

## **BPS/POST**

# **Postgraduate Award**

The Research Board of the Society, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), invite applications for their

### **POSTGRADUATE AWARD**

Three-month secondment to POST

*Closing date for applications: 31 August 2005*

Postal/telephone/e-mail requests should be made to: Lisa Morrison Coulthard, at the Society's office (lismor@bps.org.uk).

See p.36 of the January issue of *The Psychologist* for further details.

### **The Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (POST)**

POST is an office of the Houses of Parliament. Further details are available at [www.parliament.uk/post/home.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/post/home.htm)

# **'TAKING PSYCHOLOGY TO SOCIETY'**

## **FUNDING FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS 2005/6**

### **The Publications and Communications Board invites applications**

The Society, through the Publications and Communications Board (P&CB), aims to increase the number of public engagement events, both national and local, as part of a mid- to long-term strategy of 'Taking psychology to society'.

Subsystems and individual members have a key role in this venture, and the P&CB wishes to encourage Society subsystems and members to undertake events by making funds available up to a maximum of £3000 per event. *Individual members are encouraged to approach their subsystem prior to application, both to widen their proposed event and to strengthen their application by collaboration.*

#### **Proposals must be focused on one or more of the following target audiences:**

- the general public
- school students (Key Stage 3 and 4 and above)
- higher education (non-psychology) students
- other professions and other learned societies
- government and other appropriate policy makers
- service users, including employers

#### **Proposals will be assessed in the light of the following headings:**

- target audience and likely impact on the audience
- rationale for the event
- description of the event
- how the event will 'advance and diffuse a knowledge of the discipline' (Royal Charter objective)
- how the event will be evaluated and value for money

**For an application form, contact Suzanne Jefford on [suzjef@bps.org.uk](mailto:suzjef@bps.org.uk) or telephone 0116 252 9577.**

**The deadline for the receipt of applications is Friday 24 June 2005; decisions will be communicated within one month.**



Graham Powell

Contact Graham Powell via the Society's Leicester office, or e-mail: [president@bps.org.uk](mailto:president@bps.org.uk).

*The Society* and its members increasingly influence legislation as it is drafted and passes through Parliament and national assemblies. The Mental Capacity Bill (see [tinyurl.com/4px24](http://tinyurl.com/4px24)) and Mental Health Bill (see [tinyurl.com/68am2](http://tinyurl.com/68am2)) are recent examples, and the two are often confused. The Mental Capacity Bill concerns those who cannot make a decision about the management of their own affairs because they have a disability of mind that makes them unable to understand, retain or weigh information, or to foresee the consequences of deciding one way or another. We have contributed to this formulation and helped ensure safeguards – for example, capacity is assumed unless proven otherwise, and the question of an individual's capacity will not be a blanket judgement but specific to each personal decision to be made. Psychologists will take a key role in training people to assess capacity, and in training the individuals themselves to try to regain capacity. The Society has made the case that psychologists should be one of the professional groups able to sign the application for the Court of Protection to take over an individual's affairs.

The Mental Health Bill concerns those people who are perfectly able to make a decision but whose final decision is harmfully influenced by a mental disorder; for example, based on a delusional belief or on ideas rooted in a severe depressive illness. If a serious risk to themselves or others, then as a last resort they can be treated against their wishes. Recently, four of us went on behalf of the Society to present our views to the joint House of Lords and House of Commons committee on the draft Mental Health Bill, and to be cross-examined on them. We said firmly that psychologists are competent to fulfill two roles defined in the bill – 'Examiner' and 'Clinical Supervisor'. Examiners decide whether all conditions are met for detention, and Clinical Supervisors write and monitor the care plan. The Society will help ensure that appropriate training is made available for those taking on these roles, and is strongly recommending that the training is a single route for all professional groups; that is, for both psychiatrists and psychologists.

Risk permeates the Society. As a charity we have a duty to address risk issues, so recently we established the Risk Audit and Management Committee. This is not simply about avoiding risk – to do so would stifle enterprise, initiative and growth. It is about taking the *right amount* of risk. All significant new projects will draft a risk statement briefly stating the risks (e.g. financial risks and risks to reputation) and how they will be addressed. One concrete output has been the formulation of a Disaster Recovery Plan covering

eventualities such as a total system failure or loss of access to the Leicester office. The committee has a small number of core members and is establishing a wider panel of expertise within the Society. If you have expertise in an area of risk but would rather not commit your time to full committee membership, then let the committee know and you might become a named adviser.

At the latest Representative Council meeting we received the annual auditor's report, and for about the 25th year in a row the accounts were accepted without question and the financial status of the Society was seen as strong. Interestingly, the auditors picked up on two current strategic risks and one for the future. The first risk concerned the impact of statutory regulation on membership numbers. The Trustees have already considered a risk statement on this, and the risk committee will be presenting ideas on risk management, stressing that there are opportunities here as well as pitfalls. The second risk concerned whether the Society might some day divide, with some Divisions splitting off into separate institutions. This actually reflects constructive discussion within the Society, which has resulted one of the aims in the Strategic Plan: 'To decide on the balance between the appropriate autonomy of subsystems and their corporate responsibility to the wider Society'. The latest Representative Council agreed that there should be a joint working group of Council and Trustees to lay out the issues. Personally, I expect issues of autonomy to be sorted out to everyone's benefit – psychology is, I believe, still the ring that binds us all. The third risk was a hint that we should consider whether we are holding too much by way of reserves; that is, being too cautious. The better we manage risk, the less we need in reserves, and the more we can pump into developing new membership services and membership initiatives. This sounds like a good idea to me.

Members' needs vary from region to region. The Council has decided to meet sometimes in the regions rather than in London. The 2006 Annual Conference will be in Cardiff, and the Council will hold one of its meetings during it. After the meeting there will be an event on psychological issues and needs in Wales, to which members of the Welsh Assembly would be invited to contribute. I will be writing to the Secretary of State for Wales about this, but please let us have any initial thoughts on what such a seminar might cover.

Finally, warm thanks to Ken Brown for his presidency over the last year, during which time he has moved the Society on, helping it to settle into its new governance structure, and doing all this with a lightness of touch and a sense of humour.

“Risk management is not simply about avoiding risk – to do so would stifle enterprise, initiative and growth”

Read our interview with Graham Powell on p.204.