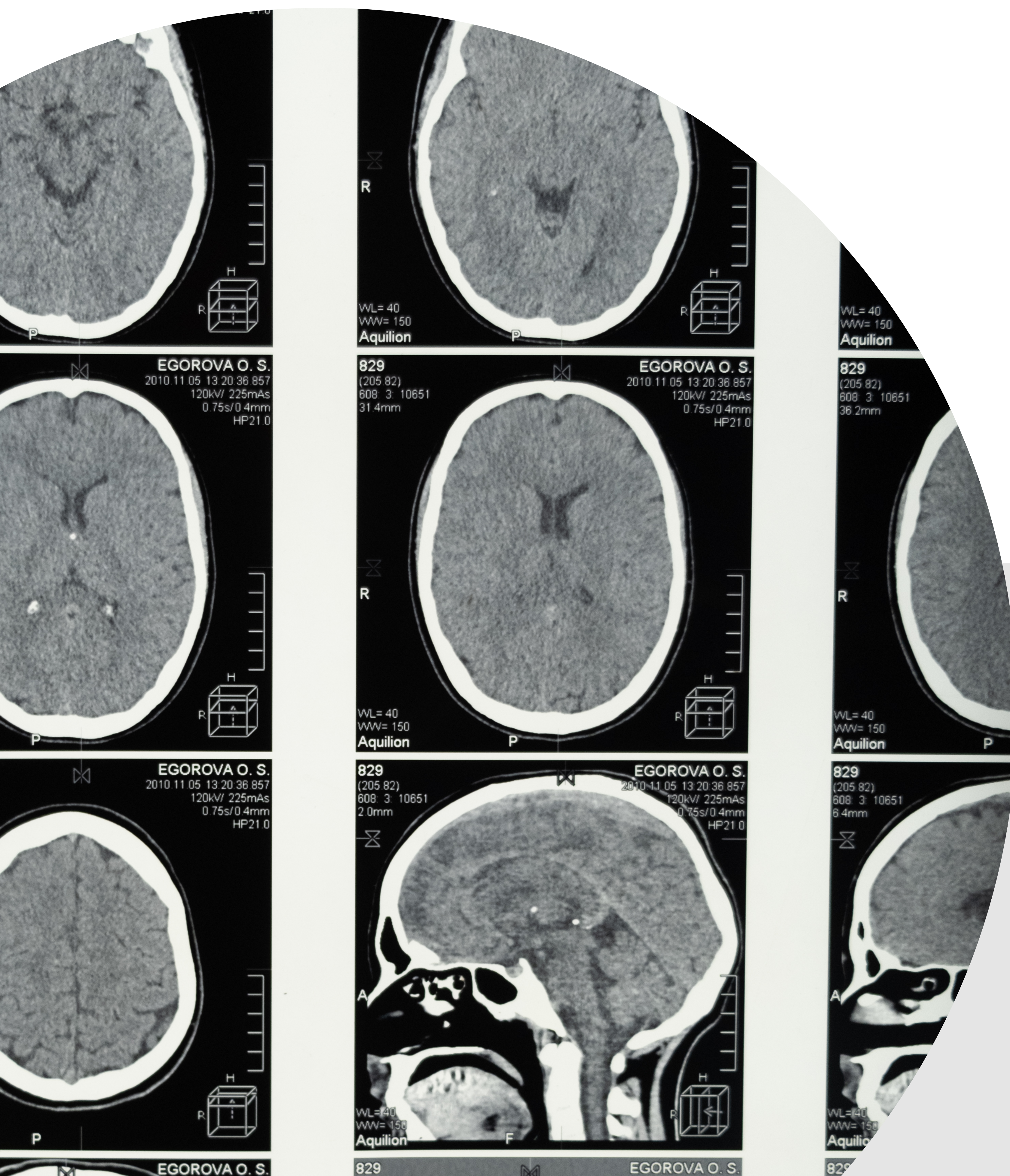


Year Ending 2021



# Trustees' Annual Report

## Summary



2020  
-2021



**Rik Henson - President**



**Anne Cooke - Chief Executive**

**We are relieved and proud to say that the BNA has not only shown resilience but in fact risen to the challenge and grown in new ways.**

## Message from the BNA President and the Chief Executive

If the previous Trustees' Annual Report (TAR) for the year ending 2020 was unprecedented, then this report for the year ending 2021 is unprecedented as well. Last year (YE2020) we reported on how the global pandemic of COVID19 had disrupted our plans for a full six months of the twelve-month period: this year, in a way that no-one could have fully predicted, it has impacted all twelve months of the year. Nevertheless, we are relieved and proud to say that the British Neuroscience Association (BNA) has not only shown resilience but in fact risen to the challenge and grown in new ways.

As in previous reports, below we review each of our overarching aims in turn – Inform, Connect, Influence – and how we have worked to meet them. Delivering all three of these aims when travel restrictions and working lives have prevented meeting in person has required flexibility and fully embracing online tools at our disposal.

The major challenge for the BNA during YE2021 was creating a successful Festival of Neuroscience. This biennial event would, in normal times, would be the focal point for delivering all three of our aims as well as a key source of income. It was therefore imperative to convert a four-day, in-person event to an online one instead. With a lot of hard work, creativity, and the support of the whole BNA community behind it, we're pleased to report that the 2021 Festival turned out to be a resounding success. We are very grateful to all those who took part and helped us to continue influencing, informing and connecting.

Although the Festival dominates the BNA year, there were plenty of other activities as well. Highlights amongst them were the launch of a new 'BNA Scholars Programme', establishing a strong and flourishing partnership with 'The Psychiatry Consortium', having the first 'Registered Report' published in the BNA journal, and running the inaugural BNA 'Credibility in Neuroscience' prizes.

At the end of the current reporting period (September 2021), after a whole year of socially distanced and online life, it remains uncertain when the BNA will be able to hold in-person activities again. Moreover, when that time does come, it will inevitably bring yet another new challenge of how to maintain the benefits of online (greater accessibility, wider reach, lower impact on climate change) alongside benefits to be had from meeting in person (career opportunities for our early career members being especially important here). However, if nothing else, the previous two years have demonstrated that the BNA is adept at embracing change! We're confident that the Association is in a strong position and will always find a way to deliver the charity's mission and aims.

# Vision, Purpose and Aims

As a membership organisation, the BNA is committed to preserve and protect health and advance public engagement in neuroscience, through supporting, promoting and representing neuroscientists and neuroscience research.

We have three interconnected aims that are central to achieving our vision and purpose: these are to **Inform, Connect, and Influence**. The aims help the BNA Council and Committee to direct activities throughout the year. Below is a short review of how we have worked to meet them over the accounting period.

## Inform

As an organisation, keeping all our stakeholders informed, particularly our members, is essential. We communicate across a range of platforms, which have featured a number of highlights for YE2021, including:

### • **Scientific Journal**

Our scientific journal, *Brain and Neuroscience Advances*, published its first Registered Report (RR) and also 'Ratlas', an atlas of the rat brain to revolutionise experiments on the health and disorders of brain function.

### • **Brain Insights**

A *BNA Bulletin* section, *Brain Insights*, written by and for students and Early Career Researchers, has become a valuable opportunity for early career scientists to gain writing experience within YE2021.

### • **BNA website**

During 2020-2021, the website attracted 154,000 users and 486,000 page views with information on careers and BNA2021 attracting the most traffic.

### • **Public engagement of neuroscience**

Our main public engagement activity, 'Bring Your Own Brain' took place in April 2021. Of particular note was the webinar 'Behind the scenes of a primate lab', which was subsequently featured in *Nature Neuroscience* (Mendez, J.C., Perry, B.A.L., Heppenstall, R.J. et al. Openness about animal research increases public support. *Nat Neurosci* 25, 401–403 (2022)).

### • **BNA's 2020 Festive symposium**

Online for the first time, over 400 people tuned in from around the world to hear about 'The Seven Ages of (Hu)man', marking the launch of our annual theme for 2021 of the neuroscience of ageing. A number of speakers were also interviewed by BBC Radio 4 for 'All in the mind'.

## Connect

Ways in which we connected the neuroscience community included:

### • **Connecting the neuroscience community through BNA membership**

Over the course of YE2021 we saw membership hold steady, with a change from 2,432 to 2,466 members over the course of the year.

### • **BNA Local Groups**

The BNA's national network of Local Groups (LGs) grew from 39 to 41, and we were delighted to see our first Northern Ireland LG established at Ulster University. A range of BNA-funded LG activities took place, from a Kings College London Neuroscience conference to a 'Training Your Brain' public event at University of Central Lancashire.

### • **Connecting with industry ('Building Bridges Between: Industry and Academia')**

Our strategic programme to increase connections across these two sectors held a number of high-profile events on how to improve translation between industry and academia in neuroscience, deepening connections and trust between commercial neuroscience organisations and the BNA across YE2021.

### • **BNA Meetings**

YE2021 featured the BNA's main meeting, the Festival of Neuroscience (12-15 April 2021) which, with the ongoing pandemic situation, was held entirely online and attracted a very high number of attendees (1,615). Many other online meetings were also held.

## Influence

This year saw a step-change in the BNA's ability to influence the sector, decision-makers, and neuroscientists themselves, by appointing a full-time staff member to the role of 'Head of Policy and Campaigns'. Our 'influence' activity highlights included:

### • **Credibility in neuroscience**

The BNA's campaign to "support the neuroscience sector to increase the transparency, reproducibility, replicability and reliability of neuroscience research" witnessed a number of achievements. From the adoption of 'Credibility' as one of the three core values by the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) to the launch of Credibility in Neuroscience prizes. In addition, we ran a Journal Impact Factor consultation with vital findings for embracing further change in neuroscience, and submitted evidence to Parliamentary enquiry on reproducibility in research.

### • **Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in neuroscience**

Our positive action with respect to widening diversity has increased greatly over YE2021 with highlights including the launch of the BNA Scholars Programme for students from under-represented ethnic groups in neuroscience, and a new 'Carer Grant' (supported by the Guarantors of Brain) enabling those with caring responsibilities to participate in activities.

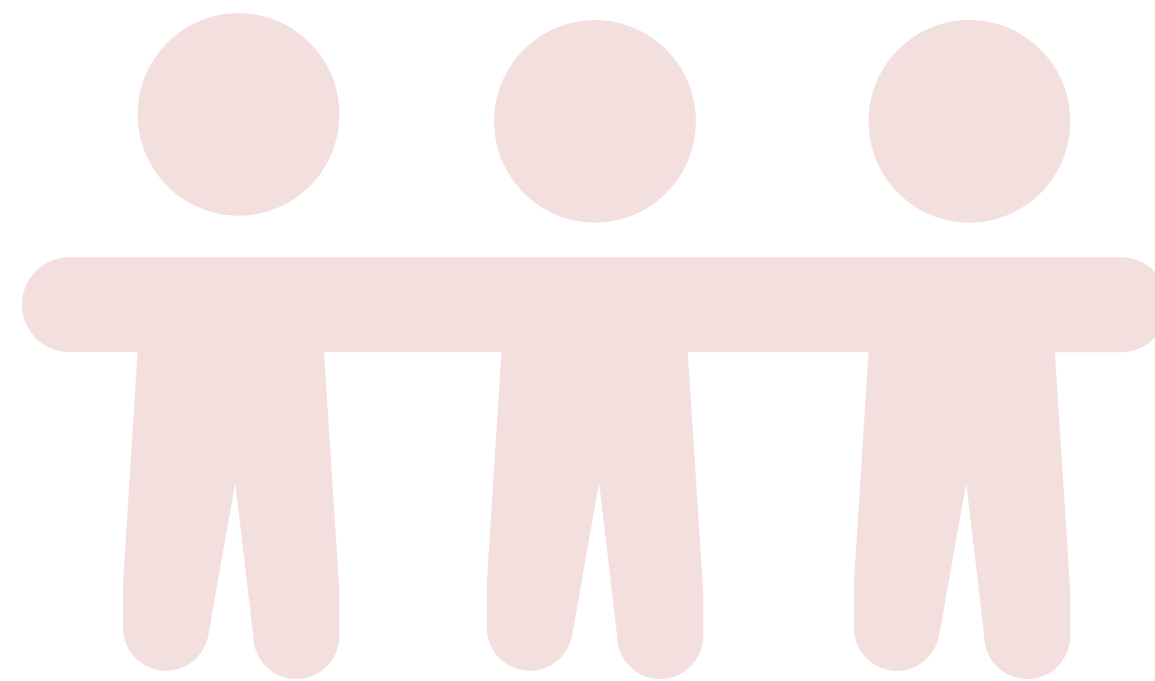
### • **BNA prizes**

We also celebrated the achievements of the winners of the BNA's annual prizes.

# Looking ahead: Plans for 2021-22 (YE2022)

The strategic pillars of the BNA remain 'Inform, Connect, Influence', with 'Credibility in Neuroscience' continuing as our core 5-10 year commitment underlying all our activities. More specific targets include:

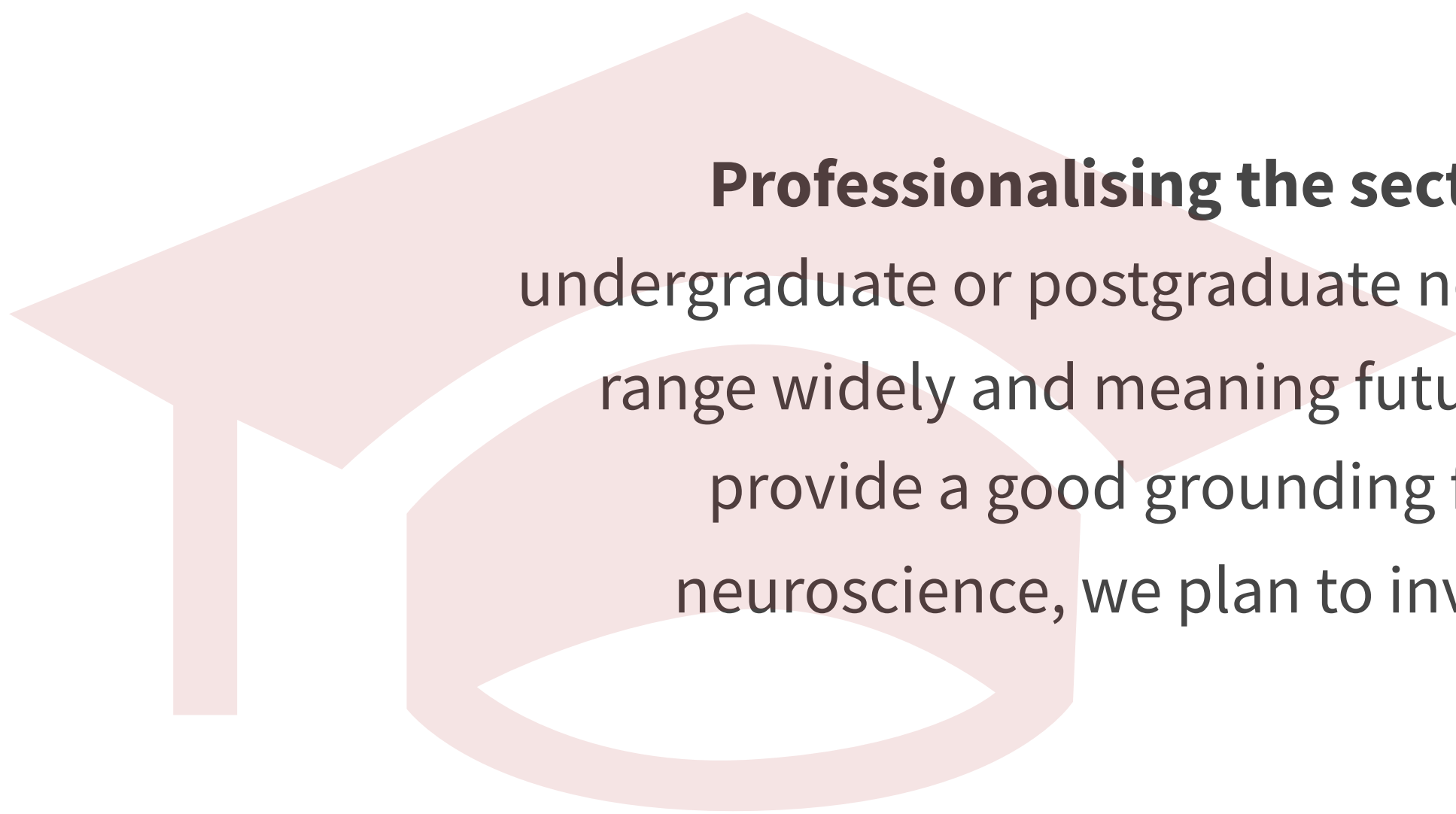
Our target for membership numbers is to reach is 2,636 by September 2022.



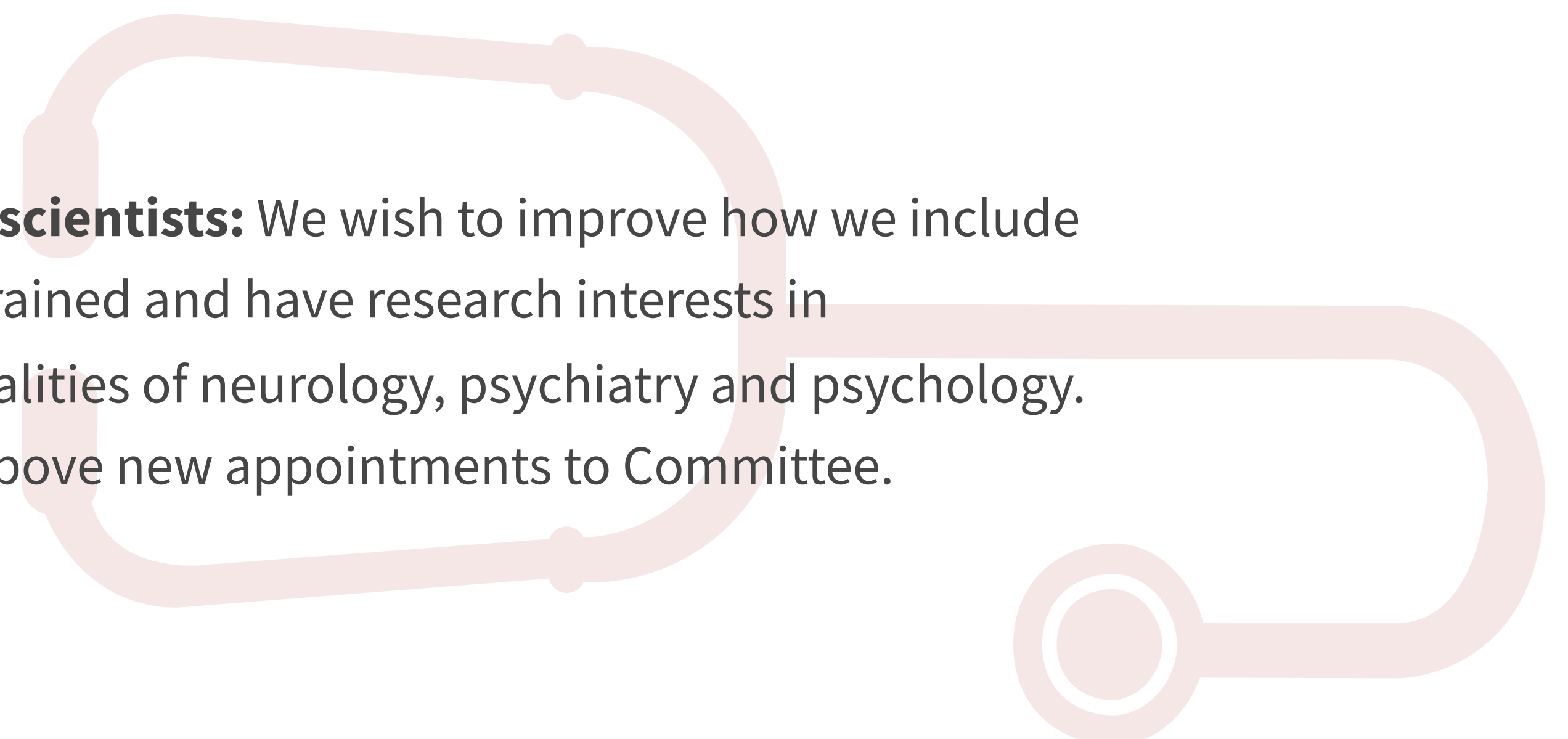
**Securing ongoing funding from the Gatsby Foundation:** The BNA has benefited greatly over the previous 3-4 years from financial support from the Gatsby Foundation. With the current grant due to finish at YE2022, a priority is to secure ongoing support from the Foundation, or seek alternatives from elsewhere.



**Professionalising the sector:** At present, there are no agreed, universal standards for undergraduate or postgraduate neuroscience courses to meet, making the quality of courses range widely and meaning future neuroscientists have no way of identifying ones that will provide a good grounding for their career. As the leading professional organisation for neuroscience, we plan to investigate how to assess and endorse neuroscience courses.



**Including and catering for clinical neuroscientists:** We wish to improve how we include those individuals who are both clinically trained and have research interests in neuroscience, across the three main specialities of neurology, psychiatry and psychology. To get this underway, we have made the above new appointments to Committee.



**Reaching a wider audience:** We know from surveys and anecdotally that many people who could be a member of the BNA, do not know about the Association nor what we do. We will seek to address this by investing in marketing and communications during YE2022.

