Professor Rhiannon Turner - Keynote Speaker

Rhiannon Turner is a Professor of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast. She did her undergraduate degree at Cardiff University, her MSc at the University of Kent, and her D.Phil. at the University of Oxford. She held posts at the Universities of Birmingham and Leeds before taking up her current position in 2012.

The main focus of her research is intergroup relations, with a particular interest in direct and indirect forms of contact (such as extended and imagined contact, and nostalgic recall of contact) as means of changing intergroup attitudes and behaviours. This research has been published in journals such as American Psychologist, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and Psychological Bulletin, and has been funded by grants from the Economic and Social Research Council, the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, and the National Institute for Health Research. She currently holds associate editorships at the British Journal of Social Psychology and Group Processes and Intergroup Relations.

Abstract:

Confidence in contact: Promoting cross-group friendship among children and adolescents

Intergroup contact theory proposes that positive interactions between members of different groups improve intergroup relations. It should be especially effective among school children where opportunities exist to engage with outgroup peers and develop cross-group friendships. However, children do not always engage in such friendships, choosing to spend time with same-group peers even in diverse settings. To capitalise on the potential impact of contact in schools, a new model is needed that places ‘confidence in contact’ at its heart. I present an empirically-driven theoretical model of intergroup contact in the classroom, developed with Dr Lindsey Cameron (University of Kent), that outlines the conditions that help to prepare young people for successful, sustained intergroup relationships by giving them the confidence that they can engage in contact successfully. Initial data which supports the model will be presented, and specific recommendations made for practitioners and policy makers interested in harnessing diversity to promote harmonious intergroup relations.