

opportunity for the 50 or so participants to receive some information, to network as a group and, hopefully, to form a member network of their own.

In the last column I mentioned that there was to be a review meeting between the Society and the HPC as part of the ongoing collaboration between professional bodies and the regulator. We had a useful and friendly discussion, which will be reported more fully once notes have been agreed. In summary those of us from the Society reiterated our view that the public can only be properly protected if the name 'psychologist' is protected. The HPC pointed out that this would require a change of legislation and would only come about if there was more concrete evidence to support our belief. Obviously we will be monitoring the public protection issues that arise over the next few years and will accumulate any evidence that emerges. The HPC regretted any inconvenience caused by the recent renewals coinciding with a postal strike and the plan is for future renewals to be made online. We discussed the methods used by the HPC to stop unregulated practitioners from repeatedly claiming the competencies of regulated practitioner psychologists. The HPC does not put titles on certificates and the fees are scrutinised by Parliament and the Privy Council. These issues were raised by members both with the Society and with HPC directly.

Finally, thank you for your e-mails. Many of you are interested in consultations on public policy or on matters relating to Parliament. Do look in *The Psychologist* and on our website for updates. I hope you are on the list for the e-newsletter. A demonstration of the new website will be given to the next Representative Council so please ask your member network representative for news. I'm certain that this will be a welcome development.

BPS/POST Postgraduate Award

Fiona Duff describes her experience at the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

With the generous funding of the BPS, I was fortunate enough to take a three-month secondment from my PhD in summer 2009 and relocate from the University of York to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST). POST's offices are situated at the heart of politics in Westminster, and as such this fellowship offered a unique experience, quite different from university life!

The ultimate aim of these fellowships is to write a short briefing note for parliamentarians, clearly summarising an area of psychological science, its current policy context and related issues that may need to be addressed in future policy. With a research interest in reading development, disorders and interventions, my task was to produce a briefing note on the area of teaching children to read.

This is a topic that receives a considerable degree of attention in policy, with obvious links to education, but also employment and economics. Recent policy documents include the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (DfES, 2006) and *Identifying and Teaching Young Children with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties* (DCSF, 2009). Indeed, around the time of the note's publication, the Science and Technology Committee announced a series of checks on how research evidence is used to inform policy; the first topic was literacy interventions.

In order to write my note, I spent time familiarising myself with past and present policy documents in the area of literacy instruction, together with research evidence from the psychology literature. In addition, I had the privilege of consulting a variety of people regarding their opinions on the subject. This included expert psychologists from different institutions, directors of charities that lobby in this area, MPs, policy makers, and those charged with the task of converting policy into practice.

In all, the secondment was a fantastic and valuable experience. It helped me to challenge and broaden my understanding of my research

area, and will undoubtedly help me as I continue in my career. Its greatest impact on me was in helping me to realise afresh how fundamentally important it is that children learn to become good readers; reading really is the gateway to learning.

I am grateful to the BPS for granting me this opportunity, and to Dr Peter Border for his supervision of my work. I would encourage supervisors to inform their PhD students of this scheme, and I wholeheartedly encourage students to apply. These secondments help to bring alive the research-practice circle; a feature that is central to so many aspects of our discipline.

I The published POSTnote can be found at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_offices/post/pubs2009.cfm

References

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). *Identifying and teaching young children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.
Department for Education and Skills (2006). *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: Final report*. London: DfES.



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held at noon on **Friday 25 June 2010** in the Society's London office at **30 Tabernacle Street, London**.

The Open Meeting will commence immediately after the AGM.

Please submit questions for the Open Meeting in writing addressed to the Honorary General Secretary by **Monday 14 June 2010**.

Professor Pam Maras
Honorary General Secretary