



# UK Social Mobility Awards™

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# Advancing Social Mobility in the UK

FINDINGS FROM THE UK SOCIAL  
MOBILITY AWARDS 2021

FULL REPORT

Organised by **Making the Leap.**

## About this report

This report examines key activities, facilitators and barriers to advancing social mobility in 2020-21, as reported by private and public organisations who entered the 2021 UK Social Mobility Awards. Findings and recommendations are based on thematic analysis of all eligible entries to the awards. Since 2017, the UK Social Mobility Awards have recognised and celebrated employers and educational institutions working to advance social mobility. The awards are organised by Making the Leap, a London-based social justice charity. Founded in 1993, Making the Leap works with schools, young adults and employers to advance social mobility in the UK.

To learn more about the UK Social Mobility Awards, including the 2021 winners, please visit [www.somo.uk](http://www.somo.uk).

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# OUR PARTNERS



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## Foreword

'Social mobility' is one of those inarguable concepts such as 'road safety' which, because they are blindingly obviously right, are rarely debated or – worse – defined. They are just taken for granted.

Unfortunately, especially in business and in major public bodies, this all too often results in the task of delivering social mobility becoming an element of a 'corporate social responsibility' programme – the contemporary name for the rather Victorian practice of the privileged dispensing good works amongst the disadvantaged.

To see social mobility wholly as an aspect of social justice is to miss an existential point for companies, institutions and, ultimately, the nation.

Social justice is but one side of a critical coin, the other being competitive advantage.

It is axiomatic that organisations that do not understand or empathise with their stakeholders – customers, supply chain, staff, recruitment pools, regulators (if they have them) and the communities in which they operate – will be at a competitive disadvantage to those that do. And, as every business, third sector organisation and government department is, by definition, engaged in some form of competition for scarce resources (from revenues to votes), gaining that understanding and empathy must be an imperative.

The best way to gain those insights is to recruit and develop talented people with direct, lived experiences of those stakeholder groups. Across the advantage spectrum, from negative to positive.

The annual UK Social Mobility Awards (SOMOs) provide an opportunity to celebrate the pioneers in this field – entities that have got the message that both sides of the coin matter, and that have invented ways to access and relate to others from a range of tough reality backgrounds.

Growing up in a single-parent household and entitled to free school meals with all that connotes, I am acutely aware of life in the lower strata of the social pyramid. Happily, I was the lucky beneficiary of a first-class education and of starting my career with an employer for whom winning was the only acceptable outcome. I have therefore been delighted to chair the SOMOs judging panel since its inception. We judges are a highly diverse group when viewed according to the socio-economic backgrounds of our early years. However, we are all united in two unshakeable beliefs:

- Giving a helping hand to the disadvantaged is, a priori, a good thing to do in the interests of social justice.
- In addition to gaining an understanding of and empathy with our stakeholders by connecting with those from less advantaged backgrounds, doing so unveils the vast pool of talent which lies beyond the horizons of our own lived experiences.

This is the case for seeing the 'Why?' of social mobility. It is more – much more – than a mere question of doing good, and it should never be reduced to being just a boilerplate component of an ESG strategy, or taken for granted as a 'good thing' like road safety.

That leaves only the question of the 'How?' – in which regard, I commend the following pages to you. They provide a thorough grounding on which to build your own answer to the question of 'What should we do?'

That is, after all, exactly what competitive advantage is all about!



Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE  
*Chair of the UK Social Mobility Awards Judging Panel*

# | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Executive Summary

### Introduction

Since 2017, the UK Social Mobility Awards (SOMOs) have recognised and celebrated employers and educational institutions working to advance social mobility. The SOMOs are organised by Making the Leap, a London-based social justice charity. We believe that the SOMOs are a vital opportunity to raise awareness and encourage action to improve social mobility in the UK. Our vision is for **every employer and educational institution in the UK to have a social mobility plan**, which guides meaningful action to ensure **people from less advantaged groups can thrive no matter what their background or occupation**. By using this definition, we understand social mobility in broader terms than ‘the link between an individual’s income and occupation and that of their parents’.<sup>1</sup> Our definition is connected to wider understandings of social mobility, which include having a good standard of living and financial security.<sup>2</sup> The SOMOs focus on activities to achieve social mobility in these terms for people from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (SEBs), with attention to the intersections between less advantaged SEBs and other types of disadvantage.

### Overview of 2021 entrants

The majority of entrants to the 2021 awards were private sector organisations (70 per cent), with 30 per cent of entries from the public sector. In terms of specific sectors, the education, legal and professional services sectors were most represented in this year’s awards. Collectively, entrants employed just under one million employees. Over 8,000 pupils and over 300,000 undergraduates attended schools, colleges and universities who entered the awards. Social mobility initiatives in 2020-21 typically engaged young people from less advantaged SEBs, but there was considerable breadth and depth to entrants’ social mobility activities. Beneficiary groups included racially minoritised people,<sup>3</sup> care-experienced young people, women, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, military veterans, refugees, asylum seekers and prison leavers.

### Key findings

Based on thematic analysis of all eligible entries to the 2021 UK Social Mobility Awards, we explore the following questions:

- What did employers and educational institutions do to advance social mobility in 2020-21?
- What were the key facilitators and barriers to advancing social mobility in 2020-21?

We examine activities to advance social mobility in the approximate ‘order’ in which employers, educational institutions and people from less advantaged SEBs are likely to encounter them.<sup>4</sup> This starts with **data collection** to understand the socio-economic diversity of a workforce or student body, followed by targeted actions to **reach, recruit, retain** and **promote** people from less advantaged groups. We also examine **advocacy** activities, through which organisations share and encourage best practice to promote social mobility to wider audiences. Our key findings and recommendations are presented below.

<sup>1</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2021) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers’ toolkit: cross-industry edition](#). London: Social Mobility Commission.

<sup>2</sup> PwC (2021) [Driving social mobility](#). London: PwC.

<sup>3</sup> While the terms ‘Black and minority ethnic’ and ‘ethnic minority’ were typically used in SOMOs 2021 entries, we use the collective term ‘racially minoritised’ throughout the report.

<sup>4</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2021) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers’ toolkit: cross-industry edition](#). London: Social Mobility Commission.

**Key finding 1****Employers and educational institutions focused on reaching and recruiting young people from less advantaged SEBs.**

Entrants' activities in 2020-21 typically focused on the early stages of the employee pipeline, to reach and recruit young people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. This focus is perhaps unsurprising, given the underrepresentation of people from less advantaged SEBs in sectors including law, professional services, finance and the media. Outreach work was conducted virtually during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and included raising awareness about career pathways, developing soft skills, providing exposure to work environments and supporting young people from less advantaged SEBs. To promote social mobility through recruitment, entrants offered multiple routes to employment (such as apprenticeships and paid internships), implemented inclusive hiring practices and delivered targeted employment programmes.

**Key finding 2****To support retention, employers aimed to create more inclusive workplaces and to promote awareness around social mobility.**

Employers' actions to support retention focused on creating more inclusive workplaces and encouraging culture change. Staff networks and targeted mentoring programmes aimed to provide focused support for employees from marginalised groups, including those from less advantaged SEBs. To improve awareness of and support for social mobility, entrants celebrated 'socially mobile' employees as role models, while internal events provided space for employees to learn about social mobility. Where implemented, these initiatives reflected an understanding that promoting socio-economic diversity must be accompanied by efforts to ensure inclusive workplaces for employees from less advantaged SEBs.

**Key finding 3****Key facilitators to advancing social mobility included the drive to make a difference, motivated leadership, collaboration and resources.**

A drive to make a difference was the first key facilitator for entrants working to advance social mobility – without this, meaningful commitments to social mobility or wider diversity and inclusion (D&I) work were unlikely. Examples of 'going against the grain' included more transparent work experience programmes, removing academic grade requirements, and voluntary CEO and senior leader pay cuts to ensure financial security for employees during the pandemic. Motivated junior and senior leaders were another driver of social mobility work. Effective leaders kept social mobility on their organisations' agendas, and collaborated with employees from less advantaged groups, across departments and with external partners to get the work done. Committing resources was also essential, from funding for targeted activities to hiring full-time staff to deliver social mobility, diversity and inclusion work.

**Key finding 4****Best practice to advance social mobility included intersectional approaches and advocating for wider change.**

Among 2021 entrants, law firms and professional services firms were the most likely to demonstrate intersectional approaches to social mobility and to advocate for wider change. There were also notable examples from the retail, hospitality and higher education sectors, who adopted similar approaches. Intersectional approaches were rooted in understanding that being from a less advantaged SEB and one or more marginalised groups – including being racially minoritised, female, LGBTQ+, disabled and/or part of a religious minority – leads to multiple, compounding forms of disadvantage. To put intersectionality into practice, entrants embedded social mobility within a wider D&I strategy, collected data on SEBs alongside other background characteristics, promoted an intersectional understanding of social mobility and developed actions based on intersectional analysis and transparent reporting. Examples of external advocacy included engaging clients in social mobility work, participating in sector-wide initiatives and influencing wider audiences through events and resources for employers.

**Recommendation 1****Robust data collection, analysis and reporting are needed to inform targeted social mobility work.**

Before employers and educational institutions take action to improve social mobility, they need to understand and define the problem(s) to be addressed – ideally using high-quality internal diversity data. Only around a third of entrants reported data collection activities in 2020-21 – although it is possible that ongoing data collection was not reported, or that entrants drew on external evidence regarding socio-economic diversity in their sectors. When collected internally, quantitative data on employees' SEBs and other background characteristics allow employers and educational institutions to understand how diverse (or not) their organisations are, and whether those from less advantaged SEBs have equal opportunities and fair outcomes. Meanwhile, qualitative data provide insights into perspectives, experiences and priorities for change among employees from less advantaged SEBs. The Social Mobility Commission's [toolkit on socio-economic diversity and inclusion](#) provides a valuable starting point for employers looking to measure SEBs, including the 'one key question' to ask.

**Recommendation 2****More action is required to support the progression of employees from less advantaged SEBs.**

Activities to support progression were the least reported 'type' of social mobility work in 2020-21. Ensuring fair opportunities for promotion – including through positive action and targeted training and development opportunities – is a crucial element of advancing social mobility. From an employer perspective, there are important implications for retention, since employees are likely to seek opportunities elsewhere if they are not able to progress and develop. There are also clear links to the wider social mobility agenda. People from less advantaged SEBs are significantly underrepresented at the most senior levels in the UK, which cannot be addressed without targeted initiatives to facilitate progression and promotion throughout their careers. We were encouraged to see entrants engaging with initiatives specifically focused on equity of progression and socio-economic diversity, such as the [City of London Socio-Economic Taskforce](#), and we hope to see more examples of progression-related activities in future years.

**Recommendation 3****Further action is needed to support employees from less advantaged SEBs, including those who are leading social mobility work.**

It was encouraging to see employers implementing initiatives to foster more inclusive workplaces. However, to support and retain those from less advantaged SEBs, it is also vital to improve employment conditions by ensuring financial security, job security and safe working environments. This is crucial if employers are to support a wider definition of social mobility, in which people from less advantaged groups can thrive no matter what their background or occupation. We were encouraged by entrants from the facilities management, hospitality and retail sectors who were improving employment conditions as Living Wage employers and who supported flexible working options. We hope to see more examples in future years.

Many of the individuals driving social mobility work were themselves from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. These individuals were rightly celebrated in SOMOs entries for their commitment and passion, and they should be supported to continue their valuable work. However, it is important to acknowledge that there may be 'triple labour' involved for employees in these positions: working to advance social mobility, overcoming barriers faced as members of marginalised groups, and fulfilling their actual day jobs. Strategies to support these leaders include treating social mobility and D&I work as part of (rather than 'above and beyond') full-time jobs, creating dedicated roles for social mobility and D&I work, and encouraging allyship and action from employees in more advantaged groups.

# 1 | INTRODUCTION



# 1 | Introduction

## The UK Social Mobility Awards

Since 2017, the UK Social Mobility Awards (SOMOs) have recognised and celebrated employers and educational institutions working to advance social mobility. The SOMOs are organised by Making the Leap, a London-based social justice charity. Founded in 1993, Making the Leap works with schools, young adults and employers to advance social mobility in the UK. We believe that the SOMOs are a vital opportunity to raise awareness and encourage action to improve social mobility. Our vision is for **every employer and educational institution in the UK to have a social mobility plan**, which guides meaningful action to ensure **people from less advantaged groups can thrive, no matter what their background or occupation**. By using this definition, we understand social mobility in broader terms than ‘the link between an individual’s income and occupation and that of their parents’. Our definition is connected to wider understandings of social mobility, which include a good standard of living and financial security. The SOMOs focus on activities to achieve social mobility in these terms for people from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (SEBs), with attention to the intersections between less advantaged SEBs and other types of disadvantage.

## Overview of this report

This report presents key findings from all eligible entries to the SOMOs in 2021, which describe social mobility activities from January 2020 to March 2021. Rather than focusing on the activities of winners and shortlisted entrants,<sup>7</sup> we draw on thematic analysis of all entries to answer the following questions:

- What did employers and educational institutions do to advance social mobility in 2020-21?
- What were the key facilitators and barriers to advancing social mobility in 2020-21?

We answer these questions based on the information entrants chose to include in their submissions to the 2021 awards. The report therefore does not necessarily present a full picture of what each entrant has been doing to advance social mobility, or to improve diversity and inclusion more broadly.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2** Presents an overview of SOMOs 2021 entrants by sector, the location of their social mobility activities, beneficiaries of their activities and the reasons why entrants worked to advance social mobility.
- Chapter 3** Explores key activities to advance social mobility in 2020-21, with individual sections focusing on: data collection, outreach, recruitment, retention, progression and advocacy. In each section, we synthesise data on reach and highlight examples of reported outcomes.
- Chapter 4** Examines key facilitators and barriers overcome by entrants to ensure effective social mobility work.
- Chapter 5** Reflects on key findings from the SOMOs 2021 entries and presents recommendations for next steps to advance social mobility in the UK.
- Appendix** Describes the 2021 submission process and our analytical approach.

<sup>4</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2021) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers' toolkit: cross-industry edition](#). London: Social Mobility Commission.

<sup>5</sup> PwC (2021) [Driving social mobility](#). London: PwC.

<sup>6</sup> The eligibility period for SOMOs 2021 entries means that key activities to promote social mobility in 2021 are not covered in this report. Most notably, PwC's [Diversity Pay Gap Report](#) (including pay gaps by socio-economic background) and KPMG UK's [Socio-Economic Background Pay Gap Report 2021](#) are not discussed in detail, as they were published in September 2021.

<sup>7</sup> A full list of 2021 winners, finalists and the judging panel is available at [www.somo.uk](http://www.somo.uk).

# 2 | OVERVIEW OF 2021 ENTRANTS



## 2 | Overview of 2021 entrants

### Who is working to advance social mobility?

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of entrants were private sector organisations (70 per cent), with 30 per cent from the public sector. Looking at sectors in more detail (Figure 2), just under a quarter of entries were from the education sector (23 per cent), followed by those from the legal profession (19 per cent) and professional services (16 per cent). The high proportion of entries from the education sector is consistent with the inclusion of two categories (School/College of the Year, University of the Year) exclusively for educational institutions, which reflects the importance of education in advancing social mobility.

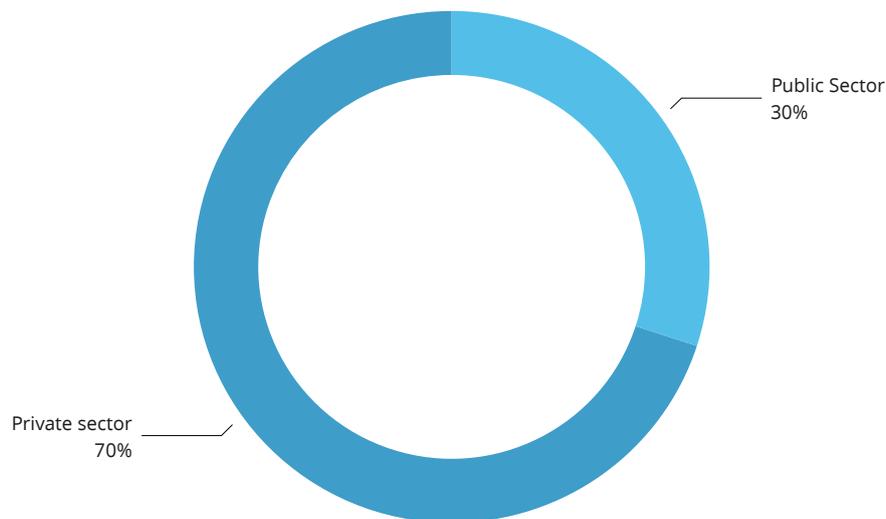


Figure 1: SOMOs 2021 entrants by high-level sector

Entrants to the 2021 awards employed just under 1 million people in the UK.<sup>8</sup> Based on UK definitions,<sup>9</sup> 20 per cent of entrants were small or medium enterprises, with up to 249 employees. The majority were large enterprises (80 per cent), with 250 or more employees. However, as shown in Figure 3, there was considerable variation between entrants within the 'large enterprise' category. Overall, a third of entrants employed between 1,001 and 5,000 people, with just under a quarter employing 10,001 or more.

Across the educational institutions who entered the 2021 awards, there was a combined total of over 8,000 school pupils and over 300,000 undergraduates.

<sup>8</sup> This excludes entrants where employee data could not be found, and also excludes educational institutions. While educational institutions are of course also employers, entries from schools, colleges and universities focused on social mobility initiatives for pupils and students, rather than employees. We therefore do not include employees at educational institutions in these figures.

<sup>9</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) (2020) [Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2020: statistical release](#). London: BEIS.

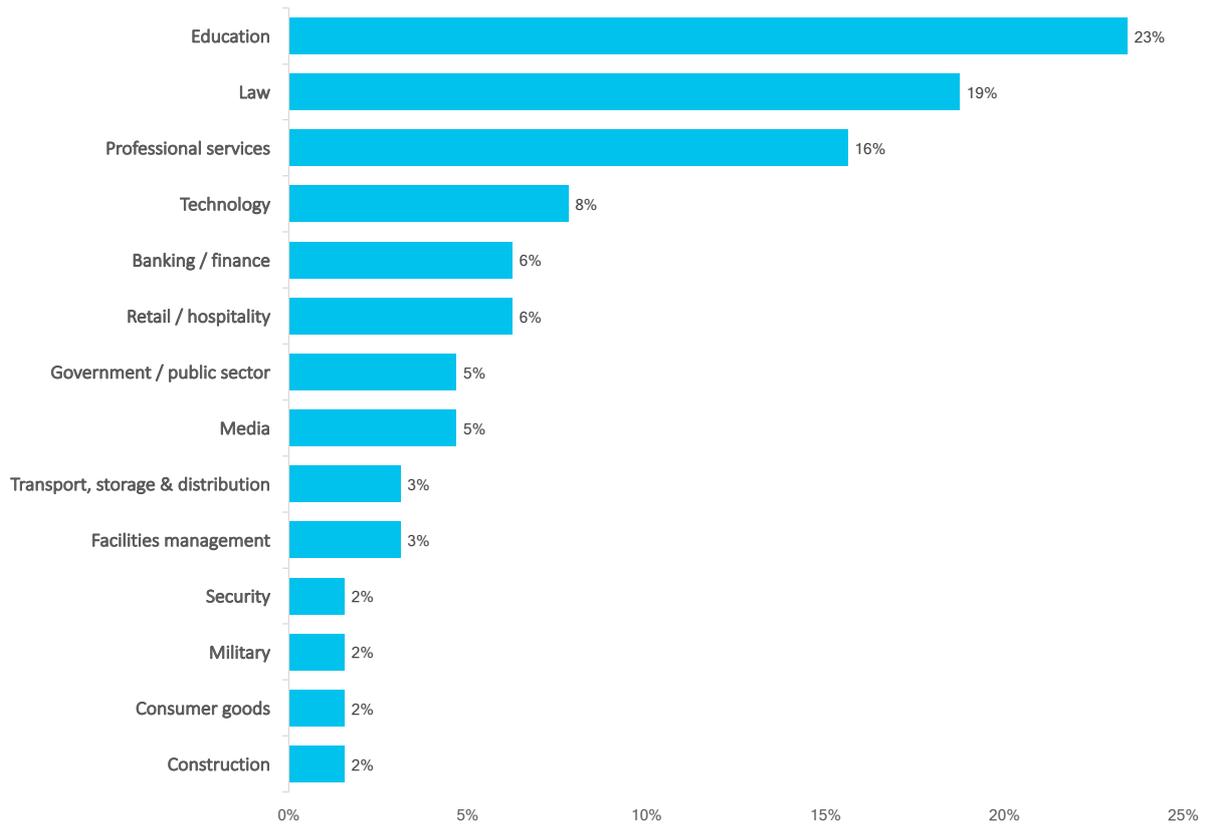


Figure 2: SOMOs 2021 entrants by sector

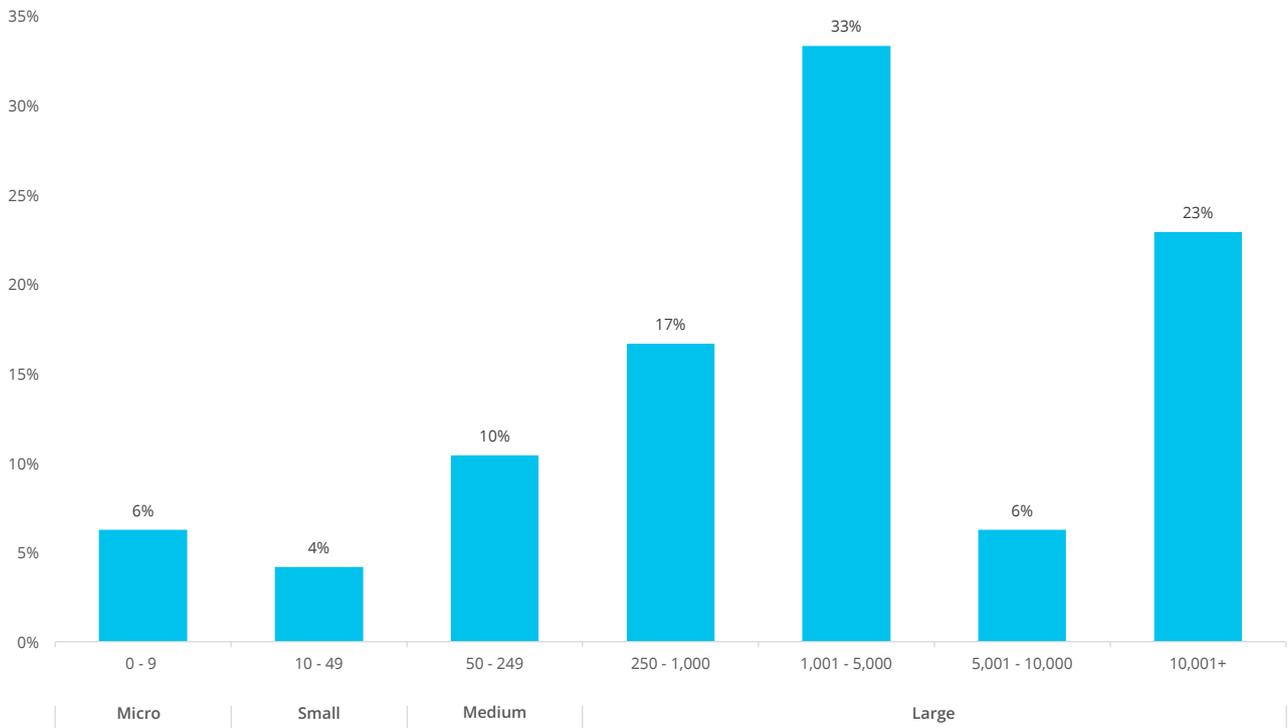


Figure 3: SOMOs 2021 entrants by number of employees

## Where are social mobility initiatives taking place?

60 per cent of entrants described their social mobility initiatives as being implemented across the UK ('UK wide', Figure 4). Entrants were also able to indicate whether their activities were taking place in specific English regions, Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland. 31 per cent indicated that their social mobility activities took place in the south of England,<sup>10</sup> 26 per cent in the north of England,<sup>11</sup> 23 per cent in the Midlands and East Anglia,<sup>12</sup> and three per cent in Scotland. None of the entrants listed social mobility initiatives in Wales or Northern Ireland. However, in some cases, these nations were covered by entrants who described their activities as 'UK wide'.

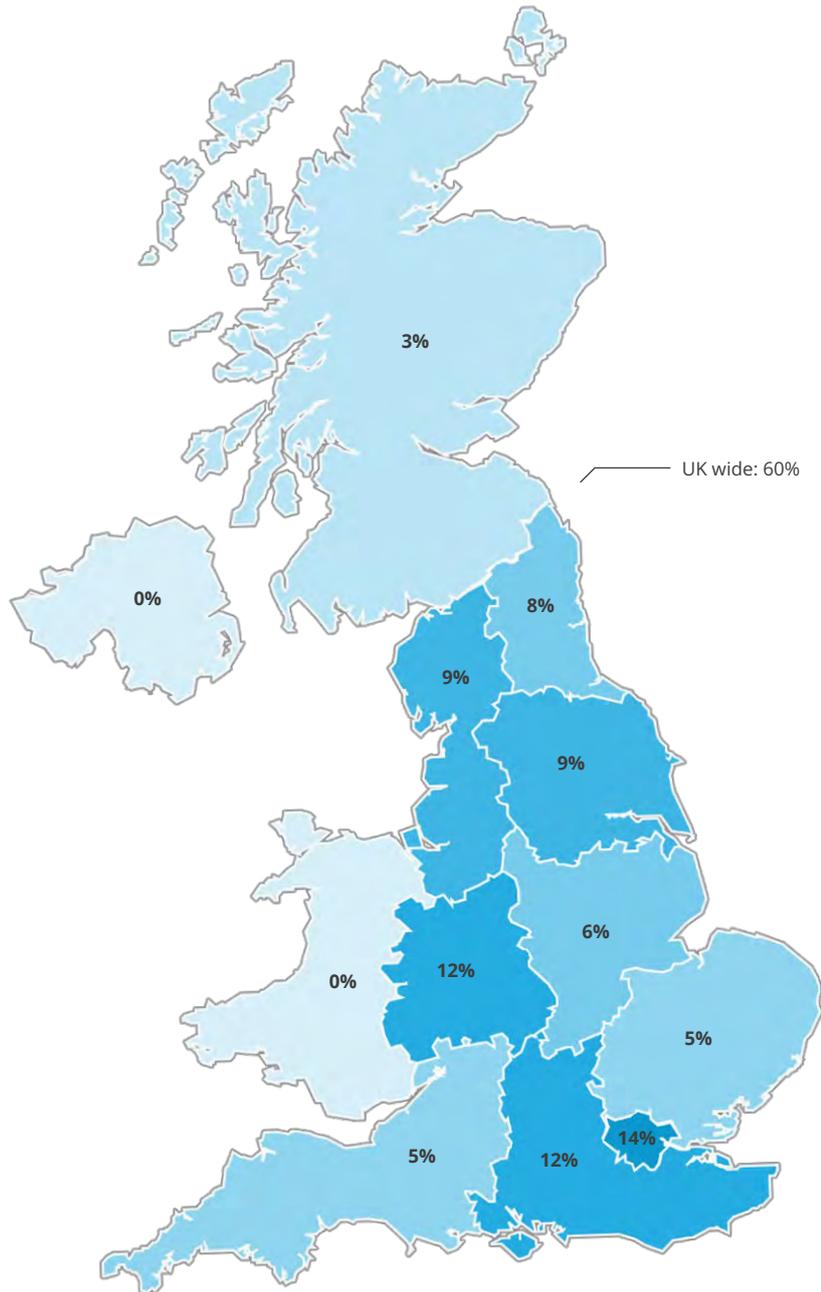


Figure 4: SOMOs 2021 activities by location<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>South West, South East and London.

<sup>11</sup>North West, North East and Yorkshire & the Humber.

<sup>12</sup>West Midlands, East Midlands and East Anglia.

<sup>13</sup>The sum of percentages in Figure 4 exceeds 100, as several entrants listed two or more regions where their social mobility activities took place.



## Why are organisations working to advance social mobility?

When describing their motivations for social mobility work, entrants typically cited **moral reasons**. Equality of opportunity was the most common understanding of a fair society, based on a belief that “where you start in life shouldn’t define your future success.” To achieve this, entrants described the need to “level the playing field” and to “break down barriers” for groups underrepresented in sectors such as the legal profession and financial services. Entrants referred to doing social mobility work to address socio-economic inequalities: to “break the cycle of deprivation” and to “close the education and opportunity gap” between more and less advantaged areas in the UK.

Entrants were also motivated by the **business case** for social mobility. This included widening opportunities to access “the best talent” from all backgrounds and to enjoy the benefits of a diverse workforce, including to “drive up productivity, engagement and, ultimately, revenue.” Improving social mobility was linked to improved customer service and competitiveness. A diverse workforce was seen as a means to better understand diverse customer needs, thus providing better services and a “competitive edge.”

Notably, entrants were often driven by **both moral and business reasons** for social mobility. For example, entrants emphasised the importance of socially responsible business, as employers have a “key role to play in regenerating society and the environment.” The quotation on this page illustrates the way entrants combined moral and business motivations for their social mobility work.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is both right and a fundamental strategic value driver for the business. Inclusion and diversity promote innovation, growth and improved business results, but most importantly they create equity.**

Reward Gateway

### 3 | ACTIVITIES TO ADVANCE SOCIAL MOBILITY IN 2021



### 3 | Activities to advance social mobility in 2020-21

In this chapter, we examine entrants' activities to advance social mobility in the approximate 'order' in which employers, educational institutions and people from less advantaged SEBs are likely to encounter them.<sup>17</sup> This starts with **data collection** to understand the socio-economic diversity of a workforce or student body, followed by targeted actions to **reach, recruit, retain** and **promote** people from less advantaged groups. We also examine **advocacy** activities to promote social mobility to wider audiences. After an overview of all activities, the chapter includes a detailed discussion of activities in each area.

#### Overview of activities

As shown in Figure 6, outreach activities were the most common type of social mobility work in 2020-21. Eighty-four per cent of entrants worked to raise awareness about career pathways, develop soft skills, provide exposure to work environments and/or inspire and support young people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups.

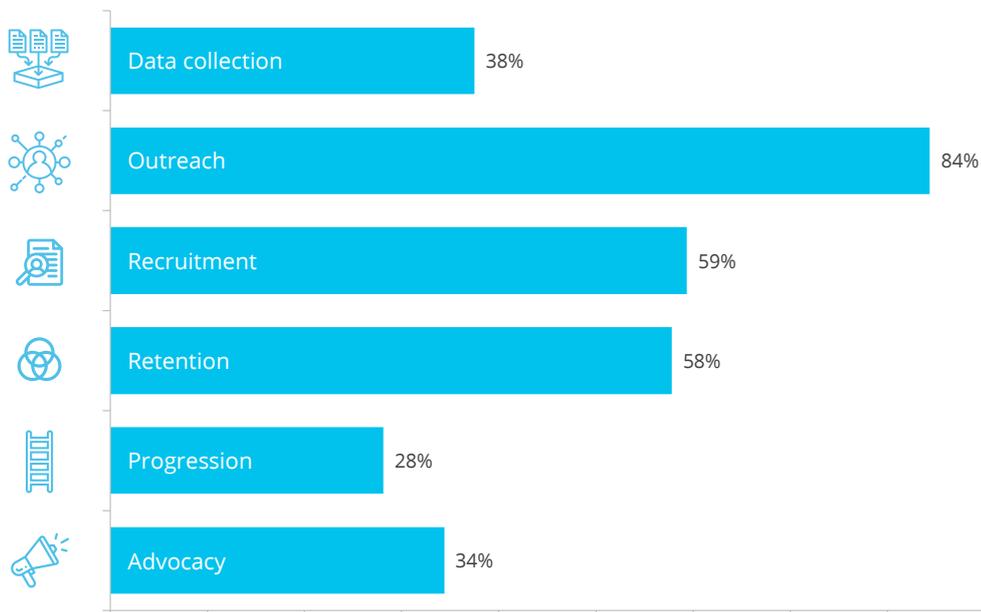


Figure 6: Overview of social mobility activities in 2020-21

After this, the next most common types of social mobility work were to improve recruitment practices (59 per cent) and to encourage retention (58 per cent) among employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. Activities to improve recruitment included offering a variety of routes to employment, introducing or continuing inclusive hiring practices, and implementing targeted employment programmes. Retention-related activities included improving employment conditions, creating inclusive workplaces and fostering culture change.

Thirty-eight per cent of entrants described activities to collect, analyse and use data on socio-economic backgrounds. A third of entrants (34 per cent) engaged in advocacy activities to promote social mobility to their clients, in their sectors and/or to wider audiences. Activities to support progression – such as positive action and targeted training and development opportunities – were the least reported (28 per cent).

<sup>17</sup>Social Mobility Commission (2021) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers' toolkit: cross-industry edition](#). London: Social Mobility Commission.



## Data collection

Before employers and educational institutions take action to improve social mobility, they need to understand and define the problem(s) to be addressed. Key questions include:

- How diverse is the organisation in terms of SEB, ethnicity, gender and other key characteristics?
- What are the experiences of employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups?
- What proportion of senior leaders are from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups?

To answer these questions, data collection is a crucial first step. Quantitative data on employees' SEBs (along with other background characteristics) can be used to understand the organisation's demographic profile and outcomes for employees from less advantaged groups. Meanwhile, qualitative data on employees' experiences can indicate how inclusive (or not) an organisation is. Together, these data can be used to inform the development of a social mobility plan, with ongoing data collection to measure progress.

However, only around a third of entrants reported data collection activities in 2020-21. It is possible that entrants conducted data collection activities that were not mentioned in their entries. Alternatively, rather than starting with their own data, entrants may have drawn on wider evidence regarding the lack of socio-economic diversity in certain sectors. For example, recent work by the Social Mobility Commission highlighted that compared to seven per cent of the UK population as a whole, 71 per cent of barristers, 43 per cent of journalists and 27 per cent of CEOs attended independent schools.<sup>18</sup>

In this section, we focus on entrants who did describe data collection activities in 2020-21. We start by examining how data on socio-economic backgrounds and other characteristics were collected, and then explore how entrants analysed and used this data to inform action to improve social mobility.

### Collecting diversity data

Before collecting data, a key decision was how to measure SEBs. The most common approach among entrants was to use the Social Mobility Commission's four questions to measure socio-economic diversity:<sup>19</sup> **parental occupation at age 14, type of school attended at age 11–16, free school meal eligibility and highest parental qualification.** The Social Mobility Commission's 'one key question' (parental occupation at age 14) was sometimes used alone, with other entrants planning to use this question from 2021-22 onwards. Entrants also described using other criteria to determine SEBs, including type of university attended, whether first to attend university in the family, any income support received, salary of highest earner when in school, former refugee or asylum seeker status, and/or self-defined SEBs.

To capture data on SEBs and other characteristics, entrants often used HR systems or other internal employee systems. A key advantage of this approach was that diversity data could be tracked against employee outcomes over time (such as pay, grade, length of service), rather than requiring multiple points of data collection.

Entrants also conducted targeted surveys to capture the perspectives and experiences of employees from less advantaged SEBs. This included an internal survey from **DWP** in 2021 to understand less advantaged SEB employees' views on barriers to progression and development, which was shared through the firm's internal Social Mobility Network. **KPMG UK** conducted a targeted survey to gain employees' perspectives on hybrid working during the COVID-19 pandemic, which found that employees from less advantaged SEBs were more likely to face barriers to working and studying at home. This illustrates the value of collecting and analysing information on SEBs and other background characteristics across all internal research activities. Disaggregated results offer insights into the specific needs and experiences of employees from less advantaged groups.

<sup>18</sup>Social Mobility Commission (2020) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers' toolkit: cross-industry edition. London: Social Mobility Commission](#)

<sup>19</sup>Social Mobility Commission (2020) [Socio-economic diversity and inclusion. Employers' toolkit: cross-industry edition. London: Social Mobility Commission](#)

## Analysing and using diversity data

Once collected, entrants analysed and used diversity data in a range of ways. For **KPMG UK** and **Civil Service Fast Stream**, externally commissioned research on employee diversity was the starting point for their social mobility plans in 2016-17, and for continued work to identify and address barriers to progression in 2020-21. Based on analysis of an internal survey of less advantaged SEB employees' experiences, **DWP** addressed identified needs by delivering targeted development sessions, including sessions on application and interview skills, confidence building, imposter syndrome, and leadership skills. DWP also used routinely collected staff SEB data to identify social mobility 'cold spots' across the Civil Service, and shared best practice to advance social mobility in these departments. Meanwhile, both **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** and **Grant Thornton** used diversity data to track retention. At Grant Thornton, data were used to analyse correlations between employees' SEB, gender and ethnicity with rates of progression, performance, reward and retention. The firm also used an annual adverse impact study of assessment and selection processes, to quickly identify and rectify any issues faced by candidates. As we discuss in Chapter 4, the firm also used these data to understand the intersectional impact of SEBs, gender and ethnicity.

Entrants also used diversity data to measure the reach and outcomes of their interventions, as demonstrated in the examples later in this chapter. For example, **Browne Jacobson** evaluated the impact of their initiatives and educational outcomes among their early careers' population, while **University of Southampton** employed research associates to "forensically understand" students' use of university processes based on SEBs and protected characteristics. Similarly, **University of Exeter** analysed participant data from their virtual outreach activities to ensure their programmes were reaching underrepresented groups, and that they were supporting those most in need.

Collecting data on socio-economic background shows "a real commitment to understanding and overcoming gaps in representation".

Civil Service Fast Stream



## Outreach

Outreach activities were the most commonly reported actions to advance social mobility in 2020-21. 84 per cent of entrants described activities to raise awareness about career pathways, to develop soft skills, to provide exposure to work environments, and/or to inspire and support young people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. In this section, we outline entrants' activities in each of these areas.

Due to restrictions during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, outreach activities were delivered virtually in 2020-21. Entrants adapted previously in-person activities for online delivery, and also developed new virtual activities in response to the needs of young people and educational settings during the pandemic. Based on figures reported by entrants, around 250,000 children and young people participated in outreach activities delivered in 2020-21 (see Figure 7). Outcomes reported from outreach activities included improved soft skills and access to job opportunities (see Figure 8).

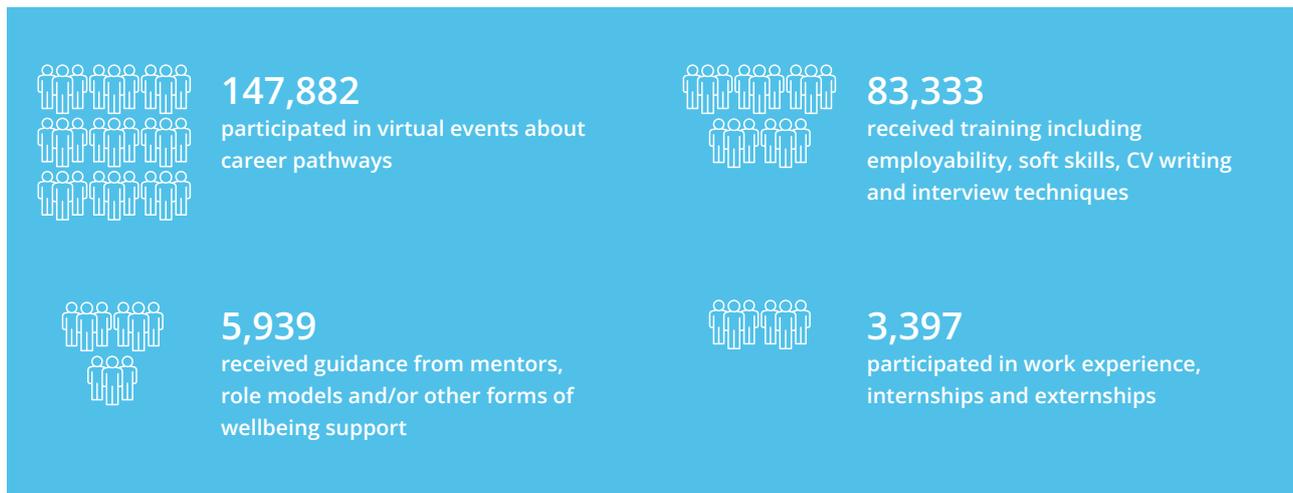


Figure 7: Outreach activities in 2020-21: children and young people reached<sup>20</sup>



Figure 8: Outreach activities in 2021: examples of reported outcomes

<sup>20</sup>Based on combined figures from SOMOs 2021 entries.

## Raising awareness about career pathways

Entrants organised a range of events with schools and colleges to raise awareness about careers in which people from less advantaged SEBs are underrepresented. These included virtual presentations and insight events about careers in the media, the legal profession and the retail sector. Schools and colleges in social mobility 'cold spots' were often targeted for these activities, as areas where "talent is overlooked and opportunities often hard to come by for students" (Browne Jacobson). DWP focused on schools receiving a high level of pupil premium funding and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) through their School Outreach Programme, which included presentations on support provided by DWP and careers in the department. To increase the value of outreach work for schools, Unilever described aligning their activities with the Gatsby Benchmarks, a framework for careers guidance in schools which was integrated into the Department for Education (DfE)'s Careers Strategy in 2017.<sup>21</sup>

School outreach activities from law firms provided opportunities for young people from less advantaged SEBs to connect with legal professionals from a similar background. Alice Shaw (Linklaters) judged presentations and attended Q&A sessions with students from less advantaged SEBs, while Grant Thornton produced a 'Talking Careers' video series, which highlighted the career journeys of "a diverse group of individuals" from the firm. CMS delivered a series of webinars for racially minoritised young people from less advantaged SEBs. Delivered by trainees from racially minoritised groups who had attended non-Russell Group universities, these webinars aimed to ensure "the audience could envisage employees from a similar background [to them] working at CMS."

Among educational settings, the University of Southampton converted its 'Learn with US' outreach programme into a free online resource for all state schools in the UK, to encourage pupils from less advantaged groups to consider an undergraduate degree. To overcome issues related to digital exclusion, the university created and mailed out physical activity packs to pupils across the city of Southampton.

Employers also worked with universities to improve awareness of different career pathways. Enterprise Rent-A-Car hired Campus Brand Managers to represent the company at universities across the country, as an extension of their Talent Acquisition Team. The Civil Service Fast Stream identified priority universities for their outreach work based on factors including the proportion of students from less advantaged SEBs and racially minoritised groups. At these universities, Civil Service Fast Stream worked with widening participation teams to deliver virtual presentations from employees and senior leaders, workshops and targeted insight sessions for students from less advantaged SEBs.

Going beyond specific educational settings, entrants participated in larger-scale events such as virtual careers fairs. Hannah Leggatt (HS2 Ltd) attended the Big Bang Careers Fair, speaking to girls and young women about her personal experiences and the "opportunities, challenges and rewards of working in the construction industry." Enterprise Rent-A-Car attended virtual careers fairs at local and national levels to share traineeship, apprenticeship, entry-level, placement and graduate opportunities with the company.

<sup>21</sup>The Gatsby Foundation website (2021) "The Gatsby Benchmarks: Good Career Guidance". Accessed 09 November 2021.

To access wider audiences, entrants used social media and other virtual platforms. **CMS** created the #CMSBuildingBetterFutures Hub, an online resource designed to provide secondary school students with information about job roles and employability skills in the legal sector. Content included a series of short videos showcasing legal and business service roles at a law firm. Warren Johnson (**W Communications**) used his social media platforms to promote WX (a separate arm of his agency which aims to attract and develop young people from less advantaged SEBs) and to highlight social mobility problems in the media and communications industry. Sophie Pender (**Herbert Smith Freehills**) started the 'State School Proud' social media campaign, to showcase students and professionals from less advantaged SEBs. Podcasts were also a popular medium to promote social mobility. David McIntosh (**KPMG UK**) started the 'Development by David' podcast (see quotation), while James Mitra (**JBM**) continued to host the '40 Minute Mentor' podcast, which aimed to "make business mentorship available to all." Overall, outreach activities on social media and other virtual platforms aimed to reach young people from less advantaged SEBs beyond educational settings, to increase their awareness of different career options and to celebrate social mobility success stories.

“Guests on the 'Development by David' podcast “use their working-class stories to motivate students and bridge the gap between aspiring adolescents and thought leadership.”

David McIntosh, KPMG UK

### Developing soft skills

To develop an “early pipeline” of young people from less advantaged groups, entrants worked to develop key soft skills for the world of work. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** delivered online employability sessions with schools, colleges and universities in social mobility ‘cold spots’, with a focus on skills such as personal branding.

**Grant Thornton** delivered an online version of their School Enterprise Programme to schools in London, Bolton and Leicester, to develop financial and entrepreneurial skills among Year 7 and 8 pupils. They also participated in the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) RISE pilot, delivering workshops for pupils in Years 6 to 11 to support the development of employability skills, including communication, team working and resilience. **PwC** ran employability and skills sessions for schools with higher-than-average FSM eligibility and/or in social mobility ‘cold spots’. They also created an Employability Skills Toolkit for these schools, which included lesson plans for teachers. At university level, **KPMG UK** ran Employability Awards with first and second-year undergraduate students, an initiative designed to develop employability skills before making career decisions.

Entrants also described activities to build young people’s confidence as part of targeted employability sessions, during work experience or through mentoring initiatives (described in more detail below). Through The 93% Club, Sophie Pender (**Herbert Smith Freehills**) facilitated networking opportunities and spaces for university students from less advantaged SEBs to develop their confidence and to find “a sense of belonging in otherwise alien spaces.” In the higher education sector, **Newcastle University** delivered a virtual version of their PARTNERS Summer School to young people from widening participation backgrounds.<sup>22</sup> The programme included modules to improve higher education study skills, and to “ease [young people’s] transition from school to university study.” This was seen as a priority in response to concerns around lost learning and study skills during the pandemic.

Beyond soft skills, outreach activities aimed to develop practical and technical skills so young people could successfully navigate recruitment processes and improve their employability. Practical skills included CV and interview workshops delivered to schools and colleges, mock interviews and advice on using the STAR technique.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, **QA** developed coding skills through their ‘Teach the Nation to Code’ workshops, with a focus on deprived areas of the UK and to reach groups underrepresented in the tech industry, including women and minoritised communities.

<sup>22</sup>Widening participation refers to strategies to improve access to higher education for “students from disadvantaged backgrounds, lower income households and other under-represented groups.” See Connell-Smith, A. & Hubble, S. (2018) [Widening participation strategy in higher education in England](#). Briefing Paper Number 8204. London: House of Commons Library.

<sup>23</sup>A technique to frame skills and experiences in terms of specific situations, tasks, actions and results. National Careers Service website (2021) [‘The STAR Method’](#). Accessed 27 October 2021.

Two entrants delivered national-level skills development activities. The **DWP's** Movement to Work Programme – usually a two-week work experience programme for candidates aged 18 to 30 – was re-launched as a digital programme in March 2020. Working with job centres across the country, DWP ran regular programmes covering confidence, presentation skills, CV writing, interview skills and information about the world of work. Meanwhile, the **Open University** provided free, tailored online training in each of the four nations to build skills and improve job prospects for furloughed or unemployed workers during the pandemic. This work was done through DfE's National Careers Service Skills Toolkit in England, the Furloughed Workers scheme in Northern Ireland, Skills Development Scotland's 'My World of Work' portal, and the Welsh government's package of e-learning resources.

### Providing exposure to work environments

Since in-person work experience was not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, entrants developed and delivered remote work experience programmes in 2020-21. **HMRC** adapted its Work Experience for Social Mobility programme for PRU students for online delivery in autumn 2020. The week-long programme included online sessions on HMRC apprenticeships, individual mock interviews, individual projects which students presented to Senior Leadership Team members, and follow-up sessions with mentors. **EQUANS** delivered a virtual work experience and employability programme for young people, including those who had been affected by furlough and redundancies. Each participant was required to complete a personal work log every day, and received feedback on performance and progress to support their development. Participants were also given opportunities to ask questions and learn from role models at the company.

**Grant Thornton** delivered virtual work experience via the Access Accountancy programme, aimed at students from less advantaged SEBs. In 2020-21, virtual delivery allowed Grant Thornton to double their work experience intake, and to target young people in UK social mobility 'cold spots' that had previously been hard to reach. The Social Impact Team at **Linklaters** ran the Virtual Business Foundation Course, an online version of their work experience programme for young people (aged 14 to 18) from state schools in areas of high deprivation. During the pandemic, this included live Q&As with employees and interactive work tasks to develop students' knowledge of careers, confidence and employability skills. The programme also included interactive sessions with employees from the firm's Race and Ethnicity Employee Network and the Social Mobility Employee Network "so young people [could] see themselves in the professionals they [met]."

**Pemberton Capital Advisors** worked with three other private credit firms to deliver Investing Potential, a programme of three-day virtual 'externships' for Year 10 to 12 students from underprivileged backgrounds. The programme provided insights into asset management and private credit, and employment opportunities in the private credit and asset management industry, and involved two meetings with a mentor each day. Students were also asked to record a short presentation at the end of their externship to present what they had learned. Overall, in spite of the challenges of virtual delivery, these examples indicated that entrants worked hard to deliver engaging, relevant work experience programmes to expose young people to the (remote) workplace.

### Inspiring and supporting young people

Mentoring was a key outreach activity in 2020-21. This included one-to-one mentoring through schools, with Year 12 students in London who had missed out on job opportunities during the pandemic (**Lewis Silkin**), and with students with "high potential but low social capital" in Manchester schools (**Grant Thornton**). At university level, Louise Watkins (**BlackRock**) mentored students from her home town to help them navigate the banking and finance sector. Ash Daniells (**Reynolds Porter Chamberlain**) acted as a mentor to university students and junior lawyers across the UK, to provide guidance and to act as a positive role model. Through his mentoring work, Ash aimed to support law students who "face barriers due to their socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, ethnicity or gender identity."

As well as personally mentoring young people, entrants worked to scale up mentoring initiatives. Jessica Cottrell (**North Highland**) supported 40 employees to mentor mature students and students from less advantaged groups. Justin Farrance (**Allen & Overy**) established GROW Mentoring in 2020, an initiative which paired students and legal professionals from similar backgrounds.

Entrants also mentored young people through partnerships with charities and other organisations, including the Amos Bursary, The Girls' Network, Law Society, Making the Leap, Princes Trust, Queer Lawyers of the Future, The Talent Tap and Social Mobility Foundation. These mentoring initiatives aimed to "raise aspirations" among mentees, develop their employability skills

and confidence, and prepare them for recruitment processes through CV advice, interview techniques and mock interviews. Among universities, **Sheffield Hallam University** launched a mentoring initiative through which graduates mentored pupils in South Yorkshire. This initiative aimed to help young people re-engage with their studies during the pandemic, to navigate their transition back to full-time learning and to support their wellbeing.

Beyond mentoring initiatives, entrants shared their experiences and career journeys to act as role models and to inspire those from similar backgrounds. Hannah Leggatt (**HS2 Ltd**) participated in school-based events to share her career, highlight available opportunities and inspire young women to pursue STEM education and careers. In addition to the mentoring work described above, Ash Daniells (**Reynolds Porter Chamberlain**) acted as a role model at his old school, where only six per cent of students currently progress to university. Similarly, on top of his work through GROW Mentoring, Justin Farrance (**Allen & Overy**) worked as a role model with LGBTQ+ charity Diversity Role Models, delivering workshops to combat bullying in schools.

Outreach activities also offered young people mental health and wellbeing support. For example, alongside employability and careers events, The 93% Club's first Employability Week included wellbeing sessions on meditation and dealing with stress (Sophie Pender, **Herbert Smith Freehills**). As part of weekly CV clinics and webinars, James Mitra (**JBM**) offered advice on managing mental health during the pandemic (see quotation). During their PARTNERS Summer School (described above), **Newcastle University** provided remote one-to-one appointments with their Wellbeing team. This offered participants mental health and wellbeing support, and also meant students would be connected to relevant support once they started their undergraduate degree.

“It was upsetting to see how many people had been negatively impacted [by unemployment during the pandemic] but [it] felt really good putting my recruitment skills to good use.”

David McIntosh, KPMG UK

**EQUANS** ran two programmes which provided a broad range of support for specific groups. As part of their STRIDES programme, EQUANS ran a Health and Wellbeing Programme for care leavers to provide proactive strategies to increase motivation, confidence, financial resilience and self-care. STRIDES also supported care leavers with home improvements, employment opportunities, work experience and a life skills programme to support the transition from care to independent living. As part of their commitment to the Employers Against Domestic Abuse Covenant (EDAC), EQUANS developed and delivered a programme to support female survivors of domestic abuse into employment. This included employability advice, information about the company and a workshop on self-care, emotional wellbeing and confidence building to re-enter the workplace.



## Recruitment

59 per cent of entrants described recruitment practices that aimed to advance social mobility in 2020-21. As described in this section, actions included: expanding routes into employment, adopting inclusive hiring practices, and implementing targeted employment programmes for specific marginalised groups. Over 1,500 apprenticeships, internships and other forms of work experience linked to employment opportunities were offered by entrants in 2020-21, while entrants reported hiring nearly 4,000 people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups through positive action and targeted employment programmes (see Figure 9). Reported outcomes included a more diverse workforce and expanded routes into permanent employment (see Figure 10).



Figure 9: Recruitment activities in 2020-21: young people and less advantaged groups reached <sup>24</sup>

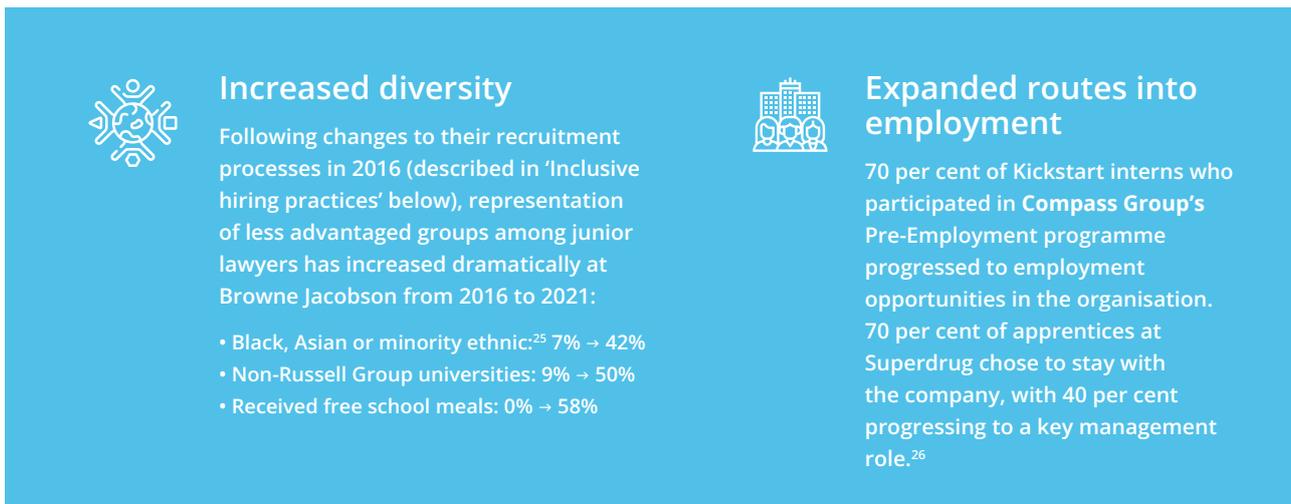


Figure 10: Recruitment activities in 2021: examples of reported outcomes

### Routes into employment

Entrants described a range of approaches to expand routes into employment. In some cases, pre-employment schemes were linked to work experience initiatives described in the previous section. **HMRC** piloted Springboard from Exclusion to Employment, which built on their Work Experience for Social Mobility programme. This four-week work placement for students from PRUs included an induction in an HMRC regional centre, working with mentors to upskill students and a workplace assessment. Thanks to an agreement from the Civil Service Commission to allow an "exception to usual recruitment practices", Springboard students who demonstrated sufficient engagement and commitment were then offered a 12-month HMRC apprenticeship.

<sup>24</sup>Based on combined figures from SOMOs 2021 entries.

<sup>25</sup>Terminology used in original entry.

<sup>26</sup>Figures for Compass Group and Superdrug reflect the SOMOs 2021 eligibility period, January 2020 – March 2021.

Following their Employability Awards (discussed in the previous section), **KPMG UK** gave each attendee a direct contact in the KPMG UK Student Recruitment Team. The team encouraged interested attendees to apply for KPMG UK vacancies, and a further event with young people was planned prior to the 2022 vacancy launch date to encourage sustained engagement. **Compass Group's** Gateway to Employment programme also upskilled young people before the recruitment process. Run in partnership with charity Springboard UK, Compass delivered a 15-day virtual programme to support CV development, interview techniques, mock interviews and confidence building among care leavers. At the end of the programme, participants were guaranteed an interview for a suitable role with the company.

Targeted internships for young people from less advantaged groups were another example of expanding routes into employment. Through their Fairer Access into Real Experience (FAIRE) Programme, 50 per cent of **Browne Jacobson's** paid internships were reserved for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These internships were intentionally paid, to reduce issues of affordability for young people from less advantaged SEBs and to “break down entry and progression barriers within the legal profession” for those who feel law is “out of reach” for them. **Bank of England** similarly offered paid internships to provide employment and hands-on experience for young people from less advantaged SEBs. To target those most in need of support, Bank of England removed fee-paying schools from their recruitment activities in 2020, and used Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data from 2021. **Greene King's** Supported Internship Programme, launched in 2021, provided young people (aged 16 to 24) who have special educational needs (SEN) and an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) with opportunities to develop their employment and life skills. Delivered in partnership with Landmarks Specialist College, these assisted learning internships were linked to potential employment opportunities with Greene King.

A range of targeted apprenticeships were offered in 2020-21. There were entrants who continued long-running apprenticeship programmes for young people from less advantaged groups, while others introduced new schemes. **Lewis Silkin** and **DLA Piper** both launched new Solicitor Apprenticeship Schemes, while DLA Piper also introduced a Paralegal Apprenticeship Scheme. These schemes aimed to provide young people with a route into law without attending university, in light of the financial barriers to higher education for those from less advantaged SEBs. **JBM** hired their first apprentice during lockdown, and encouraged their clients to do the same to increase diversity in their organisations.

Entrants also participated in Kickstart, the UK government's scheme which funds employers to create jobs for 16 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit.<sup>27</sup> **Compass Group** additionally delivered a pre-employment programme linked to Kickstart, which provided their Kickstart candidates with a 10-day virtual programme with sessions on improving confidence, providing customer care and managing personal finances.

## Inclusive hiring practices

Introducing more inclusive recruitment processes was a key strategy to “promote a level playing field” (**EQUANS**), to “remove barriers” for candidates from less advantaged SEBs (**Grant Thornton**) and to “reach out to disadvantaged groups and identify those with the highest talent” (**Civil Service Fast Stream**). Inclusive hiring strategies included focusing on potential rather than experience, and using competency or skills-based approaches.

Legal and professional services firms led the way by introducing flexible entry criteria, or removing academic entry criteria completely. **Browne Jacobson** removed degree and A-level grade requirements for entry-level legal roles in 2016, **PwC** removed UCAS criteria from graduate and undergraduate roles and Grant Thornton adopted a flexible approach to academic entry requirements. In 2020-21, PwC also upheld offers to school and college leavers regardless of grades to “mitigate against the challenges of A-level awarding in the absence of exam-based assessment [during the pandemic] that disproportionately affected low SEB pupils.” In other sectors, there were no minimum grade requirements for any roles at **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**, while **Pitney Bowes** removed academic requirements for its telesales department. Among universities, **University of Warwick** set entry grades for Warwick Scholars<sup>28</sup> between two and four grades below the standard undergraduate offer.

<sup>27</sup> DWP website (2021) ‘[Kickstart Scheme](#)’. Accessed 27 October 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Students from working-class backgrounds who receive a 50 per cent tuition fee discount and a bursary to reduce financial barriers to undergraduate study.

Beyond entry criteria, entrants described multiple strategies to improve inclusivity throughout the recruitment process. This included monitoring demographic characteristics (including SEBs) but anonymising applications, so hiring managers were not aware of candidates' socio-economic backgrounds. Employers including **Bank of England** and **Browne Jacobson** adopted a contextualised approach to recruitment, while **University of Bradford** adopted a similar approach to undergraduate admissions (see quotation). This involved considering the potentially adverse impact of candidates' socio-economic disadvantage on their performance during the recruitment process. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** monitored selection numbers based on background characteristics at all stages of the recruitment process, while both Enterprise Rent-A-Car and **Grant Thornton** offered greater transparency for candidates by outlining all stages of the recruitment process and competencies assessed on their websites. At Enterprise Rent-A-Car, this approach aimed to ensure that [“all individuals from all backgrounds \[understood\] how our recruitment process work\[ed\], whether this \[was\] how to put together an application to performing well at interview.”](#) Entrants including **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**, **Omnicom Media Group** and **Unilever** described mandatory training for hiring managers, including unconscious bias training workshops, to raise awareness of the challenges facing those from less advantaged groups.

**A contextualised approach to recruitment involved “identifying applicants whose circumstances may have limited their pre-higher education academic performance and taking their circumstances into account**

University of Bradford

To improve access and engagement among candidates from less advantaged SEBs, entrants offered a range of support and resources during the recruitment process. In an example of practical support, **Silent Games** paid travel costs for all candidates who needed to interview in person. The 93% Club developed the Milkround Resource Pack, a free resource to help students navigate the application process for graduate roles (Sophie Pender, **Herbert Smith Freehills**). This included an application tracker, a competency question bank, example strengths-based questionnaires, a company research matrix and a deadline tracker. **Bank of England**, **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** and **Grant Thornton** provided direct support to candidates during the application process. For their apprenticeship, Kickstart and internship roles, Bank of England shared interview questions with candidates prior to their interviews, in recognition that students from less advantaged SEBs may have had less exposure to interview training or practice. Enterprise Rent-A-Car provided weekly online information sessions for candidates to ask questions and meet current employees, to help them feel more confident and to [“reduce the mystery”](#) of each stage of the process. Feedback was also available for all applicants at every stage of the recruitment process. At Grant Thornton, candidates received coaching ahead of digital interviews and assessment days. Among universities, **Sheffield Hallam University** provided support to young people from vulnerable groups (who were more likely to drop out from the undergraduate admissions process due to digital poverty) through their SHU Progress Applicant Scheme. As part of a wider support package, **University of Bradford** offered pre-admission support for care-experienced young people.

**DLA Piper's** Head Start programme provided a notable example of support from outreach through to the recruitment stage, covering most of the activities described in the preceding sections. Head Start engaged with young people from less advantaged groups over a five-year period, from school and university into employment. Support at the outreach stage included employability skills sessions, work placements and mentoring from DLA Piper lawyers. At the recruitment stage, participants were supported with applications for graduate schemes, interview and assessment centre practice and presentation skills. While the programme aimed to support a diverse pipeline into the legal profession, those who did not choose a legal career continued to receive mentoring support through an Alumni Network.

Almost all entrants' recruitment strategies referred to hiring processes for entry-level positions. However, professional services firms also described practices to encourage more diverse hiring at experienced levels. At **PwC**, this involved a tiered system of preferred agencies for experienced hires, with agencies' approach to diversity and inclusion (including SEBs) a key factor in determining preference. **Grant Thornton's** agency partners were briefed on the firm's diversity and inclusion strategy, including social mobility, for experienced hires. Grant Thornton also offered financial incentives to employees who recommended candidates who were then hired. The firm's monitoring data indicated this approach [“enhance\[d\] the social diversity of hiring activity within experienced hire”](#); candidates hired via referral were more likely to have been eligible for FSM, and to have attended non-selective schools.

## Targeted employment programmes

The hiring practices described above both implicitly and explicitly aimed to improve inclusivity for those from less advantaged SEBs during the recruitment process. In addition to these practices, entrants implemented targeted employment programmes to recruit people from specific marginalised groups. **The Civil Service's** Going Forward into Employment (GFIE) programme matched prison leavers, military veterans and care leavers to Civil Service jobs. **PwC** worked with social enterprises to develop the employability skills of groups including military veterans and refugees. Through their Hospitality Releasing Potential Programme, **Greene King** worked with and offered employment to prison leavers. **Mitie** implemented three targeted branches of its flagship Ready2Work programme to support military veterans, disabled people and prison leavers into employment. In 2020-21, this programme involved employability training, work experience and (wherever possible) an offer of paid employment to successful applicants.



## Retention

Activities to retain employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups were reported at comparable levels to recruitment activities (58 per cent) in 2020-21. Entrants aimed to retain employees by improving employment conditions, by creating inclusive, supportive workplaces and by fostering culture change. Such initiatives are an essential companion to outreach and recruitment initiatives: without them, staff from less advantaged groups are likely to seek alternative employment at best, and at worst, to have negative workplace experiences. Based on figures reported by entrants, over 25,000 employees engaged with events and networks to improve inclusion in the workplace (see Figure 11). Reported outcomes included increased engagement and reduced turnover (see Figure 12).



Figure 11: Retention activities in 2020-21: employees engaged<sup>29</sup>



Figure 12: Retention activities in 2021: examples of reported outcomes

### Improving employment conditions

Stable employment conditions, including meeting financial needs and job security, are key factors in employee retention,<sup>30</sup> and are crucial to support social mobility for those from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. Although not commonly reported by entrants, there were employers in the hospitality, facilities management and retail sectors who described action to ensure financial security for their employees in 2020-21. **Compass Group**, and **Unilever** described their commitments as Living Wage employers,<sup>31</sup> with Compass Group pledging to “tackle low pay head on” and to pay all Compass direct workers the

<sup>29</sup>Based on combined figures from SOMOs 2021 entries.

<sup>30</sup>Coulson, A.B. & Bonner, J. (2015) [Living Wage Employers: evidence of UK Business Cases](#). London: Citizens UK on behalf of the Living Wage Foundation.

<sup>31</sup>These employers directly mentioned Living Wage employer status in their SOMO 2021 entries. A full list of Living Wage Recognised Service Providers, including other SOMO 2021 entrants, is available [here](#).

real Living Wage in 2020.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, in response to closures across the hospitality sector during the pandemic, senior leaders at **Greene King** took bold action to ensure financial security for employees. Early on in the pandemic and again in January 2021, Greene King's CEO and executive board members took voluntary pay cuts of 50 and 30 per cent respectively, with other senior leaders also taking voluntary pay cuts. These funds were used to create a Team Member Support Fund to support employees in the greatest financial need.<sup>33</sup> To support employees ineligible for the government's furlough scheme (including prison leavers recruited via the company's Hospitality Releasing Potential Programme), Greene King provided 80 per cent pay while hospitality venues were closed during the pandemic. For employees who were ineligible for furlough and had been recruited via the company's social mobility programme, the company provided 100 per cent pay.

There were also entrants who offered greater flexibility to help employees and students with pandemic-related challenges. Dominic Carter at **News UK** drove action to provide employees with four hours off per week to manage childcare and other domestic responsibilities during the pandemic. **The Open University** introduced more flexible processes for students experiencing disruption to their studies. These included an automatic waiver to allow students longer extensions to assignment submissions, and an automatic consideration of special circumstances for all students, without requiring supporting evidence.

Entrants continued to implement policies to improve employment conditions which pre-dated the pandemic. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** continued to offer flexible working arrangements such as part-time positions and job shares, while **Unilever** continued a changeable bank holiday policy, through which employees could choose to take leave on religious holidays instead of UK bank holidays.

### Creating inclusive, supportive workplaces

Entrants commonly described activities to create more inclusive and supportive workplaces for their employees. The quotation on this page indicates the key reasons for doing this: to facilitate an environment in which staff from diverse backgrounds felt they belonged, which in turn would support their retention.

Staff networks provided space for employees from less advantaged groups to connect and support each other. These included networks for racially minoritised staff, LGBTQ+ staff and disabled staff, **Linklaters**, **PwC** and **Superdrug** described Social Mobility Networks specifically for staff from less advantaged SEBs and allies who supported social mobility. These networks aimed to champion social mobility within the workplace, to improve visibility for staff from less advantaged SEBs and to celebrate socio-economic diversity.

While social mobility and other staff networks often facilitated informal mentoring opportunities for employees from marginalised groups, public sector employers also introduced formal mentoring schemes for employees from less advantaged SEBs in 2020-21. **HMRC's** Stride Mentoring Scheme connected mentee and mentor communities via MS Teams so that information and best practice could be sought and shared between participants. Meanwhile, **DWP** ran 'Each One Reach One', an event which aimed to build confidence and aspirations through an online mentoring session with a senior leader. Formal mentoring schemes were less commonly reported in the private sector, but there were many examples of individuals mentoring employees from less advantaged SEBs. Anna Fitzjohn at **Bauer Media** provided Kickstart interns with one-to-one support, mentoring and careers advice to provide "a safe, supportive community for [them] to thrive in", while Mark Hudson (**News UK**) similarly mentored each of his Kickstart interns and apprentices. Sharleighn Tulloch (**Barclays**), Alice Shaw (**Linklaters**) and Ash Daniells (**Reynolds Porter Chamberlain**) all acted as mentors to those from less advantaged groups. Louise Watkins (**BlackRock**)

[We aim] to provide an inclusive environment for talent to thrive, feel belonging, have a voice and ensure retention of a diverse pipeline.

Civil Service Fast Stream

<sup>32</sup>The 'real Living Wage' is calculated based on the cost of living, linked to a basket of household goods and services. Unlike the National Living Wage, the real Living Wage is non-statutory, applicable to those 18 and older and includes a separate, higher rate for London. See Living Wage Foundation website (2021) '[What is the real living wage?](#)'. Accessed 27 October 2021.

<sup>33</sup>£500,000 at the time of Greene King's entry to the SOMOs. By November 2021, over £1 million had been raised through additional donations.

noted that employees from less advantaged SEBs may require more time and support to develop self-confidence and the ability to express opinions in the workplace. She therefore acted as a coach and mentor to help those from less advantaged SEBs “through difficult challenges, personal development and promotions.”

Beyond support with personal and career development, entrants described targeted initiatives to provide mental health and wellbeing support to employees from less advantaged groups. This included a wellbeing programme at **Pitney Bowes** for work experience students and apprentices. The firm prioritised this support during the pandemic as young people were “living, studying and working at home, often with their family members and/or caring for younger siblings/dependants.” **EQUANS** also engaged with employees from specific groups (those from less advantaged SEBs, survivors of domestic violence and care leavers) to provide wellbeing and financial advice, including links to internal and external sources of support.

Heather Richardson (**DWP**) provided emotional, practical and career development support for prison leavers, military veterans and care leavers who joined the Civil Service through its Going Forward into Employment (GFIE) programme. This included a personal call on their first day to “let them know someone is rooting for them”, and one-to-one support with providing identity documents as part of the required security checks for new starters. Heather noted that, for groups recruited through GFIE, identifying the correct documents could be “a confusing and (for prison leavers) nerve-wracking part of the process.” In addition to GFIE’s buddy system, Heather provided ongoing mentoring by sharing information about her own career path. These actions are a key example of inclusivity at work. Rather than simply providing access to those from less advantaged groups, this approach reflected an understanding of specific needs and a willingness to offer tailored support. By creating a safe, inclusive working environment for people from less advantaged SEBs, such practices are crucial to support social mobility.

Looking at educational settings, entrants provided a range of support for students during the pandemic. Among examples of financial support, **Slaughter and May** added a financial bursary to its Law Springboard programme to “level the playing field for the most disadvantaged students.” The firm noted the importance of financial security for student retention, given that financial constraints commonly lead to student drop-out. Universities themselves provided financial and other forms of support to students during the pandemic. **The Open University, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Bradford, University of Exeter** and **University of Southampton** all offered COVID-19 hardship funding to students, with additional support including: mental health and wellbeing support, money advice, support to acquire part-time work, emergency accommodation and food delivery services. Both Sheffield Hallam University and University of Exeter introduced a ‘wraparound’ model of support, to provide students with academic, financial, pastoral and careers support. Sheffield Hallam University described this approach as “a vital tool in [their] strategy for impacting admissions, retention, success rates, employability, and student wellbeing”, particularly for those from less advantaged groups.

## Fostering culture change

In addition to support for employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups, entrants described activities to support culture change in their organisations. There were examples of individuals doing this through internal advocacy: Anna Fitzjohn’s “work and activism” at **Bauer Media** was described as creating “a ground shift in how Bauer views new entrants [...] with a far deeper appreciation of the value that diverse talent brings.” Louise Watkins’ internal advocacy for social mobility at **BlackRock** involved “giving a voice” to employees from less advantaged SEBs, enabling them to tell their stories and inspire other employees. At **KPMG UK**, internal advocacy was embraced by senior leaders through the ‘Fairer Futures’ campaign, which provided a space for “open conversations” about diversity, inclusion and social equality for employees and communities.

Celebrating role models from less advantaged SEBs was also a popular way to encourage culture change. This was seen as particularly important for social mobility initiatives, since SEBs cannot necessarily be “optically gauge[d]” (**KPMG UK**). To act as role models, junior and senior employees described the challenges they had faced related to their SEB, and encouraged colleagues to be as transparent about their own backgrounds and challenges. At **PwC**, Sharf Rizvi and Ayaan Tarey shared their mental health struggles and refugee backgrounds respectively via internal and external channels, to challenge stigma and inspire current and future employees in similar situations. Individual role models were also described at **Barclays** (Sharleighn Tulloch), **BlackRock** (Louise Watkins), **Herbert Smith Freehills** (Sophie Pender), **HS2** (Hannah Leggatt) and **KPMG UK** (David McIntosh).

Social mobility stories were also shared on a wider scale. At **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**, this was done through Pulse, an internal communications app, where “social mobility stories that intersect with race, gender, disability and other areas of diversity” were shared. **Shoosmiths, Browne Jacobson** and **PwC** all encouraged employees to share social mobility stories internally.

As indicated in the quotation on this page, celebrating role models from less advantaged SEBs had the potential to inspire those from similar backgrounds and empower them to bring their ‘whole selves’ to work.

Entrants also ran internal events and shared communications to educate employees on social mobility. These included monthly coffee drop-in sessions with senior leaders from less advantaged SEBs, to help junior employees from similar backgrounds feel welcome, educating colleagues about social mobility through blogs, ‘Lunch and Learn’ sessions, internal panel events, podcasts and videos, external guest speakers, TED talks and thought leadership sessions.

In addition to social mobility-specific events, entrants described internal campaigns related to race and ethnicity, such as **PwC**’s ColourBrave Programme, and newsletters, discussions and engagement activities related to Black Lives Matter and during Black History Month at **Barclays**. Entrants also referred to initiatives linked to Pride and Mental Health Awareness. Wider D&I initiatives included induction sessions for new starters, and learning and development programmes on unconscious bias, inclusive teams and allyship.

There were also entrants who sought to foster culture change by listening to the views and experiences of employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. At the **Civil Service**, this included ‘listening circles’ and actively working with staff networks to understand the experiences of Fast Streamers, apprentices and interns, and cross-department engagement to address any areas of concern. **Shoosmiths** introduced an anonymous Q&A platform to encourage employees to share questions and comments with colleagues and management. Among universities, **University of Exeter** developed their support measures in consultation with student unions and in response to ongoing feedback, to deliver a “student-focused scheme.” University of Southampton aimed to create a “genuine partnership” with students, through a Student Advisory Board which involved students from underrepresented groups in strategic governance decisions.

“Every time [Sophie Pender] shares her story, it gives a student from a lower socio-economic background the confidence and the candour to speak about their own [...] She is an inspiration to many.”

Herbert Smith Freehills

Reverse mentoring was another way entrants sought to amplify more junior voices. These involved junior employees from less advantaged groups sharing their experiences with senior managers and leaders, to educate them about the challenges they had faced. These initiatives were popular at law firms: at **Reynolds Porter Chamberlain**, Ash Daniells mentored the Chief Operating Officer (COO) to “enlighten [them] about life as an openly gay lawyer, who was the first in his family to go to university.” At **Allen & Overy**, Justin Farrance reverse mentored a senior partner who “wanted to learn from someone about social mobility and [to] be challenged.” **Shoosmiths** ran a reciprocal mentoring scheme, which aimed to provide junior employees with opportunities to learn from and influence senior leaders. For senior leaders, the scheme offered opportunities to learn about their mentees’ experiences and challenges, and to inform their future decision making. Beyond the legal profession, **Grant Thornton**, **Superdrug** and **University of Southampton** also implemented reverse mentoring schemes with similar aims. Overall, these initiatives had the potential to change ‘top-down’ leadership and management cultures. By highlighting the experiences of junior employees from less advantaged groups, reverse mentoring gave senior leaders the opportunity to take these perspectives into account during decision-making processes.

Almost all entrants described trying to foster culture change through the ‘softer’ approaches described above. Such initiatives were undoubtedly positive practices to support those from less advantaged groups in the workplace, and to educate those from more advantaged groups about inequalities within and beyond their sectors. One entrant, **News UK**, also described a ‘harder’ initiative related to culture change: a system to track “all instances of discrimination” among current employees, with exit interviews and leaving data similarly monitored for outgoing staff to identify patterns and issues faced.<sup>31</sup> Such initiatives, which aim to improve accountability and transparency, are a vital part of culture change, particularly in organisations where people from less advantaged groups are in the minority.

<sup>34</sup>It may be the case that other entrants introduced or continued to implement similar systems in 2020-21; however, this was only described explicitly in News UK’s entry.



## Progression

Just over a quarter of entrants described activities to support the progression and promotion of employees from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups (28 per cent). Although in the minority, these were important actions to support retention. If employees from marginalised groups do not feel they are able to progress at an organisation, they are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. Relevant activities explored in this section include positive action to support promotion for people from less advantaged groups, and targeted training and development opportunities. Entrants provided limited information on reach and outcomes related to progression in 2020-21. However, at least 450 employees were supported through targeted training and development opportunities (see Figure 13), and reported outcomes included promotions for employees from less advantaged SEBs (see Figure 14).



Figure 13: Progression activities in 2020-21: employees supported<sup>35</sup>



Figure 14: Progression activities in 2021: examples of reported outcomes

### Positive action to support promotion

While entrants commonly referenced progression as part of their social mobility and/or D&I strategies, they did not always describe specific activities in this area. Among entrants who provided more detail, one approach was positive action to promote employees from less advantaged SEBs. **Compass Group's** Essential Worker Career Paths aimed to help frontline workers in the service industry to “see more clearly how they can ‘get on’ in the organisation”, including the organisational support available to them. The programme included a toolkit for managers to better engage with and support their teams to progress.

<sup>35</sup>Based on combined figures from SOMOs 2021 entries.

**Enterprise Rent-A-Car** described their approach to positive action and promotion as directly linked to their recruitment process. The company recruited many employees from less advantaged SEBs at entry level, and as the organisation largely “promote[d] from within” and “based on merit”, this supported fair progression opportunities. The company also facilitated forums and buddying/mentoring schemes specifically focused on progression. **News UK**’s positive action involved a “multicultural leadership programme” to create a “more diverse pipeline” to leadership roles, in partnership with consultancy Creative Equals.

Among universities, we considered progression in terms of post-university transitions to employment. **University of Warwick** has worked with the Sutton Trust for several years to support less advantaged young people into the legal profession through their Pathways to Law programme, with targeted support starting prior to university entry. In 2020, the university launched a similar programme – Pathways to Engineering – to support access to careers in engineering and advanced manufacturing. The university also provided targeted careers support for young people from less advantaged groups throughout their undergraduate degrees. This was described as “a personalised programme that enables students to broaden their career horizons” by developing employability skills, networks, and accessing work experience. **Sheffield Hallam University** similarly provided ongoing careers support by pairing all undergraduates with an Employability Advisor as part of their Student Support Triangle. Meanwhile, **University of Bradford** worked with key regional employers to support unemployed graduates from racially minoritised groups into employment in health and social care, engineering and manufacturing, and public services.

### Targeted training and development opportunities

Although not directly linked to promotion opportunities, targeted training and development opportunities helped to prepare employees from less advantaged groups for future progression. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** reported using most of their Apprentice Levy funds to upskill current employees during the pandemic. This included 12-month support programmes for entry-level employees and self-service training options for employees from less advantaged SEBs. **Greene King** provided a range of virtual training and development opportunities for their apprentices during the pandemic. At **KPMG UK**, progression for “historically underrepresented groups” formed a strategic pillar of the firm’s Inclusion, Diversity and Social Equality Strategy. To put this strategy into action, the firm expanded the criteria for GROW – a personal development programme for diverse employees at manager and senior manager levels – to include employees from less advantaged SEBs in 2020-21.



## Advocacy

A third of entrants reported activities related to advocacy (34 per cent). These included engaging clients in social mobility work, promoting social mobility within their respective sectors, and influencing wider audiences. Unlike the preceding activities, entrants did not typically provide data on the reach or outcomes of their advocacy activities.

### Engaging clients in social mobility work

One approach to advocacy was engaging clients in ongoing social mobility activities – for example, involving them in outreach work such as mentoring schemes with less advantaged young people. Another approach involved prioritising social mobility when working with clients and suppliers. **Compass Group** offered a Living Wage bid alongside every market rate submission to prospective and current clients, to advocate for a Living Wage in their professional network. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** aimed to ensure that their own values and goals were “mirrored throughout [their] suppliers and their way of practice.” To do this, the company sent a questionnaire to their top suppliers to gain information on their supply chains, including actions to support social mobility. The aim was to start a conversation around social mobility and other D&I work, to learn from others’ best practice, and/or to partner with them on their social mobility initiatives. **Reward Gateway** used their work with HR leaders to start conversations about how to engage employees in D&I work, including the way the company used its own products and services internally to engage staff with its D&I strategy. This led to clients following Reward Gateway’s lead by customising their engagement platforms to include a focus on their own D&I strategies.

### Promoting social mobility among peers

To promote social mobility in their sectors, entrants participated in events and used various media platforms to share their practices and encourage their peers to take similar action. This included presenting at events in the hospitality and retail sectors, articles in the legal press and other online platforms accessed by those in the legal profession, and workshops in the games industry.

Entrants engaged with a range of professional bodies and sector-wide initiatives to advance social mobility. In the legal profession, **Lewis Silkin** shared knowledge of their social mobility initiatives through their involvement in PRIME, a network of over 60 law firms committed to “giving young people from underprivileged backgrounds work experience opportunities and the chance to succeed in the legal profession.”<sup>36</sup> **DLA Piper** also engaged with PRIME’s Pathways Advisor Group, sharing insights from the firm’s Head Start scholars to highlight barriers faced at different stages of their careers. The Law Society offered another avenue to promote social mobility. Lewis Silkin participated in the Society’s Committee of the Women Lawyer’s Division, while Justin Farrance (**Allen & Overy**) acted as a Social Mobility Ambassador for the Law Society to “raise the profile of social mobility and fair access to the legal profession.” Among financial and professional services, entrants participated in the government-backed City of London Socio-Economic Taskforce, which aimed to “promote equity of progression in the UK financial services industry.” The Private Credit Social Mobility Partnership was another sector-based initiative, established and coordinated by **Pemberton Capital Advisors**.

Whether through events, communications or sector-wide initiatives, sharing best practice was an important element of entrants’ advocacy work. Heather Richardson wrote **DWP**’s business case for a recruitment scheme for homeless people in Manchester, based on her experience of the Going Forward into Employment Scheme (described earlier). **PwC** described being contacted regularly by other employers “looking to emulate the success of [their] social mobility network”,

“The positive outcomes of Law Springboard have had a ‘ripple effect’, elevating social mobility as a cause within the legal sector and encouraging other firms to take action.”

Slaughter and May

<sup>36</sup>A full list of PRIME’s law firm members, including other 2021 SOMOs entrants, is available [here](#).

while **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** shared best practice at social mobility and D&I events. Warren Johnson, CEO of **W Communications**, aimed to use WX (a separate arm of the agency established to attract and develop young people from less advantaged SEBs) to “lead the charge” and encourage other agencies to take action on social mobility. **Slaughter and May** described the “ripple effect” of their social mobility work in the legal sector (see quotation above), by providing a pipeline of young people from less advantaged groups into Magic Circle law firms through the Law Springboard programme.

### Influencing wider audiences

Beyond their immediate sectors, entrants advocated for action on social mobility through LinkedIn and other social media platforms, national newspapers, conferences on social mobility, National Apprentice Week and events with the Social Mobility Commission. Another form of advocacy was through engagement with social mobility research and the development of key resources for employers. **PwC**'s Future of Government research explored public attitudes to social mobility, while **Govia Thameslink Railway** sponsored research with the Princes Trust, Futures at Stake 2020, which highlighted the risks of failing to close the ‘skills gap’ in multiple industries. Entrants also participated in social mobility research. **BlackRock** contributed to a government-sponsored survey to understand SEBs across the financial services, and **DWP**'s internal employee data was included in the Social Mobility Commission's report Navigating the Labyrinth: Social-economic background and career progression in the Civil Service. **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** noted their involvement in the development of the Social Mobility Commission's Social Mobility Toolkit, a key resource developed in 2020 to help employers to develop social mobility strategies.

Taken as a whole, entrants who engaged in advocacy work demonstrated a willingness to take the lead, and to encourage wider engagement among their clients, peers and wider audiences with the social mobility agenda.

## 4 | FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS TO ADVANCING SOCIAL MOBILITY IN 2021



## 4 | Facilitators and barriers to advancing social mobility

In the previous chapter, we described the activities undertaken by employers and educational institutions to advance social mobility in 2020-21. In this chapter, we take a closer look at how this work was done. We start by examining five key facilitators for effective social mobility work: the drive to make a difference, putting intersectionality into practice, motivated leadership, adopting a collaborative approach and committing resources.



### Key facilitators

#### The drive to make a difference

The drive to make a difference was perhaps the first key facilitator for social mobility work – without this, meaningful commitments to advancing social mobility (or D&I more widely) were unlikely. Across sectors including media, law and finance, entrants demonstrated a willingness to challenge norms and “ad hoc practices” around work experience, whereby opportunities have been almost exclusively available to children of employees and clients. **Browne Jacobson**, **News UK** and **Pemberton Capital Advisors** all introduced or planned to introduce work experience programmes to “end nepotism currently associated with work experience” in their sectors. This included more consistent, coordinated approaches to ensure fair selection processes, and positive action to specifically increase participation among those from less advantaged SEBs.

**Browne Jacobson’s** “brave” decision to remove academic grade requirements for entry-level positions in 2016 also provided a key example of challenging existing practices. This decision was driven by Recruitment Manager Tom Lyas, based on the justification that there was no evidence new joiners with lesser grades would underperform. The success of this decision is evident from the dramatic increase in the representation of racially minoritised and less advantaged SEB employees at the firm from 2016 to 2021 (see Figure 10). Perhaps even more importantly, according to their entry, the firm did not apply pressure to see a return on investment from these changed recruitment practices (see quotation). This suggested the firm’s social mobility work was primarily driven by the moral case – to ‘do the right thing’ – rather than the business case (see Chapter 2). By prioritising employees’ financial security, senior leaders’ voluntary pay cuts at **Greene King** during the pandemic provided another example of what might be considered ‘radical’ social mobility action.

“The firm applies no pressure to see a [return on investment] in terms of recruitment. We’re simply trying to inspire all firms within the legal sector to ‘do more’ and remove their own unnecessary entry barriers.”

Browne Jacobson

#### Putting intersectionality into practice

An intersectional approach to social mobility is based on an understanding that being from a less advantaged SEB and from one or more marginalised groups – including being racially minoritised, female, LGBTQ+, disabled and/or part of a religious minority – leads to multiple, compounding forms of disadvantage. Without an intersectional understanding, social mobility work is likely to become siloed from wider D&I work, and therefore less effective.

In 2020-21, entrants demonstrated four stages of putting intersectionality into practice:

1. Including social mobility in their wider D&I strategy.
2. Collecting data on SEBs alongside other background characteristics.
3. Demonstrating and/or promoting an intersectional understanding of socio-economic disadvantage.
4. Analysing and reporting on how less advantaged SEBs interact with other background characteristics, and developing actions to address intersectional issues.

Entrants across sectors indicated that they had taken the first step, with social mobility as a “key pillar” of D&I at **Bauer Media**, **BlackRock** and **Superdrug**, a Social Mobility Lead working as part of the wider HR Inclusion Team at **DWP**, and **Linklater’s** “newest diversity and inclusion group”, a Social Mobility Network alongside others including a race and ethnicity network. While this step did not necessarily reflect an intersectional approach, it provided an important foundation for future intersectional work. As socio-economic disadvantage is not a protected characteristic, it also reflected organisations’ commitment to social mobility as part of their efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion.

The next stage was to collect data on SEBs alongside other background characteristics, as discussed in Chapter 3. Organisations at this stage had D&I strategies that included targets related to race, gender and SEBs, and were collecting data on these background characteristics. As with the first step, collecting SEB alongside other background data did not yet reflect intersectional work, but nevertheless demonstrated important progress towards it.

Another stage involved demonstrating and/or promoting an intersectional understanding of socio-economic disadvantage. This was a starting point for some organisations: for example, Hannah Leggatt (**HS2 Ltd**) worked with HS2’s BAME Network to organise and fund external speakers who explored the intersections between race, gender and ethnicity. Hannah used these events as a basis for raising awareness, encouraging “difficult conversations” and “amplify[ing] those that struggle to have a voice or have their voices heard.” Ideally, promoting an intersectional understanding in this way was combined with the strategy and data collection stages described above, as this demonstrated a move away from thinking about different kinds of disadvantage in isolation and instead thinking intersectionally. This was apparent at **Allen & Overy**: in addition to a Social Mobility Group alongside other D&I groups, and data collection on SEBs, gender and ethnicity, one of the firm’s key social mobility advocates promoted an intersectional understanding of social mobility. As a gay man who was state-educated and the first in his family to attend university, Justin Farrance’s lived experiences have led him to “champion an intersectional understanding of social mobility and inclusion in all aspects of his life.” At **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**, in addition to a Social Mobility Committee within their diversity committee, and data collection on SEBs and other background characteristics, the company promoted an understanding of intersectionality by internally sharing employee profiles which included stories of SEBs intersecting with race, gender and disability.

The most ‘advanced’ approaches combined all three of the previous stages, but also included tangible action to address social mobility intersectionally. Even on a small scale, this resulted in meaningful action: Sally Blake at **Silent Games** noted the intersections of class and gender inequalities in the games industry, which she described as being “dominated by middle-class men.” To address this, attendance at her ‘Women Making Games’ events were free or low-cost, to specifically improve accessibility for working-class women. On a larger scale, firm-wide intersectional approaches were apparent in the legal profession and among professional services firms, with notable examples among universities. All of these entrants described social mobility strategies as part of wider D&I strategies, and an intersectional understanding of social mobility. For example, Lucy Lewis (**Lewis Silkin**) sat on the Committee of the Women Lawyer’s Division of the Law Society, and highlighted intersectional issues between gender and social mobility. Ayaan Tarey (**PwC**) similarly used her voice and lived experiences to promote an intersectional understanding of social mobility at her firm (see quotation).

Entrants put their intersectional understanding of social mobility into practice in a range of ways. Among outreach activities, entrants’ work paid attention to the intersections between less advantaged SEBs and racially minoritised groups. **Lewis Silkin** partnered with Ark Globe Academy for their mentoring scheme based on socio-economic and ethnic diversity at the school, while **University of Bradford** partnered with regional employers to specifically increase opportunities for unemployed graduates from racially minoritised groups.

Analysing and reporting diversity data with an intersectional lens was another important dimension of effective social mobility work. At **Browne Jacobson**, analysis of monitoring data led to recruitment practices being dramatically changed (as discussed earlier in this chapter), which in turn increased the intake of those from racially minoritised groups and/or less advantaged SEBs (see Figure 10). **Grant Thornton’s** analysis revealed that White candidates from

“  
As a Black, Muslim woman from a less advantaged, Ayaan Tarey “actively uses her voice to [...] inspire others who share a similar story to her, [and to advocate] strongly within PwC to raise awareness on social mobility, [highlighting] the importance of supporting social inclusion at all levels.”

Ayaan Tarey, PwC

less advantaged SEBs were more likely to succeed in the recruitment process than racially minoritised candidates from less advantaged SEBs; these results led to specific interventions to address this gap, including training, coaching and sponsorship for racially minoritised staff. Past research by **KPMG UK** found that White, female employees from less advantaged SEBs took the longest to progress through the firm, while less advantaged SEB employees across almost all ethnic groups and of all genders took longer to progress than employees from higher SEBs. These findings led to KPMG measuring and publishing its socio-economic pay gap in 2021 and the firm has now set specific targets to address socio-economic pay gaps, in addition to gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that an intersectional approach to social mobility needs to be guided by a coherent strategy, high-quality data, activities to promote an understanding of intersectionality, and operationalised through analysis, transparent reporting and meaningful action.

### Motivated leadership

Leadership from motivated individuals was another key facilitator for effective social mobility work. Entries described a combination of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches to leadership in 2020-21. Bottom-up leadership involved employees in junior roles taking the lead on social mobility, including apprentices, trainee and associate solicitors, and those in managerial roles outside senior leadership teams. Many of these individuals were entered into the Rising Star category, which is specifically for those in the early stages of their career (aged 30 years or under). Within and beyond this category, entrants were described as “vocal champions” and “thought leaders” who were “working tirelessly” to advance social mobility in their workplaces.

A key strategy for early- to mid-career leaders was to influence those in senior leadership positions to “be better” and “do more” (Tom Lyas, **Browne Jacobson**). Anna Fitzjohn (**Bauer Media**) worked to influence and secure “high-level buy-in” for programmes such as Kickstart, and to introduce policy changes to support employees from less advantaged SEBs. Regular engagement with senior leadership was important, to ensure an ongoing commitment to and understanding of the social mobility agenda. Where these efforts were successful, support and buy-in from senior leadership included membership of social mobility networks, participation in internal events, and active support for new initiatives to advance social mobility, such as the Social Mobility Taskforce at **BlackRock** and the Inclusion Advisory Board at **Grant Thornton**.

There were also examples of top-down leadership on social mobility, where the work was initiated or owned by those in senior leadership and management roles. Among law firms, partner Lucy Lewis (**Lewis Silkin**) worked as a member of her firm’s Strategy Board to ensure social mobility was reflected across the firm’s strategy and decision making. At **Browne Jacobson**, Caroline Green’s commitments to social mobility formed the “centre piece” of her successful campaign to become senior partner. Looking at the retail and hospitality sectors, a Chief Diversity Officer was accountable for **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**’s global approach to social mobility, while three Senior Directors in Europe set strategy and targets locally. As discussed earlier, the CEO and senior leadership team at **Greene King** demonstrated leadership and commitment to social mobility by taking voluntary pay cuts during the pandemic, to ensure financial security for their employees (see Chapter 3). In other sectors, entrants described CEOs taking ownership of the social mobility agenda, including Warren Johnson at **W Communications** and Doug Butler at **Reward Gateway**. This was an important way to ensure D&I was “firmly embedded in [the organisation’s] culture” (Reward Gateway).

Whether in junior or senior roles, leaders’ passion to advance social mobility was often driven by their lived experiences of being from a less advantaged SEB and/or other marginalised groups. At **News UK**, Dominic Carter worked to improve social mobility and the diversity of the media workforce as “one of the few Black media executives”, while Mark Hudson was motivated to become a journalist to “help represent the council house communities he grew up with.” There were also notable examples of working-class women in senior leadership positions – including Sally Blake (**Silent Games**) and Louise Watkins (**BlackRock**) – who were motivated to advance social mobility based on the barriers they had faced in their respective industries. Junior leaders from less advantaged SEBs who had benefited from positive action programmes and support were also keen to “give back” as role models and to “rise by lifting others” (David McIntosh, **KPMG UK**).

### Adopting a collaborative approach

In addition to motivated leadership, a collaborative approach was an important facilitator for social mobility work. Entrants commonly collaborated with social mobility charities to benefit from their expertise and to reach people from less advantaged

groups. Internal collaboration also supported effective social mobility work, including cross-departmental collaboration – such as **HMRC** working with the Civil Service Commission to change standard recruitment processes, which widened HMRC employment opportunities to “some of the most vulnerable young people.” There were also examples of leadership teams working collaboratively with employees: **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** described their social mobility strategy as “a collaboration between senior-level management, HR and our employees.” To implement their Success for All programme to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic, **University of Exeter** described both kinds of collaboration. This included cross-departmental collaboration between the Funding Team, Support Services and Student Union to provide a holistic safety net during the pandemic, and consultations with student unions to develop student-centred support measures.

### Committing resources

Dedicating resources to social mobility activities was both a key facilitator and a demonstration of organisational commitment to social mobility and wider D&I work. Entrants described committing considerable financial resources to support the activities described in Chapter 3, including a five-year investment from **Slaughter and May** in its Law Springboard programme and **Browne Jacobson's** investment in its FAIRE programme in 2020-21. **News UK** paid for an additional two days per week for Kickstart interns (on top of the government's three days per week) in 2020-21. A significant level of funding was committed by educational institutions to support pupils and students during the pandemic, including to purchase laptops and other digital equipment, towards bursaries for those from low-income families, and for pupils and families in financial need.

Entrants also committed both financial and human resources by hiring full-time staff members to lead their social mobility work. This included a Social Mobility Programme Lead at **HMRC**, a Responsible Business and Sustainability Executive at **Lewis Silkin**, a full-time Head of Social Mobility at **Tile Cross Academy** and a full-time member of staff managing **W Communication's** social mobility work. Dedicated human resources was a key facilitator for sustainable social mobility, diversity and inclusion work. While the efforts of motivated individuals described above were crucial to drive social mobility, there were significant challenges – particularly for junior employees – when trying to combine social mobility responsibilities with their full-time jobs (as discussed in more detail below). Creating and sustaining dedicated, full-time roles therefore reflected and facilitated more sustainable, long-term commitments to effective social mobility and D&I work.



## Overcoming barriers

Given that effective social mobility work involved changing existing practices, influencing senior leaders and committing organisational resources – all while operating in the wider context of a global pandemic – entrants unsurprisingly encountered a number of barriers to advancing social mobility in 2020-21. Nevertheless, entrants described impressive efforts to overcome the barriers faced. In this section, we explore barriers encountered and strategies to overcome them: limited support, going ‘above and beyond’, and challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Limited support

Entrants described a range of challenges when seeking buy-in for social mobility work in their organisations. This was sometimes due to a lack of engagement from employees – for example, **HMRC** and **W Communications** initially experienced difficulties with low response rates to SEB questions. To help overcome this challenge, both organisations engaged employees through virtual sessions in which they explained the importance of sharing diversity data. These actions led to significant improvements in response rates: at W Communications, completion rates rose from 30 per cent to 70 per cent.

Across sectors, senior leaders were not always immediately convinced of the need for social mobility initiatives. This was sometimes due to the level of organisational commitment required for certain activities, such as offering and integrating apprenticeships alongside existing pathways. Reluctance to engage with social mobility initiatives was often linked to misconceptions about people from less advantaged SEBs. Entrants described several strategies to overcome these barriers, including directly challenging misconceptions, highlighting the links between social mobility and existing organisational values, and drawing on the moral and business cases for increasing socio-economic diversity.

While a lack of support could form a passive barrier to social mobility work, entrants also experienced more direct forms of opposition. When setting up The 93% Club at university, Sophie Pender (**Herbert Smith Freehills**) encountered considerable hostility from peers who opposed the aims of the Club. Overcoming such experiences is evidently not a straightforward process; however, Sophie’s work to establish The 93% Club as “[the largest network of state-educated students at university in the UK](#)” indicated that she was able to continue her work to advance social mobility in spite of these experiences. In turn, this allowed her to create a space to support others who may face similar challenges.

### Going ‘above and beyond’

Employees in junior roles who took the lead on social mobility work (described above) were often celebrated for going ‘above and beyond’ the expectations of their day jobs to do this. However, these employees faced significant challenges to “[juggle the commitments](#)” of social mobility work with their full-time jobs in law, finance and public sector roles. A common ‘solution’ was to devote their spare time to social mobility activities, working through evenings and weekends to provide mentoring support, to prepare activities and materials for staff networks and to coordinate larger-scale social mobility initiatives. However, those leading social mobility activities were also dealing with a range of personal challenges, which suggested that being expected to go above and beyond was not an ideal solution. As mentioned above, many of those leading social mobility work were from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups, which meant that they faced intersectional disadvantages themselves. These included dealing with imposter syndrome, feelings of inferiority, a lack of confidence in their workplaces, dealing with (past) experiences of exclusion, and mental ill health and depression.

It was apparent from entries that working to advance social mobility and supporting others from less advantaged SEBs were hugely important to entrants who were facing or who had faced similar challenges. Organisations should therefore continue to empower their employees to actively engage in and lead social mobility work. However, the ‘triple labour’ this involves should also be acknowledged: in addition to working to advance social mobility, employees from less advantaged SEBs were also working to overcome barriers as members of marginalised groups, and to fulfil their actual day jobs.

Entrants did not directly discuss how to overcome these challenges in their entries. However, the facilitators described earlier provide potential solutions. For example, by committing dedicated human resources to social mobility work, employers can reduce the burden on individual staff members who already have other full-time commitments. Adopting a collaborative approach should ensure that employees from less advantaged groups are heard and actively engaged in social mobility work,

where they wish to do this. Encouraging employees from more advantaged groups to actively engage as allies would both widen engagement and reduce the burden on those from less advantaged groups. Lastly, where employees play a key part in an organisation's social mobility work, this should ideally be treated as part of, rather than 'above and beyond', their full-time jobs.

### Pandemic-related challenges

Entrants faced a range of challenges when working to advance social mobility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21. As outlined in Chapter 3, social mobility activities were delivered virtually during the pandemic, due to government restrictions on face-to-face interactions and requirements to work from home. Digital inequality therefore presented an immediate challenge for entrants, particularly when trying to ensure outreach activities remained accessible for the least advantaged. Solutions to overcome digital exclusion included providing students with IT equipment, dongles and data bundles to support virtual participation, and printed materials as an alternative or supplement to online engagement. Other accessibility issues were addressed by subtitling video content and providing external note-takers where participants required extra support.

Entrants reported challenges of low engagement with remote delivery during the pandemic. At **Lewis Silkin**, mentors learned that mentees did not always feel comfortable discussing their career aspirations when in shared spaces at home with family members. Mentors therefore adapted mentoring schedules so that less personal topics were covered at times when mentees were in shared spaces.

Conversely, certain services received a much higher volume of requests than usual, which presented a different range of challenges. **University of Exeter** found that their existing staffing and systems struggled to keep up with the "unprecedented demand, volume and urgency of requests" from students for financial and other forms of support. To ensure accessibility and fast disbursement of funds to students in need, a streamlined funding scheme was rapidly developed, with a single point to apply for funds, receive advice and access self-help tools. In an example of lessons learned from extraordinary circumstances during the pandemic, the university decided to adopt this "extended wraparound financial and pastoral support" as a permanent measure for students.

Schools were in "survival mode" for much of 2020-21, and entries from schools highlighted the acute challenges faced by less advantaged SEB families during the pandemic. These included being unable to afford food and other basic goods, and a lack of technology and/or data for online teaching and learning. Educational institutions and entrants across other sectors sought to address these challenges by providing direct support to those in need. This included: donating technology to schools and university students, setting up or contributing to existing food donation schemes in less advantaged areas, providing accommodation for key workers, making personal protective equipment (PPE) and offering practical help in the community such as delivering shopping and picking up prescriptions. These forms of direct support reflected the breadth of entrants' activities to address the inequalities highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 5 | CONCLUSIONS



## 5 | Conclusions

In this report, we have examined the activities, facilitators and barriers to advancing social mobility in the UK in 2020-21, as reported by employers and educational institutions who entered the 2021 UK Social Mobility Awards. In spite of significant challenges during a global pandemic, entrants reported an impressive range of activities to advance social mobility and to address growing inequalities. In this final chapter, we summarise key findings and present recommendations for next steps to advance social mobility.

### Key findings

#### **Key finding 1** Employers and educational institutions focused on reaching and hiring young people from less advantaged SEBs.

Entrants' activities in 2020-21 typically focused on the early stages of the employee pipeline, to reach and recruit young people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. This focus on access and entry is perhaps unsurprising, given the underrepresentation of people from less advantaged SEBs in sectors including law, professional services, finance and the media. Outreach work included virtual activities to raise awareness about career pathways, to develop soft skills, to provide exposure to work environments and to inspire and support young people from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. Even though entrants faced multiple challenges when delivering these activities virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 250,000 children and young people participated in outreach activities over the year, with reported outcomes including improved soft skills and access to job opportunities.

The next most common 'type' of social mobility work focused on recruitment – for example, offering a variety of routes into employment, introducing or continuing inclusive hiring practices, and implementing targeted employment programmes. Entrants offered over 1,500 apprenticeships, paid internships (including through Kickstart) and other work placements linked to potential employment in 2020-21, and entrants worked creatively to deliver these activities remotely during the pandemic. Reported outcomes included more diverse workforces and student bodies, and more successful routes into employment.

#### **Key finding 2** To support retention, employers aimed to create more inclusive workplaces and to promote awareness around social mobility.

Employers' actions to support retention focused on creating more inclusive workplaces and encouraging culture change. Staff networks and targeted mentoring programmes aimed to provide focused support for employees from marginalised groups, including those from less advantaged SEBs. To improve awareness of and support for social mobility, entrants celebrated 'socially mobile' employees as role models, while internal events provided space for employees to learn about social mobility. Where implemented, these initiatives reflected an understanding that promoting socio-economic diversity must be accompanied by efforts to ensure inclusive workplaces for employees from less advantaged SEBs.

#### **Key finding 3** Key facilitators for advancing social mobility included the drive to make a difference, motivated leadership, collaboration and resources.

A drive to make a difference was the first key facilitator for entrants working to advance social mobility – without this, meaningful commitments to social mobility or wider D&I work were unlikely. Examples of 'going against the grain' included establishing fairer, more transparent work experience programmes, removing academic grade requirements for entry-level positions, and voluntary CEO and senior leader pay cuts to ensure financial security for employees during the pandemic.

Another key driver of effective social mobility work involved motivated leaders (at both junior and senior levels) who kept social mobility on the agenda. These leaders facilitated effective social mobility work through collaboration with employees from less advantaged groups, across internal departments and with external partners. Committing resources was also essential, from financial resources for targeted activities to hiring full-time staff to deliver social mobility and wider D&I work.

**Key finding 4****Best practice to advance social mobility included intersectional approaches and advocating for wider change.**

Among 2021 entrants, law firms and professional services firms were the most likely to demonstrate intersectional approaches to social mobility and to advocate for wider change. There were also notable examples from the retail, hospitality and higher education sectors, who adopted similar approaches. Intersectional approaches to social mobility were rooted in understanding that being from a less advantaged SEB and from one or more marginalised groups – including being racially minoritised, female, LGBTQ+, disabled and/or part of a religious minority – leads to multiple, compounding forms of disadvantage. To put intersectionality into practice, entrants embedded social mobility within a wider D&I strategy, collected data on SEBs alongside other background characteristics, promoted an intersectional understanding of social mobility, and developed meaningful actions based on transparent analysis and reporting. For example, at one organisation, intersectional analysis revealed that White, female employees from less advantaged SEBs took the longest to progress through the firm, while less advantaged SEB employees across almost all ethnic groups and of all genders took longer to progress than employees from higher SEBs. Based on these findings, interventions including training, coaching and sponsorship were developed and targeted where they were most needed. In addition to internal best practice, entrants took the lead by promoting social mobility externally. This included engaging clients in social mobility work, participating in sector-wide initiatives, collaborating with peers through professional bodies, and influencing wider audiences through events and resources for employers.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1 **Robust data collection, analysis and reporting are needed to inform targeted social mobility work.**

Before organisations take action to improve social mobility, they need to understand and define the problem(s) to be addressed – ideally using high-quality internal diversity data. Only around a third of entrants reported data collection activities in 2020-21 – although it is possible that ongoing data collection was not reported, or that entrants drew on external evidence regarding socio-economic diversity in their sectors. Where collected internally, quantitative background data allowed entrants to understand how diverse (or not) their organisations were, and whether those from less advantaged SEBs had equal opportunities and fair outcomes in the workplace. Meanwhile, qualitative data provided insights into perspectives, experiences and priorities for change among employees from less advantaged SEBs. The Social Mobility Commission's recent [toolkit on socio-economic diversity and inclusion](#) provides a valuable starting point for employers looking to measure SEBs, including the 'one key question' to ask. Recent publications from [KPMG UK](#) and [PwC](#) also provide key examples of socio-economic pay gap reporting and target setting around socio-economic diversity in the workplace.

### Recommendation 2 **More action is required to support the progression of employees from less advantaged SEBs.**

Activities to support the progression of employees from less advantaged SEBs were the least reported 'type' of social mobility work in 2020-21. Ensuring fair opportunities to promotion – including through positive action and targeted training and development opportunities – is a crucial element of advancing social mobility. There are important implications for retention, since employees are likely to seek opportunities elsewhere if they are not able to progress and develop at their organisation. There are also clear links to the wider social mobility agenda: people from less advantaged SEBs are significantly underrepresented at the most senior levels in the UK, which cannot be addressed without targeted initiatives to facilitate progression and promotion throughout their careers. We were encouraged to see entrants engaging with initiatives specifically focused on equity of progression and socio-economic diversity, such as the [City of London Socio-Economic Taskforce](#), and we hope to see more examples of progression-related activities in future SOMO entries.

### Recommendation 3 **Further action is needed to support employees from less advantaged SEBs, including those who are leading social mobility work.**

It was encouraging to see employers implementing initiatives to foster more inclusive workplaces. However, to support and retain those from less advantaged SEBs, it is also vital to improve employment conditions by ensuring financial security, job security and safe working environments. This is crucial if employers are to support a wider definition of social mobility, in which people from less advantaged groups can thrive no matter what their background or occupation. We were encouraged by entrants from the facilities management, hospitality and retail sectors who were improving employment conditions as Living Wage employers and who supported flexible working options. We hope to see more examples in future years.

Many of the individuals driving social mobility work were themselves from less advantaged SEBs and other marginalised groups. The commitment and passion of these individuals was rightly celebrated in entries, and they should be supported to continue their valuable work. However, there may be 'triple labour' involved for employees in these positions: working to advance social mobility, overcoming barriers faced as members of marginalised groups, and fulfilling their actual day jobs. Strategies to support these leaders include treating social mobility and D&I work as part of (rather than 'above and beyond') full-time jobs, creating dedicated roles for social mobility and D&I work, and encouraging allyship and action from employees in more advantaged groups.

# | APPENDIX



## TAXES:

The undersigned borrower acknowledges that they have read and understand the terms of the loan agreement and that the installment of taxes will be delinquent and penalties will be assessed if they do not pay the taxes on time. Buyer is aware that they are responsible for the taxes on the property described within the terms of the loan agreement.

## INSTRUCTIONS

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302. Less amount  
303. CASH TO  
SUBSTITUTE FORM 1099  
negligence penalty or other  
constitutes the Gross Proceeds  
You are required by law to provide  
subject to civil or criminal penalties

(H)

(W)

## Appendix: Methods

### Submission process

The submission process for the 2021 UK Social Mobility Awards opened in April 2021 and closed in June 2021. The awards were open to UK-based private and public sector organisations, universities and schools. Entries for individual categories (Champion of the Year, Mentor of the Year, Rising Star) were nominated and submitted by their organisations. Organisations were able to submit more than one entry to each individual category (for each person entered), but only one entry per organisation for each organisational category. Organisations were able to submit separate entries to as many relevant categories as they chose. Social mobility-related activities conducted from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021 were eligible for consideration. Entrants were asked to provide a written submission, comprising: a 200-word executive summary, a 1,200-word description of activities conducted, barriers faced and how these were overcome, and a 300-word description of what was achieved and how success was measured. Entrants were also able to submit up to three pieces of supporting information.

### Analysis and reporting

Data from all eligible entries (n = 99) were analysed qualitatively using the Framework approach,<sup>34</sup> which allowed analysis within and across cases and themes. Using themes covered in the submission template and other themes emerging from the data, we assembled a matrix in which each row represented an individual entry and each column a related theme. Within- and cross-case analysis was conducted to identify trends by sector and by type of activity (outreach, recruitment and so on).

Data from entries on sector and location of activities were coded and synthesised to produce descriptive sample statistics. Publicly available information on the number of employees, students and pupils per organisation was used for aggregate figures on organisational size (see Chapter 2). Quantitative data provided by entrants was synthesised to report overall reach and engagement in social mobility activities (see Chapter 3). Due to the range of approaches to measuring and reporting outcomes across entries, we analysed outcomes data thematically rather than quantitatively.

<sup>34</sup>Gale, N.K. et al (2013) 'Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research'. BMC Medical Research Methodology 13 (177). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-117>.