

SOCIAL INCLUSION: HOW EMPLOYERS CAN CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE OF OPPORTUNITY

With the Government putting significant emphasis on apprenticeships and Theresa May's commitment to opportunity for all, many organisations are developing or monitoring their approach to Social Mobility. With the imminent launch of the Social Mobility Employer Index, Fox Williams and City HR take a look at "what is social inclusion?" why it matters and how organisations can contribute to the Social Mobility Employer Index.

According to David Johnston, CEO of the Social Mobility Foundation, socio-economic diversity has had less focus than gender and ethnicity/race diversity. Did you know that in Great Britain in 2017, Johnston has identified that:

- 4% of doctors, 6% of barristers and 11% of journalists come from a working-class background
- Up to 70% of professional service firms' intakes come from private schools and grammar schools
- Average pay gap between working class and professional families in same profession is £6,800 per annum
- Focus lies on race/ethnicity and gender to the exclusion of socio-economic background
- Focus lies on past academic performance and polish to the exclusion of potential

Charlotte Sweeney OBE, author and leading expert in Diversity and Inclusion, sees social mobility as a silent threat to talent development, with so many pitfalls submerged beneath the Waterline of Visibility on the D&I Spectrum. Whilst significant inroads are being made in many visible "protected characteristics" the iceberg model highlights the difficulties experienced by those who lack wealth, education, family and social status.



The Social Mobility Foundation was established in 2005 to make a practical improvement in social mobility for young people from low-income backgrounds. The Foundation set out to provide opportunities and support for 16-17 year olds who are unable to get help from school or family. More than ten years on, the first supported students have successfully achieved degrees and graduate entry jobs. So how can this experience translate into City firms? By following the work of the Social Mobility Foundation, City firms should begin to see a diversification of the talent pool and find a wider scope of employees than before; varied employees will bring different assets to a firm.

The impending Social Mobility Employer Index sets out to highlight which companies in Britain are top employers of socially diverse workforces. Firms can respond anonymously and any data presented outside the top

list will be presented as such nonetheless. There are 7 areas across which questions will be asked and firms are expected to already have a policy in place **tackling one of the 7 areas**. The categories are as follows:

■ Working with young people:

- The index looks for firms interacting with candidates countrywide, with the focus being on potential over presentation and polish.

■ Routes into employer

- Graduate only roles exclude many candidates and roles for non-graduates do not offer equal situations. The index asks for well-structured non-graduate routes providing comparable progression and parity with graduate roles.

■ Attraction

- Innovative methods of reaching out to graduates beyond a handful of universities are sought after. Many of these limited candidates will find work elsewhere and may have little awareness of the firm.

■ Recruitment and Selection

- Academic achievements are frequently used to restrict candidate pools. Employers should be looking to remove any socio-economic hindrances and judge potential over interview presentation.

■ Data collection

- Firms should aim to analyse their workforce profiles and strive towards diversifying them and avoid preference of privileged candidates.

■ Progression

- Support should be in place to help those of lower socio-economic backgrounds to get on, not just in, limiting staff feeling uncomfortable and leaving.

■ Internal/external advocacy

- Employees may feel quietly uncomfortable. The best firms may not advertise their efforts to do so. There should be action to involve staff in improving social mobility, as well as pressure on peers and suppliers to do the same.

The deadline for organisations to make a submission showcasing their activity in one of the categories listed above is 3rd May 2017.

The City of London Corporation is sponsoring the Social Mobility Employer Index - a new initiative from the Social Mobility Foundation and Social Mobility Commission - which ranks Britain's top businesses on how open they are to accessing, recruiting and progressing talent from all backgrounds. Mark Boleat, Policy Chairman comments:

"The Index is an important benchmarking tool primarily targeted at sectors which are keen to improve their approach to social mobility. The Index gives firms from across the UK the opportunity to showcase real progress towards improving social mobility"

Jane Mann, Partner at Fox Williams concludes "Social mobility helps those from disadvantaged backgrounds truly realise their potential. The move towards assessing potential talent and expanding the scope of selection will diversify workplaces in the City and bring opportunities to more people, as well as new and varied talent to your firm".

For more information please visit www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/