

Press release: Director for Fair Access and Participation announced

The Department for Education has today (8 September 2017) announced the appointment of Chris Millward as the first Director for Fair Access and Participation of the Office for Students (OfS).

The OfS is a new public body, established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Once fully operational in April 2018 the OFS – which will replace the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) – will regulate the higher education sector and place students' interests at its heart.

Chris Millward is joining the OfS following over ten years at HEFCE as their Head of Policy. While at HEFCE, Chris led on reforms to ensure more people from disadvantaged backgrounds were given the chance to study at England's world-leading universities, as well as the implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework which recognises excellent teaching and learning across the higher education sector.

Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education said:

As someone who was the first person in my family to go to university, I know how transforming this opportunity can be for young people.

More young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are going to university than ever before – up 43% since 2009. But we know there is more to do to level the playing field.

Chris Millward has a wealth of expertise and understanding of the higher education sector which will be invaluable in helping to drive forward further improvements and ensuring no student misses out.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said:

We have made significant progress to ensure that everyone, no matter what their background, gets the chance to study at one of our world-leading universities.

I would personally like to thank Professor Les Ebdon, the current Director for Fair Access, for his excellent work in driving this forward with record rates of disadvantaged students entering higher education.

The new Office for Students will rightfully put the interests of

students at the heart of the higher education system. Chris's experience and expertise will ensure we can continue to tackle inequality, improve transparency in the sector and achieve positive outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Sir Michael Barber, Chair of the Office for Students said:

I am delighted with the appointment of Chris Millward as the Director for Fair Access and Participation. Chris brings a great deal of experience and credibility to this role, having, most recently, led the implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework with great skill.

He is well placed to drive a step change in the access, success and progression of all under-represented groups, which is fundamental to the Office for Students.

As the Director for Fair Access and Participation, Chris will play a crucial role in ensuring higher education institutions are doing all they can to support underrepresented groups, from widening access, to monitoring retention, attainment and progression from higher education. Chris Millward will serve a four-year term in the first instance, which is subject to renewal up to a maximum of ten years.

Mr Millward has been appointed following an open and transparent recruitment process, conducted in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, which is regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

The OfS will have a duty to promote equality of opportunity. This will mean looking beyond getting students from disadvantaged backgrounds into university – they will also be charged with making sure that providers are doing all they can to support the students throughout their course, helping to tackle drop-out rates and support disadvantaged students into employment.