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Psychological
Society

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The Society has offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London, as well as the main office in Leicester. All enquiries should be addressed to the Leicester office (see inside front cover for address).

The British Psychological Society

was founded in 1901, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. Its object is 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of Members of the Society by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge'.
Extract from The Charter



President's column

Gerry Mulhern

Contact Gerry Mulhern via the Society's Leicester office, or e-mail: thepresident@bps.org.uk

I expect that, as you read this column, some of the less mellow and fruitful aspects of autumn will have taken hold with the portent of worse to come. Like me, you may be wondering what happened to the promise of incessant days of sudatory languor, endless barbecues and warmth matched only by the cordiality of others' greetings. Alas, it's back to Googling light box retailers, flicking through the Directory of Psychologists for a preferred therapist, or, perish the thought, reaching for the SSRI of choice. Take heart, there's always next year!

Seldom do I think of weather forecasting without recalling a story told to me some years ago by an atmospheric physicist from York University in Toronto who quoted some astronomical sum being spent at that time on weather forecasting in Canada. The result was a creditable 73 per cent accuracy – creditable, that is, until you learn that the simple act of predicting that the weather tomorrow will be the same as it was today achieves an accuracy of 70 per cent. So all of those precious millions were spent to achieve a 3 per cent accuracy gain. Am I alone in wondering whether there is a parallel with the assessment of research quality in universities? More of that in a later column.

As I write, across the UK, those academics among us are bracing ourselves to welcome the latest crop of voracious minds onto our quality assured, externally benchmarked, internally reviewed, and BPS-accredited (through partnership!) programmes. Of course, as every year, our summer was spent assuring friends, neighbours and, indeed, family that we were not 'off' until October. Au contraire – the break was an opportunity to catch up with writing papers, drafting grant proposals and updating next year's PowerPoint slides. Those better organised may even have fitted in some preparatory paperwork for their next appraisal, transparency return, module review, or mock RAE return – a veritable feast for university bureaucrats poised like wicketkeepers to gobble up the dead trees. Undoubtedly, all but the most perverse scholars will have managed to fit in a couple of weeks or so of relaxation and reflection on some of life's bigger questions, like the latest pay offer of 0.4

per cent unconsolidated and the proposed cuts to university pensions.

It will, therefore, be something of a relief to hear again the buzz of the milling hordes, a buzz that will itself be all too transitory as the pernicious effects of over-assessment and student debt accumulate exponentially across the semester.

The Universities Minister is on record as describing the cost of university tuition as an 'unacceptable' burden on the taxpayer. The sentiment will no doubt play well with many of the public, particularly in these austere times.

Personally, I have always had difficulty with this view, just as I would if someone were to describe the cost of teaching in schools as an unacceptable burden on the taxpayer, or the cost of police officers, or nurses, or traffic lights.

It is, of course, their *value* to society that is paramount and, quite simply, the value of universities to the supply side of our economy is unfathomable.

With some 43 per cent of all eligible 18-year-olds entering university, the system is no longer an elite, nor has it been for a generation. The main beneficiary of the university system is the taxpayer, not, except in a minority of cases, the graduate. Stop for a moment and consider the economic consequences of every school leaver suddenly choosing not to go to university. It is, in fact, a social responsibility for those with appropriate intellect, skills and talent to enter higher education. Whether too many are judged to have these attributes is a question for another time.

So, universities will have set about filling their precious quotas, careful to avoid the high financial penalty for each additional student admitted above quota. This year the pain of rejection will have been felt by more students than ever and, blessed as our discipline is with burgeoning demand, psychology will be at the top end of rejections. Of course, having admitted a strict quota, universities must do all they can to hold on to their charges. As an Advisor of Studies to some 130 students annually, I can say with some authority that a major impediment to student retention is financial hardship and, of course, this impacts disproportionately on the most vulnerable social groups. It was not like that in my day, nor, I presume, in many of our politicians' days.

"The main beneficiary of the university system is the taxpayer, not...the graduate"

Presidents' Award

Professor Paul Burgess (University College London) has won the Presidents' Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Knowledge, given as a mid-career recognition of the achievements of those who are currently engaged in research of outstanding quality.

On graduating in psychology from the University of Nottingham in 1983, Burgess intended to pursue a career in clinical psychology, so his early years were spent working in various clinical settings, including as a residential social worker. 'These were formative times,' Professor Burgess says, 'and the desire to combine theory-driven research with practical diagnostic and treatment developments still informs my research today.'

In 1987 Burgess was appointed a research officer at the MRC Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge, working with Professor Tim Shallice. Later he registered for a PhD under the supervision of Professor Elizabeth Warrington, which produced one of the leading theories of confabulation. He joined UCL in 1990, where in 1995 he was the first psychologist to receive a prestigious Wellcome Trust Research Career Development Fellowship. This was followed by a move to UCL's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience on its inauguration, where he was later appointed Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience.

Professor Burgess has received more than £2 million in research funding and his work has received more than 6500 citations. He is the inventor of several neuropsychological tests used in clinics worldwide to assess the consequences of frontal lobe damage. Professor Burgess said: 'My research group has worked extremely hard to establish themselves as perhaps the world's leading experts in subjects relating to the functions of 'rostral prefrontal cortex', i.e. the large part of the brain that sits just behind the forehead. This has led us to study many abilities that have received relatively little attention from psychologists, but are so crucial to competence in everyday life, such as prospective and source memory, multitasking, mentalising, inhibition, how we deal with open-ended situations, and even curious human mental phenomena such as "mind-wandering".'

Most recently Professor Burgess has been applying the findings from his basic experimental and theoretical work to

develop cognitive biomarkers for the phenotypes that underlie Asperger's syndrome in adults. He is also developing new methods for detecting and treating cognitive impairment in neurological patients who have suffered damage to the rostral prefrontal cortex.

Nominating Professor Burgess were Dr Tom Manly from the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and Professor Sophie Scott from UCL, who said: 'One of Paul's great strengths, in our view, lies in his creativity, his ability to think outside of conventional experimental paradigms and his eagerness to apply his work to new fields. His techniques and insights have developed our understanding and ability to assess a range of clinical conditions, and he is an excellent communicator with clinical as well as academic audiences.'

Referring to Professor Burgess's suitability for this mid-career award, Manly and Scott said: 'Although there is no doubt that Professor Burgess's past achievements, by any measure, make him deserving of the BPS Presidents' Award, it is also the case that his research career is very much still developing. Over the last five years the annual citation rates for his work have more than doubled. But there is still the same thrust of innovation and cross-talk between pure experimental and practical clinical work that has informed his approach from the outset.'

Professor Burgess told *The Psychologist*: 'I am absolutely delighted and honoured to receive this award. I have been a member of the BPS since graduation in the 1980s, but would never have imagined that one day that my work might be recognised in this way. Every researcher hopes that some day their findings might be put to practical use, and I have been very fortunate that in trying to answer the very simple question "What do the frontal lobes do?" I have been led towards matters that intersect



Professor Paul Burgess

with the concerns of psychologists from so many different fields. It has been fun applying their knowledge and experience to understanding how the brain works. I am also very lucky to have worked with, and for, many wonderfully talented scientists.'

Professor Burgess is invited to deliver the Presidents' Award Lecture at the Society's 2011 Annual Conference in Glasgow, when he will be presented with a commemorative certificate. Recipients are also eligible for Life Membership of the Society.

LEARNING CENTRE

To have your CPD event approved by the Society and for a catalogue of forthcoming opportunities, see www.bps.org.uk/learningcentre or call 0116 252 9512.

To advertise your event in *The Psychologist*, e-mail psyadvent@bps.org.uk or call +44 116 252 9552.

A diary of non-approved events can be found at www.bps.org.uk/diary.

CONSULTATIONS ON PUBLIC POLICY

Responses to two consultations were prepared by members on behalf of the Society during August: brief details of both are provided below. Full details, including consultation papers and the Society's responses, are available at: www.bps.org.uk/consult. The Society would like to thank all those involved in preparing the responses.

Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland – A Regional Strategy (Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland) This draft strategy addressed the following key aspects of dementia services:

- | preventing or delaying the onset of dementia;
- | raising awareness and addressing stigma associated with the condition;
- | providing early diagnosis;
- | adopting a staged approach to care and support as the condition progresses;
- | improving staff awareness and skills;
- | redesigning services to enable care and support to be provided, as far as possible, in people's own homes.

A number of points were raised in the Society's response, including that:

- | the proposed prevention strategies are not evidence-based and do not acknowledge the importance of psychological processes in the modification of lifestyle;
- | the role of clinical psychology/neuropsychology in the neuropsychological assessment of people with dementia is not acknowledged;
- | proposals to remove local dementia services and replace them with a regional service could cause difficulties for service users;
- | it is important also to attend to the needs of the families of people with dementia.

Draft BS ISO 10667-1 Assessment service delivery – Procedures and methods to assess people in work and organizational settings (British Standards Institution) This draft service delivery standard focuses on quality in the provision and delivery of assessment services and asserts the need for methods and procedures used to be both soundly evidence-based and technically fit for purpose. The standard is intended to be applicable in any work or organisational assessment setting and requires those delivering assessments to be competent in the use of those assessments and not to act outside of, or beyond, their areas of competence.

Overall, the draft standard was welcomed by the Society as useful for providers and users of assessment services in the workplace, both nationally and internationally. It presents practical and workable standards for a fair and equitable process of assessment, and it provides a basis for agreements between users and providers. A few matters of detail were highlighted as being in need of further attention.

Full details of all consultations, including downloadable copies of consultation papers and the Society's responses, are available at: www.bps.org.uk/consult.

The preparation and submission of the Society's responses to consultations on public policy is coordinated by the Policy Support Unit (PSU). All those holding at least graduate membership are eligible to contribute to responses, and all interest is warmly welcomed. Please contact the PSU for further information (psu@bps.org.uk; 0116 252 9926/9577).

Bipolar report from the DCP

A tendency to extreme moods can have significant benefits as well as sometimes leading to problems, according to a new report published by the Society's Division of Clinical Psychology.

The report, *Understanding Bipolar Disorder*, is the result of an in-depth review of recent research undertaken by a team of leading academics and clinical psychologists, led by Professor Steven Jones of Lancaster University.

Professor Richard Bentall, Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Bangor, said: 'This is a timely and clearly written report, which very neatly summarises our current understanding of bipolar disorder in a way that is authoritative, but very accessible to service users, carers and the general public. It will do much to promote a better understanding of a condition that can cause a great deal of distress and disability to sufferers and their families.'

Between 1 and 2 per cent of the population have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, which was previously known as manic depression. The report suggests that periods of extreme mood are forms of the variation we all experience. They can result from life experiences as well as from brain chemistry alone, and it is not always helpful to think of them as an illness.

The report finds that biases in previous research have led to an exaggerated emphasis on the difficulties at the expense of the potential positive aspects, such as increased creativity. Doctors and other health workers sometimes give unhelpfully negative messages about what a diagnosis of bipolar disorder means, for example encouraging people to lower their expectations of what they can achieve in life.

The report says that clinical services should recognise the expertise of service users and work with them towards their own individual goals. One of the report's authors, Joanne Hemmingfield, says: 'As a service user myself I believe that this report provides a message of hope for people with bipolar disorder which is in stark contrast to the messages most people have received in the past.'

| A free download of *Understanding Bipolar Disorder* is available until the end of October, from www.bps.org.uk/bipolar

Society vacancies

British Psychological Society President 2012/13

See advertisement p.834

Contact

Liz Beech liz.beech@bps.org.uk, 0116 252 9928

Closing date 2 December 2010

Psychological Testing Centre Consultant Editor for Test Reviews

See advertisement p.845

Contact

Ayshea King ayshea.king@bps.org.uk

Closing date 5 November 2010

Award for Excellence in Psychology Education

John Maltby

Each year the Society seeks to recognise and reward inspirational psychology through the Psychology Education Board's Award for Excellence in Psychology Education. The quality of work being carried out in psychology learning and teaching continues to excel, and the panel was delighted to review a large number of high-quality nominations. The award goes to Dr John Maltby (University of Leicester).

Dr Maltby has made outstanding contributions to the curriculum and pedagogy at both national and international level. He was lead author of *Personality, Individual Differences and Intelligence* (2006, 2010), a textbook that has made a substantial contribution to one of the core areas of the BPS syllabus and has been adopted by 30 UK universities.

A colleague and former student, Liz Day, describes John as an engaging lecturer: 'He is approachable, warm and a popular lecturer seeking at all points to

make lectures interesting, and to maximise students' learning. He uses good and appropriate humour, which enriches his lectures and is careful to use examples that are relevant to students' lives and interests.'

Dr Maltby has also shown himself to be dedicated to developing students academic and employability skills, long before personal Development Planning was widely introduced within universities. 'John has always been aware of supporting students who do less well, dedicating time to developing new teaching material and methods to help those psychology students who find statistics difficult and challenging,' Day said. 'This is an aspect of teaching that he has worked hard at, not only in terms of publishing and receiving grant money, but in terms of working closely with students in the lecture hall and classroom. In essence, John tried to make students understand statistics in terms of its wider context, considering it as a tool to research and to

see the usefulness of statistics as opposed to fearing it.'

On receiving the award, Dr Maltby told us: 'I am absolutely delighted and honoured to receive this award. It is rewarding that our professional body recognises our endeavours in this way.' He will receive free life membership of the Society and a commemorative certificate, and will be invited to give a paper at the Society's Annual Conference in 2011.

Outreach grant for health psychology

The Division of Health Psychology is launching a new grant scheme to support public engagement activities aimed at increasing public awareness of health psychology. Awards will be made for the development of events or activities with any relevant target group, in any medium or context, but must be aimed at increasing the public profile of the Division and of health psychology as a whole. Applications are invited for a public engagement bursary up to a maximum of £500.

For more information, please contact the Division of Health Psychology Public Engagement Officer, c/o the DHP support officer (dhp@bps.org.uk)

Independent Practitioners Forum

Starting out in independent practice can be both exciting and rewarding, but it can also be quite daunting with many challenges. This is why the Professional Practice Board established an independent practitioners discussion forum, which has been running since 2007. The forum is free to join and it has grown to have just over 500 members.

Members on the forum range from those just starting out in independent practice to those who have long-established careers with a wealth of experience and knowledge in this area. There is a good range of representation of the discipline, including occupational, counselling, forensic, coaching psychology, to name but a few. Many members have benefited from talking with those who have already taken the step of working independently and have received sound advice and lots of business tips.

The forum is an ideal way to disseminate information, ask questions, find answers, share opinions, ideas and concerns but above all it is a collegial network for psychologists who are self-employed. Some topics that have been discussed:

- | business set-up and running
- | ethical issues
- | clinical work delineation
- | supervision
- | medio-legal work
- | employment issues
- | record keeping.

Questions can be posted on to the forum or a member may wish to be a silent member and just read the messages that have been posted, either way it is a great start to help build a collegial network.

If you are thinking about branching out in to independent practice or have been working independently for a while and would like to gain more information regarding the forum or to join the forum, please e-mail Nigel Atter (nigel.atter@bps.org.uk).

DEATHS

We were saddened to hear that Stephen White, former Director of Publications and Communications for the Society, died in August aged 61. See the 'obituaries' thread at www.psychforum.org.uk for tributes.

Susan Paulson, aged 50, died in June 2010 of a long-standing condition. Sue was a visiting lecturer in the Department of Psychology at City University, London. In January 2010 she was awarded a PhD in Psychology, supervised by Dr. Carla Willig. She conducted ethnographic and narrative research on the meaning of dance, health and growing older. She was been awarded a Distinction for the MSc in Health Psychology at City University in February 2006. As a member of the British Society of Gerontology, she had been involved in research with older people for a number of years.

A view of Northern Ireland

Anne Kerr, BPS Northern Ireland Adviser

The Northern Ireland Branch of the Society (NIBPS) was founded in 1956. Our regional office opened in September 2000 and we are pleased to be celebrating its 10th anniversary by reporting yet another busy and successful year to date.

Over the past 10 years, I have had the privilege of working with some excellent chairs, secretaries and enthusiastic committees. My work is supported by the various teams in Leicester, and I am in regular contact with the Parliamentary Office in London and the other regional offices.

In the early days it was just NIBPS and the Northern Ireland Branch of the Division of Clinical Psychology. Today we have Divisional Branches for Health, Forensic, Educational & Child, Occupational, and Counselling. There are also two working groups for Teachers & Researchers and Sport & Exercise Psychology, which we hope will have full Divisional Branch status in the near future.

We organise a number of events jointly with the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). We also work with partner organisations on multidisciplinary conferences and events. Our Divisional Branches and NIBPS liaise with the Policy Support Unit in Leicester and have responded to a large number of Northern Ireland government consultations.

This year so far we have had our 5th All Ireland Undergraduate Careers Event, attended by 400 students from across Ireland. This is a partnership event with the PSI and is sponsored by all of the psychology departments in Ireland covering 10 universities. Our Flavour of Psychology Lectures once again brought six keynote speakers to Northern Ireland, giving both undergraduate and A-level students a taste of psychology and

bringing psychology to society in general. We have also held a number of public lectures and more are planned for later this year. The Divisional Branches have been active too, holding many CPD events that have been managed by the regional office.

One of the year's highlights came after three years of collaborative working between NIBPS and the PSI, together with the educational psychology services in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. The result was Ireland's hosting of the 32nd Annual Conference of the International School Psychology Association in July, when over 500 delegates from 40 countries came to Trinity College Dublin. They were treated to an opening ceremony in the state rooms of Dublin Castle and were addressed by the education ministers from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, whose departments both co-sponsored the conference.

NIBPS and our Educational & Child Psychology Divisional Branch co-hosted a visit of 130 delegates from the conference to Northern Ireland. The successful afternoon visit included a guided tour of Belfast and a reception and tour of our government buildings hosted by the Northern Ireland Minister of Education Caitríona Ruane MLA.

Our own Annual Conference has grown in size since the formation of the new Divisions. The 2011 conference, which will return to The Manor House Hotel, Killadeas, Co Fermanagh for a third year on 15–16 April 2011, promises to be the biggest yet. Meanwhile our Divisional Branches are actively encouraging their parent Divisions to host their annual conferences in Ireland with the Division



Caitríona Ruane MLA, Minister of Education NI, Michael Sheehan, Chair of ISPA Local Organising Committee, and Professor Carol McGuinness Chair of NIBPS, at the ISPA Reception at Stormont on 22 July 2010

of Health Psychology coming to Belfast in September 2010.

A cross-divisional forum was established two years ago representing NIBPS and all of the Divisional Branches, to date it has carried out a mapping exercise of postgraduate courses, which will be reported on shortly. From this exercise collaboration is expected between course providers, who will share training where appropriate. The forum plans a conference encompassing all of the Divisions in 2011.

Over the past 10 years NIBPS Members have held some key Society positions. Emeritus Professor Ken Brown who chaired NIBPS went on to be President and Treasurer of the Society and is now Chair of the Conference Committee. Dr Gerry Mulhern who has previously been Honorary General Secretary is now President of the Society and our President Elect is Professor Noel Sheehy who is also a past Chair of NIBPS. Professor Maurice Stringer, our most recent past Chair, chaired the Representative Council.

Over the coming years we look forward to developing and growing our membership in Ireland which stands just above 1900, working with even more partners to promote the research and practice of psychology in Ireland and beyond. Our calendar of events can be viewed on the Branch website: www.nibps.org.uk.

SOCIETY NOTICES

BPS Student Lectures See p.815

BPS Conferences See p.831

Learning Centre courses and events See p.831–833

Spearman Medal – Call for nominations See p.833

BPS Annual Conference 2011 See p.841