

SHOOSMITHS

**FOR
WHAT
MATTERS**

Shoosmiths & Purpose Coalition

Social Mobility Impact Report

www.shoosmiths.com



Proudly run by
**this is
purpose**

**PURPOSE
GOALS**



Contents

00	Forewords	3
01	An Introduction to Shoosmiths and its Impact	6
02	Executive Summary	11
03	Reviewing Shoosmiths Activity Against the Purpose Goals	14
04	Analysis	28
05	Recommendations	32

Forewords

0. Forewords



0.1 Rt Hon Justine Greening, Chair of the Purpose Coalition and Former Secretary of State for Education

As businesses seek to enable and demonstrate positive change, it is more important than ever that their approach remains authentic and tuned in to the needs of their communities.

I set up the Social Mobility Pledge in 2018 to drive a fundamental shift towards purpose-led organisations who were committed to improving their social impact. While the robust government commitment to levelling up we saw at the beginning of the decade appears to have lost its impetus, the need to open up opportunity in the wake of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis is more urgent than ever and it is increasingly clear that businesses can play an important role.

Shoosmiths, a law firm serving UK and international clients from its offices across the United Kingdom and Brussels, was the very first signatory to the Pledge and it has continued to work in partnership with the Purpose Coalition to develop its social impact for its colleagues and communities. As part of that work, we published a Social Mobility Action Plan which highlighted the best practice that was already deeply embedded in the firm and assessed where it could go even further.

This report provides an update on how it has taken those recommendations forward to open up opportunity in a key professional sector which is still seen by many as exclusive, open only to those who went to the right schools or right universities. It demonstrates genuine progress, with a determination to measure and evaluate at its heart. That is not always an easy process – and inevitably opens up further challenges – but it is

essential to evaluating where barriers still exist and how they can be broken down most effectively.

Shoosmiths has a well-defined ESG strategy, with elements extending to 2040, and has committed to reporting annually in order to track its social mobility initiatives consistently. With its offices across the UK and in Brussels, it has the ability to lean into the needs of those local communities and target its support to what matters most to them. It recognises that talent exists everywhere and works hard to help those with potential to access opportunity, often in conjunction with local partners who understand where the gaps are. Whether it is working with Aston University to develop the talent pipeline in the West Midlands region or with Yorkshire charity, Street League, to support young people into employment, it is making quantitative progress across the country from which other businesses can learn. Encouraging potential does not stop at recruitment so it offers considered development programmes to retain staff and help them progress, as well as collaborating with them on policies that support their health and wellbeing. It also targets underrepresented groups to ensure that its workforce is as inclusive as possible. The Shoosmiths Foundation in particular provides significant support to the charities that help identify those who face particular barriers, helping to build more sustainable communities.

The regional pieces of the jigsaw evidenced in this report contribute to an overall picture of well-targeted and well-measured social impact from a business that does not just talk the talk but walks the walk. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the team at Shoosmiths to further develop its social impact and to shape the wider social mobility agenda.



0.2 David Jackson, CEO at Shoosmiths

I often find myself reflecting on my journey from a working-class upbringing in Bristol to where I am today. As a child with an innate (ie annoying!) penchant for debate and a dream of becoming a lawyer, my path was not the most obvious one for someone like me in the 80s. Nevertheless, I was blessed with incredibly supportive parents who instilled in me the values of hard work and determination. With their encouragement, I set my sights on the legal profession.

My journey with Shoosmiths started more than 16 years ago. From day one, this firm has been more than just a workplace; it has been a platform for growth, a realm of endless opportunities, and a nurturing environment for learning. I recall the wise words of our then CEO, Paul Stothard, who assured me at the outset that Shoosmiths was a place where I could be bold, be audacious, and even make mistakes without the fear of dire consequences.

That guidance was profoundly empowering, and it laid the foundation for a culture that encourages innovation and embraces the prospect of failure as a stepping stone to growth.

His philosophy was simple yet profound: if we must falter, let us do so swiftly, but let us also learn from our missteps and, in the spirit of progress, avoid repeating them!

As I reflect upon my journey within Shoosmiths, I can't help but be grateful for the unwavering support and the countless opportunities I have been afforded. This firm's commitment to social mobility, a commitment embedded within our 2020 Social Mobility Action Plan, has created an environment where dreams can be realised, potential can be unlocked, and diversity is celebrated as an asset that enriches our organisation.

We still have a way to go - reflected by our comprehensive ESG goals, with some even taking us through to 2040. This report and our partnership with the Purpose Coalition is a reflection of our continued firm-wide commitment to driving social mobility through a transparent reflection of current best practice, and an acknowledgement of where we could go even further to deliver for our colleagues and the communities we serve.

An Introduction to Shoosmiths and its Impact



1. An Introduction to Shoosmiths and its Impact



Shoosmiths is a law firm clients choose for excellent service, incisive thinking and, above all, for its ability to focus on what matters. The firm serves UK and international clients from its offices across the United Kingdom and Brussels. Its size - over 1,600 people - scope, and purpose is making a profound impact on colleagues and the communities it operates in across the UK and beyond.

In October 2020, Shoosmiths took a significant step towards the underpinning of social mobility across the firm by making the Social Mobility Pledge, and committing to a Social Mobility Action Plan in partnership with the Purpose Coalition. The firm was the very first signatory to the Pledge and in the three years since - despite the COVID-19 pandemic - it has made impressive strides across each of its offices.

Shoosmiths appointed a Corporate Responsibility lead taking decisive action more than a decade ago. The lead ensured Shoosmiths committed to an annual Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) report. This report serves as a benchmark, guiding the firm in tracking its social mobility initiatives consistently while holding itself responsible for all its actions.

With a well-defined ESG strategy extending up to 2040, the firm clearly recognises its purpose extends far beyond the bottom line. It's about making a lasting difference in society, addressing crucial issues like social mobility.

Shoosmiths' approach to social mobility is guided by widening the gates, not lowering the bar - taking concerted steps to create more opportunities for underrepresented groups while maintaining high standards of practice.

A remarkable aspect of Shoosmiths' social impact approach is its engagement with local communities. Each office partners with a designated local charity. These partnerships are not just symbolic; they're deeply woven into the fabric of the team's community initiatives.

Through its strategic ESG initiatives, unwavering commitment to social mobility despite socioeconomic challenges and community-focused partnerships, Shoosmiths is actively contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society in regions across the UK.



1.1 Social Mobility Progress

Shoosmiths has internalised social mobility firm-wide, taking crucial steps against the commitments set out in the October 2020 Action Plan.

Each office nominated a social mobility lead and adopted office-specific actions, driven by a social mobility steering committee and informed by the original action plan.

These steps, its impact on the ground and its boosting of social mobility across all levels of the firm has brought national attention. The firm was ranked 38th out of 149 organisations entered in the Social Mobility Foundation's Social Mobility Employer Index in 2022. The Social Mobility Employer Index assesses and ranks UK employers on the actions they take to ensure they are open to talent from all social backgrounds. Employers are evaluated and benchmarked across seven areas: their work with young people, routes into the employer, the attraction of staff, recruitment and selection, data collection, progression of staff and experienced hires and advocacy. This is the fourth year the firm has ranked in the top 75, demonstrating an impressive consistency in its efforts on social mobility.

The new values and behavioural-focused process has produced offices that aim to be representative of the local community, instilling the Shoosmiths social mobility values committed

to in the 2020 Action Plan from day one. This is a testament to the teams in each region and to the firm UK-wide in its commitment to social mobility and social impact.

A central pledge made by the firm in its 2020 Social Mobility Action Plan was to improve firm-wide tracking of employees' socioeconomic diversity.

An individual's socioeconomic background not only contributes to their lived environment and family upbringing, but also gives employers an indication of the types of barriers a colleague may face once in work.

Applying questions formulated by the Equality of Opportunity Coalition - a specialised group within the Purpose Coalition - Shoosmiths asks employees:

1. Which type of school did you attend for the most time between the ages of 11 and 16?
2. What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were about 14?
3. Did either of your parents attend university and gain a degree (eg BA/BSc or equivalent) by the time you were 18?

The firm garnered an impressive response rate of over 86 per cent in 2023, up 15 per cent since 2019 - with the data presented below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Shoosmiths Socioeconomic Diversity Data 2023.

	UK state school-selective	UK state school-non-selective	Independent/fee paying: no bursary or < 90% of tuition	Independent/fee paying: bursary >= 90% of tuition	Attended school outside the UK	Don't know/not sure	Prefer not to say
Partnership	16%	36%	17%	6%	1%	0%	1%
Legal Advisor	14%	55%	10%	3%	3%	<1%	2%
Business Services	10%	62%	3%	1%	9%	1%	2%
Total	13%	51%	10%	3%	4%	1%	2%

	Professional	Intermediate	Lower Socio-Economic
Partner	49%	5%	17%
Legal Advisor	51%	13%	20%
Business Services	38%	19%	27%
Total	46%	12%	21%

	No, neither of my parents attended university	Yes, one or both of my parents attended university	Do not know /not sure	Prefer not to say
Partnership	45%	31%	<1%	1%
Legal Advisor	43%	38%	4%	3%
Business Services	48%	20%	13%	5%
Total	45%	30%	6%	3%

The increase in the depth, detail and breadth of the socioeconomic data Shoosmiths is collecting from right across the firm since the 2020 Social Mobility Action Plan is a sign of the progress the firm is making and the commitment to continual improvement on equality of opportunity year-on-year.

The firm has been focused on opening dialogue on all issues. The access to socioeconomic data frames conversations and challenges employees may face, each of which affect progression and therefore act as a barrier to internal social mobility. This open dialogue was crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, where employees faced a myriad of challenges, each specific to their own circumstances and backgrounds.

Throughout this report, Shoosmiths' progress in all areas will be mapped against the Purpose Goals - indicating its continued commitment to truly living its purpose as a key driver of social mobility internally and externally.



1.2 Tackling the UK's Biggest Challenges in Partnership with the Purpose Coalition

The Purpose Coalition measures organisations against a set of sector-relevant social impact criteria. The Purpose Goals outline 14 interconnected impact goals. By drawing on expertise provided by academia and business, the Goals are designed to specifically address some of the unique challenges facing the UK.

The Goals were designed following Justine Greening's experience as Secretary of State for International Development, leading the UK's delegation to the convention of the United Nations (UN) that established the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Purpose Goals apply the SDGs in a UK context.

The SDGs as interlinked goals emphasised the interdependent environmental, social, and economic aspects of development and centralised the role of sustainability.

At the time, Justine recognised how transformative a common set of accessible but ambitious goals could be in galvanising action to effect change. After leaving Government in 2019, Justine established the Purpose Coalition and Social Mobility Pledge with the intention of galvanising UK economic and social actors to improve social mobility in the UK.

The Purpose Goals focus on key life stages and highlight the main issues that need to be resolved to break down barriers to opportunity in the UK. The Goals are intended to guide ambition, provoke action, and measure progress.

Shoosmiths is active across all 14 Purpose Goals but is specifically focused in four specific areas of the most impact in its area of specific expertise - delivering social impact through the building of employability for all.

Executive Summary



2.1 Social mobility and the Purpose Coalition

Social mobility has remained stagnant in the UK for years, with the pandemic highlighting how entrenched inequality has become. It is still too often the case that a person's background and where they are from dictates how well they do in life.

The Purpose Coalition is working with businesses, universities, and NHS Trust's to deliver equality of opportunity and break down the barriers that prevent people from achieving their potential, particularly in the most deprived communities. It uses a set of interconnected and sector-relevant social impact criteria known as the Purpose Goals which are intended to guide ambition, provoke action and measure progress.

2.2 Social mobility and Shoosmiths

Shoosmiths is a law firm with over 1,600 employees, serving UK and international clients from its offices across the United Kingdom and Brussels. It has a well-defined ESG strategy with published benchmarks, including social mobility commitments, that are aimed at making a lasting difference in society.

In October 2020, it signalled its commitment to underpin social mobility across the firm, becoming the first signatory to the Social Mobility Pledge, and agreeing to develop a Social Mobility Action Plan in partnership with the Purpose Coalition.

Shoosmiths' approach to social mobility is guided by widening the gates, not lowering the bar. It takes concerted steps to create more opportunities for underrepresented groups while maintaining high standards of practice. Much of that approach is guided by its engagement in local communities across the UK, with each office partnering with a designated local charity.

2.3 Key findings from the report

Informed by its 2020 Action Plan, Shoosmiths has undergone a period of significant progress in its firm-wide commitment to social mobility and underpinning purpose. Focusing on strategic levers that directly impact social mobility and equality of opportunity, tailored to the community that each office serves, the firm has upscaled its already impressive impact. It has also extended this approach to its colleagues, prioritising proactive and inclusive recruitment that leads to a wide range of progression opportunities - underpinned by a best-in-class employee wellbeing support package - and a diversity and equity agenda. Central to its strategy is a commitment to improve firm-wide tracking of socioeconomic diversity and the resulting increase in the depth, detail and breadth of the data has helped facilitate a constructive dialogue with employees about the challenges they face.

Shoosmiths' work encompasses all 14 Purpose Goals but is specifically focused on the four where it can have the most impact in its area of specific expertise - delivering social impact through the building of employability for all.

Education, career pathways, and mentorship

Shoosmiths has transformed its recruitment process since 2020, recognising the value of diverse educational and career pathways that extend beyond traditional academic routes, including apprenticeships and T Levels, and focus solely on values, behaviours, and potential. Through its localised partnerships with organisations like MCR Pathways, EY Foundation, and DYW, and its commitment to mentorship and work experience opportunities, it helps young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds gain exposure to the world of work and raises aspirations.

Community engagement

Shoosmiths proactively engages with the communities it serves. Spread across fourteen offices and three countries across the UK, the firm has established deep ties and personal connections with the regions it serves. The Shoosmiths Foundation provides grants to UK-registered charities like EveryYouth, Street League, and Jericho, complementing the firm's wider community investment strategy. This further illustrates its commitment to supporting the most vulnerable people and families as well as a continual leveraging of its resources and expertise to contribute to employability, education, and overall well being.

Championing wellbeing

Shoosmiths understands its employees' mental and physical health is integral to their overall wellbeing and to unlocking their potential. It offers a range of effective support mechanisms as key drivers of social mobility. By offering flexible working arrangements and family-first policies, including remote work and part-time roles, it meets the diverse needs of its workforce and enables its employees to balance work and personal responsibilities.

Diversity and inclusion

Shoosmiths collects socioeconomic diversity data of its staff and uses metrics to monitor its progress. The response rate has improved and continues to highlight the diversity of the firm. It leads the way in fostering diversity and inclusion through its support networks which provide education, mentorship, and representation. The strategic design of offices also offers accessibility and wellness facilities and accommodates a diverse range of employee needs.

2.4 Recommendations for further action

Building on Shoosmiths' commitment to social mobility and its progress since the 2020 Action Plan, this report makes the following recommendations alongside suggestions for impact measurement metrics:

Goal 12 Building Sustainable Communities

Sharing best practice across the UK:



To align and coordinate its countrywide efforts by creating a firm-wide Social Mobility Network while also establishing dedicated Social Mobility Working Groups in each office, contributing to a more uniform and impactful approach to social mobility.

Goal 6 Fair Career Progression

Link progression directly to core Shoosmiths values:



To integrate progression opportunities with the Social Mobility Working Groups, ensuring that positions across the firm, including partners, are linked to active participation in social mobility efforts.

Goal 5 Open Recruitment

Take the next step on measurement:



To set diversity goals on ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, and socioeconomic background, tailored to the demographic make-up of different cities and regions in the UK.

Goal 14 Achieve Equality through Diversity and Inclusion

Empowering underrepresented groups through dedicated champions:



To establish dedicated champions for underrepresented groups who would serve as advocates and guides, empowering each group by tailoring support and progression programmes to their individual needs.

Goal 3 Positive Destinations Post 16+

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



To build on its outreach work with schools and colleges close to its offices in areas of acute deprivation, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), with a focus on care-experienced students who face particular barriers to employment.

2.5 Conclusion

With its geographic reach and proven social mobility track record, Shoosmiths can play an important part in making a career in the legal sector accessible to anyone with the potential to work in it, regardless of their background or where they are from. More broadly, it can build on its positive social impact to drive opportunity across communities and shape a place-based approach to social mobility.

Reviewing Shoosmiths'
activity against the purpose goals



3. Reviewing Shoosmiths' activity against the purpose goals



3.1 Goal 3. Positive Destinations Post 16+

Every individual - regardless of age - should have the opportunity to select a high quality path in education, employment or training.

Historically, we have directed our youth toward an academic pathway, guiding them through A levels and higher education, ultimately leading to a university degree. We are witnessing a notable trend where a growing number of young individuals are breaking new ground by becoming the first in their families to pursue university education. This is particularly evident across Shoosmiths.

It is also crucial to emphasise the significance of alternative paths that do not necessarily follow an academic course. In recent times, apprenticeships and the increasing availability of T-Levels have emerged as robust options, providing individuals with alternative non-academic routes to opportunity.

3.1.1 Raising aspirations in social mobility coldspots

The Shoosmiths team in Edinburgh is directly involved with MCR Pathways, a schools based mentoring scheme supporting young people in Scotland from disadvantaged backgrounds to realise their full potential. Through this scheme, weekly mentoring is provided to a care-experienced young person and this has been ongoing over a number of years.

Going forward, and building on the MCR relationship, Shoosmiths will also look to be involved with MCR's Talent Tasters programme. This programme provides work experience in a Shoosmiths office for young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The programme is specifically designed to show the wide variety of job opportunities and offer insights into where different types of skills can be applied within a workplace.

The EY Foundation works with disadvantaged young people, employers and social entrepreneurs. It supports young people - regardless of background - to realise their career ambitions and transition into work, higher education or self-employment.

The Shoosmiths Glasgow office maintain a particularly close partnership with the EY Foundation, delivering for young people growing up in acute social mobility coldspots around the two cities by offering work experience. Glasgow have pioneered the work placement programme which aims to compliment the EY Foundations Smart Futures and Your Future programmes which are specifically designed for young people aged 16-19 who may face additional barriers and have struggled with school as a result. Our work experience posts have provide young people with the unique chance to meet employers, receive a mentor, learn employability skills via specially designed projects and gain paid work experience, thus creating and supporting pathways to employment.

Shoosmiths Glasgow are also partnered with Urban Roots, a community led charity with an environmental focus but who support children and young people from all walks of life. Their projects are designed at delivering youth projects that build skills and confidence, connecting young people with nature and supporting outdoor learning in school grounds and local greenspaces.

Shoosmiths also partners with the Developing Young Workforce (DYW) organisation in Edinburgh, part of the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee. The team offers interview sessions, careers events, presentations, mentoring, and work experience. Shoosmiths also took part in a DYW careers festival at a high school in Edinburgh, presenting to pupils on a career in law.

In other initiatives, Shoosmiths also attended the inaugural Business in the Community: Championing Responsible Business Across Scotland Conference held in Edinburgh in November. Shoosmiths are also supporting the Glasgow University Charity Fashion Show, a social mobility arts-based charity supporting arts for all.

These initiatives are making a difference in communities across Scotland, developing offices' talent pipeline and boosting social mobility.

3.1.2 Developing a Talent Pipeline

In the Birmingham office, Shoosmiths' social mobility action plan aim, as set out in October 2020, was to proactively prepare young people from diverse backgrounds for managerial and leadership roles within the firm.

In a partnership with the local Aston University, Shoosmiths has helped develop the University's own Pathways to Law programme. As a university, Aston has an extremely diverse student demographic make-up as a result of its focus on recruiting students from in and around Birmingham and the West Midlands. The family ties that keep the students studying in the City mean they stay to work in the City.

Shoosmiths interacts first with the students at Year 12 and Year 13. The firm brings the students into its brand new office, offering work experience and presentations on a number of different roles in the firm, providing them with first-hand experience of a legal workplace before studying at university.

Once they leave college they go on to study law at Aston University to begin preparing themselves for a career in the legal sector, with academic support and guidance from Shoosmiths. Aston University tracks its student's socioeconomic diversity once they join the University, and Shoosmiths is able to maintain continued engagement with the students due to its close relationship with Aston.

Shoosmiths has also partnered with Virgin Money and CILEX - two of its key clients - diversifying the options within the Pathways to Law Programme in the West Midlands for those students who do not wish to go to university.

The first cohort of this programme - made-up of thirty students - graduated in Summer 2023.

3.1.3 Proactive school outreach

As part of Shoosmiths' commitment to social mobility and after the launch of its Social Mobility Action Plan in October 2020 a social mobility working group was set up across every office. The working group in the Milton Keynes office has grown to twelve staff members out of an office of 90 and serves as an example of best practice in terms of the establishment of a school outreach programme.

Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team has made impressive progress in the community over the past year. The team specifically focused on secondary school students who may not have knowledge of the roles associated with law or the privilege to have links within the sector.

The team have attended careers fairs at local schools, linking this up with work experience opportunities within the firm. The work experience offers local secondary school students an insight into the range of roles available with the firm across all departments, including non-legal roles.

Critically, the team engages with the parents of the children at careers fairs and work experience placements. This helps to ensure the expertise and support gained is also fed back to the students when back at home, as well as raising aspirations across the family.



Case Study - Rory McDermott

“Rory McDermott left school before he completed his A-levels, but that hasn’t stopped him pursuing a career in law. He’s now been working in the conveyancing team for over four years and has the goal of becoming a conveyancer in his sights.

I always wanted to work in law as a career and this influenced my choices at both GCSE and A-Level, picking subjects that I knew would be looked upon favourably when I went to university. Then just as I was starting year 13 and my final year at school, I decided that university was not for me and I didn’t want to finish my A-Levels at all, within a week I had dropped out and needed to do something as I was only 17 at the time. My mum wasn’t massively happy when I came home one day and informed her that I had dropped out and didn’t need to go to school anymore - which probably wasn’t a wise decision to do this without letting her know first.

Thanks to a careers fair at my school a few months before, I had the contact details for the head of recruitment at Shoosmiths, after some persuasion by my family, I decided to email them asking if they had any opportunities for someone who was fresh from school and sent over a copy of my (very limited) CV. I heard back a few days later and was offered an interview for a position as a Legal Administrative Assistant in the Conveyancing department, as well as a Level 2 Legal Administration Apprenticeship. I accepted the interview which was scheduled for a week later.

I felt the interview went well but, in all honesty, I had no idea if it would come to anything. Whilst walking home from my third lesson at college, I had a phone call offering me the job at Shoosmiths. I accepted the role straight away.

The apprenticeship was brilliant for me, I was able to work every day and earn a wage, whilst also being in a form of education that was useful for me long-term and for the job that I was doing. Once the apprenticeship ended after a year, I was well known by the managers of the administration team and some of the Solicitors and Conveyancers in the department. I worked for another year at Shoosmiths before being promoted to an assistant paralegal in the conveyancing team.

Having been at Shoosmiths for over four years now, I am able to train new starters who join the team, and I have my own case load which I’m responsible for. Some days are hard work but I have found a role in a law firm where I really do enjoy working.

I have been working hard to develop myself and progress my career, now I have the goal of becoming a conveyancer. I hope to achieve this over the coming years and will be progressing with on-the-job training to work my way towards this goal. This will involve further training on the legal side of my current role and incorporating more advanced learning to ensure I have a full understanding before moving forward.

It’s an exciting time within my department, we have recently rebranded the entire conveyancing department to Switch, still very much a part of Shoosmiths but under a different name. We hope this will drive our department to be more of a leading light within the world of conveyancing whilst still remaining a key part of Shoosmiths.

If you don’t feel that studying suits you, then you don’t need to force yourself through A-Levels and University, and the sooner you make the decision, the easier it will be to find a role that’s suited to your strengths where you can grow and develop. I know lots of people who went to university because they got accepted and not because they wanted to go, they weren’t happy, and some ended up dropping out anyway.

There are other options for me to further my education via higher level apprenticeships while working at Shoosmiths, but these aren’t right for me just now. I am comfortable knowing that, even with my level of education, there are still opportunities for me to progress within the firm to a senior level, through hard work, experience and by developing myself in other ways.”

3.1.4 Charity partnership

Through the Shoosmiths's Foundation, Shoosmiths' Leeds office created a partnership with the Yorkshire-based programmes delivered by national charity Street League. On the back of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing youth unemployment, Street League uses the power of sport to support young people into employment.

Shoosmiths works with young people who have not accessed college opportunities or apprenticeships across Leeds.

On establishing a relationship with the charity and donating funds through the Shoosmiths Foundation, Shoosmiths colleagues offered further support. The lack of a professional environment when running mock interviews was identified by Street League as an issue that Shoosmiths could help with.

Shoosmiths agreed to open up one of its offices for Street League to carry out mock interviews in a work environment. Employees from the office also supported running the mock interviews, offering feedback as well as helping the young person with the mock interview preparation.

This process began in April 2023 and has been crucial in contributing to increased employability and increased soft skills for strategic groups of young people across Yorkshire.

3.1.5 Recruitment transformation

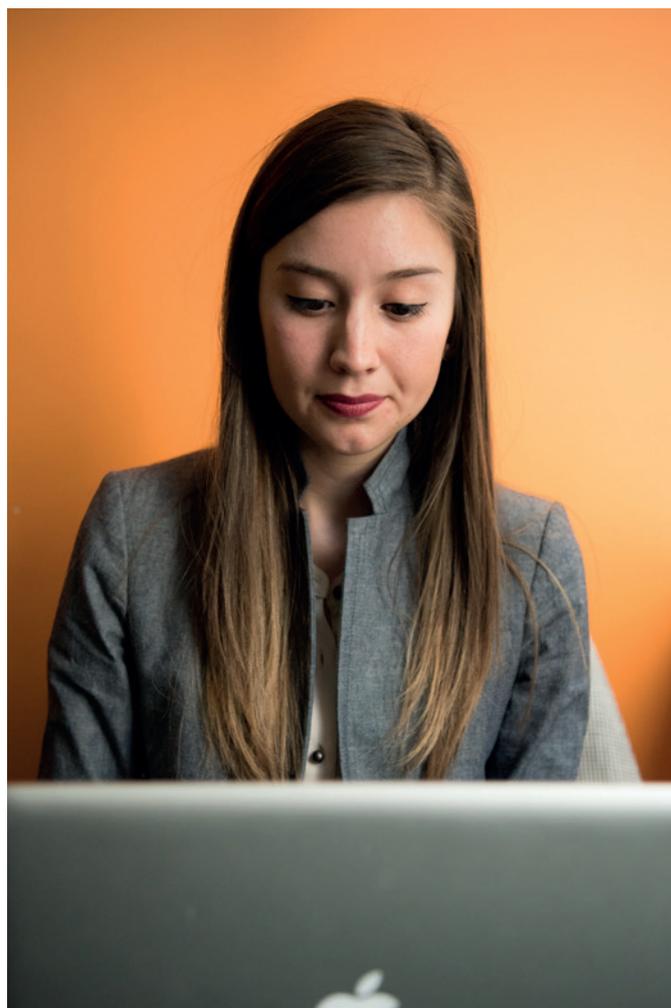
In-line with its commitment to social mobility, Shoosmiths recently overhauled its recruitment process.

Initially using blind CV and application processes, the firm has taken its strategic inclusivity even further. Shoosmiths now focuses on strengths-based assessment, developing new internal metrics to assess and track potential.

Due to the extremely high proportion of graduate applicants Shoosmiths receives, 3,000+ per year, this transformation has been crucial to its role as a vehicle for social mobility in communities across the country.

3.1.6 Social Media Presence

As part of a concerted effort to reach as many people as possible - free from the barriers inherent to traditional routes into law - Shoosmiths has steadily increased its social media presence since October 2020, with two separate channels, one firmwide and one dedicated to Emerging Talent opportunities, better allowing targeted campaigns to reach talent where outreach is needed the most.



Case Study - Elaine Seamark

Elaine decided that university wasn't for her, but she still had aspirations of an enjoyable career in law. She now works as a partner - non lawyer - which is one of the most senior positions in a law firm. She said of her experience navigating roles to find one that was truly for her:

"Growing up I always wanted to be a primary school teacher so to aid my UCAS application I did voluntary work at a local school. After this I realised teaching was not for me, and I had to change my plan.

I withdrew my application to university. I decided to work for a year and then reapply for university. I applied to do Law with Human Resources, to this day I am not sure why I picked this course but I was offered a position at my chosen university.

I excelled at school achieving good results, but I had to study very hard and after a year out I did not want to go back to this. Six weeks before I was due to start, I plucked up the courage to tell my parents I no longer wanted to go to university. They accepted my decision and encouraged me to do what I felt was best for me.

My first job was with Shoosmiths in the Personal Injury department. As an office junior, my role was to sort and distribute post, do photocopying and run errands to the other Shoosmiths office in the town centre of Northampton. After around 18 months I started to look for another job, as I felt I had more to offer.

My second job was with Northampton County Council in the student awards department. My role was assisting with the assessment of parent's income to calculate the level of grant each student would receive and to check the attendance/exam results of all students. I did not enjoy this job.

To fill the time in, I studied for an NVQ Business Administration level 3 funded by the Council and attended night school to study a Legal Secretarial Course and RSA typing.

After 18 months I applied for a job at a local firm of solicitors as a Post Completion Assistant. In this job I enjoyed the role but not the office environment. But the firm must have seen I had potential as they offered to pay for my Council of Licenced Conveyancers qualification. I thought 'I don't want to be dealing with houses all my life!'

I went on holiday for two weeks and while away I decided that I needed to find a job I really enjoyed. I saw an advert for a case handler within the conveyancing department at Shoosmiths. I applied and I was offered a position, and from my first day in December 2000, I knew this was a role I was going to enjoy for the long-term.

I have now been working for Shoosmiths for over 21 years. I have progressed from a junior position in the conveyancing department to being a Partner (non lawyer) which is one of the most senior positions within a law firm.

I have developed my expertise on the job, dealing with thousands of transactions and assisting other people in the team with theirs. My strengths were practical ways of learning rather than studying textbooks, and this is what I enjoyed.

Shoosmiths agreed to pay for the Council of Licenced Conveyancer qualification for me. I started this course but I did not find studying easy and did not enjoy doing it. After the second module I decided not to complete the course. I was concerned that forcing myself to study would result in me disliking the job. I have never regretted this decision.

Since joining Shoosmiths I have not achieved any further qualifications. However, I have continued to learn and develop. Shoosmiths have an excellent learning and development team who offer numerous courses on management skills. To develop my management skills I have attended as many courses as possible. Learning from the senior leaders in my team has also been invaluable. I have learnt a lot from the other Partners in my team. Listening to how they handle various situations, discussing and sharing ideas has been a great way of learning and developing. My promotion to Partner has been achieved by gaining experience in all areas of my role and hard work.

I fell into working in law and particularly conveyancing. I have been very successful without the qualification or the burden of a student debt! It has been hard work and I have had to work under a lot of pressure at times.

To me the most important thing is, I found something I enjoyed doing. So remember, you spend most of your awake hours at work, so it is important to do something you enjoy."



3.3 Goal 8. Good Health and Wellbeing

Promoting mental and physical health across all age groups is not only crucial for fostering overall wellbeing but also for unlocking the full potential of individuals. This holds weight in both people's personal and professional lives, enabling individuals to capitalise on their skills and confidently pursue progression in their careers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has glaringly exposed the health inequalities entrenched in our society and their far-reaching consequences. This spotlight on divergent life expectancies highlights how even geographically close communities can experience markedly different outcomes. These disparities highlight the pressing responsibility of businesses, like Shoosmiths, to champion health and well-being, not just within their workforce but in the communities they serve.

As a firm deeply committed to promoting social mobility, Shoosmiths acknowledges the imperative of delivering good health and wellbeing for its employees and the wider community. By taking proactive steps to improve wellbeing, businesses like Shoosmiths not only contribute to the betterment of individuals' lives but also play an active role in mitigating health disparities and creating a more equitable society.

3.3.1 Flexible working approach

Shoosmiths stands out within the legal sector for its progressive approach to accommodating employees' working preferences. All Shoosmiths staff members enjoy the advantage of hybrid working, a notable contrast to the standard expectation of consistent office presence prevalent across the legal industry.

This commitment to flexibility extends across levels, reflecting Shoosmiths' understanding of the various demands employees face. Colleagues also have the option to transition to part-time roles. Notably, Shoosmiths has the largest part-time workforce within the UK legal industry, showcasing this commitment to supporting its all employees' needs at key life stages.

Coming out of COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown in 2021, Shoosmiths took a proactive step by seeking input from both colleagues and clients on defining successful hybrid working models. Using this feedback, the firm continues to uphold the value of flexibility while empowering individuals and teams to tailor their work arrangements. Embracing these working principles, Shoosmiths places equal emphasis on fostering collaboration and team-members spending quality time together.

As part of its investment in its workforce, Shoosmiths has also directed resources towards revitalising its office spaces. Numerous offices have undergone refurbishments, and new spaces have been established, exemplified by the recent launch of the London and Glasgow offices. The expansion further extends to exciting locations like Edinburgh's Haymarket development and Birmingham's 103 Colmore Row, both of which signal Shoosmiths' intent to cultivate a dynamic and conducive work environment for its employees.



3.3.2 Development opportunities

Shoosmiths has a dedicated internal Performance and Talent Development Team. This team is focused as much on personal development as technical role-specific growth. For colleagues from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and underrepresented groups the soft skills, feeling welcome to be their true selves, and knowledge of an office environment can be barriers to progression and internal social mobility.

A trainee development programme is delivered by the Performance and Talent Development Team within the first 18 months of the trainees tenure. This involves self reflection, business skills, dealing with difficult situations, goal-setting, next steps and transitions into the workplace as a qualified lawyer.

Since October 2022, Shoosmiths has also brought in quarterly conversations between managers and staff members. Through the HR systems these quarterly, longer form 1-1 conversations managers undertake with colleagues can set structured targets on specific priorities and formal development opportunities. These are also a safe space to address any challenges being faced by staff across the firm. Crucially, the conversations must be completed by both managers and employees for colleagues to receive their collegiate bonus.

3.3.4 Financial support

Shoosmiths is committed to providing comprehensive cost-of-living colleague support, ensuring the wellbeing and financial security of its employees. The firm's dedication to fair compensation is evident through its real-living wage accreditation.

In May 2021, the firm further demonstrated its appreciation for its staff by implementing an impressive 'thank you' gesture. Shoosmiths offered an additional four weeks' pay - equating to 7.7 per cent of annual pay - as a token of gratitude for their contributions over COVID-19 and in June 2022 made additional cost of living payments to all employees of £1000.

The firm also enhanced 'Your Benefits' to streamline the accessibility of employee benefits. This platform consolidates information about individual benefits, facilitating convenient selection of options, such as access to private medical and dental care and cycle to work and electric vehicle schemes. The Total Reward Statement provided within the portal offers a comprehensive view of the benefits package, going beyond the basics of salary and pension. It encompasses discretionary benefits such as birthday vouchers, long-service gifts, employee referral payments, and awards from the employee recognition scheme - STAR.

Recognising the importance of financial planning for the future, as part of its financial support agenda, Shoosmiths enhanced its pension scheme by elevating the employer contribution to 5.5 per cent for all scheme members. The firm also increased life cover to a multiple of eight times the employee's salary, further reinforcing its commitment to the financial wellbeing and security of its colleagues.



3.3.5 Family-first policies

Shoosmiths' leading health and wellbeing colleague offering extends to its co-parent leave package. In 2023, the firm significantly enhanced its family-friendly policies, driving forward the organisation's wider employee offering.

The changes included:

- 12 weeks full pay for co-parent leave;
- a partnership with Apricity to offer fertility guidance and treatment for all colleagues as well as free consultations and discounts;
- back up care with up to 5 days of back up care per employee per year for when care falls through including child care, adult and elder care, and pet care;
- fully paid leave for assisted conception, pregnancy loss and adoption;
- and increased menopause support including trained menopause champions internally.

3.3.6 Promoting Shoosmiths values

Shoosmiths' firm-wide values guide its behaviour, and its behaviours define its culture. It recently added a fourth value to its simple but effective cultural underpinning - "being ourselves".

This was added to refreshed values of: "focusing on what matters"; "delivering together"; and "making a difference". The firm acknowledges that despite all of these sounding simple and all should be a given, often these are not.

To address this, based on STAR nominations, each quarter an employee is admitted to the 'hall of fame' for their exemplification of each of the values and recognised firmwide and individually with financial recognition.

3.4 Goal 12. Building Sustainable Communities

Thriving communities characterised by opportunity and high living standards are the bedrock of long-term social mobility. In contrast, communities that lack these essentials run the risk of losing their skilled individuals and deterring valuable business investments that have the potential to effect positive change. This outlines the critical significance of place-based strategies, not only from a central and local government perspective but also from the standpoint of businesses like Shoosmiths.

Shoosmiths recognises the profound impact it can have on its local community. Businesses have the unique ability to contribute to the overall wellbeing of their communities by fostering a favourable environment for talent retention, economic growth and improved quality of life for employees. Embracing place-based approaches, firms like Shoosmiths can become vehicles of positive transformation, playing a central role in shaping vibrant and sustainable communities that flourish over time.

3.4.1 The Shoosmiths Foundation

Launched in June 2021, The Shoosmiths Foundation is the firm's targeted grant-making body.

The Shoosmiths Foundation builds on Shoosmiths' existing community investment programme which continues to support local charity partners through staff fundraising and firm donations, staff volunteering and provision of legal advice pro bono.

The Shoosmiths Foundation, driven by the Grants Committee which has representation from colleagues across the firm, considers which of these local partners to award the firm-wide national allocated funds each year. The most recent round of funding amounted to £90,000.

The first two rounds of funding were directed towards a social mobility theme, with the three strategic areas of the foundation being the following categories:

- The advancement in social mobility in the legal sector, and across the UK, in line with the Shoosmiths Social Mobility Action Plan There is a particular focus on charitable organisations which share Shoosmiths' belief that 'talent can come from anywhere', and which align their interventions with local socio-economic analysis and need;
- The advancement of a carbon net zero UK; and
- The advancement of access to justice in the UK.



Case Study - Impact of the Shoosmiths Foundation

The Shoosmiths Foundation has supported three charities with targeted social mobility support. End Youth Homelessness, Street League and Jericho have benefited, receiving a total of £140,000 over 2021 and 2022.

Funding to End Youth Homelessness (EYH) aimed to provide over 2,174 hours of employability support from Employability Coaches and help over 41 young people back into Employment, Education or Training (EET).

As a result of Shoosmiths Foundation funding, 46 young people were directly able to receive this support and transitioned into education, employment or training. Included in those 46 young people were:

- 13 young people who have since sustained full time employment;
- 14 young people sustained part time employment in industries such as retail hospitality and catering;
- a young person gained security qualifications and entered the industry;
- 11 young people sustained further education, studying qualifications such as health and social care, journalism and music production;
- one person now has a place at university;
- three young people sustained traineeships;
- and three young people sustained volunteering in charity shops.

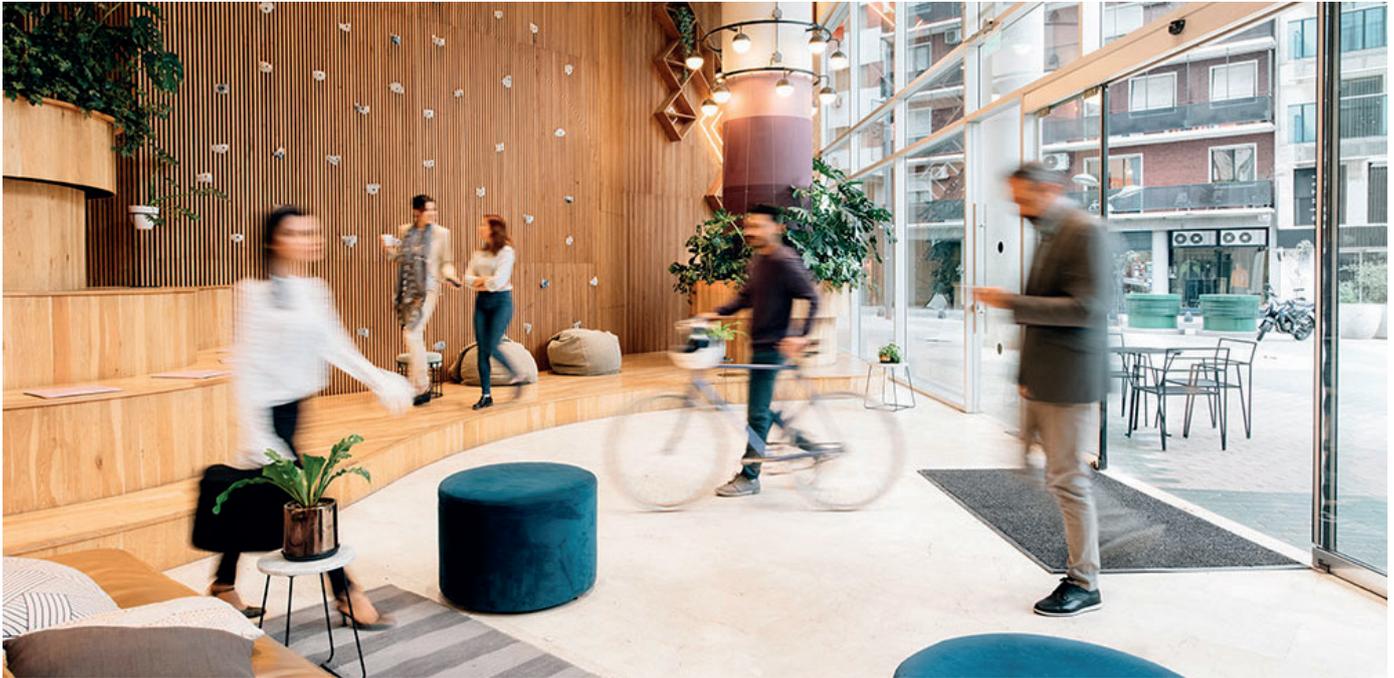
Funding to Street League aimed to support 53 unemployed young people, living in some of the most deprived communities across Leeds and Sheffield, to gain qualifications they need to secure meaningful job opportunities. Street League's targets included 48 young people to achieve at least one qualification.

As a result of Shoosmiths Foundation funding, Street League is now ahead of its targets. For example, based on 187 young people starting a qualifications programme since November 2021, 155/190 qualifications were achieved - an 82 per cent achievement rate - including GCSE level English. So far 82 young people have moved into employment.

A further £49,690 from Shoosmiths Foundation was awarded to support Jericho Jump Start in autumn 2022. Jericho Jump Start aims to underpin and extend work with school pupils at risk of exclusion, young people not in education, and people with lived experience of trauma, abuse, modern slavery, health and wellbeing issues, the care system or criminal justice system, addiction or homelessness.

Jericho Jump Start will see 75 per cent of the 40 people engaged in the project enter sustainable employment, with the remaining 25 per cent achieving their most appropriate positive destination.

Katie Webb, Deputy CEO at Jericho, said of the partnership: "We are hugely grateful to Shoosmiths for being willing to help us further develop our work with people who face real and significant challenges in accessing the job market. We will use the funding from the Shoosmiths Foundation to provide additional, social mobility-focused support on top of the work and training opportunities we currently provide for 12 months, and this extra support will help our beneficiaries achieve longer-term work and life goals and so ultimately have the very best chance of a fulfilled, happy life."



3.4.2 Addressing community challenges as an anchor organisation

Shoosmiths' office in Reading - based on data in its October 2020 Action Plan - identified 16 to 18-year-olds from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as its target group to boost social mobility across the region.

Shortly after the launch of the Social Mobility Action Plan, the team in Reading began collaborating with the Education Business Partnership (EBP). This partnership has included key strategic outreach into local schools running careers events, mock interviews, work experience, and employability workshops. The scheme offers insights into careers in law, raising aspirations across underrepresented groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds at a key life stage.

Several members of the team also work with the firm-wide partner, Business in the Community (BITC), the UK's largest and most influential responsible business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world. The office's work with BITC in the region began at the beginning of 2023 and has included job coaching for individuals struggling to find employment. This is less directly linked to law and the legal sector, with the initiative focused on offering support for individuals throughout their recruitment process.

The Social and Charity Committee team leads on this work in Reading. The committee has fourteen members, from trainee lawyers up to senior colleagues within the office, engaging with social mobility and community-based work.

3.4.3 A leader in the business community

Shoosmiths has been a corporate partner of Business in the Community (BITC) since 2000, supporting a number of its campaigns and programmes, and providing leadership on four BITC Leadership Boards.

In an effort to directly invest in the communities within which they operate, the firm has steadily increased the depth and breadth of its ties with BITC. Since the launch of the 2020 Action Plan, local Shoosmiths offices have linked up with regional BITC branches to tackle barriers into the workplace and boost social mobility in the communities it operates in across the UK.

In 2021/2022, as part of the Shoosmiths Foundation, the firm took the decision in Manchester to fundraise and provide firm donations in support of a BITC homelessness research project. Facilitated by the funds from Shoosmiths, BITC commissioned a local employment research project to complement existing support provided to individuals. The research aimed to directly identify employers who are recruiting for mainly entry-level jobs.

The research on local employers has since allowed BITC to build strong relationships with five new employers who have been able to offer jobs to people with experience of homelessness. All employers identified in the research were invited to the re-launch of the Manchester Homelessness Partnership in September 2022.

3.5 Goal 14. Achieve Equality through Diversity and Inclusion



Creating a level playing field for all offers the opportunity to fully unleash Britain's potential for the first time.

Research consistently highlights that businesses characterised by diversity tend to make more informed decisions. This advantage stems from the breadth of perspectives they bring to the table, overcoming the barrier of groupthink.

Diversity goes beyond gender and ethnicity; it encompasses sexuality, disabilities, and other hurdles that lead to inequality. An examination of leadership roles across various domains - business, the judiciary, government, and politics - reveals a persistent overrepresentation of individuals born into areas that are less deprived, less ethnically diverse, and more socioeconomically stable. The true success of the UK hinges on the alignment of leadership roles, across all sectors of society, with the broader societal landscape.

Shoosmiths, as a socially conscious business, understands this imperative for equity, diversity, and inclusion. With a commitment to levelling the playing field, Shoosmiths exemplifies how a forward-thinking business can shape not only its own workforce but also contribute to fostering a more representative and equitable society at large. This approach extends beyond immediate gains, offering a path toward a more inclusive future for all.

3.5.1 Collecting critical data

Shoosmiths collects quantitative social mobility data in addition to gender, race, LGBT+ and disability status. It applies the Equality of Opportunity Coalition's socioeconomic diversity metrics, producing insightful and useful findings up and down the country. It also voluntarily reports pay gap data across a wide variety of metrics.

Shoosmiths advises clients on ESG matters. In giving this advice, the firm acknowledges the responsibility it has to uphold these standards internally.

Shoosmiths' employee networks are led by colleagues up and down the business.

3.5.2 Employee Networks

Since October 2020, Shoosmiths has further embedded its firm-wide employee networks across its 14 offices. Although these are firm-wide, each office has autonomy over specific events and engagement across the networks.

This takes advantage of each office's expertise and knowledge of its immediate community, as well as its ability to drive change on the ground.

3.5.3 Spotlight on The Embrace network

The Embrace network exists to celebrate the culture and heritage of individuals at the firm and encourage diversity within the Shoosmiths community to help foster an inclusive and diverse culture. Through education and openness, the network provides a voice to all employees and encourages understanding and engagement across the firm.

The Embrace network supports:

Education – through sharing stories, reinforcing the importance of culture and fostering an understanding of why diversity matters at Shoosmiths;

Mentoring – opportunities to share experiences, strengthen connections and provide guidance and support;

Branching out – not just internally but externally too. As a network we recognise that we can help promote diversity and inclusion within Shoosmiths and in the legal sector;

Representation – encourages greater representation of minority groups;

A safe and supportive space – we want to make it easier for colleagues, especially our network members, to speak up about the challenges they may face because of their race, ethnicity or culture and seek workable solutions where processes and practices need to be improved;

Collaboration – inform and help to shape action taken by Shoosmiths' senior leaders, as well as colleagues across the firm, in support of the network;

Encourage – provide visibility to members of the network, enabling them to be themselves at work, develop in a supportive environment and ultimately succeed.

Other networks include Balance (focused on gender parity); Proud (LGBT+ colleagues and allies) and Mental Health and Wellbeing Champions.

3.5.4 Fit-Out Project

Shoosmiths firm-wide has been transforming its offices across its more established regions, a sign of its growth ambition and the firm's commitment to providing the best possible working environment for its employees.

The Birmingham office, as part of its 'Fit-Out Project' relocating the office, particularly focused on employee engagement in the office design. The office leads held meetings with each department, asking all staff what they would like out of their new office. Notably, staff requested a prayer room and wash facilities. A wellness room was also requested, which has been key for women experiencing the menopause and for ensuring women who have recently had a baby can breast-feed while at work.

In designing the office, Shoosmiths Birmingham also asked for the advice of a colleague who uses a wheelchair, ensuring accessibility using all of the building's services for those living with disabilities.

As a firm, Shoosmiths truly understands its responsibility in designing and providing the best possible working environments for its employees that are accessible to all. Often, people's working environments can be hurdles to their development and progression in and out of the workplace. If this is coupled with unseen barriers to accessing and using the space they are working in, the places people work can stifle their social mobility. The Fit-Out Project in Birmingham illustrates Shoosmiths' firm-wide understanding and activity in delivering the very best workplaces for all of its employees.

Case study - Diversity in action

Shoosmiths Northampton is made up of a diverse team of legal and non-legal professionals. In an office of 350 employees - the largest legal employer in Northampton - only a handful are qualified lawyers. This has led to ever increasing diversity in background across the office.

Shoosmiths launched its Social Mobility Working Group over 2022/2023 in Northampton, recruiting 25 volunteers as members of the Group. The volunteers each received training on how to deliver career events and workshops with local schools and universities. The Group has recently started proactively reaching out, specifically to disadvantaged schools.

Critically, the Social Mobility Working Group volunteers helped to produce, working with the firm-wide multi-media team that is based in the region, a brochure showcasing the wide range of staff members and non-legal roles available within the office. The creative and engaging brochure is handed out at the careers events to local young people, offering information on the possibilities to work and progress through the Northampton office.

In a region with a high number of social mobility coldspots, as well as low youth attainment and aspiration, these measures by Shoosmiths are vital in boosting equality of opportunity across Northampton and Northamptonshire.



Analysis



4. Analysis

Since its 2020 Action Plan, Shoosmiths has undergone a period of significant progress in its firm-wide commitment to social mobility and underpinning purpose. Focusing on strategic levers that directly impact social mobility and equality of opportunity - bespoke to each office's community - the firm has upscaled its already impressive impact. It has also ensured that it extends this approach to its colleagues, prioritising proactive and inclusive recruitment that leads into a wide range of progression opportunities - underpinned by a best-in-class employee wellbeing support package, and diversity and equity agenda.



4.1 Education, career pathways and mentorship

Through its commitment to social mobility, Shoosmiths has transformed its recruitment process since 2020. The firm ensures it recognises the value of diverse educational and career pathways beyond traditional academia, focusing solely on values, behaviours, and potential. Shoosmiths is inspiring individuals of all ages to access high-quality education and employment opportunities as worthy pathways into a skilled career. There is room for the firm to go even further, scaling-up its already impressive recruitment transformation to progress from open to proactive recruitment through setting specific targets on the diversity of its workforce. Deepening its ties with universities, who could lead on measurement and targeting for opportunities to access career pathways within the firm, could help to facilitate contacting the hardest to reach groups who often face the highest barriers.

As well as truly open recruitment, Shoosmiths is also committed to providing mentorship and work experience opportunities, especially for young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Through localised partnerships with organisations like MCR Pathways, EY Foundation and DYW, the firm offers insights into a number of internal and external job opportunities, helping young people gain exposure to the world of work and raise aspirations in strategic areas.



4.2 Community engagement

The firm proactively engages with the communities it serves. Since the 2020 Action Plan, Shoosmiths established the Shoosmiths Foundation, making grants to social organisations like Street League and Jericho, alongside the separate office-charity partnerships. This further illustrates the firm-wide commitment to supporting the most vulnerable people and families in its communities, as well as a continual leveraging of its resources and expertise to contribute to employability, education and overall wellbeing.

Due to the size of the firm, spread across fourteen offices and three different countries across the UK, each office has established deep ties and personal connections with the respective region it serves. Taking the next step in its community agenda, there is space to explore unifying efforts across the offices, with regional collaborative partnerships established strategically between older and younger offices.

4.3 Championing wellbeing

Crucially, Shoosmiths has internalised the outward focus on community wellbeing and social mobility to its colleagues - truly understanding how vital it is to progression and the overall health of the firm. It offers a range of effective support mechanisms as key drivers of social mobility. By offering flexible working arrangements - including remote work and part-time roles - it delivers against diverse needs of its workforce in a sector that is often traditional in its approach to home-working, enabling its employees to balance work and personal responsibilities.

The firm could explore linking its social mobility initiatives - through a universal approach across each of its offices - directly to progression. As Shoosmiths' underpinning purpose, employees should be incentivised to go out of their way to live and proactively promote social mobility and inclusion throughout their day-to-day work.

4.4 Diversity and inclusion

As a leader within the legal sector, the firm actively collects socioeconomic diversity data of its staff - based on a central commitment in its 2020 Social Mobility Action Plan - and uses metrics to monitor its progress. The response rate has improved 15 per cent since its inception, with an impressive rate of 86 per cent in 2023, and has continued to display the firm as diverse - especially in comparison to the number of employees who attended private education when compared to the rest of the legal sector.

The firm has the potential to go even further, focusing on the empowerment of specific underrepresented employees, like those who are living with disabilities, the menopause or those who are neurodiverse. The firm is already leading in the fostering of diversity and inclusion through its range of support networks which provide education, mentorship, and representation and its strategic design of offices to ensure accessibility and wellness facilities - accommodating a diverse range of employee needs.

4.5 Summary

Overall, Shoosmiths' initiatives since its 2020 Action Plan reflect a holistic approach to the creation of opportunities, supporting employees' wellbeing, engaging with communities and the promotion of diversity and inclusion as a firm-wide purpose. These efforts align with the firm's commitment to responsible corporate citizenship and its role in driving positive change through an underpinning of social mobility as a guiding principle.



Recommendations



5. Recommendations

Goal 12: Building Sustainable Communities

1. Sharing best practice across the UK: Firm-wide



To ensure consistent and effective social mobility efforts across the firm, Shoosmiths could explore the establishment of dedicated ‘Social Mobility Task Forces’ in each office, particularly in newer locations like Glasgow and Sheffield which are focal points for office growth. The Task Forces should meet regularly to discuss local initiatives and challenges.

A practical way to implement this recommendation is by creating a firm-wide Social Mobility Network. This network would comprise designated leads from each location and they would come together quarterly to exchange insights, best practices, and strategies. This collaborative forum would not only facilitate the sharing of successful initiatives but also address challenges collectively and pool resources. Currently, there is a duplication of efforts and resources across offices due to a lack of firm-wide communication.

By setting up these local task forces and a firm-wide network, Shoosmiths can ensure that its social mobility efforts are aligned and coordinated across all offices. This approach will contribute to a more uniform and impactful agenda on social mobility.

Implementing this initiative begins with securing buy-in from senior leadership within the organisation, ensuring they understand the significance and benefits of the Social Mobility Network. Identifying individuals within each office to serve as local task force leads where these are not already in place is essential, as they will play a pivotal role in driving social mobility efforts at the grassroots level. The firm should also empower those already leading each office’s social mobility efforts to take a more central role.

The objectives of the Social Mobility leads should be clearly defined. This should involve standardising social mobility initiatives, sharing success stories, addressing common challenges and pooling resources on shared channels. An effective communication plan should be in place to ensure seamless information flow between local Task Forces and the firm-wide network.

Sharing best practices is a crucial aspect of this recommendation. Each local task force should actively contribute by sharing their successful social mobility initiatives,

programmes and strategies during network meetings. These best practices should be documented for future reference. The pooling of resources should also be explored as part of this effort. This should involve the many impressive initiatives already undertaken by the firm like mentorship programmes, scholarship funds or partnerships with external organisations dedicated to social mobility.

In up-scaling this work Shoosmiths could look to enhance and unify social mobility efforts across its various offices’ by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing. More mature offices should form partnerships and ‘buddy-up’ with nearby offices that are earlier in their social mobility journey. For instance, the office in Edinburgh can lend support to those in Glasgow, and teams in Leeds can closely collaborate with their counterparts in Sheffield. This partnership model serves as a means to make the most effective use of resources and replicate best practices, ultimately bolstering social mobility initiatives right across the firm.

This exchange of insights and experiences brings a fresh perspective to social mobility approaches and infuses them with innovative solutions. Seasoned Task Forces and Social Mobility Groups can extend mentorship and guidance. This support ensures the seamless integration of social mobility initiatives across the UK offices and promotes a firm-wide progression of goals under a unified ‘Shoosmiths standard’.

The strength of this approach lies in the collective effort of all colleagues and office heads who work together within a common framework. It is crucial to acknowledge and respect regional nuances, adapting strategies to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by each location. The end goal is to scale up Shoosmiths’ already sector-leading community support agenda.

By setting up these localised task forces and a firm-wide network, Shoosmiths can ensure that its social mobility efforts are aligned and coordinated across all offices. This approach will contribute to a more uniform and impactful approach to social mobility, deepening the sense of unity and commitment across the organisation.

Shoosmiths could apply this recommendation in practice using the below impact measurement metrics:

- Number of volunteer hours contributed by colleagues.
- Participation rates in mentoring or educational programmes.
- Impact assessments of community projects supported by the firm.

Goal 6 - Fair Career Progression

2. Link progression directly to core Shoosmiths values:



To strengthen the connection between social mobility initiatives and the overall purpose of the firm, Shoosmiths could look to integrate progression opportunities with the Social Mobility Task Forces and its leads.

As a complementary measure to the establishment of Task Forces at each office, individuals that are seeking - or currently holding - partner positions must demonstrate a tangible commitment to Shoosmiths' values through their active involvement in the firm's social mobility work.

This integrated approach not only aligns with the firm's dedication operating as a force for good but also ensures that those advancing to partner roles embody the spirit of these values in action.

More widely, for all roles outside of partnership positions, Shoosmiths should consider attributing value in terms of progression in all roles to a colleague's social mobility, diversity and inclusion and ESG work. This would only be seen through the lens of 'value-added' rather than a negative if an employee was not active on top of their role.

By linking progression to active participation in social mobility efforts, Shoosmiths can create a culture where career advancement is closely tied to the principles that underpin the firm's commitment to a fair and inclusive work environment. This, in-turn, reinforces the importance of the Social Mobility Task Forces and networks while driving home the significance of these efforts throughout all levels of the firm.

Shoosmiths could apply this recommendation in practice using the below impact measurement metrics:

- Number of volunteer hours contributed by colleagues to diversity and inclusion.
- Pro bono hours per employee.
- Number of pro bono cases or projects completed.
- Total pro bono hours contributed annually.



Goal 5 - Open Recruitment

3. Take the next step on measurement:



Shoosmiths has already demonstrated a commitment to exceeding traditional expectations when it comes to measuring the socioeconomic diversity of its staff members, as outlined in its October 2020 Action Plan.

The firm has also taken notable strides in transforming its recruitment process, shifting the focus away from conventional markers like academic prowess and industry connections, which have traditionally acted as barriers to social mobility within the legal sector. This change in approach has yielded positive results, with a significant number of individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and underrepresented groups successfully joining the firm.

However, Shoosmiths has the opportunity to take the next step in its commitment to ensuring diversity and boosting social mobility through open, proactive and fair recruitment.

Specifically, the firm can leverage the wealth of data it has collected and set specific diversity goals for its employees, categorising these goals according to ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality and socioeconomic background. Recognising the considerable variations in demographic make-up across different cities and regions in the UK, it is essential to tailor these objectives office-by-office to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

To further expand its reach and tap into an even broader talent pool, Shoosmiths can draw inspiration from the successful partnership between Shoosmiths Birmingham and Aston University. By harnessing the measurement capabilities of local universities and establishing similar talent pipeline partnerships, the firm can access a diverse pool of candidates. The Purpose Universities Coalition should act as a bridge to Shoosmiths and universities through which collaborations and partnerships can be established. Shoosmiths can then access the wealth of data higher education institutions measure on the demographics of programme participants.

The firm has made commendable strides in its commitment to boosting diversity and social mobility through its values and behavioural based recruitment. However, by setting specific diversity goals, customising them for each office and establishing partnerships with local universities, the firm can take the next step on its sector-leading measurement strategy.

Shoosmiths could apply this recommendation in practice using the below impact measurement metrics:

- Employee participation and completion rates in training and development programmes.
- Measurable skills enhancement - by diversity factor - amongst employees.





Goal 14 - Achieve Equality through Diversity and Inclusion

4. Empowering underrepresented groups through dedicated champions:



Shoosmiths' commitment to diversity and inclusion is a core pillar of its mission to become truly representative of the communities it serves. To further this commitment and address specific issues concerning underrepresented groups - such as employees going through the menopause and those who are neurodiverse - Shoosmiths should establish dedicated champions for each underrepresented group, as it has done with the menopause.

These champions would serve as advocates and guides, empowering underrepresented groups by providing invaluable support and contributing to their holistic development. The unique challenges faced by individuals in these groups, often hard to quantify and varying greatly from person to person, make the presence of champions crucial. These champions can empathise and work directly with each employee, tailoring support and progression programmes to their individual needs.

The role of these champions extends beyond individual support. They are equipped to navigate organisational processes, provide insights and lead initiatives aimed at addressing the specific challenges encountered by these groups. The presence of the champions also has the potential to foster a broader awareness and understanding among colleagues. This, in turn, contributes to a workplace culture that not only values but actively embraces the contributions of all employees - regardless of their unique circumstances or challenges.

Shoosmiths could apply this recommendation in practice using the below impact measurement metrics:

- Employee retention rates for diverse groups.
- Employee up-take of progression opportunities by diversity group.

Goal 3 - Positive Destinations Post 16+

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



Shoosmiths undertakes a comprehensive outreach programme across many of its offices. As outlined above, its social mobility focus is sector-leading - raising aspirations in communities through interaction with students early in the talent pipeline

in schools and colleges. The firm acknowledges that the legal sector - for young people from under-resourced backgrounds - can be daunting and seem out of reach. Shoosmiths focuses on demystifying students' feelings around the sector and works to break down barriers to all of the roles available within the firm.

To go even further in these outreach efforts, Shoosmiths - in partnership with the Purpose Coalition - could specifically target schools and colleges close to its offices in areas of acute deprivation, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The IMD combines information from seven indicators to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation for small areas in the UK. The indicators are: Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment.

The application of the IMD's indicators to specific areas allows the user to rank 32,844 Lower-layer Social Output Areas (LSOAs) from most deprived to least deprived. LSOAs comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.

Once the LSOAs across Shoosmiths' footprint have been identified, the firm can then reach out to schools and colleges in those areas to maximise its social impact.

Shoosmiths could apply this recommendation in practice using the below impact measurement metrics:

- Number of schools and colleges in under-resourced areas reached.
- Number of students in under-resourced areas reached.
- Feedback from participating schools and colleges.
- Improvement in the seven indicators of local deprivation in chosen areas.





©Shoosmiths LLP 2023

SHOOSMITHS

www.shoosmiths.com



THE PURPOSE
COALITION

Proudly run by
this is
purpose

**PURPOSE
GOALS**

**FOR
WHAT
MATTERS**