

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Business Seminar 2024



Highlights from the 2024 Social Mobility Business Seminar

On 21 March, The [UK Social Mobility Awards](#) held the seventh annual Social Mobility Business Seminar. The event convened leaders and organisations from the private and public sectors to advance social mobility. The Seminar aimed to inspire individuals and organisations to begin, continue, or take the lead in their social mobility journeys.

Speakers

On the day, we were joined by insightful speakers and panellists from the private sector who shared ways they are actively advancing social mobility. All our speakers communicated passionately for business leaders to 'do more' to widen the gate and create equitable opportunities for individuals from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (SEBs).

The Seminar explored a range of ways that organisations can get involved with social mobility and highlighted the benefits for organisations who actively seek to advance the cause. Ways that organisations can progress social mobility include outreach work within underrepresented communities, removing recruitment and progression barriers for individuals from less advantaged SEBs, and improving the sense of belonging in the workplace – specific examples of best practice can be found in The UK Social Mobility Awards [2023 Winners' Case Studies Report](#).

A key message from this year's Seminar was that inclusive workspaces are shaped by employees from diverse backgrounds, and rely on broad, lived experiences of the challenges faced in communities. This depends on workforces which fairly represent the UK population. The Speakers felt that the conversation surrounding social mobility needs to be broadened beyond access to professional roles only via university routes. Businesses must also consider creating diverse pathways to local jobs and professions to unlock talent across the UK. It is the responsibility of organisations to create accessible, welcoming workspaces rather than employees to fit into social class expectations.

2024 Speakers & Panellists

MC & Moderator:

- Tunde Banjoko OBE (*Founder, UK Social Mobility Awards & Making The Leap*)

Speakers:

- Will Serle (*Chief People Officer, National Grid*)
- Jenny Colville (*Head of ESG and Sustainability, Landsec*)
- Paul Stanley (*Chief Executive, UKI Financial Service, Accenture*)
- Dipi McKernan (*Chief Operating Officer, M&G wealth*)
- Wendy Lyons (*Managing Director, Human Assets*)

Panellists:

- Barry Murphy (*Partner, PwC*)
- Dimple Mistry (*Senior HR Leader, Investment Management*)
- Rhian Kelly (*Chief Sustainability Officer, National Grid*)
- Tracey Fuller (*UK Head of Engagement and Impact, BNP Paribas*).

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Business Seminar 2024

Key Points from Speakers and Panellists

Below, we use [Making The Leap's framework for the social mobility journey](#) to summarise the key points made by all our Seminar speakers and panellists. This summary draws on speakers' presentations, the panel discussion, and panellists' responses to questions from the audience.

Building the Foundations

Data was a significant discussion point during the Seminar and a key takeaway from the event.

Why? Gathering employees SEB data enables organisations to understand the level of socio-economic diversity in their workforce, equipping senior leaders to take meaningful, informed action.

How? The [Social Mobility Commission's Toolkit](#) can be used to measure organisations level of socio-economic diversity. This requires clear, authentic communication to ensure the use of SEB data is widely understood by employees. Organisations can improve response rates by facilitating self-identification opportunities for employees and creating Social Mobility Employee Groups.

Strategy & Leadership

Why? Social mobility remains an inconsistent part of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. Action on social mobility starts with buy-in from senior leadership.

How? Communicating lived experiences of social mobility from senior leaders and creating meaningful targets and/or commitments to ensure leaders are held accountable for progress.

Doing the work

Why? Profitable for organisations; fits in as part of the 'forgotten S' in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG); access to a diverse talent pool; and brings innovative ideas into organisations.

How? Targeted outreach work with schools and community programmes; revising organisational practices to remove barriers that may exist within recruitment and progression; celebrate social mobility success stories; and implement mentoring opportunities for employees from less advantaged SEBs.

Taking the lead

Why? "If organisations do not change, nothing changes" was a powerful message from our panel. By collaborating, advocating, and convening with other businesses and charitable organisations higher social impact will develop.

How? Supporting social mobility charities such as [Making The Leap](#) or [Progress Together](#); attending Masterclasses hosted by the Social Mobility Commission; and celebrating your social mobility work whilst inspiring others to do so through initiatives such as [Social Mobility Day](#) and The [UK Social Mobility Awards](#).

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Business Seminar 2024

We asked our panellists some questions that are widely discussed in the social mobility sphere. Here are their responses...

How do you think social mobility does or should fit in the diversity agenda?

"It does and it should. The S in CSR and ESG must be within these, not in a separate discussion. Building a diverse workforce with more voices around the table creates another layer and brings value from other perspectives."

"When you start looking at data intersections, patterns emerge. Building and analysing data makes these issues more prominent and visible."

What are your thoughts on socio-economic status being included as one of the protected characteristics?

"It absolutely should be protected. Direct and indirect discrimination is better recognised across the other characteristics and should also be recognised within socio-economic status."

"It is a gradual journey, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't start. Yes, it is complex and difficult, but we should push this forward."

How can you advance social mobility in the UK?

UK SOCIAL MOBILITY AWARDS

Enter the 2024 UK Social Mobility Awards in association with National Grid.

The [UK Social Mobility Awards](#) (SOMOs) is a national leadership initiative dedicated to the advancement of social mobility. Every year, the SOMOs offer a nationwide platform to celebrate educators' and employers' social mobility work. Winners across 14 categories are decided by an independent judging panel of leading figures from the private and public sectors. Submissions to the 2024 SOMOs open on 29 April 2024.

To learn more, visit www.somo.uk.

Participate in Social Mobility Day 2024

On 13 June 2024, Social Mobility Day provides an opportunity to promote wider conversations about social mobility and encourage action to improve outcomes for people from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

To learn how you can #ShareMoments for social mobility this year, visit www.socialmobilityday.com.

I'M SUPPORTING
SOCIAL MOBILITY
DAY ON 13TH JUNE

socialmobilityday.com



To learn more about our findings...

Drawing on evidence from organisations employing over 1 million people, our annual research reports explore what employers and educators are doing to advance social mobility, and how they do it – the challenges overcome, and the enabling factors supporting effective social mobility work.

Check out our latest research at www.somo.uk/reports.