

Meeting our objectives

THE Society has been a registered charity since 1962, so that as well as supervision by the Privy Council (because of our Royal Charter), we have to abide by the rules of the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Their website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk) is well worth a visit, and you will find that we are one of the larger of the 163,800 registered charities, in the top 3 per cent by income.

So it is a tremendous achievement that we have received a very positive report from their visit last autumn, when their delegation met our then President (Graham Davey), Treasurer (Geoff Lindsay) and Honorary General Secretary (Ingrid Lunt), as well as our chief executive (Barry Brooking) and the manager of the Finance Directorate (Russell Hobbs). Well done to all concerned, and it is also a big pat on the

back for all our members and staff who work hard and steadily to make sure we operate with integrity and prudence.

Being a charity has two other major consequences. We save nearly a million pounds a year in taxes and rates – not to be sniffed at, and making it up from subscriptions alone would add about 50 per cent to our subs. But there is a downside. In many ways, we are more of a learned society than a charity, and some of the recommendations and rules of the Charity Commission do not sit easily with our reality.

For example, we have to tailor our accounts to our charitable objectives: 'To promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the usefulness and efficiency of its members by setting up a high standard of professional

education and knowledge'. This makes our accounts less transparent than might otherwise be the case.

We are not allowed to pay trustees, and there are serious limitations on our ability to pay members for other services they render. It may surprise you that your honorary officers work for nothing other than expenses, but it's true, and perhaps surprising that any sane person wants to do it. Almost certainly, it narrows the field of members who are prepared to stand for office.

None of this is likely to change in the foreseeable future, or in a hurry. In September 2002 the government's strategy unit published a report on possible reform, *Public Benefit, Private Action*. It generated 1100 responses in consultation, and led to an announcement on 16 July 2003 of planned changes to the law and related administrative systems. Most of this is tidying and modernisation of the 400-year-old law with the main test to be 'public benefit', an extension to amateur sports clubs and human rights organisations for the first time, and a promise of greater freedom to campaign and undertake other non-party political activity. But there was no promise of when parliamentary time would be found for the changes, so we have to remain extremely cautious about making public campaigning pronouncements that might be *ultra vires* – beyond the powers of our objectives – even if we all agree about them.

Of course charity begins at home, and if you are making your will it is worth mentioning the BPS Welfare Fund, for impoverished psychologists. It has hardly any money, and if I live too long I could be one of the deserving applicants, don't you think?

Zander Wedderburn

Contact Zander Wedderburn via the Society's Leicester office or e-mail: president@bps.org.uk.

CHARITY COMMISSION REPORT

At the end of last year, we received a visit from the Charity Commission, our regulatory body. This was part of their national strategy to review important aspects of the work of the larger charities, of which we are one.

Topics covered included the role of the trustees and governance, subcommittees, trustee benefits, activities and standards, staff employment and management, trading, internal policies and finance management. Clearly this was an important visit for the Society, particularly as we have made great efforts over the past few years to update our governance and management processes and to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

The report reflects very well indeed on the Society. A number of points of good practice were noted, particularly regarding management. The report commented favourably on the fact that the trustee body has been reduced from over 60 to 15 in number. It also notes that in terms of administration, the management system has been reviewed and produced a much clearer structure. The Charity Commission commented: 'The impression given was one of a professional and open organisation focused on the delivery of service.'

We were complimented on many areas of best practice, particularly in management. Our weakest area was the Annual Report, which was not fully compliant with the prescribed method of reporting in the Charity Act. The report for 2002 was adjusted accordingly and is now fully compliant.

I was not President during the time of the visit so it seems appropriate for me to thank and congratulate my predecessor, Graham Davey, and our chief executive Barry Brooking and his staff for helping the Society achieve such an excellent report, which confirms the quality of what we do.

WOMEN IN PRISON

A REPORT from the Prison Reform Trust reveals that two thirds of women in prison are suffering from a mental disorder, with record numbers being driven to suicide or self-harm by lack of appropriate care. The report, supported by the Nuffield Foundation, recommends better early intervention, court diversion schemes, more staff training and better joint working with health authorities.

□ *For a copy of the report*

Troubled Inside: Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Women in Prison, call the Prison Reform Trust on 020 7251 5070.

SEEING THROUGH A BUSINESS IDEA

A NEW spin-out company created by a Royal Holloway psychologist is set to revolutionise X-ray security scanning. The novel technology is based on principles of neuronal information processing, and will generate 3D-representations, using motion parallax to reconstruct depth. Potentially, it will allow the operator to move a virtual camera inside containers, to rotate objects and take different viewpoints and to isolate objects for closer inspection.

HoViz, formed by Johannes Zanker (Professor of Neuroscience in the Department of Psychology, at Royal Holloway, University of London), initially won funding from the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts to carry out a feasibility study of this new technology, and now receives support from the Partnership for Accessible Research and Knowledge seed fund to develop the business side of the project.

ALLIANCE ACTIVITY

THE Mental Health Alliance, the 60-strong coalition lobbying the government over its draft Mental Health Bill, has appointed Martin Ball as part-time coordinator.

The Alliance also recently held a 'One Year On' forum in the House of Lords, and has presented 18,360 cards in support of its call for a Charter for Consensual Treatment to the government's Mental Health Czar Professor Louis Appleby.

Getting down to business

THE links between universities and industry are increasing, especially in some research-driven sectors, but there is room for improvement, according to Richard Lambert, who published a summary in July of the consultation responses and the issues raised in his review of business–university collaboration.

The review received over 300 responses, approximately equally split between responses from universities, businesses and regional and national agencies and other professional bodies. Its principal aim is to 'identify the benefits to business of greater interaction with higher education, how this can be promoted and how any barriers holding back business demand for universities' knowledge and skills outputs can be addressed'.

Richard Lambert said: 'I have been impressed by the efforts that the universities have made over the last 10 years to disseminate as well as to create knowledge. In some respects the business side is less impressive – apart from the pharmaceutical and aerospace sectors, there are relatively few research-intensive businesses located in the UK. This translates into weak demand for the knowledge created in universities. The question is what can be done to encourage more businesses to collaborate with universities.'

Some positive messages emerged from the consultation. It is clear that the amount of collaboration is increasing and that government funding for knowledge transfer activity in universities – so called 'third stream funding' – has generated a marked culture change in universities and has built up their capacity to transfer knowledge. However, areas have been identified

where further progress could be made.

Some universities expressed a need for stronger engagement from business – particularly small and medium sized businesses, which often do not collaborate with universities but who could benefit significantly from collaboration. There also appears to be a lack of clarity about intellectual property ownership in the UK, but equally a lack of consensus about what to do about it. Many respondents commented that

'the RAE is a significant barrier to collaboration'

the Research Assessment Exercise is a significant barrier to collaboration, that academics are not sufficiently incentivised and rewarded for collaboration with industry and that the current funding streams do not promote enough multidisciplinary research. Universities have asked for an increase in, and greater certainty about, future third stream funding and a move away from the competitive bidding process.

Some businesses reported difficulties in dealing with universities and expressed a desire for university governance structures to be modernised and for an effective mechanism for business to influence the courses and teaching on offer at universities.

Richard Lambert said: 'I think that the big question is whether there is scope to manage universities in a different way – for the government to specify some measures of success, which if met by the universities would mean that they could be given greater freedoms to behave in a more entrepreneurial way.'

The review will be examining these issues in more detail over the next few months and will submit its final report, with case studies and recommendations, to the government in October this year.

□ *For more information see www.lambertreview.org.uk.*

If you are a psychologist engaged in collaboration with a business and you are interested in writing an article for us, contact the Editor, Dr Jon Sutton. E-mail jonsut@bps.org.uk.

AUTISM REGISTER FOR ED PSYCHS

Are you an educational psychologist? Do you have experience of working with children who are on the autistic spectrum?

The NAS Advocacy for Education Service is compiling a database of educational psychologists with an interest in autistic spectrum disorders. Information on this database will be made available to people with ASD and their families. The service provides advice, information and support to enable parents who have children on the autistic spectrum get the most appropriate educational provision for their child. We aim to empower parents and enable them to make informed choices and decisions about their child's education.

If you would like your details to be included on this list, e-mail advocacy@nas.org.uk, titling your e-mail 'Educational Psychologist'. Alternatively write to Advocacy for Education Service, 393 City Road, Islington, London EC1V 1NG.



THE British Association, ScienceWorlds and Planet Science have launched a new website, www.sciencelive.net. The site lists science presenters for teachers and youth leaders trying to arrange visits to schools and youth groups. The service offers a feedback process for the teachers and others to comment on the presentations. It's free to register your details, and a great way to get young children excited about psychology.

The British Association is also busy this month with its annual Festival of Science, at the University of Salford from 8 to 12 September. The BA Psychology Section will be running sessions on developmental learning disorders, Freud and consciousness, and language and thought. For more information see www.the-ba.net/festivalofscience or call the British Association on 020 7973 3052.

WEBSITES

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/

The 2003 Reith Lectures, by neuroscientist Vilayanur S. Ramachandran

dreamresearch.net

Content analysis of dreams from the University of California

www.psychology.ltsn.ac.uk/reports.html

Guidelines for the supervision of undergraduate qualitative research

www.google.com/technology/pigeonrank.html

The link between Skinner and Google's search engines

uk.group.yahoo.com/group/psychstudent

The Psychology Student Network – message board, chatroom, articles, support, downloads

www.psychology.ltsn.ac.uk/reports.html

Guidelines for the supervision of undergraduate qualitative research

www.psychologytoday.co.uk

Networking and research dissemination

If you come across a website that you think would be of interest to our readers, let us know on psychologist@bps.org.uk.

From the parliamentary office

TO fulfil the Society's Royal Charter objective the parliamentary office continues to engage with government departments, select committees and all-party groups where we believe psychology has a significant contribution to make.

Some of our current work

includes submitting evidence to the Royal Society inquiry into the detection and decontamination of chemical and biological weapons (www.royalsoc.ac.uk/policy). We are also advising government and parliament on the new proposed legislation on mental

incapacity (www.lcd.gov.uk/menincapfr.htm). Together with other learned societies we are discussing with ministers the future of higher education, following the recent White Paper; see www.bps.org.uk/about/pab_papers.cfm for the Society's response. The Society has also recently submitted evidence on migration and HIV to the inquiry staged by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Aids (www.appg-aids.org.uk).

In terms of future plans, we have sponsored a postgraduate student to complete a briefing concerning mental health for the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. Next November, together with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, we will host a meeting on the integration of refugee children in the UK. □ For further information contact Dr Ana Padilla, the Society's Parliamentary Officer, on anapad@bps.org.uk.

OTHER PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

The government has recently published a range of select committee reports, on higher education, patient and public involvement in the NHS, UK science and Europe, protecting hospital staff from violence, the work of OFSTED, and A-level standards. All are available via www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmselect.htm.

Forthcoming select committee inquiries include 'The use of science in UK international development policy' – the extent to which research, technology and innovation is informing government international development policy and practice, and what the impact of government policy has been in building a relevant science base in developing countries. Written evidence is requested by 14 November.

The Environmental Audit Committee has published a report, *Learning the Sustainability Lesson*, featuring contributions from Society member Professor David Uzzell (report and written evidence available via www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmenvaud.htm). Finally, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has published a report entitled *Hidden Harm: Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users* at www.drugs.gov.uk/ReportsandPublications/NationalStrategy.