

Treating children's behaviour

The British Psychological Society's Division of Educational Psychology and Division of Clinical Psychology have supported the call for a national review of the use of medication to treat children's behavioural issues.

Peter Kinderman, Chair of the Division of Clinical Psychology, said: 'We welcome the announcement from the government pledging an extra £400 million for the provision of psychological therapies – including the promise of better support for parents and children with behavioural problems.

However, we are concerned that the overall cuts to the public sector will place all of mental health care – including care for children – at risk.

'We know BPS members are involved in excellent work with Child and Mental Health Service teams, but child mental health is an area that is grossly under resourced, resulting in too few children and young people being able to get timely access to the appropriate therapy. Clearly, it is important to understand children's behavioural and psychological problems fully, and to invest in proper, expert, therapeutic approaches. We would be very concerned if children were being prescribed medication as a quick fix rather than accessing the full



assessments and psychological therapies which take may longer and cost more, but ultimately are likely to be better value in the long run. Within the BPS we are already working closely with our psychiatry colleagues to ensure better mental health across the board. If there is evidence of inappropriate use of drugs or medication then we're sure that our psychiatry colleagues would be equally concerned.'

Figures released by the Department of Health show that in 2009 the number of prescriptions issued to 16- to 18-year-olds to treat ADHD had risen by 51 per cent in just two years.

Kinderman concluded: 'Many children unfortunately have behavioural and emotional problems which of course demand appropriate care... Children for whom the diagnosis of ADHD is being considered should receive full multidisciplinary assessments, the option of receiving psychological and behavioural therapies, and their parents or carers should be offered parent-training and education programmes. Drugs should be considered as an option but this should

be part of an overall therapy programme. In the case of problems such as temporary sleep problems, mild social anxiety and shyness, I fail to see how medicalising these problems and contemplating the use of drugs is justified. These may indeed be problems, but they are problems that clearly deserve a more psychological response.'

Pedalling psychology

Two Psychology lecturers are planning to cycle across two countries, calling at secondary schools and colleges in a bid to excite students about studying the subject.

Dr Tim Jones, from the University of Worcester, and Dr Paul Sander, from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, are hoping to change the perception that psychology is 'all about sitting on a couch' by highlighting the many varied employment opportunities in the field.

'The traditional perception is that psychology is all solely about helping people and sitting on a couch,' said Dr Jones. 'We wanted to do something innovative to show that psychology is a diverse discipline and introduce students

to areas in psychology that may not be covered as part of their GCSEs or A-levels.'

'Alongside this, we want to demonstrate that learning does not

just take place in classrooms during class times but is much more of a lifestyle choice to open oneself up to new experiences and to benefit from them,' added Dr Sander.

Psychology is one of the most popular choices at A-level. Currently around 75 per cent of students studying psychology at university are female. Dr Jones and Dr Sander hope that through a number of activities they can encourage more boys to take up the subject. The Pedalling Psychology challenge, funded by a British Psychological Society 'Sharing our science' grant

(see www.bps.org.uk/shareourscience), will see Jones and Sander cycle from Cardiff to Worcester, calling at two schools per day, over five days. They will set off on the journey on 14 March.



At each school they will run a number of practical activities. They will create videos and podcasts along the journey, which can be used in schools as teaching aids. They have also set up a website (www.pedallingpsychology.com) and a Twitter account where people can follow their progress.

Schools wanting to get involved in the project are invited to contact Dr Jones at t.jones@worc.ac.uk.

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