The AFPSIG Bursary

Topic - The Age of Criminal Responsibility
Amount - £3000

Deadline for application – 30.11.19
Outcome announced – 3.1.20
Presentation of project proposal – AFPSIG study day November 2020
Final report to be received by – 30.10.22

The Adolescent Forensic Psychiatry Special Interest Group (AFPSIG) has introduced a £3000 bursary which will be awarded every 2 years.

The purpose of the bursary is to encourage interest in the speciality by funding a piece of work on a topic related to adolescent forensic psychiatry. The exact topic will vary and will be decided by the AFPSIG Executive Committee.

AFPSIG will take a flexible approach to the nature of the work funded by the bursary, which could include research, quality improvement projects or patient/carer/community engagement projects.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility. The plan for the project will be presented at our AFPSIG study day in November 2020 on this topic. The final report / outcome will be expected by 30.10.22 in the manner of a publication or other specified final piece.

The winner will be expected to produce a summary of their work but this could be in a variety of formats e.g. written, video or other media. The winner may also be invited to present their completed work at one of the AFPSIG Study Days. It is hoped that, in many cases, the work will also lead to a publication and increase the literature in this field.

Supervision may be available from a suitable member of the AFPSIG.

For the inaugural award the topic will be: ‘The Age of Criminal Responsibility’

The minimum age of criminal responsibility is the age at which young people can be prosecuted in court for offences. Below this age, they are conclusively presumed to be incapable of committing offences. The issue of setting the age is dealt with differently across the world, with ages being set across the 210 state countries covering a range from 7 to 16.

The setting of these ages is usually driven by historical factors, including the impact of previously occupying empires or forces, and under the influence of various international instruments. The blossoming of neuroscientific studies over the past 30 years has driven a more scientific understanding of the developing brain, and a better recognition of concepts such as developmental immaturity, which gives an indication of some of the capacities and the areas of challenge that young people face. This subject symbolises the interface between science and the law in a very stark way.

The project needs to have a specified aim. It will need to draw from multiple data sources, including medical research, case law and media representations. A number of articles have been written by both lawyers and doctors on this topic and it may be useful to draw on the experience of experts in these fields in order to build a position based on science but conducive with the structure of legal mechanisms. The candidate will need to consider the implications of raising the age, reducing the age or keeping the age static from the point of view of societal expectations, economics (health, welfare and penal system) and of course
the plight of the young person who finds him- or herself in contact with the criminal justice system.

This bursary is open to trainee psychiatrists and associate specialists. We recommend enlisting the support of a supervisor such as a consultant forensic and child & adolescent psychiatrist.

The work will be judged by the Adolescent Forensic Psychiatry Special Interest Group’s Executive Board: any AFPSIG executive board member involved in any application will not be part of the judging process.

The deadline for applications is the 30th of November 2019. Word limit 1000 words. Please send applications to Catherine.langley@rcpsych.ac.uk