

SHOOSMITHS

Social mobility at Shoosmiths

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Foreward

In this report we reflect on our continued firm wide commitment to social mobility and acknowledge where we can go further to support the communities around us, and our people.

This report marks another step forward in our firm-wide commitment to social mobility. It's both a reflection on the progress we've made and a recognition of the work still to do, to better support our people and the communities around us.

Looking back, we've worked to open up access to the legal profession and create opportunities for talent from all backgrounds. But we know that real change requires ongoing effort, fresh thinking, and collective action.

Since stepping into the role of Board Ally for social mobility, I've had the privilege of seeing first-hand the incredible outreach work being led by colleagues across our offices. Their passion and dedication are making a real difference. You'll find some of those stories and outcomes in the pages ahead. Thank you to everyone who has played a part.

Looking ahead, there's even more to be excited about. With new initiatives on the horizon, there are plenty of ways to get involved. I encourage you to consider the role you can play in helping us go further, together.



Chris Stanton

CFO AND BOARD ALLY TO SOCIAL MOBILITY

In June last year Chris was invited to record a podcast with The Full Circle, during which he shares his journey from a non-financial background to a successful career in finance and law. He discusses his childhood, education, the decisions that led him to where he is today and the value of different professional pathways and perspective in decision-making.

[LISTEN HERE](#)

Two commitments to action

Social mobility network

We are excited to announce the launch of a colleague-led social mobility network to sit alongside the firm's existing networks. The network will act as a consultative body to enhance the internal focus on social mobility, raise awareness, enhance community between our clients and foster new relationships with partnership organisations.

New partnerships

To focus on school outreach and advancing social mobility and diversity within the legal profession:

- a. we've established a new partnership with charity GROW mentoring.
- b. we're expanding our schools outreach to support young people facing the greatest barriers. To help us scale our efforts, we're seeking a charity partner with expertise in educational outreach and social mobility.

For further information on either of these commitments, please contact the [DEI team](#).



Here's an update on what we've been working on over the past 12 months

The firm's Social Mobility Impact Report was launched at the end 2023, building on our 2020 Social Mobility Action Plan. Prepared in collaboration with The Purpose Coalition, the report highlighted 5 recommended focus areas for progressing our commitment to social mobility. These are aligned to the Purpose Coalition's 15 Purpose Goals which set out core barriers to opportunity that exist in the UK.

You can [view our Impact Report here](#) – within which you'll also find personal profiles highlighting the diversity of routes into a career in the legal sector and progression within Shoosmiths.

Sharing best practice across the UK: Firm-wide

- We launched a national social mobility working group focused on facilitating a more coordinated and impactful approach to social mobility outreach activity. The working group comprises a designated lead from each office, meeting quarterly to exchange insights, best practices, strategies and success stories. This collaborative forum has brought greater visibility to activity taking place across our office locations and developed an internal platform for sharing material and resources.
- Enhanced senior leadership engagement and buy in through dedicated Board Ally role –attending working group meetings and participating in thought leadership activity.

Link progression directly to core Shoosmiths values

- Career frameworks within One Shoosmiths, and role expectations for performance evaluation and professional development (across all roles), include alignment to firm's Responsible Business goals (within the People and Culture strategic enabler)
- Promotion of Responsible Business is a specific role expectation for Partner promotions. Assessment of commitment to Responsible Business is also a factor considered within Partner appraisals.
- Participation in Responsible Business activity, which includes social mobility outreach, is one of the eligibility criteria for the Legal Advisor Individual Performance Bonus.

Take the next step on measurement

- Through our partnership with external experts Pirical we continue to periodically analyse recruitment, retention and progression of under represented groups (including lower socio-economic background) and benchmarking this data against our legal sector peers. Insights from this data are periodically shared with Exec Board.
- Include socio economic pay gap data in our annual Pay Gap reports
- A focus on social mobility within our early talent pipeline and pipeline partnerships to help strengthen diversity. This includes The Discover placement and mentoring programme, targeted support for trainee / solicitor apprentice level applicants from under represented groups (such as virtual insight sessions), continued use of contextual recruitment in application screening (RealRating by social mobility charity upReach) and tailored online / social media content.

Empowering underrepresented groups through dedicated champions

- Continued support and investment for our 5 employee networks – Balance, Embrace, Mental Health & Wellbeing Champions, Proud and Unique.
- Collaboration with our ‘Menopause Champions’ on launch of menopause policy and guidance, key events on World Menopause Day and dedicated private healthcare support via BUPA
- Creating a platform to shine a light on stories and issues that matter to us all through colleagues shared perspectives and experiences – including a focus on Endometriosis, Cancer and cultural events.

Targeting outreach efforts to schools and colleges in the areas of most need

- Continued outreach efforts in schools and colleges through local office partnerships and social mobility charities (Social Mobility Foundation, EY Foundation, DYW Scotland).
- Feedback from the SMEI highlighted %age of FSM students or Indices of Multiple Deprivation are the recommended data sets for targeting outreach efforts. Positively we now have access to the Social Mobility Foundation’s interactive map (which uses a range of publicly available social mobility data including %FSM and Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking) and which can be used when proactively targeting schools and colleges in our office locations.

External recognition

Our efforts have been recognised externally with a 25th ranking in the Social Mobility Employer Index 2024 (SMEI), the firm’s highest ranking since first entering in 2019.

We receive valuable feedback from entering this cross sector Index – with a performance rating of ‘performing poorly’, ‘performing well’ or ‘work to do’ across 8 key themes. As a firm we were considered to be performing particularly well in ‘data’ and ‘external advocacy’, with most identified areas for improvement within ‘pay, progression and retention’ and ‘working with young people’. We have built this feedback into our planned activity for the coming year.

Moving forwards we have made a commitment to enter the SMEI biennially.



Spotlight on our outreach efforts

Across our UK offices, we continue to champion social mobility by providing meaningful opportunities for young people from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Initiatives over the past year reflect our commitment to widening access to the legal profession and supporting early career development:

Work shadowing:

Through a partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation, and continued relationship with Developing Young Workforce (DYW) Scotland, over 20 young people (under 18) have participated in structured work shadowing placements across several of our office locations. The placements are intended to build confidence by providing students with an understanding of the professional world and an insight into a career in law.

Educational partnerships:

Through ongoing collaborations with universities, social mobility charities and organisations such as the Education Business Partnership, colleagues volunteer to support a variety of programmes which help young people navigate routes into further education, the legal profession or other career pathways.

Skills development:

Sessions focused on commercial awareness, networking, employability, and professional skills have been delivered by colleagues across the firm, often in partnership with clients and local ambassadors.

Community outreach:

Presentations and events in local schools and colleges aim to challenge stereotypes and raise career aspirations among young people.

Across our UK offices, we continue to champion social mobility by providing meaningful opportunities for young people from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Feedback from young people we have supported highlights increased confidence, clearer career goals, and in some cases, direct progression into higher education—demonstrating the tangible impact of our efforts. A student who participated in one of our work shadowing placements in Edinburgh (in collaboration with DYW) shared:

“Without this opportunity, I don’t think I would have the determination to be a lawyer as I always thought it was out of reach. I now know it is possible.”



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