

# BEYOND 2015

## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EQUALITY HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Marie Staunton CBE, Chair of the Equality and Diversity Forum

The Beyond 2015 conference created a space, a still point in the turning world of policy. It took advantage of a pre-election pause in white papers and looked beyond the current flurry of election promises. Time to stop and reflect on how we link research to policy to impact

We looked back on the impact of austerity on specific groups – like young people. In this [Equally Ours video](#) you can see how Hughes successfully won his right for representation as a child, but he is now entering a workforce where young people's wages have reduced by 19% in real terms since 1997.

Austerity has hit small ngos – small and medium sized charities have suffered a 23% cut in income.<sup>1</sup> We have seen this around the EDF table. Month by month, faces have disappeared as ngos have cut their policy or equalities work or closed altogether

There has been positive news too. Joint action and good evidence saved the Public Sector Equality Duty from the government's bonfire of the red tape. Some moves forward have been side effects rather than objectives of policy – a by-blow of auto enrolment will be better pensions for women and ethnic minorities. Others have been a consequence of changed public attitudes. Same sex marriage is a prime example. The Prime Minister's support for equal marriage appealed to wider public opinion over the head of some in his party using a narrative about traditional values. From the research and opinion surveys Equally Ours has done, we know that an appeal to higher values can be effective in moving the undecided to the side of human rights and equalities

But attitude change is tricky. See [Jan's film](#) by Equally Ours on winning the right to more care hours. Public opinion is divided on attitudes to disability. The Paralympics created superheroes out of some people with disabilities yet research by the Employers Network on Equality and Inclusion showed that unconscious bias against people with disabilities increased by 8% from pre to post the Games.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Civil Society Almanac, NCVO, 2014

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.enei.org.uk/publications.php/734/disability-a-research-study-on-unconscious-bias>

Changing attitudes within institutions is hard – as Sir Robert Francis has again shown in another report on the Health Service.<sup>3</sup> Three decades ago I was lobbying on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, introducing safeguards against misuse of stop and search against young black men. Please look at [Nick's film](#). He is a police officer and has been stopped and searched 30 times when off duty because, he believes, of the colour of his skin. Rules and guidelines alone do not change the microclimate inside institutions.

The Conference attracted researchers, academics, ngos, lawyers, activists to share perspectives on attitudes to equalities, human rights and social justice. We looked at some of those intractable problems which have defeated successive governments, e.g. occupational segregation, minorities at the bottom of the socio-economic pile. Our task was to come up with practical ways of working together 'Beyond 2015' to create a society where everyone can fulfil their potential and make a distinctive contribution; a society where diversity is celebrated, people can express their identities free from the threat of violence and everyone is treated with dignity and respect; a society where your chance to flourish is not limited by who you are or where you come from

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/whistleblowing-in-the-nhs-independent-review>