co.uk. The site provides a valuable resource to Society members and employers alike.

"Cygnet is one of the largest outsourcing providers to the NHS of acute and intensive care psychiatry"

have seen a tripling over recent years in the number of postgraduate courses and 'forensic psychology' routes at undergraduate level.

Although forensic psychologists comprise only around 10 per cent of the Society's divisional membership we remain an increasingly popular Division, more than doubling our membership in the last three years. This has been influenced in part by the widening of employment opportunities, which we expect to continue over the next decade or

so. HM Prison Service and Probation remains our largest employer, but increasingly employment is moving into academia, the health service, police and courts. Forensic psychologists are increasingly becoming involved in civil as well as criminal courts, with developing work within court mediation and victim/witness support. Our strengths can also be found in the development of offending-behaviour therapies.

Of course, the interest in forensic psychology is likely to be far greater than

the available employment opportunities as a forensic psychologist, but graduates interested in this area are increasingly moving into allied professions (e.g. offending-behaviour therapists, drug workers, crime analysts, behavioural advisers, forensic researchers), with an increasing number using their founding training in psychology to pursue other careers within the forensic and justice systems (e.g. prison governors, police and probation service, forensic social workers).

PROFESSOR JANE L. IRELAND

Neuropsychology

The single biggest cause of disability in children, and adults of working age, is head injury. Across the lifespan, stroke and dementia are the leading causes of severe disability, and the numbers of people with neurological conditions will grow sharply in the next two decades owing to improved survival rates, increased longevity and improved diagnostic techniques.

Over the last decade, cognitive neuroscience has added substantially to our understanding of the problems faced by people with conditions affecting the brain, including psychiatric disorders

such as psychosis and anxiety disorders. Neuropsychologists play a vital role in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of cognitive and emotional problems in all these conditions and are leading research into the development of neuropsychological rehabilitation techniques, including the application of new technologies that have been proven to reduce disability. Neuropsychological approaches are being incorporated into psychological therapies for major psychiatric disorders.

An evidence base is thus emerging that will guide practice standards in the coming decade. The development by the DoN of post-qualification training programmes and opportunities for continuing professional development in clinical neuropsychology means that, by 2020, psychologists will be better equipped to meet the growing demand for specialist knowledge and skills.

PROFESSOR HUW WILLIAMS

Educational

Educational psychology in England and Wales will continue to provide a wide range of services to the public. Most educational psychologists are employed by

local authorities but a growing number work in private practice, reflecting the range of the work and possible future developments. Like our colleagues in Scotland, we are in the process of reviewing and adapting service delivery to meet national and government priorities and the move to more integrated children's services across education, social care and health, and to provide more community access to educational psychology. We work at the level of organisations and systems, on research and development through to work with individual children and families.

For the future, the profession is looking to maintain the strong interactionist, environmental paradigm that brings a unique contribution to multi-professional working. Educational psychologists are increasingly involved in developing approaches to promote emotional health and psychological well-being and access to therapies for children and young people, alongside other applied psychologists.

Professional doctoral training is now in place and over the next decade we look forward to the further development of a common base for the training of applied psychologists. During that time it is

An inclusive approach to working life

David Carew on his work as Chief Psychologist for the Department of Work and Pensions, and on how psychologists can influence government policy

Just about everyone in Great Britain will have contact with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) during their lifetime. As Chief Psychologist, I have responsibility for around 120 occupational psychologists. My work includes psychologist recruitment, workforce development, continuing professional development and the setting and maintenance of professional standards. My team formulates policy, and develops innovative solutions based on research and practice in work and organisational psychology.

In any one day I might discuss an individual's CPD plans; design an interview process for use in the

Department; do some training; provide advice for a minister preparing to answer a parliamentary question and then look at how our interventions are working. Working in a policy environment requires a high tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity, combined with the ability to deal with often conflicting views and information. Retaining perspective is a key skill, as is the ability to remain calm and focused.

I am passionate about helping people who find it more difficult than most to find and keep work. Work is an important part of who we are and provides outlets for our individuality and talent. The absence of work restricts

human growth and potential, and is associated with poor mental and physical health.

In 2005 the government launched the Health, Work and Well-Being Strategy, which my team works to support. This placed the issue of health and work centre-stage. The key is to help the individual and the employer achieve a good person-job match and to support people in performing the tasks of the job effectively. Very often such supports are negligible in resource terms but can greatly improve the quality of working life. They are also key to retention.

To give a very specific example: 2.7 million people are on incapacity benefit and a million of those have expressed the desire to work. The importance of work in tackling

the inequalities that arise from being socially excluded is central to what the DWP does. The application of psychology is crucial in bringing about the necessary change to inform better policy development through scientific rigour, practical evidence-based solutions and real impact.

The government is open to this kind of psychological thinking. The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies initiative is just one example. But I think my particular experience illuminates a wider issue for psychology.

Psychologists from all the Society's Divisions have a role to play in influencing policy and decision making. The key is not to blind people with science. If I am going to be successful in influencing thinking I have to

expected that the wrinkles will be ironed out of the current situation over funding for training and employment during training.

In Scotland, the government maintains a commitment to the funding of high-quality training to meet the demands of working in local authority settings. The profession has also been funded to expand its activities into the post-school sector, and this has led to the setting up of national and local projects. The contribution made by the profession is inspected by HM Inspectorate of Education and this process is assisting services in ensuring effective practice related to the impact of their work.

Education in Scotland is undergoing exciting developments, and we will continue to be at the forefront of developments involving core skills (synthetic phonics), approaches connected with Better Behaviour and Better

Learning (nurturing schools, restorative practice, solution oriented practice) and other innovative developments (philosophy for children, formative assessment and motivation).

If our most recent behaviour is a reliable predictor of our future behaviour, it is expected that job opportunities for educational psychologists working within Scotland will require a curiosity to develop practical approaches from research and practice, maintain a commitment to quality and resourcefulness and put our communities, families and children at the centre of these development.

JEAN LAW (DECP) AND CHRIS SCOTT (SDEP)

Clinical

There has been a significant rise in the acceptance of the importance of psychological well-being not only to quality of life, but also to economic productivity, and this emphasis is likely to continue over the next decade or so.

Programs such as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies bring increased opportunities for those delivering psychological therapies, and the new Mental Health Act recognises the key role of professions other than psychiatry for those with severe mental illness.

However, whilst these changes are about improving psychological care, they do not necessarily imply an increase in the delivery of that care by clinical psychologists. Alongside these changes we have had Agenda for Change, via which clinical psychologists employed in the NHS are compared to other professionals in terms of cost and found to be expensive. Roles within the NHS are becoming increasingly generic, and an emphasis on stepped care and tighter control of resources may lead to other professionals out-competing us for jobs within the NHS. Future job prospects depend on the ability of the profession to re-situate itself in the new environment, either within or without the NHS.

On a positive note, whilst there are new contenders for delivery of psychological care, the demand for good-quality psychological care has never been higher, so there is all to play for!

TIM CATE

offer solutions that are realistic, valuable and, above all, ethical. These come first. The second part is to offer robust evidence for your proposals – and gathering evidence is sometimes the most time-consuming part of my work. You can't back up ideas simply by reference to theory. I think any psychologist must bear this in mind whether they're addressing a government minister, a multidisciplinary case conference or the board of a plc.

There are some very specific skills underlying this approach. Excellent communication is a must. Understanding complex data and having the ability to turn this into recommendations is also important. Finally, psychologists mustn't hide behind technicalities but must engage with their customer using accessible appropriate language. Visibility is also critical. Often you can be in uncharted territory and sometimes you have to make the

journey with the people you are trying to help.

At the DWP, we ultimately want psychologists to be the logical partners for what the Department does internally or externally: a group of people you want to engage with, because they add value.

We need to increase our partnership with employers to design jobs and workplaces so that once recruited, people stay in their jobs. This upstream work is vital. If you've been out of work for five or ten years, finding work is only the first step: we need to help people to get used to working, and help employers manage those early days and months. We also need much more background evidence about the health of people of working age so as to tailor our services to

meet customer needs as they progress through their working lives.

Early intervention is key to ensuring that for those in work, their health is not adversely affected by the job they do or the environment in which they do it.

Intervening early when health problems impact on job performance is an area where work psychologists provide assistance to the employer and employee in order to

make the necessary adjustments to allow people who develop health conditions or resulting disability to remain in work.

They help employers who do not wish to lose the knowledge and experience of a valued employee. Companies whose workforce reflects the diversity of their customers should perform better. Generally

speaking, retention measures are also more cost-effective in the longer term – there's increased tax revenue, and a reduced burden on the NHS and the benefit system.

Of course, primary prevention and health protection should also be a core focus. Deployed in a range of organisational and occupational sectors, work psychologists can and do help to improve the quality of working life for the working age population with the aim of reducing the possibility of job loss in the first place.

But we can and should do more. It's perhaps not as well recognised as it might be, but applied psychology affects millions of individual lives in the way it shapes key public policy initiatives. Psychologists and the psychological community need to respond to this challenge.

**For a longer version see
www.thepsychologist.org.uk**

"Psychologists from all the Society's Divisions have a role to play"