



The British  
Psychological Society  
Promoting excellence in psychology

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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

### Peter Banister

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

Our Royal Charter spells out that the Society exists not only to promote the usefulness of our members but also 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied'. We are both the professional body for the discipline, and also the learned society with the aim of being the authoritative and public voice of psychology. In addition we hope to be influential in the development of public policy.

Having said this the precise way in which this can be done is a lot more problematic, and what I want to do in this month's column is to mention some of the things that we are currently doing, and to invite you to contribute to this important debate. When we say that we are the public voice, what precisely does that mean, for instance? Should we be both attempting to popularise psychology and to emphasise the psychological science aspects?

We do a lot currently, but the question is not only whether it is enough but also whether we could do it better. There is some lack of clarity as to what our role should be now that the regulatory aspects have gone. *The Psychologist* is an excellent publication with limited distribution, we try to provide the media with contacts when we are faced with queries, and we attempt to influence through playing an active part in consultations. There is also of course our much lauded freely available web-based Research Digest (see [www.researchdigest.org.uk/blog](http://www.researchdigest.org.uk/blog)), which is influential internationally.

There are many other examples of our public face; for instance our History of Psychology Centre runs a series of public events, the most recent one being in this October focusing on 'Stories of Psychology', looking at archives, histories and what they tell us.

We jointly campaign with other groups, as the Academy of Social Sciences; one of the ways that public influence is being tried here is through a series of booklets (available on the web in pdf form) and launched at conferences. These contain a number of case studies of interesting examples of what psychologists and other social scientists have achieved and what they can potentially do in a number of areas,

including ones we have sponsored on Crime, and Sports and Leisure.

There is also an annual free public lecture involving the Society and the British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences. This year's lecture was by Professor Ian Deary, who has been looking at and following up some fascinating historical material from Scotland. All 11-year-olds throughout Scotland had their intelligence assessed in 1932 and 1947, providing an invaluable database that allows studies to be done looking at subsequent cognitive changes up to the age of 90.

Another body that we belong to and that it is important to influence is the Science Council, which involves a number of germane professional bodies and learned societies. It aims to promote and represent science for society, claiming to represent over 400,000 scientists. One of its initiatives is to promote the profession of 'scientist' through the Chartered Scientist (CSci) designation, which psychologists can be awarded via our Society.

Joint working such as this is becoming more important in an age that is increasingly relying on interdisciplinary contributions to developments within science and increased understanding of their potential benefits for society; this was very much a recurrent theme in the recent Higher Education Academy STEM Conference.

Another initiative to try to extend our influence is via the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), which is an in-house source of independent information related to science and technology issues for the development of public policy for parliamentarians of both houses. Each year it publishes 20 to 30 POSTnotes (to receive these by e-mail, contact [post@parliament.uk](mailto:post@parliament.uk) with 'join POST mailing list'), which focus on current issues and their possible policy implications. Short-term research fellowships are available to allow psychology postgraduates to be seconded for three months to POST to help to produce these briefs, and the Society funds such Fellowships. BPS award holders recently have produced notes on Housing and Health and on the Impact of Video Games. At a recent meeting of alumni they all spoke of the positive impact that the experience had on them personally and professionally. In addition this is an excellent

"we hope to be influential in the development of public policy"



# Book Award 2012

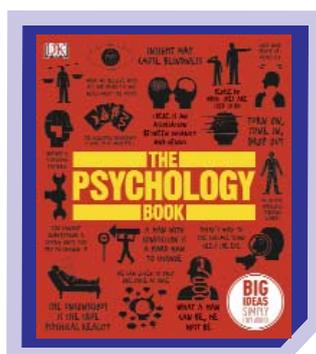
An innovative and accessible guide designed for readers new to psychology has won our Book Award for 2012. The Society makes this award annually to a text that has made a major contribution to the advancement of psychology.

Described by the website [allaboutpsychology.com](http://allaboutpsychology.com) as 'a great book that combines both style and substance throughout', *The Psychology Book* is written by Nigel Benson, Catherine Collin, Joannah Ginsburg, Voula Grand, Merrin Lazyan and Marcus Weeks, and published by Dorling Kindersley.

It is organised around seven broad themes, including philosophical roots, behaviourism and psychology of difference. These themes are then explored through a series of short articles on relevant thinkers, experimenters and schools of thought, whose contributions range from the classical world to the present day.

Reviewing the book in *The Psychologist* in March this year, the magazine's editor Dr Jon Sutton suggested it was 'aimed at

those who are completely new to psychology, fully engaged as a student, or an armchair expert'. He said its section headings were well chosen to pull readers in, and praised the authors' interesting choice of international figures, including Zing-Yang Kuo and Ignacio Martin-Baró.



A review on the [changingminds.org](http://changingminds.org) website said the book shares Dorling Kindersley's 'usual...excellent design', while the blog *Scientific Aesthetic* wrote:

'*The Psychology Book* appears to understand we learn best by seeing, and not just by reading, and that's why this bit of study literature is a wonderful learning companion to have on hand sitting beside you when you need a quick answer or an in-depth analysis.'

It is unusual for a book aimed at students or general readers with an interest in psychology to win a major prize – this Society award brings an author £500 and the invitation to give a lecture at our Annual Conference – but it may be that *The Psychology Book* will be helped to find a wider readership.

way to help to ensure that psychology is having an impact.

There are other Society initiatives in this area, including the annual Public Engagement Grants, which aim to spread the discipline and to improve public awareness by specific initiatives. The relevance of evidence-based psychology is promoted through direct work and by the organising of special communications activities. Recent recipients have received grants to work in areas such as crime, autism, self-harm, living with HIV and primate intelligence. Further details of the above are to be found on the Society's website.

To some extent the above is just scratching the surface of the many things we already do – I have not mentioned all that is done at a local level, particularly in places like Northern Ireland, where the Branch is very active. It may however be necessary to do more than this to achieve influence on public policy and policymakers across the UK. Perhaps we should be speaking out more on issues that affect society and people that we can contribute to (providing of course we keep within the bounds of being a charity)?

So we are already doing a lot, but the question remains as to how best to ensure that the Society is meeting its aims. The Trustees in their November meeting will be devoting time to further consideration of this important issue, and as usual any contributions from members would be gratefully received.

## NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC EVENTS

The Northern Ireland Branch together with the local Clinical and Forensic Divisional Branches have held three workshops and three public lectures between 10 and 15 September.

'Attachment Focused Care for Children and Young People with Trauma Attachment Difficulties' (Dr Dan Hughes, Quittie Glen Center for Mental Health, Annville Pennsylvania) comprised two lectures, one for parents and carers and the other for professionals, attended by a total of 800 delegates over the two nights. Dan also provided Level 1 & Level 2 'Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Training' for 60 local health professionals during his stay.

Our public lecture 'Facing Danger' (Dr Iain Bourne, Impact Training & Consultation Ltd) was attended by over 100. Iain also facilitated a workshop 'Difficult Disturbing and Dangerous Behaviour' for a group of 30.

**I For more information on forthcoming events in Ireland please visit [www.nibps.org.uk](http://www.nibps.org.uk)**

## ALLAN SAKNE

Everyone involved with the Society is saddened by the death of Allan Sakne, former Business Manager of the Society. He had been ill for a number of years.

Allan joined the Society in 1974 when it was still occupying leased premises in London and he was instrumental in bringing the Society to Leicester the following year. He oversaw a period of significant growth in income, membership numbers and staff. Allan was also responsible for the development of the Society's first computerised membership system. He retired in 1999.

Dr Peter Banister, current President of the British Psychological Society, paid tribute: 'There are many current and former staff, and members of our Society who will have fond memories of Allan's commitment, kindness and mischievous humour. Our thoughts are with Allan's wife Jo and his family.'

