



The
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The British Psychological Society

New TSN - Phase 2 Public Consultation Document

The British Psychological Society thanks the Office of the Minister and the Deputy First Minister for the opportunity to comment on Phase 2 of the TSN consultation. This response has been prepared by the Northern Ireland Branch of the Society.

Introduction

Having already identified the areas where Psychology can inform the implementation and evaluation of New TSN in an earlier response (see Appendix 1), the following focuses on the final document, identifying where psychological bodies, researchers, and practitioners can play an active role in the implementation of New TSN. With this in mind, this response will highlight entries in the document where an explicit reference to psychology or psychological material may be of relevance.

Suggested Psychology related Insertions

Page 6 paragraph 2.1 ...Firstly, any measure of poverty must be meaningful in terms of people's **physical and psychological** experience of poverty.

Page 8 paragraph 2.7 ...The selection of items in this instance is 'democratised' and will reflect the specific time-bound **psychological** values and **physical** needs of a particular population and is referred to as a consensual measure of poverty.

Page 8 paragraph 2.9 ...Mixed approaches to poverty measurement in part provide a response to the criticism that income poverty measures alone may not sufficiently reflect the broader impacts of poverty, or some of the **psychological** subtleties of experience.

Page 8 paragraph 2.11 ...they tend to be attitudinal **or psychological** in nature and can unduly reflect the impacts of broader social...

Page 8 paragraph 2.11 ...effectively exclude themselves under subjective measures of poverty. **However, psychological research into perceptions of poverty could provide some insights into the differing needs of disadvantaged groups.**

Page 27 paragraph 2.49 ...homeless people, **those suffering psychological health problems,** minority ethnic communities...

Page 27 paragraph 2.50 ...targeting effort to address the **physical and psychological** needs of the most vulnerable...

Page 56 paragraph 6.4 ... addressing social need and tackling inequalities will serve to reinforce policy focused on the **physical and psychological** needs of individuals...

Conclusion

It is hoped that the discipline of psychology could support and enhance the implementation of New TSN. If the final document makes explicit references to the value of psychology then it will encourage and enable people in the field to investigate topics that help New TSN achieve its goals. Furthermore it would fulfil one of the responsibilities of OFMDFM individual departments, i.e., “cascading the strategy to non-departmental public bodies and other service providers, and encouraging them and/or working with them to ensure its effective implementation” (p.72 8.4).

This response has been prepared by Liam O'Hare, School of Psychology, the Queen's University of Belfast on behalf of the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society.

Appendix 1

New TSN – The way forward a consultation document

This response has been prepared by Liam O'Hare, School of Psychology, the Queen's University of Belfast on behalf of the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society.

The Society is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this consultation document as the future development of New TSN remains central to government measures designed to address unemployment, employability and social exclusion.

The Society is aware that Northern Ireland presents particular problems with regard to social need over and above those encountered in Great Britain and with this in mind, is broadly supportive of the changes that are suggested in the consultation document.

The following comments deliberately focus on those areas where it is felt that the discipline of psychology may be best placed to inform policy development and in particular the proposed specific changes (3.14-3.17) on pages 25 & 26. The main aim of this commentary is to provide a psychological perspective on these issues and to help identify psychological theory, research and current practice that may be informative either now or in the future when considering these proposed changes, while broadly supporting the changes themselves.

3.14 A clear strategic aim – to improve income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged.

There is an abundance of psychological research which is relevant to an understanding of the factors which may improve well-being and including living conditions of disadvantaged groups. Furthermore there are a number of psychological methodologies which can assess when these criteria have been met.

Research on **Personality Psychology** can identify and assess factors which promote psychological well-being, and motives associated with conditions including learned helplessness. **Health Psychology** through Quality of Life research can help assess physical well-being alongside psychological considerations. General **Well-being** identification and assessment itself is also a thriving area of psychological research (Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. 2001 & 2000).

The discipline can also be useful for providing appropriate methodologies and research designs for assessing the outcomes of the strategic targeting. **Outcome evaluation** is a key part of psychological research and many psychologists specialise in this topic. **Qualitative techniques**, used in psychological research, such as surveys and focus groups can be very useful for identifying successful outcomes. Furthermore, statistical techniques such as **regression analysis** and **structural equation modelling** are often used in psychological research for predicting outcomes of various strategies.

3.15 Wider scope for policy – to introduce a new priority focus on financial exclusion.

Social psychology has investigated a number of aspects of **Participation Behaviour** which can be useful for tackling exclusion. Therefore research on Participation Behaviour may offer valuable insights in this area e.g. Social Participation Behaviour (Allport, 1954), Prejudice (Pickert & Brewer 2001), Inter-group Relationships (Hogg and Abrahams 2001) and Social Inclusion (Kurzban and Leary 2001). A related aspect of social psychology is that of **attitude change** (Zimbardo & Leippe,

1991). Changing attitudes of those in disadvantaged environments could be a beneficial strategy for revitalising those communities.

Economic Psychology is an emergent discipline, informed by both parent disciplines, that leads to a better understanding of people behaving in their economic lives, and that explores the way economic issues in society affect people's behaviour.' (EPTEN, 1999). Research in this area can offer insights into issues such as attitudes to saving (Brandstätter, 1995; Daniel, 1997), debt and poverty.

Risk Psychology uses psychological methods to identify groups that are at risk in various situations (Repin 2004). Risk Psychology techniques could be adapted to identify which groups are most at risk from financial exclusion.

3.17 Question 3 – Do you think that these high level priorities are appropriate for inclusion in the strategic framework – are there other priorities that you feel should be included?

Psychology has had a strong history of research in employment and employability. **Occupational psychologists** research various issues surrounding employment (Sharp, 2004) including its effect on self-efficacy (Strauser, Ketz & Keim, 2002).

Employability is a strong focus of many groups in Psychology including the **Learning and Teaching Support Network for Psychology (LTSN)**. The LTSN, although generally focusing on higher education, discusses and investigates many issues about employability, a number of which could be adapted for groups other than students, i.e. the financially excluded. Focal topics investigated by the LTSN include skill development and personal development programmes. Methodologies used include problem based learning and teaching with technology. In essence the high level priorities could be expanded to include educational development in deprived groups which will have a resultant decrease on financial exclusion.

Conclusion

Psychology has the potential to offer useful contributions to the implementation of the New TSN policy. Psychological research and including that detailed above may provide insight into the effect and effectiveness of interventions with disadvantaged groups, and it is to be hoped that government will take due cognisance of this work during the implementation of this policy.

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