

Social Mobility

Business Seminar 2025



Highlights from the 2025 Social Mobility Business Seminar

On 25 March, The UK Social Mobility Awards held the eighth annual Social Mobility Business Seminar. The theme for this year's seminar was "Navigating Change: Social Mobility in a World in Flux". The Seminar convened leaders and organisations from the private and public sectors, inspiring individuals and organisations to begin, continue, or take the lead in their social mobility journeys.

Speakers

This year's seminar explored a range of pressing topics, including how to ensure social mobility has staying power in today's political climate, why social mobility should be a protected characteristic, and how to ensure the rise of AI doesn't widen existing inequities.

Our panellists also discussed what low cost/high impact measurements businesses can implement to really make a difference, as well as their personal thoughts on how they would push social mobility forward across the UK if they had limitless resources to do so.

Key Takeaways

90% of attendees felt more inspired to take action on social mobility after the Seminar

81% felt there were valuable networking opportunities at the Seminar

2025 Speakers and Panellists

MC & Moderator:

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

Speakers:

Will Serle (Chief People Officer, National Grid)

Matthew Crummack (CEO, Domestic & General)

Sheriff Alderman Gregory Jones KC

(Aldermanic Sheriff of the City of London)

Sophie Evans & Kimone Telfer (Brand Point Zero)

Wendy Lyons (Managing Director, Human Assets)

Panellists:

Chanelle Gray (UK Board Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Savills)

Natasha Frangos (Managing Partner, HaysMac)

Paul Gerrard (Campaigns, Public Affairs and Policy Director, Co-op Group)

Helen Mullings (Chief People Officer, PA Consulting)

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Key Points from Panel Discussion

During the Seminar, our panellists were presented with a range of questions about the state of social mobility in the UK, how current affairs are constantly evolving the issue, and how technological advancements create new challenges. Panellists also answered questions from the audience, providing insight into their businesses and how we can work together to move the dial on social mobility. Below is a selection of these questions and answers.

Q1 What low cost high impact measurements can business implement to make a difference?

"It starts with outreach - we raise our profile across a diverse group to make people aware. The reason why outreach is so powerful is because it's strategically done, it can break down preconceived ideas about the profession and therefore inspire young people to want to get in to the profession. The work is never done but there should be lots of ideas that are live and active within the business."

"No matter how big or small you are, fundamentally you are somewhere in your community...There is always a school near you who you may be recruiting from in 10/15 years. Help families and kids in the area understand what's possible."

"We're really looking at the move from inspire to hire -there's all this great inspiring work going on, but once they get to the assessment centre or recruitment process, there's a big door in front of them...If you can and you do have a process, challenge it every step of the way. Is this the best and fairest way of recruiting? Merit is a myth, so if you can look at your drop off points - look at the data."

Q2 Social mobility isn't a protected characteristic, what policy do you think the government could adapt to help it become one?

"We should be pushing for social mobility to be a protected characteristic because it comes back to that point of strategy around intersectionality. It's the right thing to do, and if you can connect it to growth and prosperity, you've got a chance. I don't think we should give up on it becoming a characteristic."

"We also need to think about what the obstacles to social mobility are in our society. For example, student loans leave young people in a horrendous situation and creates a further barrier to social mobility. Really thinking about how can we do this in a way that helps those who need it most. Apprenticeship schemes are difficult to operate - they're very rigid. Let's sit down and make them easier so we can embrace them fully as employers."

Q3 How do we ensure AI doesn't widen existing inequities?

"I think AI can help us in so many ways, we have to embrace it - but in this intermediary revolution you have to be cognisant of the threats it has to the workforce as well as the benefits. Digital AI skills are a tremendous leveller. Digital careers need to be accessible - not everyone wants to go to university or take on that debt...Digital apprenticeships is a good way around this."

"Regarding threats, administrative tasks can easily now be undertaken by AI - eg. Application screening...You have to be careful because AI can carry historic bias even more so than a human being."