

EMPLOYER INDEX 2025

YOUR FEEDBACK

CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining the Social Mobility Employer Index 2025 and for leading the change in building workplaces that are more representative, innovative and successful.

Welcome to your individual feedback report. This report focuses on the changes you could make to have the biggest impact on social mobility and provides tips on how to get started.

Whilst your whole submission was reviewed when marking, this report will only give feedback on the areas we have identified as the most impactful for improving social mobility. In creating these reports, we have taken into consideration what you included in your submission, your size, sector and whether you are a repeat or first-time entrant.



SUMMARY

Across each section of the Index, we have assessed your performance against the key areas that will drive - or hinder - social mobility.



You're doing well in many areas of the Index and we're confident that continuing this good practice and actioning the feedback in this report will result in tangible improvement to social mobility outcomes over the coming year.



There is still room for improvement and on the next page we have indicated the sections that you are doing better or worse on. Then, for each section we have made recommendations for steps you can take to improve.

YOU ARE
24TH
IN THE SOCIAL
MOBILITY
EMPLOYER INDEX
2025

YOUR DASHBOARD

SECTION	PERFORMANCE IN SECTION	RANKING IN SECTION
SECTION ONE: PRE-18 OUTREACH	Good – can build on	6
SECTION TWO: ATTRACTION AND POST-18 OUTREACH	Good – can build on	11
SECTION THREE: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	Needs improvement	27
SECTION FOUR: ROUTES INTO EMPLOYMENT	Needs improvement	48
SECTION FIVE: DATA COLLECTION	Needs improvement	71
SECTION SIX: PAY, PROGRESSION AND RETENTION	Needs improvement	45
SECTION SEVEN: CULTURE AND INTERNAL ADVOCACY	Needs improvement	57
SECTION EIGHT: EXTERNAL ADVOCACY	Good – can build on	7



Performance in section reflects how well you are doing in this section based on known effective practice of what works – and what doesn't. It can be used to help you direct your efforts over the next year.



Ranking in section reflects how well you are doing in this section relative to other entrants in the Index. It shouldn't be used to direct your efforts, as it doesn't necessarily align with where the biggest impact can be made.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Contribute to the social mobility research agenda. Research can not only inform public policy but also enables businesses to identify and implement evidence-based effective practice. You can get involved by partnering with academic institutions, providing anonymized workforce data for analysis, funding targeted studies, or piloting formally evaluated interventions.

Your Theory of Change is robust and offers detailed information about what you want to achieve, how and why. Consider how you can support other employers earlier in their outreach journey.

Take the next step in your social mobility strategy by including clear targets and timeframes to closing gaps that you have identified. Add these to your strategy and publish them externally so other employers are encouraged to take action.

SECTION ONE: PRE-18 OUTREACH



PRE-18 OUTREACH

WHY IT MATTERS

High-quality careers education in schools leads to measurable improvements in several key student outcomes, including career readiness, academic performance, labour market awareness, and successful transitions into further education, employment, or training. But it's not currently equal: students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to feel 'career ready' and are less likely to have awareness of the range of jobs and opportunities – including apprenticeships – available to them.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Run multiple outreach projects that have a theory of change designed to tackle barriers to employment for specific groups of young people rather than just raise awareness of their own organisation.
- Align their outreach work to the Gatsby Benchmarks and guidance from the Careers and Enterprise company.
- Evaluate their outreach work against short, medium and long-term outcomes and share this freely with others working to improve careers education and employment outcomes.

1

PRE-18 OUTREACH YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Section 1 is one of the strongest sections in your submission. Your Theory of Change is robust and offers detailed information about what you want to achieve, how and why. Consider how you can support other employers earlier in their outreach journey. If you are not doing so already, sharing your findings with your sector and in the public domain will help ensure that outreach activities are evidence based and continue to develop in line with best practise. It is just as helpful to know what isn't having an impact, as much as what is.

SECTION TWO: ATTRACTION AND POST-18 OUTREACH



ATTRACTION & POST-18 OUTREACH

WHY IT MATTERS

Young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds studying in college or at university are less likely to have the networks in place to be aware of opportunities such as vacation schemes or internships, less likely to have access to application support for job roles and more likely to report financial constraints on gaining relevant work experience. Together, this contributes to their lower likelihood of securing a professional role than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, even if they have the same grades.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Take a data-led approach to working with colleges and universities (if they have a graduate scheme) across the UK via the institutions' own careers team, offering ring-fenced paid opportunities for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to gain meaningful work experience or gain employability skills.
- Partner with other local/regional employers, job centres, local authorities and prisons to create jobs or employability programmes specifically for post-18 young people who are more likely from lower socioeconomic backgrounds such as care leavers, prisoners and long-term unemployed individuals.

ATTRACTION & POST-18 OUTREACH

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Consider increasing the amount of outreach you do with university students and/or those interested in applying for Graduate/Degree Apprenticeships. Both in-person and virtual outreach opportunities can help those juggling study and employment demands. Over 50% of full-time UK undergraduates are in paid employment while they study, working an average of 14.5 hours per week ([HEPI, 2024](#)). Therefore make sure outreach is offered at a range of times and dates (e.g. a mix of daytime, evening, weekend and non-weekend events). If you don't already reimburse the travel costs of students attending your in-person events, you might want to consider doing so for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- › Attending online events can sometimes be easier than attending in-person for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who may have other responsibilities that limit their on-campus time. Recording virtual events will ensure no-one misses out. You should evaluate each mode of delivery, so that you can understand whether there are differences in effectiveness both overall and for certain student groups.
- › Outreach with universities should support careers teams to help students from a low socioeconomic background be application ready. If you offer a graduate scheme we recommend you do not close applications early, however if you do regularly close applications early, your university outreach should include the importance of applying early. It should also include guidance on preparing for psychometric tests.
- › If you offer internships for university students, target your outreach so students from a lower socioeconomic background are aware of your internship program and are supported to apply. This can help improve social mobility in your workplace because there is a high conversion rate from internship to graduate role ([UCL, 2025](#)).

ATTRACTION & POST-18 OUTREACH

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Target universities according to the percentage of students who received free school meals and the percentage of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These metrics can be used to identify universities or cohorts with higher numbers of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and the [Office for Students' 'Size and Shape'](#) dashboard is the most up-to-date source for English universities. The [Higher Education Statistics Agency](#) (HESA) provides information for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the HESA.
- › Collect data on the socioeconomic background of the students attending your university activities. This helps make sure you're reaching the right students. It can also help you to identify when students from low socioeconomic backgrounds aren't attending events, so that you can take proactive steps to make them more accessible. It's also key that you explain why the information is being collected, as this builds trust and improves response rates.
- › We know that many of the events you participate in are organized by the universities themselves and therefore not under your control – but we'd encourage you to use your 'purchasing power' in these instances and ask university partners to monitor event attendees.

SECTION THREE: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION



RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

WHY IT MATTERS

Candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to apprenticeships and graduate roles are consistently less likely to be made an offer than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, even when they have the same grades at school and/or university.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- As well as training all staff on equitable hiring practices and accent bias, they also take a data-led, evidence-informed approach to contextualising all aspects of their application system – including interview scores, CVs, aptitude tests and academic grades.
- Remove unnecessary grade requirements – and where these are set by an external provider (e.g. a university), they are actively lobbying for change.
- Regularly review both qualitative and quantitative data from the recruitment systems to identify any areas in which candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be unfairly disadvantaged.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › The next steps in your evaluation process are to investigate how social mobility intersects with other characteristics, and how your recruitment processes may impact on different groups. Recent research from UCL highlighted that graduate applicants from a low socioeconomic background are 32% less likely to be offered a role, however when evaluating the intersection between socioeconomic background and ethnicity they found that this gap grew to 45% for candidates from a low socioeconomic background and ethnic minority group ([UCL, 2025](#)). Therefore it is important that you evaluate your recruitment processes and consider the different challenges experienced by these groups.
- › We know that many employees are now using AI in their recruitment activities. Whilst it is too early to state what the impact this will have on social mobility, it is important that all employers are evaluating the impact it may have on all recruitment activities. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology produced an AI procurement guide for employers, which can be accessed [here](#).

SECTION FOUR: ROUTES INTO EMPLOYMENT



ROUTES INTO EMPLOYMENT

WHY IT MATTERS

Offering a breath of entry routes and scaffolding entry through internships should enable young people to gain valuable experience and access employment in professional roles. But, we know that access to internships and apprenticeships isn't equal: young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to do internships in professional roles, and less likely to be start higher (including degree) apprenticeships.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Are offering a high number of internships relative to their size, which are of a duration long enough to enable the intern to learn significant employability skills. They are offering well-paid internships that are structured and provide references at the end.
- Are ring-fencing opportunities specifically for young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds: the best employers in this section ringfence all or the majority of their internships.
- Pay apprentices the Real Living Wage rather than the apprentice National Minimum Wage – and some are actively campaigning to increase the NMW for apprentice.

4

ROUTES INTO EMPLOYMENT

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Whilst you have done a lot of work in the field of apprenticeships, consider whether you can increase routes into your organisation by school leaver routes, which will widen the talent pool available. Only 29% of young people eligible for free school meals in England and 15% of Scottish students from SIMD Quintile 1 secured a place at university at the latest data count and in 2022 only 5% of degree apprentices were eligible for free school meals. Therefore, by limiting your routes into employment, many young people are locked out of your employment opportunities.

SECTION FIVE: DATA COLLECTION



DATA COLLECTION

WHY IT MATTERS

We know that employees from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are paid less than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and are less likely to be represented in senior positions. The reasons for this are multifaceted but collecting data on aspects such as pay, progression, staff satisfaction and work allocations makes it easier for firms to identify where there might be barriers to equity of workplace experience – and then tackle these.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Are measuring socioeconomic background data using a range of metrics in line with guidance from the Social Mobility Commission.
- Are reviewing their data against relevant national benchmarks, and have analysed their data on an intersectional basis – i.e. looking at how other characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or sexuality might interact with socioeconomic background – to examine whether there are any differences in outcome for aspects such as team make-up, progression rates, pay, work allocations etc.
- Are ensuring that their Board and senior management are aware of this data analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Increasing the completion rate for your survey will help you to make more informed decisions. To improve completion rates, it's important to build trust and psychological safety among employees through regular, transparent communication campaigns. Help your teams understand why the data is being collected, how it will be used, and the tangible impact it can have—such as informing changes in policy, organisational structure, or workplace behaviours. Involve line managers and leadership to demonstrate commitment and accountability from the top down.
- › Now that you are collecting the socioeconomic background data of your staff, the next step is to evaluate your findings compared to national benchmarks. This will enable you to develop a social mobility strategy. For example, Progress Together brings together some of the UK's largest financial firms to improve socioeconomic diversity in finance. Through collecting SEB data, they highlighted that levels of socio-economic diversity reduce significantly as seniority increases. They were then able to identify a strategic target of 50% of senior leaders coming from a lower socioeconomic background by 2030 for their member organisations.
- › We encourage all employers to advocate for the collection of the socioeconomic data of their workforce and to share what they can externally. Employer values are increasingly more important than other considerations, such as salary, for young people. Three in four young people surveyed as part of our 2024 Unheard Voices research felt employers should report on their class pay gap and nearly half of those from low socioeconomic background say it has put them off trying to get a job in an 'elite' profession, such as law or finance, which is significantly higher than their more wealthy peers ([Unheard Voices, 2024](#))

Being public encourages others to join our movement for change.

SECTION SIX: PAY, PROGRESSION AND RETENTION



PAY, PROGRESSION & RETENTION

WHY IT MATTERS

Professionals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are paid £6,287 (12%) less than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in the same role, and it takes them on average 19% longer to achieve a promotion than staff from higher socioeconomic backgrounds – suggesting that there are internal barriers to equitable pay and progression.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Don't have a class pay gap – but are still actively monitoring it on a yearly basis and are ready to address any gaps that arise.
- Of those that have a class pay gap, they have published their data alongside a clear strategy detailing how they will reduce the gap. This strategy includes targets that are stretching and ambitious but manageable – and the accompanying information gives confidence that the targets will be reached.
- Have used their data collection and analysis to identify areas in which staff from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are not experiencing equity of opportunity, and have implemented relevant plans to tackle this.

PAY, PROGRESSION & RETENTION

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › We know that what gets measured gets done. Professionals from working-class backgrounds are paid an average of £6,287 – or 12% – less per year than their more privileged counterparts in the same occupation. You should measure and publish your class pay gap – please see [here](#) for our guide on how to do this. By doing this you will join our movement for change.
- › It is important to consider the impact of your internal processes on the promotion and retention of colleagues from a lower socioeconomic background. Research by [Co-op and Demos](#) in 2024 revealed that 76% senior business leaders felt promoting social mobility would help attract and retain staff, and 71% felt it would help achieve business results.
- › EY published a [report](#) in early 2025 that suggests steps to create a more inclusive progression process in your workplace. These steps include: create a clear and structured promotion process; analyse data on time to progression for underrepresented groups; review the behaviours that are rewarded through promotion and provide authentic role models to inspire employees.
- › Evaluation is an important step which will help you create a strategy to close your class pay gap. You do not have to have a strategy already in place to begin evaluating the impact of your internal processes on pay, progression and retention on social mobility – it can help you define it.

SECTION SEVEN: CULTURE AND INTERNAL ADVOCACY



CULTURE & INTERNAL ADVOCACY

WHY IT MATTERS

Internal culture of organisations is indicative of how committed they are to positive change: employers that have a positive internal culture with strong advocacy are more likely not only to have more equitable employment, but also more able to address any barriers or challenges that arise. A good internal culture makes enacting changes across the employer lifecycle easier, more effective and longer lasting.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Are already acting as if the Socioeconomic Duty (Section 1 of the Equalities Act 2010) has been enacted, and are incorporating consideration of socioeconomic duty into all strategic decisions in the same way as protected characteristics such as gender and ethnicity are.
- Have analysed employee perception of workplace culture, and used both this and broader socioeconomic data on employees to develop a long-term strategy to deliver equitable experience and outcomes. Their strategies include ambitious targets, and have clearly defined actions to improve (or maintain, if already good) outcomes for staff from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. They also have senior level buy-in for their social mobility work.
- Are helping other organisations to develop their own social mobility strategies.

7

CULTURE & INTERNAL ADVOCACY

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › It's great that you have an internal strategy for improving social mobility across your organisation. Make sure that this strategy includes targets and clear timeframes for achieving these. Add these to your strategy document and share this externally to encourage other employers to do the same.

SECTION EIGHT: EXTERNAL ADVOCACY



EXTERNAL ADVOCACY

WHY IT MATTERS

Clear public commitment and influence can drive systemic change beyond the boundaries of individual businesses, unlocking talent, boosting productivity, and fostering fairer economic growth. When employers openly support social mobility, they not only expand access to opportunity for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also encourage industry-wide adoption of more equitable practices, tackling unfairness and activating a positive cycle of diversity and inclusion.

THE HIGHEST PERFORMING EMPLOYERS IN THIS SECTION...

- Are working with clients and suppliers to improve their social mobility journeys in a comprehensive fashion: putting clauses into tender or procurement contracts, lobbying suppliers to improve actions; mandating compliance with the Social Mobility Pledge.
- Are taking an active lead in supporting other employers in their sector or region. They're not just a member of a sector working or lobbying group, but they are also bringing employers together to commit to offering ring-fenced work experience and employability programmes.
- Are lobbying government to enact changes via participation in roundtables, APPGs, and contributing to calls for evidence, consultations and committees.

EXTERNAL ADVOCACY

YOUR FEEDBACK

- › Section 8 is one of the strongest in your submission. Your collaboration and advocacy efforts are having a real impact and changing the conversation around social mobility in the UK.
- › Consider how you can widen your impact even further – contribute to the social mobility research agenda. Research can not only inform public policy but also enables businesses to identify and implement evidence-based effective practice. You can get involved by partnering with academic institutions, providing anonymized workforce data for analysis, funding targeted studies, or piloting formally evaluated interventions.

THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS, JUST GET IN TOUCH

employerindex@socialmobility.org.uk