

## **Proposals for Branch Networks (England Branches and Devolved Nations)**



**The British  
Psychological Society**  
Board of Trustees

### **Current Position**

The Society's membership is currently split geographically into eleven Society branches, of which eight relate to England alongside three national branches (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) which, as shown, form eleven operational hubs.

Branches exist to provide opportunities for members to organize and network with one another in their local area, thus allowing members to experience the benefits of membership more directly and to exert local influence.

Some Branches have a long history, being the first type of membership network to be created in the Society, while others have been formed very recently.

For some years now, Chairs of the Branches having been meeting through the Branches Forum (two face-to-face meetings plus four teleconferences per year).

These meetings have been very productive for sharing experiences and comparing activities.

Through these Forum discussions, and through feedback from the Structural Review, it was clear that differences in focus and scale of activities had evolved between Branches, particularly between the English Branches and the National Branches, who have a greater policy focus because of their devolved legislatures.

Figure 1: Society Branches in England

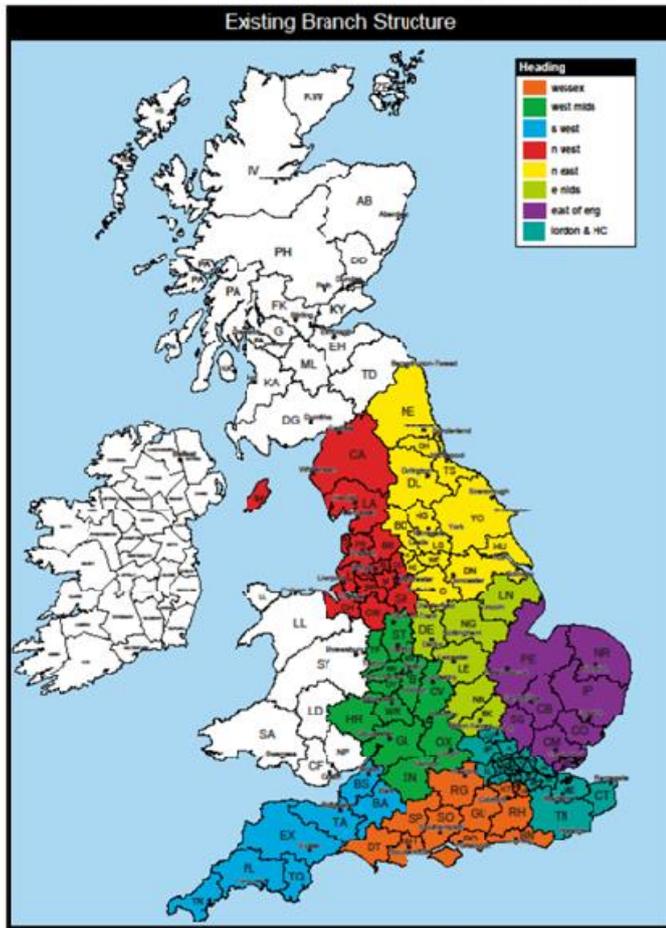
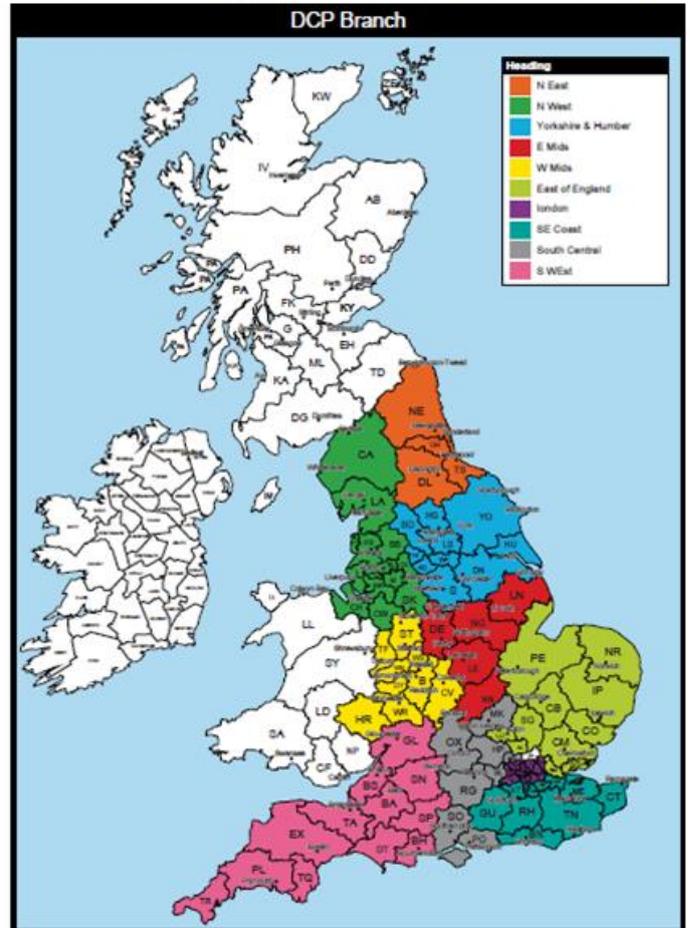


Figure 2: Example DCP Branch Structure



In addition to the eleven branches and eleven operation hubs mentioned above, some of the current divisional member networks divide their membership further, adding 29 divisional and 29 faculty branches making, including hubs, around 80 units delivering society services within the United Kingdom.

## Why are we recommending changes?

The proliferation of geographical groups is problematic for governance, communications and resources. For example,

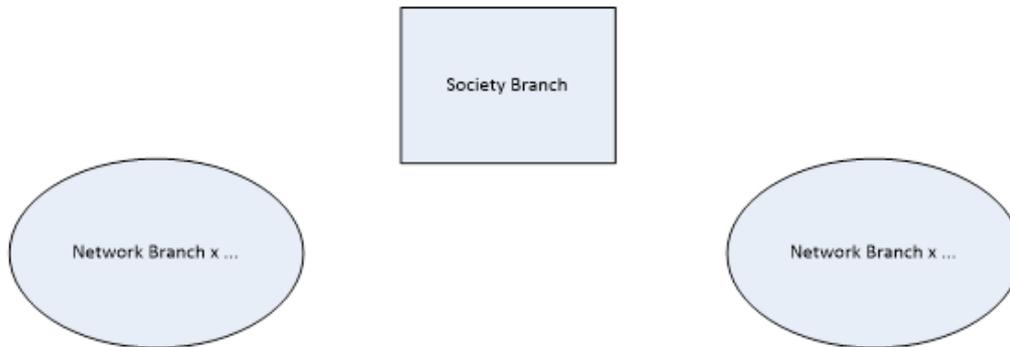
- The Society's Branch activities are conducted in parallel with divisional branch activities, sometimes with very little communication between them, resulting in overlaps and/or missed opportunities for cooperation.
- In addition, in several instances, parallel groups exist in different divisional branch networks, and even within a divisional branch, where some faculties have undertaken similar work to other networks in the same area. This duplication often means that our valuable member resource is wasted.
- Large Branch areas make it difficult to serve members needs effectively. In some Branches, hubs have been established to deal with this, but that can lead to further fragmentation, and overhead costs in terms of communication.
- Layered upon this, the divisional network branches do not map on to the Society Branches in England, other sub-network branches or each other, with the original reasons for boundaries either being no longer relevant or fit for purpose.
- The current branch boundaries lead to inconsistencies in population size and branch size. So, for example, London and Home Counties Branch has around 15,000 members – around 30% of our membership in one branch.

These issues, together with differences in remits between the different types of branches have produced barriers to effective working.

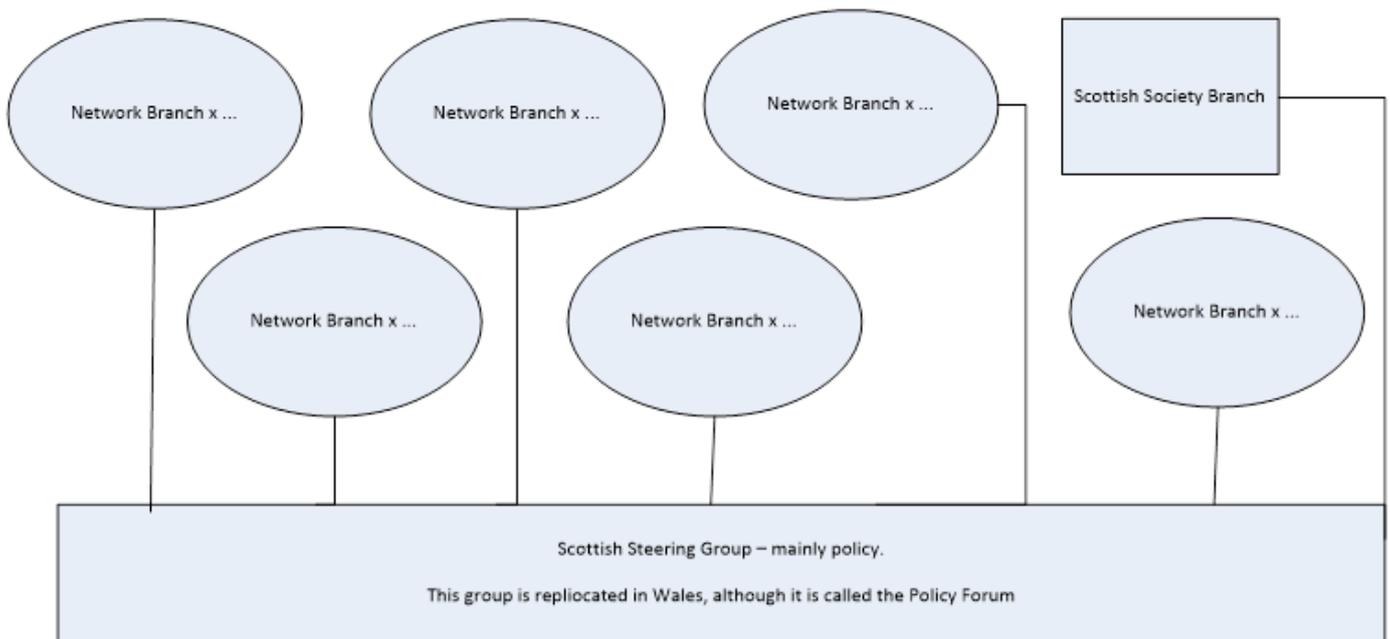
Interaction and collaboration between the various types of branches are hampered. A brief overview of the current structures is diagrammed below.

Figure 1 - Current branch interactions

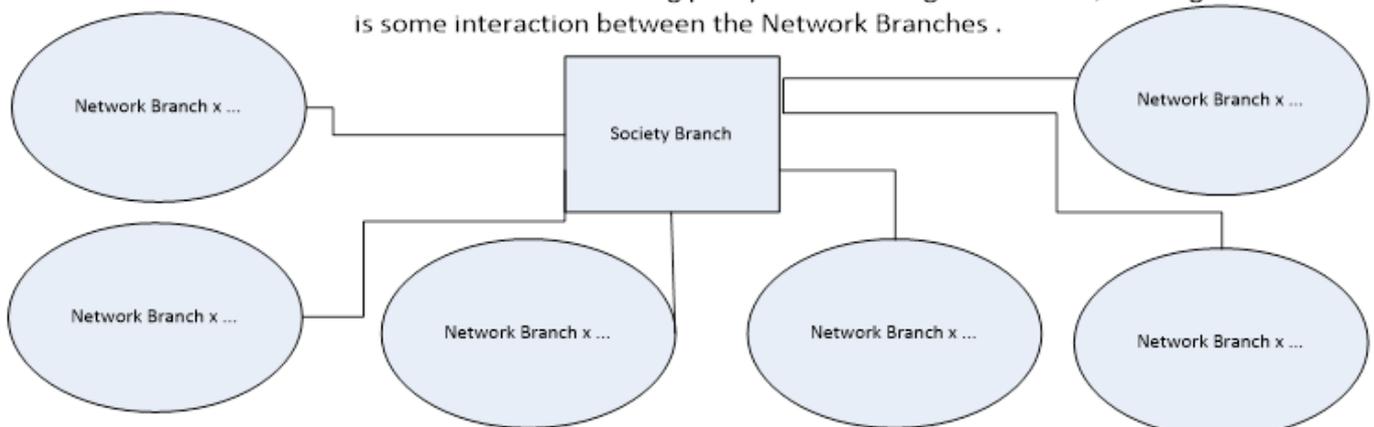
Current structure within England.  
There is little or no interaction between structures



Current structure within Scotland and Wales.  
There is some interaction between structures on policy issues through the Steering Group or Forum only.



Current structure within Northern Ireland.  
Interaction between structures on issues including policy occurs through the Branch, although There is some interaction between the Network Branches .



## **Our vision for the Branches**

Geographic networks exist to deliver the Society's objects within local areas. In the new structure we want branches (of all kinds) to play an even more important role than they do now and for the 'branch' to be at the heart of every member's experience of the BPS.

To optimize their role we are making recommendations about their remits, how they are organized locally, and their boundaries.

In order to make the Society more responsive to the growing policy differences across the four nations, we are recommending that a distinction is drawn between BPS Devolved Nations (based in Scotland, N Ireland and Wales) and the United Kingdom Branches which will exist across all four nations.

The BPS Devolved Nations will have a specific remit for policy in their national area, with UK Branches taking the remit for ALL local member engagement, local professional development, student engagement and public engagement in their geographic area.

The newly reformed UK Branches will include all activities formerly conducted by the Society's Branches and by the previous divisional branch networks, thus reducing the number of regional networks by merging 58 Division and Faculty branches into the relevant new UK Branch.

The Group is proposing these changes so that the geographic organization for members will be more coherent, encouraging and facilitating cooperation between different groups of members, making the Society more effective in terms of delivering membership benefits, being more responsive to local needs, and more likely to achieve impact in terms of its aims and objectives.

A more coherent national structure for externally facing policy work will be able to draw on appropriate local expertise in the devolved nations, and be more responsive to policy needs and priorities. There will be increased clarity in terms of remits and roles.

The group is also proposing that any Professional Body Function (however it is finally agreed upon) be coordinated and delivered at branch level.

The group is therefore recommending two types of branch network.

## **BPS United Kingdom Branches**

### **Purpose**

To be the main focus for the Society's activities in the geographical areas defined by BPS United Kingdom Branches, facilitating networking between members, in order to support the case for excellence in evidence based psychology through professional practice, research, education and training in their geographical area, and to inform the general public of the benefits of psychology through public engagement.

### **Remit**

To maximise opportunities for the Society's members within the Branches to organise and network with one another and with relevant stakeholders, so that the aims and goals of the Society can be effectively achieved.

To identify members' educational and professional learning requirements within the Branches and organise a programme of responsive educational and professional learning events for all categories of members, including undergraduate students, postgraduates, early careers members, graduate members, academic researchers, and Chartered members, drawing on the resources of the BPS Professional Development Centre.

To ensure the dissemination of high quality psychology research within the Branches through organising/hosting scientific conferences, liaising with other BPS membership networks as appropriate, providing opportunities for all categories of members to contribute and participate.

To ensure support for the highest quality of evidence-based professional psychology practice within the Branches, through organising professional practice conferences and workshops, disseminating best practice guidelines and other relevant documents, to ensure the highest quality of psychology services.

To provide local advice and information to the staff supporting the professional body function.

To maximise the impact of evidence-based psychology and its value to the public through organising, separately and/or in partnership with relevant stakeholders, a programme of public engagement events, in line with the Society's Public Engagement and Communications Plan.

To implement strategies within the Branches to increase the membership of the Society for all categories of members, in line with the Society's membership strategy.

To maximise membership networking and communication through newsletters, social media as well as through a programme of events.

To promote grant schemes for local projects, bursary schemes and local awards within the Branches and administer them when appropriate.

To advance the views and priorities of the Branches through representation on Senate.

To communicate the activities of the Society within the Branches to the wider membership through various channels, for example, at annual conferences, through the Psychologist, and other media opportunities.

## **Organisational Structure for BPS UK Branches**

There are currently fifty-eight branches of member networks and sub-networks. The group is recommending that branches of member networks be merged with the newly formed BPS branch in the local area.

The remit of BPS United Kingdom Branches ensures that the same range of benefits to members as previously delivered through parallel branch structures will now be coordinated through a single branch structure.

Branch committees will be structured to ensure that active members from network branches are supported as active members of the new branch, with consultation about how best to achieve this.

## **Boundaries for newly formed UK Branches**

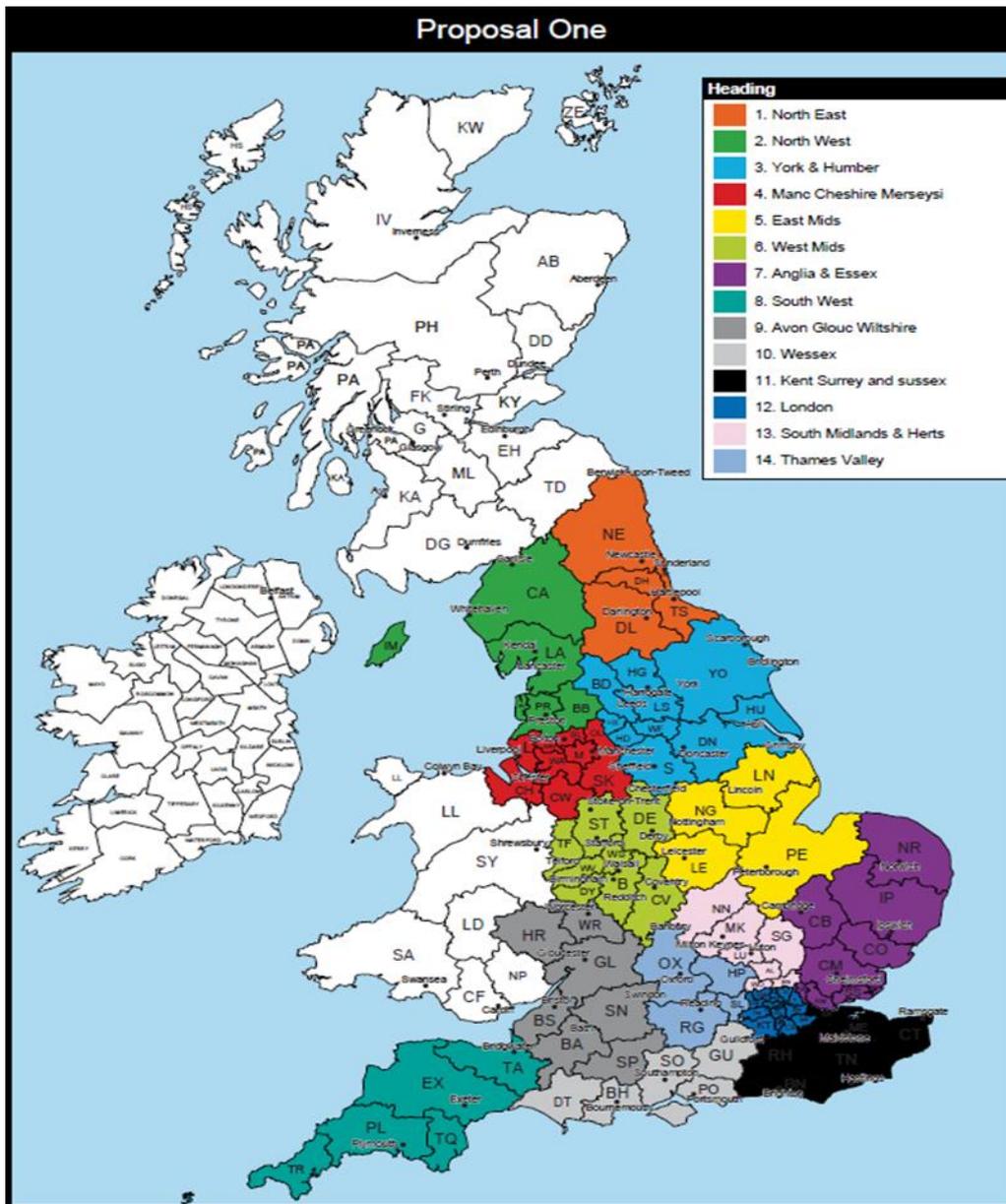
The group has also reviewed the existing branch boundaries, recognizing that some existing branches cover too large a geographic area to be able to deliver local member benefits effectively.

Taking into consideration the previous Society Branch boundaries and the boundaries of the divisional networks (specifically DCP), we are recommending that the newly formed UK branch boundaries be redrawn resulting in 14 branches specific to England, with the devolved nations being consulted to ascertain the most effective number required to achieve their aims and objectives.

The proposed English Branch Boundaries are as follows:-

1. North East
2. North West
3. York and Humber
4. Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside
5. East Midlands
6. West Midlands
7. Anglia and Essex
8. South West
9. Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire
10. South Central (Wessex)
11. Kent, Surrey and Sussex
12. London
13. South Midlands and Hertfordshire
14. Thames Valley

Figure 2 - Proposed Branch Boundaries



## **BPS Devolved Nations**

The **BPS Devolved Nations** (that is, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) will act as a hub, focusing on policy related activities in respect of policy differences between national governments. This will not include those activities covered by BPS United Kingdom Branches in the nations.

BPS Branches in the devolved nations will concentrate on their specific remit with the BPS Devolved Nations carrying the policy remit. The distinction is important in order to clarify remits. In practice, their activities will be coordinated.

This proposal is responding to the strong view expressed in feedback to the Structural Review Group from the national branches about the need for stronger devolution re policy for the devolved nations.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of BPS Devolved Nations is to advance the impact of psychology on public policy through identifying and responding to policy priorities in the devolved nation, and through responding to policy-related issues affecting excellence in the professional practice, research, education and training in evidence-based psychology specific to the devolved nation.

## **Remit**

To maximise the impact of evidence-based psychology on public policy through identifying policy priorities within the devolved nations, contributing to a policy development programme and organising public policy events, responding to public policy consultations, working with the Society's devolved nation policy advisors, the Society's Policy Unit, and the relevant Boards.

To liaise with educational and regulatory stakeholders within the devolved nations (HE/FE educational institutions, schools, qualifications bodies, regulatory bodies, etc.) to ensure that students, professional trainees and academics have access to the highest quality psychology education and training, now and in the future.

To make recommendations regarding the sustainability of funding for psychology education and training within the devolved nations and identify stakeholders and policy/makers/influencers who need to action them.

To ensure the highest quality of psychological services within the devolved nations, through participating in workforce planning, influencing the commissioning of psychological services, and involving service users.

To advance the views and policy priorities of the devolved nations through representation on Senate and Senate sub-committee(s).

To represent the views and priorities of the devolved nations when formulating and implementing the Society's strategy through the Society's Boards.

## **Organisational Structure for BPS Devolved Nations**

BPS Devolved Nations will become the national hub for the Society's policy activity.

We will consult on the constitution of the BPS Devolved Nations committees, but membership is likely to include local professional expert leads, local research expert leads, local members with public policy expertise, with additional internal and external stakeholders being co-opted (e.g., university stakeholders).

The exact membership will depend on the outcomes of decisions on other recommendations from the Structural Review Groups (e.g., knowledge and context networks, Professional Support Body).