

**EMPLOYER
INDEX
—2021**

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Social Mobility Employer Index 2021

Submission Feedback

Prepared by The Social Mobility Foundation

September 2021

Introduction

City of London Corporation

Overall ranking: 40

Thank you for making a submission to the Social Mobility Employer Index 2021. Below is your individual feedback report which highlights where your organisation is performing well, benchmarks you against other organisations and suggests areas for improvement. For further context on this report, please also read the main Index Key Findings report, which will be published in November.

In the interest of fair and consistent treatment, we have assessed each employer based on the information we have received in this year's submission only; generally speaking, we have not compared this submission with any data received previously but have taken notice where organisations have explicitly highlighted improvements on last year or have provided data from previous years.

We recognise that the last year has been an extraordinary year for many employers. As we look to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on social mobility, it is important to hear how the pandemic has affected your organisation and the adaptations you have needed to make to your work on improving social mobility. The insights you have provided will help us to establish what best practice is in the 'new normal', as well as informing us where more needs to be done to improve social mobility across the UK.

Please note that we will not be publishing previous years' rankings alongside the 2021 ranking and so if your organisation is ranked lower than in a previous Index submission, this will not be known unless anyone specifically looks for previous top lists.

In addition to using this feedback, we would also strongly advise reading the 2022 guidance notes before starting your next submission - these will be published when the next version of the Index is launched early next year. The [Employer Toolkit](#) from the Social Mobility Commission and the Bridge Group also provides helpful guidance.

2021/2022 Timeline

- November 2021: Announcement of Social Mobility Employer Index Top list and 2021 key findings report published
- February/March 2022: 2022 Employer Index and Employee survey open
- May/June 2022: Closing date for submissions to the 2022 Employer Index and Employee survey

If you have any queries regarding the Index or your feedback please contact employerindex@socialmobility.org.uk

Foreword

Thank you for participating in this year's Social Mobility Employer Index. Despite the uncertainties of the current environment and the ongoing pressures we know Covid-19 is putting organisations under, your Index submission shows some positive steps towards tackling social mobility. Congratulations on making it into the list of Top 75 employers in the 2021 Social Mobility Employer Index. The Top 75 recognises the organisations that are taking the most action to ensure they are open to accessing and progressing talent from all backgrounds. Your organisation is benefitting from accessing talent from a wide range of backgrounds, and working to ensure employees progress based on effectiveness in role, rather than by background – but as you'll know, there is still more to do. We hope that your organisation will use its position in the Top 75 to advocate for social mobility, implementing new approaches that challenge others to do more over the next 12 months.

— Sarah Atkinson, CEO

Feedback

Section 2: Work with Young People

Decile: 9

It is positive that the City of London Corporation is targeting its outreach work at schools with above average levels of Free School Meals or low levels of attainment, is working with a fairly high proportion of children that are eligible for Free School Meals, and is working with schools without existing relationships with employers like yourselves

It is positive that your organisation is using social mobility cold spots to target its outreach work, reaching young people beyond your doorstep in areas where the need for support is highest. As the Social Mobility Commission's ['State of the Nation 2020-21'](#) report re-emphasised, the biggest gap in access to opportunity is no longer the 'north/south' divide, but that between London and the rest of the country. It's therefore more important than ever that organisations like yours continue to target your support at social mobility cold spots, using new approaches to reach young people across the country.

For information on current social mobility cold spots in the UK: [England](#); [Northern Ireland](#); [Scotland](#); [Wales](#).

Your organisation has a fairly strong link between the outreach work you do and your recruitment pipeline. The most effective way to improve social mobility is to provide direct opportunities for employment for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. It is encouraging that you are doing so, as well as providing follow-up support through work-shadowing opportunities, career talks and interview guidance. It would be good to see data to show that the support you are providing is working.

Your organisation's work in this area is well-targeted. We would query the statistic saying that 100% of students are eligible for Free School Meals as this seems unusually high, and would encourage your organisation to look into whether this is accurate. Additionally, we would suggest that the organisation starts to collect data on the number of work experience placements that go to friends/family of employees and clients. Understanding the percentage of your placements that are allocated in this way will enable the organisation to gauge whether or not too many placements are offered informally and encourage colleagues to widen the pool of people they are offered to.

Your organisation is not currently flagging students from your outreach work when they go on to apply for recruitment programmes, internships or permanent roles. Given your work in this area is well targeted, it is likely that the young people you encounter through your outreach are often from backgrounds which are under-represented in your workforce. We would strongly encourage you to collect this data as part of evaluating the impact of your outreach work, in order to assess whether that work is having the desired effect. If the number of applicants or successful applicants is low, it highlights a missed opportunity for you, given the resources you devote to your outreach activity.

The student feedback on the outreach programme is positive, and suggests that the programme is improving students' confidence and understanding of the sector. It is also good that you are tracking the career / educational outcomes of the young people on these activities. We would encourage you to use this information to support your follow-up activity.

Section 3: Routes into the Employer

Decile: 4

It is good to see that your organisation is offering apprenticeships and a graduate scheme. If possible for your organisation, we would encourage you to explore the possibility of introducing a school leaver programme to offer a wide range of possible entry routes into your organisation.

We are pleased to see that your organisation is offering higher and degree level apprenticeships as these can provide a genuine route into the organisation that is comparable with graduate routes and allows for ongoing career progression. Across all Index organisations we can see a clear trend of employers offering more apprenticeships at a higher and degree level (levels 4-7). Your organisation is mainly offering apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3. While these apprenticeships represent a good starting point for levy spending, these are equivalent to GCSE's and A-levels and might not provide a genuine route into the organisation that is comparable with graduate routes and allows for ongoing career progression. We would therefore encourage you to explore the possibility of offering more apprenticeships at a higher and degree level (levels 4-7). We were pleased to see in last year's Index that an increasing number of organisations are offering high-level apprenticeships now.

We would recommend that the organisation starts to collect background data on its apprentices. This is important because while it is assumed that apprenticeships are naturally good for social mobility, research suggests that disadvantaged young people are substantially less likely than their better-off peers to start the best apprenticeships. An example for such research is the Social Mobility Commission's report '[Apprenticeships and social mobility](#)'.

Section 4: Attraction

Decile: 5

The recruitment section of your website is strong – some other good examples are provided below:

- [Capgemini](#)
- [HM Treasury](#)
- [Linklaters LLP](#)

Your organisation does have a graduate recruitment programme, but your submission suggests you did not visit any universities as part of the recruitment process. While what 'good'

looks like for this will differ across sectors, some organisations have come up with good alternatives to university visits for accessing a wide pool of graduate talent, including:

- Working with third sector providers who can reach students at a range of universities across the country, and that ideally target their support at students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Running open days at your offices, where potential applicants can learn about the organisation and attend sessions giving support on CV writing/application tips etc. If possible, run open days in different regional offices to ensure that students from across the country can attend. Consider running additional virtual events to reach students that don't live close to your offices.
- Making sure that the wording used when advertising the graduate programme is not exclusionary (i.e. 'we are looking for the best students from top universities') and is written in a way that encourages students not to self-select out of the process.
- Being clear about the recruitment process, and talking about any additional support the organisation offers, such as online Q&A sessions and practice online tests.

Many employers have also moved their attraction activities online over the last year. These employers felt that running virtual activities allowed them to interact with students at universities outside of the reach of their offices and some noted an increase in student attendance and engagement. Virtual activities present an opportunity to reach a wider range of universities and, as such, more diverse talent from across the UK. However, the importance of direct interaction between event attendees and ambassadors of the organisation should be acknowledged and, if possible, replicated in virtual events. Many employers are exploring the possibility of running both in person and virtual events moving forward. While this is positive, it is important to ensure that in person events are not just focused on a small number of Russell Group universities with non-Russell Group universities being left out.

Your organisation does have recruitment initiatives in place, but they are not specifically targeted at any one demographic and so while they may indirectly support people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, it's not necessarily the case that they will do so in a significant way. If the organisation is keen to focus specifically on social mobility, we would recommend running an outreach programme designed to encourage applications, and increase successful applications, from those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Section 5: Recruitment and Selection

Decile: 4

While your organisation has minimum academic requirements, it does have lower requirements than many Index organisations for its graduate and apprenticeship schemes. This is positive, as there is little evidence to suggest there is a connection between prior attainment and performance in role and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have higher prior attainment. Therefore, your approach could be broadening the socioeconomic demographic of the applicant pool, although we would recommend analysing your application data to see if that is the case.

Based on your submission, the organisation is not currently measuring how many successful applicants met, but did not exceed, the stated minimum grade requirements. Organisations that were able to provide us with their average A-Level grades often found that these far exceeded the minimum requirements, but were rarely able to say whether this correlated with performance. We would encourage you to collect this data, in order to establish if the minimum requirements are being used as intended, or whether successful applicants are always exceeding them. If the latter is the case, we would recommend revising the published minimum requirements, in order to more accurately reflect the reality of the application process, or reviewing the recruitment process to understand why successful candidates so often exceed them.

It's positive that your organisation has removed candidates' names, grades and university attended from most stages of the recruitment process, as it could be the case that these factors have an unduly adverse impact on the success rates of certain demographics.

You are also scoring students based on extra-curricular activities. There can be a case for scoring extra-curricular activities depending on what the activities are, but often the activities that are being scored by organisations are those not available to many socioeconomically disadvantaged young people; we would encourage your organisation to review this part of the recruitment process with those students in mind. A related point is that some young people are restricted in the extra-curricular activities they can participate in due to family circumstances, or have often experienced a bigger step up to university and therefore are not pushing to be captain of the netball team or social secretary for a society because they are focussing on their studies. Evidence of these activities being accessed disproportionately by those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds can be found in the Bridge Group's report on graduate outcomes [here](#).

It is positive that your organisation uses standardised questions for its interviews. While there is a degree of variation in every interview, where standardised questions are not used it allows each individual interviewer too much leeway to look for what they personally want and not what the organisation as a whole is looking for, and means that candidates are not all being judged on the same criteria. Strengths-based interviewing, as opposed to competency-based, has also been proven to have a positive impact on diversity. More information on this can be found in SMF's guide for students [here](#).

Your submission indicates that you are currently not flagging candidates with certain socioeconomic background characteristics in the recruitment process. We encourage the introduction of a contextual recruitment system to support students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds through the application process. We also encourage employers not to use just 1 flag/data point on a candidate for taking action; where only 1 flag/data point is used on a candidate it is not usually a reliable indicator of their socioeconomic position. Ideally you would have 2-3 flags on the same person as, for example, a child who is first generation to be going to university may have parents who joined professions when a university education was not essential and is therefore in a high income household.

We would also suggest you consider taking a second look at under-represented candidates before they are rejected as sometimes the context of the candidate can be missed in the initial sift.

Your organisation is not currently monitoring its recruitment process to identify whether there are particular stages at which those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds fall down. The employers that have made the most progress with adjusting their recruitment process have all started by assessing exactly which stage candidates from particular backgrounds are being disproportionately rejected and then changing/removing the parts of the process that seem to disadvantage those candidates, in order to level the playing field. Monitoring the process in this way is something that should be done on an ongoing basis to ensure that one year's results are not an anomaly and also because different employers have different experiences. For example, some think video interviews have improved their process, while others have found female candidates do disproportionately badly in them.

We would also encourage you to collect feedback on the recruitment process from unsuccessful candidates and analyse this feedback by socioeconomic background to identify any stages that this group might find particularly difficult.

It may also be worth looking at the relationship between social mobility and other areas such as gender and race.

There is increasing evidence – for example in *The Class Ceiling* (Friedman/Laurison) – that those from lower socioeconomic groups can suffer a 'double disadvantage' if they are also female or BAME. Access and progression are unequal by socioeconomic background (in its own right) and evidence also indicates that this characteristic is also correlated with some aspects of race (i.e. Black employees are often more likely to be from lower socioeconomic background compared to other races), and that this correlation has a compounding effect. Evidence of this can be found in research done by The Bridge Group with [law firms](#) and the [Civil Service Fast Stream](#). While not every organisation will have enough data to make definitive conclusions, looking at how candidates do if they are in more than one under-represented category can help you work out where you most need to focus your efforts.

Section 6: Data Collection

Decile: 9

It is very positive that your organisation is collecting multiple data points for new entrants and current employees. Half of the Index employers are now collecting socioeconomic background data from their new and existing employees, predominantly using the metrics:

- Parental occupation
- First generation in the family to attend university
- Eligibility for Free School Meals
- Type of school attended

In line with the Social Mobility Commission's recommendation on data collection, we advise collecting 3 to 4 of these data points. We recommend using parental occupation at the age of

14 as the main metric. You can find the Commission's toolkit on data collection [here](#) and access the full scorecard [here](#).

Some employers have begun to enquire about whether those who attended an independent school did so with the support of a bursary (and then often categorising this group as lower SEB). We advise caution here, since a great proportion of those in receipt of a bursary may a) in fact be on a non means-tested scholarship or b) be in receipt of a means-tested bursary that is a relatively small proportion of the overall fee (therefore still typically requiring significant financial contributions from parents / carers). As discussed above, we would also advise against giving too much weight to whether someone attended a non-selective state school when determining their background as this data point be placed in context with other socioeconomic metrics.

It is very encouraging to see that your organisation also looks at the socioeconomic background of unsuccessful applicants. We would encourage you to analyse if those from a lower socioeconomic background do disproportionately fall down in the application process.

The City of London Corporation has a very high completion rate for your socioeconomic background data, including from existing employees which is where we generally see a much lower completion rate. More generally, we found that across the Index, completion rates for socioeconomic background questions were mixed, with some close to 100% and some as low as 10%. High response rates are important because they help to ensure that the data collected provides accurate monitoring of the recruitment and retention of staff, and a better understanding of areas for action. The Social Mobility Commission recommend aiming for an overall response rate of at least 70% both for existing employees and new hires.

Strategies for increasing completion rates include:

- Placing the questions in the context of other diversity monitoring, and underlining that people can opt not to answer them;
- Providing staff with a detailed explanation of why the data is being collected and how the organisation plans to use it;
- Senior leadership regularly emphasising the importance of collecting this data;
- Linking the collection of the data to the business case for being open to all talent, regardless of background; and
- Using case studies to illustrate how other organisations have used their data collection exercises to improve recruitment practices.

It is positive that you are currently reviewing data against national benchmarks. It is important to understand how the socioeconomic background of your workforce compares to the national spread of the workforce population.

This year we have seen a decrease in the number of organisations able to provide workforce data broken down by background, which is a worrying trend. Less than half of Index organisations have that data, and so it's very positive that your organisation was able to provide this.

Your organisation is not currently publishing the data you collect on the socioeconomic background of the workforce. While we understand that the publication of this data has some organisational risk, we would encourage all employers to collect and publish detailed data on

the socioeconomic make-up of their workforce to increase transparency and encourage a more open dialogue about social mobility.

Over half of Index entrants are now presenting their socioeconomic background data to their UK board/management team. This is encouraging as senior buy-in is crucial to driving social mobility work within an organisation.

Section 7: Progression, Culture and Experienced Hires

Decile: 10

It is very positive that your organisation is collecting data in this area. The increasing number of studies of pay, progression and retention in the workplace show that those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can progress at a slower rate than those from more privileged backgrounds and the only way to know if that is true at your organisation is to record the data on what happens in your workplace.

In particular, those from lower socioeconomic groups can suffer a 'double disadvantage' if they are also female or BAME. As you are already collecting data in this area, we would suggest the next step would be to look at socioeconomic background alongside gender and ethnicity.

It is positive to see that you are assessing whether those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds feel that the culture of the workplace is welcoming to them. While employers have generally taken a great deal of action to make the workplace more welcoming to people who may be female, BAME or LGBT, far less has usually been done for those who may be from a different class background. This means that at many organisations the Index targets there is a feeling that those from lower socioeconomic groups need to change how they speak, dress and act in order to fit in.

Index organisations are increasingly investing in support for employees from lower socioeconomic groups. Common support offers include buddying/mentoring, leadership programmes to encourage progression and the creation of employee networks. Given the importance of peer support for career progression, we would encourage you to explore initiatives like this.

Section 8: Advocacy

Decile: 10

It is positive to see that accountability for the City of London Corporation's approach to social mobility sits at Executive Team level, demonstrating the importance of the issue within your organisation. Senior support and buy-in is in many cases an important factor in establishing new best practices and driving cross-departmental change within an organisation.

It has been welcome to see the growth of organisations encouraging employees to share their stories of having come from a different background and it is particularly welcome if senior employees are involved in this. Junior colleagues can often feel their senior colleagues are all from the same background given the degree of assimilation that takes place the longer someone works somewhere. More and more organisations now run social mobility weeks

and/or have social mobility networks of employees. It is good to see that you have created a space for personal testimonials as part of your internal advocacy strategy, and that you are leveraging Bridge Group research to develop this work further.

Your organisation shows its investment in social mobility by engaging with your clients to raise awareness for the issue. Through your work as part of the Financial Services Skills Commission and the focus on social mobility for this year's Lord Mayor's Appeal, you are using your position to advocate for social mobility and encourage your clients to take action themselves.

Additionally, only just over a third of Index organisations are encouraging their supply chains to take action on social mobility so it's positive that your organisation is taking action on this area of social mobility. Employers like yours have significant purchasing power, and can create a positive chain-reaction by asking suppliers about their approach to social mobility as part of your contracting process, or working with them to build joint initiatives to tackle the problem. It's important that employers such as yours play their part in ensuring that organisations with less expertise or resource are still taking action on this issue.

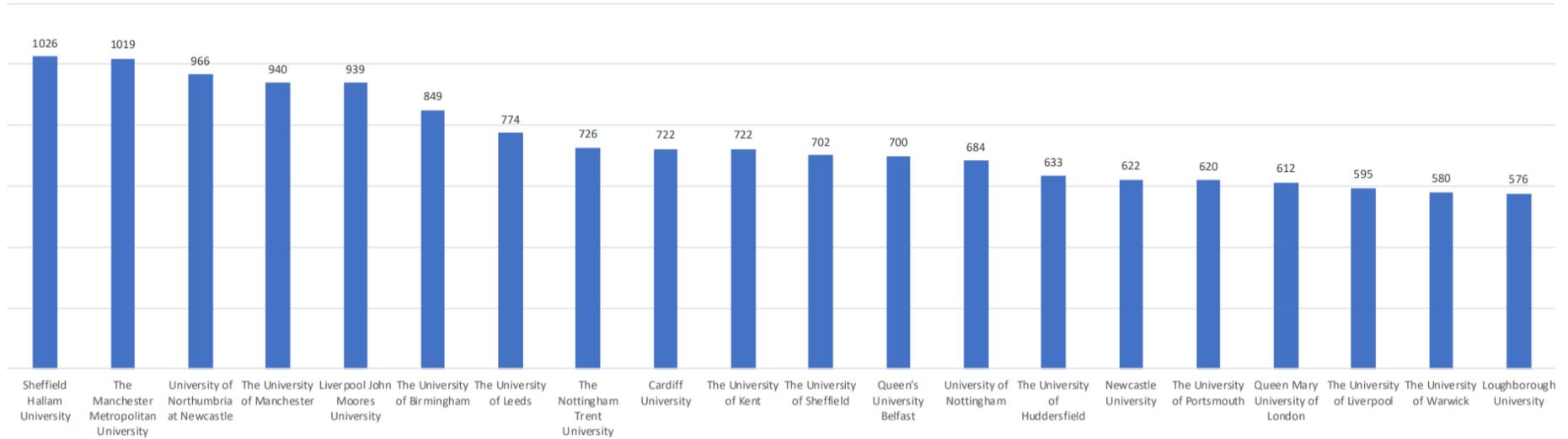
It's also encouraging that the organisation has some social mobility targets in place. Almost 40% of Index organisations now set social mobility targets as part of their wider business strategy. Based on the latest good practice, we would recommend setting targets (rather than quotas) since these are a helpful expression of success and typically the organisation's ambitions in this area. However, any such target should be well informed, so consider diversity within the talent pools you are drawing from, the way in which such a target might differ based on the occupational area within your organisation and seniority, and how the target may change over time. It is also great to see that these targets are monitored at board level and published externally.

Employee Survey

Your organisation did not participate in the employee survey this year. An overview of the survey results will be provided in the key findings report.

Appendix A

Lower SEB with BBB+ by institution



Top 20 institutions by the number of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with 300+ UCAS points (graduating this past summer). Please note the above data does not include courses allied to medicine or veterinary studies and only includes UK/HOME students.

Please contact employerindex@socialmobility.org.uk if you have any queries regarding the Index or your feedback

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