



FRED UPDATE 2018-19

Update on the work of the Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity 2018-19



As we commence a new academic year, it seems timely to provide an update on some of the work that the Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity has been doing over the last year and some of the exciting things that are coming up over the next 12 months. Many of you have been involved in working with the Forum during 2018/19 and we look forward to you being involved in 2019/20.

Students from the Discrimination Law Module participating in a mock tribunal co-hosted by ACAS and FRED.

Activity in 2018/19

The Forum has had an exciting year engaging in a number of national events:

How to use positive action effectively and robustly in HE: Professor Chantal Davies presented a workshop for staff at Liverpool University on positive action in September 2018.

Melting the Iceberg: using positive action to address gender segregation in HE
Positive action: In November 2018 Chantal presented a keynote at the Athena Swan Awards for AdvanceHE in Dublin alongside the Irish Minister for Education.

Equality at work? Positive action in gender segregated apprenticeships and beyond: Chantal presented a keynote at a Westminster Briefing Conference in London in January 2019 on positive action which was attended by government, unions and business leaders.



Professor Chantal Davies presenting at the Westminster Briefing Conference in January 2019.

Mock Employment Tribunal: Dr John Morrow in collaboration with ACAS co-hosted a disability discrimination mock Employment Tribunal in November 2018 with students from the Discrimination Law course participating as witnesses and members of the tribunal. The mock tribunal was attended by local businesses and lawyers.

Equality at work? Conference: This conference was co-hosted with the Young Women's Trust in March 2019 and officially launched the Young Women's Trust Report in the North (see below).

Collaboration in Action: using the Sustainable Development (SDGs) Framework as a vehicle: Dr Eghosa Ekhatior presented a paper at the University of Chester diversity Festival in March 2019 on this issue.

Inclusive assessment: a response to the experience of students with Dyslexia: Dr John Morrow presented his PhD research on the experiences of dyslexic law students at the International Assessment in Higher Education Conference in June 2019 in Manchester.

Westminster Insight: Diversity in the Police Conference: Chantal chaired the WM Insight Diversity in the Police Conference in September 2019 which was attended by government representatives alongside key representatives of the police.

In addition to the above, the following outputs were published this year:

Davies, C. (2019). *Positive action and apprenticeships: exploring the use of positive action in apprenticeships in England, Scotland and Wales*. Equality and Human Rights Commission, London, United Kingdom.

Healey, R. & Davies, C. (2019). Conceptions of 'research' and their gendered impact on research activity: A UK case study. *Higher Education Research and Development* <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1657804>

Ekhtor, E. (2019). 'Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights in Nigeria: Constraints and Prospects' in Michael Addaney (ed) *Women and Minority Rights Law: African Approaches and Perspectives to Inclusive Development* (Eleven International Publishing, Netherlands 2019) pages 17-35.

Postgraduate research activity

Niel Gillard is continuing his doctoral research into female progression within law firms and is anticipating submitting his thesis in Summer 2020. He is also working as a visiting lecturer with the Law School.

Sophie Cowell continues her doctoral studies looking into the implications of positive action for football coaches in the UK and is well into her write up period with an anticipated submission date of Summer 2020. She is now working part-time alongside her doctoral study as the Diversity Officer at Everton FC. In this role she spoke at the Equality at Work? Conference held in Chester in March 2019 representing Everton FC. She also continues her work with Kick It Out and Game Changers (see below).

Student participation

The Forum continues provide a vehicle and opportunities for postgraduate and undergraduate student participation and development. To date, the students have been extremely keen to make the most of volunteering opportunities. Notably they have provided vital support in relation to the ACAS mock employment tribunal and

the Equality at Work? conference held in March 2019. Equally, the students have also participated in pedagogic research projects being rolled out. Hopefully, this has also fed into their learning and has and will continue to provide them with valuable experience.

In addition, we have seen the successful continuation of the scheme whereby a number of Level 6 student volunteers provided a supporting legal casework function for the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC), in relation to the equality legislation. This year, Lily Rae and Laura Andrews provided invaluable weekly support to CHAWREC.

Positive action research

Professor Chantal Davies continues to research and disseminate work on the use of positive action in the UK. In addition to presenting papers nationally and internationally on this issue (see above), she has also published several articles in this area.

This has led to a number of requests for the Forum to work with institutions across the UK in relation to the promotion of positive action (as above).

In particular, throughout 2017/18 Chantal was funded by the Young Women's Trust and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to look at the use of positive action to address underrepresentation in apprenticeships. In 2017, a Young Women's Trust (www.youngwomenstrust.org) report "Making Apprenticeships work for Young Women" highlighted that young women are still largely absent from a number of sectors including Engineering, Construction and ICT. In particular, this report recommended that where participation of women is disproportionately low, employers should

consider taking positive action to increase participation in this regard. Indeed a recent good practice guide showcased some of the ways in which organisations are already taking action to reduce these gaps through their apprenticeship schemes.

With this in mind, in June 2017 the Young Women's Trust commissioned and funded a research project led by Professor Davies into the attitudes towards and current use of positive action in relation to apprenticeships aimed at increasing the representation of women in sectors in which they are currently underrepresented across England (in particular Engineering, Construction and ICT).

This research led to a report titled *Equality at work? positive action in gender segregated apprenticeships*. This report makes some robust recommendations in relation to the use of positive action in apprenticeships and more generally. The research findings were launched at a Parliamentary event in June 2018 and Professor Davies gave evidence based on this research to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in Work in July 2018.

A Northern launch of the Young Women's Trust positive action research report took place at a day long conference (Equality at Work?) at the University of Chester in March 2019 and was attended by a broad range of business leaders, policy drivers and academics. In particular, presentations were given by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, WISE, UNITE, Everton FC, ImagoHR and others.

Copies of the summary and full report of the Young Women's Trust research can be found at: https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/what_we_do/publications



Panellists at the Equality at Work? Conference held at the University of Chester in March 2019 chaired by Dr Carole Easton OBE (Young Women's Trust)

In addition, the Equality and Human Rights Commission funded Professor Davies (in partnership with the Young Women's Trust) to carry out a literature review and host and report on a Roundtable event on positive action in apprenticeships in March 2018. This Roundtable was attended by leading employers, academics and policy drivers to consider the use of positive action in apprenticeships to address underrepresentation across the protected characteristics in England, Wales and Scotland. Again, this report makes robust recommendations for practice, policy and legislation in this area and was published in March 2019. This report received widespread media interest and has been cited and utilised by various organisations including reference to this work in the Equality and Human Rights Commission broad based national review: *Is Britain Fairer?* published in 2018.

The full EHRC research report on positive action can be found at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/exploring-positive-action-tool-address-under-representation-apprenticeships>.

Business, Academic and Community Links

The Forum has continued to develop its links with business, academia and the community. Dr John Morrow sits as a trustee and Professor Chantal Davies acts as Special Legal Advisor with Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race Equality Centre (CHAWREC). Chantal was until early 2019 sitting on the board of the Equality Challenge Unit and was part of the group overseeing the transition of the ECU into the new merged Advance HE. John has developed links with ACAS in the North West and was commissioned to roll out a series of training sessions on their behalf this year. Links continue to be developed with the national Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) and WISE (Women in Science and Engineering).

Sophie Cowell continues to develop her leadership activities in relation to equality in football. In particular, she has been appointed to the new Game Changers group which is a mentoring programme aimed at providing professional development opportunities with the aim of identifying and creating the future leaders of football. Alongside Kick It Out, the programme is supported by UCFB and the Premier League.

Chantal and John are representing the Forum and the University of Chester as a partner in an ESRC Marie Skłodowska-Curie funded project called INNOVATEDIGNITY aimed at developing doctoral training (see below).

We have also developed institutional links with Bangor, Strathclyde, Glasgow, Liverpool, Oxford Brookes University, University of Sussex, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield University, Bath Spa University etc. We continue to develop links with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Young Women's Trust following the successful completion

of research in the area of positive action (see above) and we are meeting potential new collaborators on a regular basis to seek to develop connections further.

Forthcoming events and activities

The Forum has an exciting year ahead with a number of events to be rolled out during 2019-20 including the following:

- Professor Chantal Davies has been appointed as an expert panellist on positive action for the Irish Gender Equality Initiative. She will be in participating in this initiative throughout the year and in particular will be part of a panel carefully selected and sitting in Dublin in November 2019 to roll out an exciting and innovative positive action initiative across the HE sector in Ireland.
- As part of the INNOVATEDIGNITY project (see above), Chantal and Dr John Morrow will be organising together with Professor Fiona Cowdell of Birmingham University a conference in 2020 focussing on gender equality for postgraduate participants in the project.
- In January 2020 Chantal will be giving her inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Chester. She will be utilising this an opportunity to focus on her recent research with an interactive lecture aimed at participant reevaluation of attitudes towards and understanding of positive action.

There are lots more events and work in the pipeline with work now focusing on strategic planning for the next 5 years. If anyone would like to input into this process, please do let us know and we would be delighted to include you.

If anyone has an idea on how they would wish to use the Forum to promote their own work/interests please do let us know. Equally, if there is any existing work which

has been completed which would fit into the Forum remit we would be thrilled for the Forum website to be used to promote this. Please be aware that the Forum website is currently being updated and will not include all material.

Contact chantal.davies@chester.ac.uk for further information.

