

Meet our Speakers, Panellists and Presenters

John Blake

Director for Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students



John Blake is the Director for Fair Access and Participation. His role is to ensure universities and colleges are doing all they can to support learners from all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged, to access and succeed in higher education.

John took up his position at the Office for Students in January 2022 where he oversees activity on equality of opportunity and access and participation. He is also responsible for student insight, information and engagement, distributing funding to universities and colleges, and activity on lifelong learning.

Prior to joining OfS, he was a senior leader and researcher in the schools sector, leading on public affairs and curriculum research and design for Ark, policy and strategy for Now Teach and History initial teacher education for the Harris Federation. He has also worked as Head of Education and Social Reform for the think tank, Policy Exchange, was a founder governor of Oak National Academy, and served as an advisor to the government on reforms to initial teacher training and continuing professional development.

Joyce Liddle

Professorial Fellow, St Chad's College, Durham University



Professor Joyce Liddle has a distinguished academic background having worked at national and international levels in the fields of urban and regional development, public policy, entrepreneurship, leadership and management. Much of her research and consultancy work has been undertaken in North East England addressing economic and social policy issues in collaboration with local and national politicians, and public, private, voluntary and community organisations.

Joyce was educated at Durham University in politics and sociology, studied for a PhD at the Local Government Centre, Warwick University and went on to hold the position of Course Director in post graduate Management Studies at Durham Business School. Subsequently, Joyce held Professorial, management and research posts in seven UK Universities including Sunderland, Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Teesside, Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and in Aix-Marseille, France.

Her international reputation is reflected in advisory roles for ministers and civil servants in Italy, Finland, the West Indies and China as well as holding Visiting University Chairs in six countries. She also developed education and training programmes for public and civil servants in South Africa, Bahrain, France, Kazakhstan, Brazil and Ethiopia.

Drawing on a successful track record in securing UK Research Council and other research funding she has published over 250 articles, 45 book chapters and written and co-edited some sixteen books as well as fulfilling a number of editorial roles for journals and book series.