

Law firm Browne Jacobson ranked as the UK's number one employer for social mobility

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UK law firm Browne Jacobson has been ranked as the UK's leading employer in the Social Mobility Employer Index 2021, the leading authority on social mobility workplace best practice in the UK.

The Index is created by the Social Mobility Foundation and identifies those employers that have taken the most action to improve social mobility in the workplace. This year 203 employers were considered for the Top 75 rankings.

This is the first time that any law firm has topped the rankings in the history of the Index.

Caroline Green, Senior Partner at Browne Jacobson, who leads on diversity, inclusion and well-being at the firm, said:

"I am unbelievably proud of all our people whose passion and determination to advance social mobility in the legal profession has resulted in our first place ranking in the Index. This means a great deal to us all.

"Employers large and small have a huge role in creating a fairer society and delivering the levelling up agenda. The last 18 months has been difficult for so many young people and we are delighted that the steps we have taken and our ground-breaking FAIRE initiative, in particular, have opened up the legal profession to some of those most disadvantaged by the pandemic; we have been able to demonstrate just how much can be achieved if the will and determination is there.

"For us, the journey does not stop here. There is always more we can do and our commitment to improving social mobility within our firm, the wider legal profession and amongst the communities and clients we serve is stronger than ever."

Browne Jacobson has established a national reputation for its commitment to promoting greater diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and recently won a number of major awards for its ground breaking diversity and inclusion programme including accolades at the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards, UK Social Mobility Awards, The Lawyer Awards and British Legal Awards.

Since 2016, the firm has implemented a series of ground-breaking initiatives including revolutionising its trainee recruitment processes by removing academic barriers, anonymising applications and focusing its outreach work on social mobility 'cold spots'.

In 2021, the firm launched FAIRE (Fairer Access into Real Experience) – a unique programme offering work experience opportunities to candidates specifically from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Under its FAIRE initiative, it staged two of the UK's largest ever virtual legal careers events with over 11,000 young people taking part in total.

Rt Hon. Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Foundation, said: "The pandemic has exposed the new geography of disadvantage in Britain and, through disruption in the classroom, exam hall and workplace, created serious barriers to young people's opportunities. If older people have been on the health frontline of the pandemic it is the young who seem doomed to suffer the biggest economic and social consequences.

"Employer-led social mobility will be vital in bridging the divide and delivering the levelling up agenda. All of the employers represented in the Index are showing that it is possible to create a society where it is not background or birth but aptitude and ability that dictate progress in life. They are providing it is possible to build back better. If we are to rescue the fraying promise of a meritocratic society, then more employers must join them, and government must follow suit in taking targeted action to address social mobility".

Sarah Atkinson, CEO of the Social Mobility Foundation, added: “Congratulations to all the businesses who submitted this year – especially the 38 firms who have participated in all five years of the Index. It is encouraging that the extremely challenging circumstances of the pandemic has not deterred these firms from prioritising social mobility. It is right that they have done so. Government cannot go it alone when levelling up; indeed, the Index shows businesses and organisations are leading the way instead. Opportunity creation for the next generation, especially those from less well-off backgrounds, must be prioritised in the years ahead. As ever, we stand ready to support employers of all sizes in their social mobility journey.”

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