

City of London Corporation Committee Report

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| Committee(s): Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee | Dated: 16/06/2025 |
| Subject: Social Mobility Report | Public report: For Information |
| This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides business enabling functions | Diverse Engaged Communities Dynamic Economic Growth Vibrant Thriving Destination Flourishing Public Spaces Providing Excellent Services Leading Sustainable Environment |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | No |
| If so, how much? | n/a |
| What is the source of Funding? | n/a |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | n/a |
| Report of: | Dionne Corradine, Chief Strategy Officer |
| Report author: | Helena Mattingley, Senior Equity, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) Change Partner Sarah Guerra, Equalities Director |

Summary

Improving social mobility is a core pillar of the City Corporation's Equality Objectives 2024–29 and is embedded within the Corporate Plan and People Strategy. Participating in the Social Mobility Employer Index (SMEI) provides a valuable benchmarking tool to assess and enhance our efforts in this area. Executive Leadership Board endorsed moving to a three-year accreditation pattern, commencing after 2025 submission.

The City Corporation's 2025 submission (Annex 1) outlines a wide range of internal and external facing activities supporting social mobility. This was submitted to the Social Mobility Foundation ahead of the deadline of 6 June 2025.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Note the appended 2025 Social Mobility Employer Index submission.

Main Report

Background

1. Socio-economic diversity is visible in our Mission¹, Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and echoed in the People Strategy 2024-2029. City Corporation is working hard to create an “exceptional work environment where employees have the skills, recognition and motivation to deliver our ambitious Corporate Plan”. To achieve this, we recognise skills and talent from every socio-economic background, enabling our staff to perform at their best. When people come together from different backgrounds, we increase innovation, improve services, and strengthen employer engagement. We also demonstrate that the experience for our staff reflects the vision for social mobility we articulate for the Square Mile.
2. Socio-economic diversity is core to how we operate internally and externally. This has been true for hundreds of years, in the foundation of Gresham College, the livery companies’ role in establishing City and Guild Apprenticeships, City Corporations’ convening role in Social Mobility Taskforce, leading to Progress Together as a leading membership body for social mobility. Most recently, the City Bridge Foundation announced its ten-year funding policy which prioritises (among three other themes) economic inequality. All show a recognition that ‘talent is everywhere, opportunity isn’t’, and are leading the way to changing this at national, regional and local levels.
3. City Corporation has dedicated one of the published Equality Objectives (2024-29) solely on socio-economic diversity as we believe that “someone’s socio-economic background should not limit their potential to flourish”. This ambition is underpinned by our socio-economic diversity aims:
 - Continue to use our influence to advance socio-economic diversity across the City, building on the success of the Socio-Economic Diversity Taskforce report and its recommendations.
 - Collaborate with a variety of communities to enable opportunities for those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to get in, get on, and belong in the City Corporation.
 - Continue to measure our performance as an employer across the eight areas set out in the Social Mobility Index.

¹ [Our Corporate Plan 2024-29 - City of London](#): The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK.

- Closer working across the City of London Corporation family to tackle barriers collectively and holistically for underrepresented groups.

Current Position – Social Mobility Employer Index

4. The City Corporation has participated in the Social Mobility Employer Index (SMEI) since 2017. The SMEI is the leading annual benchmarking and assessment tool for employer led social mobility.
5. City Corporation's rankings in the SMEI have varied since 2018 (Table 1), with a significant improvement in 2024 due to a more collaborative and feedback-informed approach. The number of competitors entering the SMEI changes each year, with a high of over 200 entries in 2021.

Table 1: City Corporation's SMEI Rankings

| Year | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Result | 66 | 56 | 50 | 40 | 67 | 87 | 58 |
| # Entries | 106 | 125 | 119 | 203 | 149 | 143 | 150 |

6. In 2025, the EEDI team engaged colleagues across the organisation to compile the SMEI submission. Since 2024, City Corporation has:
 - Continued to prioritise Social Economic Background (SEB) on par with protected characteristics in Equality Impact Analysis (EQIA)
 - Increased declaration rates for SEB, through engagement with Executive Leadership Board, Senior Leadership Team, internal comms teams, all staff networks and all staff events, moving from 16% to 29% for SEB
 - Engaged Executive Leadership Board in their Away Day to jump start our Theory of Change for Social Mobility
 - Trained EEDI Practitioners in facilitating Theory of Change
 - Collected SEB data from our Candidates, the first local authority in England to do so
 - Strengthened EEDI leadership through appointment of Equalities Director
 - Recruited dedicated senior EEDI professional for Social Mobility portfolio
 - Launched 'Social Mobility in the City', one of the City Belonging Networks open to all businesses in the Square Mile
 - Transformed the Free School Meals (FSM) process at Aldgate School by incorporating paper systems onto digital platforms, enabling automation of online checks for change of circumstance, instant decisions and higher accuracy and uptake of FSM
 - Supported City Corporation's Social Mobility Network to profile their news, e.g. participation in the Lord Mayor's Parade; promoting Listening Circles

e.g. Education, and Accent Bias

7. The SMEI narrative reflects a snapshot of key activities and signals our strategic direction. Highlights include:
 - Continued impact of Progress Together
 - Launch of 'Social Mobility in the City' with Accenture
 - City Bridge Trust's 10-year policy, *Standing with Londoners*, which prioritises tackling economic inequality
 - Ongoing development of a Theory of Change and Action Plan,
 - Investment in staff capacity, confidence and capability around change management, deepening cross working relationships between HR, EEDI practitioners in Institutions and Departments and Staff Network leads in City Corporation
 - Potential transformative impact of Project Sapphire and incoming ERP system
8. City of London Corporation received targeted feedback from the SMEI in 2024:
 - Calculate and publish class pay gap with targets
 - Take a comprehensive approach to contextual recruitment
 - Design and implement an inclusive decisions process
9. City Corporation is making progress to collecting sufficient socio-economic data to calculate the Class Pay Gap, increasing disclosure rates 16% to 29% for Social Economic Background (SEB). Recruitment improvements will be actioned with the development and implementation of Project Sapphire, the incoming Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. An inclusive decisions process (Equality Impact Assessments) was launched and will meet the expectations for socio-economic inclusion for SMEI.
10. To meet the 6 June deadline, the full SMEI application was shared to the incoming Chair, previous Chair and Deputy Chair of the EDI Sub Committee. A draft has been circulated to all contributors and shared with the Executive Leadership Board. Our full submission (see Annex 1) includes extensive information on social mobility activity across City Corporation.

Proposals - Future Focus

11. City Corporation will look to measure socio-economic diversity outcomes of 'getting in' by collecting and analysing recruitment and selection trends, 'getting on' through analysing staff progression, and belonging through staff experience measures. Externally, City Corporation will anticipate the needs of all socio-economic groups in providing excellent services and in engaging diverse communities, and challenging all businesses within the Square Mile to champion socio-economic diversity as a path for dynamic economic growth.

12. Areas of future focus have been informed by previous feedback from this committee and emerging through the collation of evidence for this SMEI submission. These areas will be validated through the SMEI feedback (likely October).

13. Our future activity may centre on

- Continually increasing staff SEB disclosure, and analysing and publishing it when it is robust enough to do so
- Producing 'Class Pay Gap', similar to the statutory Gender Pay Gap report, equipping City Corporation to consciously close any class gap through targeted activity, leading to a more engaged staff community who are recognised for their contributions
- Articulating measures for socio-economic diversity in (e.g.) recruitment, progression, leadership roles, training uptake so that socio-economic background has no negative impact on internal progression rates or retention
- Reviewing the end-to-end recruitment process, implementing contextual shortlisting, offering opt-in support for candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and training on accent bias for recruiting managers, enabling access across all socio-economic groups so City Corporation benefits from the full range of skills and talents
- Clearer targeting / focus support for social mobility, in contrast to open and inclusive support which is available to all

Sharing case studies on our best practice

Proposals – Action Plan and Theory of Change

14. A Social Mobility Action Plan and Theory of Change is in development. A Theory of Change is a roadmap that visualises how specific activities lead to outputs, and how the outputs will lead to the intended outcomes.

15. The Social Mobility Action Plan uses:

- 2024 feedback
- our insights gained from collating this year's submission
- voices from our critical friends
- external leaders

as a basis for how to progress in socio-economic diversity internally and champion social mobility externally.

Social Mobility Working Group

16. After submission, a Social Mobility Working Group, will use the Action Plan and Theory of Change to oversee and deliver the activities across the organisation. The activities of the group will reflect the full span of our Equality Objective for socio-economic diversity: our influence externally in the City; community outreach

to enable opportunities to 'get in', 'get on' and belong in City Corporation; closer working across the City of London family to tackle barriers for underrepresented groups. We will use the SMEI as a way to measure our progress.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- Strategic implications – All Corporate Plan 2024-29 Outcomes are impacted (directly and indirectly) by this work, as well as outcomes in the People Strategy and Equality Objectives. The SMEI developing Theory of Change and Action Plan will develop activities that enable delivery of our wider equality objectives,
- Financial implications - £1200+VAT covered by the EEDI budget.
- Resource implications – Led by EEDI team, contributions and activity dispersed throughout City Corporation
- Legal implications – none
- Risk implications – Potential reputational risk of being perceived as excluding specific socio-economic groups mitigated by the actions in train.
- Equalities implications – This proposal is a core part of our commitment to equality; it supports City Corporation's commitment to be an organisation where people feel respected, and they belong - going beyond the protected characteristics (as set at the Equality Act 2010) to include social mobility.
- Climate implications – none
- Security implications - none

Conclusion

17. The 2025 SMEI submission reflects extensive cross-organisational collaboration and a deepening commitment to social mobility. Feedback and rankings are expected in October 2025.

Appendices

Appendix 1 –2025 City Corporation Social Mobility Employer Index Submission

Helena Mattingley

Senior Equity, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) Change Partner
E: CSPT.EDI@cityoflondon.gov.uk