

# An inspector calls

**I** SUSPECT that very few members are fully aware of what the Society's status as a registered charity actually means, but this status has a lot of implications for the kinds of thing the Society can and cannot do. I've made this the focus of this month's 'President's column' because we have been advised that the Society is to receive a review visit from the Charity Commission, probably in the late autumn. The review team will examine key charity documents – including minutes of Trustee meetings, charity policies and strategic plans – and will talk to Trustees (i.e., at present, those members who serve on the Council) and employees of the Society about its aims, governance and administration.

You may ask why we possess this charitable status if it involves such regulatory visits, along with other constraints I come to below. However, it is financially beneficial to be a registered charity, and this status does bestow some significant tax advantages. Thankfully, I believe we are in good shape to receive the review. This is very much a credit, not just to those honorary officers who have given up valuable time to devote to Society affairs, but also to those employees who are the mainstay of the management and planning processes (in particular, the Chief Executive and his team of directorate managers).

The visit will look very closely at a number of the Society's activities, and it is probably worth my mentioning a few of these in detail, because the Charity Commission rules have clear implications for what the Society can and cannot do. First, the review team will be looking at how we govern and manage ourselves. We must undertake formal strategic review and planning according to the processes laid out in our governing document – this requires that Trustees have a good knowledge of their responsibilities. To this end, the Society has recently introduced very successful training and induction days for Trustees.

Secondly, the review team will want to know whether all the Society's activities further the objects of the Society. The other side of this coin is whether the Society is indulging in activities that are beyond its

specific objects – such *ultra vires* activities could have serious consequences. February Council this year received a very thorough and informative document written by Professor David Legge on the issue of political activities and *ultra vires*. Interestingly, although one of the Society's objects is 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of 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', Professor Legge's report clearly indicated that the Society 'does not have a charitable object to work for the welfare of humanity or for the benefit of the community at large'. There is a very thin line between activities that are acceptable according to the Society's charitable status and those that are not.

Thirdly, the Society has to be very careful about how it uses its funds. It is quite clear that members cannot receive payments for their contributions to the Society other than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, and the receipt of the most modest of honorariums. However, we do hope that the Commission can be

persuaded to be more generous in this respect in the future. At present most honorary officers still have to do a full day job outside of the Society's activities. If the Society were able to buy out some of this day-job time, it would reduce overall workload and allow honorary officers to focus more productively on Society business.

Having to be careful in how funds are used does not, however, mean that the Society may simply hoard money. It is allowed to have reserves that amount to a percentage of annual turnover, but must have a policy on how it intends to use its reserves. The review team will be especially interested in how any accumulated reserves are intended to be used to further the Society's objects, and this includes financial reserves accumulated by subsystems as well.

Graham Davey

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## WHY WRITE FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST?

*Excellent opportunity to reach a wider audience, learn to write in a more general way, make new contacts and receive positive feedback from your peers.*

**Dr Rosemarie McCabe**, Bart's and the London School of Medicine, 'Knowing your own mind', January 2002

*Writing for The Psychologist is the perfect way to make contacts in psychology. We wrote our article with the specific aim of raising the profile of intensive care in the psychological community and reaching as many psychologists as possible. I was amazed at how many of my colleagues in psychology saw the article and I received a great deal of interest in our research via e-mail. We enjoyed writing the article for a more general audience and were thoroughly pleased with the feedback we received.*

**Paul Skirrow**, University of Liverpool, 'Intensive care – Easing the trauma', December 2001

*The Psychologist provides authors with the opportunity of reaching a large number of psychologists. It is very widely read, and articles often generate a great deal of interest, debate and discussion. It is the most important professional journal for psychologists in Britain.*

**Professor Gisli Gudjonsson**, Institute of Psychiatry, 'False confession', November 2001

*Positive responses by readers are extremely cheering. Moreover, this feedback also provides the opportunity to make new contacts. The practical process of writing, re-writing and editing is invaluable and is a great rehearsal for the discipline of academic (and other) writing.*

**Susan Howard**, London School of Economics, 'Psychology in the press 1988–1999', December 2001

*Writing for The Psychologist ensures the widest dissemination of findings: it's a very worthwhile investment.*

**Michael Scott**, University of Manchester, 'Unreliable assessment in civil litigation', February 2002

See p.495 for contributors' information

**TEACHING AWARDS**

TWO psychology lecturers at the University of Sussex have been honoured for outstanding teaching by the university's Alumni Society. Dr Helga Dittmar wins her award for, among other things, demystifying statistics. Dr Andy Field was selected for his 'excellent teaching materials and the warm rapport he shares with students'.

**TOO MANY ANTIPSYCHOTICS**

OVER half a million schoolchildren in the USA are taking powerful antipsychotic drugs – more than 10 times the number a decade ago – according to a panel of experts. The panel set up by health officials in New York expressed worries that too many children are getting these drugs inappropriately to control aggressive behaviour.

The drugs currently giving most concern are the newer 'atypical antipsychotics', which the panel blames for driving a 34 per cent increase in prescriptions for antipsychotics since 1999.

**DYSPRAXIA FOUNDATION LAUNCHES JOURNAL**

THE Dyspraxia Foundation, in pursuit of its aim of promoting awareness and understanding of dyspraxia, has produced the first issue of *Dyspraxia Foundation Professional Journal*, which is set to be an annual publication.

□ *The Dyspraxia Foundation is at 8 West Alley, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1EG. Tel: 01462 455016.*

**WEBSITES**

[www.bps.org.uk/careers/soa\\_1.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/careers/soa_1.cfm)

The final report of the Society survey of academics' views and needs.

[www.hero.ac.uk/rae/submissions/index.htm](http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/submissions/index.htm)

View individual entries for the 2001 RAE.

[www.uel.ac.uk/psychology/news/panel-report.pdf](http://www.uel.ac.uk/psychology/news/panel-report.pdf)

Report of the independent ethics panel for *The Experiment*.

[www.left-handersday.com](http://www.left-handersday.com)

Survey to find out how right-brain dominance can affect career choices and leisure pursuits. Right-handers can take part too.

[www.iaapsy.org](http://www.iaapsy.org)

Discover the benefits of membership of the International Association of Applied Psychology, and view abstracts from their July congress.

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

# Mental Health Alliance to rally against draft bill

**THE Mental Health Alliance, the largest group of mental health organisations ever formed, will bring together nurses, psychiatrists, mental health service users and voluntary groups in an unprecedented show of unity in a march on the Department of Health on Saturday 14 September.**

The march and rally will see the British Psychological Society taking a common stand with interest groups large and small, including the Royal College of Psychiatry, the Royal College of General Practitioners, Mind, Mencap, Unison and the Royal College of Nursing.

Upwards of 2000 protesters from all over the country are expected to assemble at midday in Whitehall Place, London, to march by the Department of

Health, marking the end of the government's consultation period on the bill. A rally will later take place in Geraldine



Mary Harmsworth Park – the site of the original Bethlem psychiatric hospital dating from the Middle Ages.

The Mental Health Alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for a new Mental Health Act that would reduce the need for compulsory powers. However, despite working with government over a long period, Alliance members have been disappointed by the new powers

of compulsion proposed by the draft bill.

Paul Farmer, Chair of the Mental Health Alliance, said: 'Gathering on the site of the first asylum for people with mental health problems is highly appropriate, as we believe the government's proposals would be a real step backwards in the treatment of people with mental health problems. The threat of being treated against your will, or detained indefinitely on flimsy grounds, is going to deter thousands of people from seeking the help they need. We want the bill to give people rights to services when they need them, not increased levels of compulsion. We hope that as many people as possible will join us on 14 September to show their opposition to the government's proposals.'

## More help with this problem needed

**THE NSPCC has published a report reviewing the system for responding to children and young people who display**

**sexually harmful behaviour. 'I Think I Might Need Some More Help with This Problem...' offers numerous policy recommendations to government and local authorities aimed at addressing 'the lack of a joined-up, strategic approach by government', which the NSPCC believes has resulted in poor coordination and inadequate provision of services.**

The title of the publication is a quote from a young person who had been displaying sexually harmful behaviour.

The NSPCC says that while there has been some progress in policy and practice over recent years, there is still no national strategy, government policy remains unclear and services on the ground are sporadic.

One recommendation is for the Department of Health to fund a large-scale research project to provide information on 'normal' sexual development among children and young people, on how diversity and disability issues relate to sexually harmful behaviour in young people, and on recidivism patterns. Such a project should also look into age-appropriate assessment models and treatment, including monitoring and evaluation studies to measure long-term outcomes of intervention and prevention programmes.

□ *The full report is available for £7.50 including postage from the NSPCC, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH. Tel: 020 7825 2500. Or it can be ordered at [www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/ch\\_Publications.asp](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/ch_Publications.asp).*

## Ignoring the evidence

**T**HE BPS has expressed its concern to a parliamentary committee that government policy is sometimes made without looking at the best available psychological evidence.

The House of Commons Select Committee for Science and Technology has been taking evidence on government funding of the scientific learned societies. The Society's memorandum to the committee said that there was a particularly strong history of input to science, health and education policy. For example, in the previous two years the BPS had responded to numerous consultations by the government and other bodies, and had provided members for departmental working or consultative groups. The estimated cost of all such collaborative work, which is not financially supported by government, was estimated to be more than £15,000.

But disappointment was expressed that policies in other areas are being made in without recourse to the best

available psychological advice. Transport, criminal justice, work and pensions, trade and industry, defence, food and rural affairs, and housing policy could all benefit from research conducted by psychologists. The Society said that it intended to promote psychological contributions to policy making in all these areas.

At the same time, in the interest of broadening the base from which advice to government is drawn, the BPS said it would welcome financial support being made available to organisations that are not grant-aided by government.

The published report of the Science and Technology Committee agreed that the government should look more towards the learned societies for expert scientific advice and that 'learned societies should be able to bid for funding to provide scientific advice they feel competent to do'.

□ *The full text of the BPS submission is at [www.bps.org.uk/whatsnew/news1.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/whatsnew/news1.cfm). The committee report is at [www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/s&t/home.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/s&t/home.htm).*

## CARE IS CRITICAL

**A** NEW working paper from the NHS Modernisation Agency has called for more psychological input within critical or 'intensive' care services.

*The Role of Healthcare Professions within the Critical Care Services* examines whether traditional methods of service delivery are still applicable, given advances in medical science. The report considers the background and role of each profession involved, with examples of how to improve practice.

The psychological problems of patients in critical care units can include depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress-related symptoms, hallucinations, delusions and memory disorders (see *The Psychologist*, December 2001 p.642). Staff working in these units and relatives visiting critically ill patients have also been noted to have needs specific to these high-intensity environments.

Ian Bennun of the Department of Clinical Psychology, Torbay Hospital, who has written on the topic (see *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 74, 369-377), says: 'Referrals are often made to mental health services, which do not necessarily have the skills to treat patients presenting with psychological problems associated with an admission to critical care. This report could be used by clinical psychologists in making the case to develop local services.'

□ *For more, see [www.modern.nhs.uk/criticalcare](http://www.modern.nhs.uk/criticalcare) or contact Jill Chapman (tel: 0116 222 5119; e-mail: [jill.chapman@npat.nhs.uk](mailto:jill.chapman@npat.nhs.uk)) or Ian Bennun ([ian.bennun@sdevonhc-tr.swest.nhs.uk](mailto:ian.bennun@sdevonhc-tr.swest.nhs.uk)).*

## Love is... made to order

**A**NY one couple can 'learn' to fall in love, according to American psychologist Dr Robert Epstein. He's roped the media into his personal search, hoping to discover that falling in love can be achieved through a series of mutual goals, weekly counselling sessions, and 'love games and exercises'.

Dr Epstein is University Research Professor at Alliant International University and Director Emeritus of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies. He is also editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today*, and used the June issue to advertise for a willing participant to enter into a 'Love Contract' with him.

Pointing out that 60 per cent of the world's marriages are not 'love' marriages – they are arranged – he proposes a six-month agreement. During this time he and

his partner will keep a diary of their thoughts and feelings, see a relationship therapist once a week, study relationships, forgiveness, and communication with the opposite sex, and go on getaways and retreats together.

'We teach our children, and especially our little girls, that a knight in a shining Porsche is going to drive up one day, awaken perfect passion with a magical kiss,' writes Epstein.

'I'm not saying you can pair up any two people and have them love each other, but there are a very large number of people out there with whom you are capable of sharing deep and profound love.'

He says that the idea is 'to create a process by which people who don't know each other but who are probably suitable to each other can learn to love each other.'

