

Browne Jacobson maintains top spot in Social Mobility Employer Index 2022

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Law firm Browne Jacobson has retained its ranking as the UK's leading employer in the Social Mobility Employer Index 2022, the leading authority on social mobility workplace best practice in the UK.

The firm, which has offices in London, Manchester Nottingham, Birmingham, Exeter and Dublin, was the first law firm in the history of the Index to top the rankings in 2021.

Over the past 6 years Browne Jacobson has launched a series of initiatives and partnerships to open up the legal profession for young people of all backgrounds, especially those from socially disadvantaged groups and regions across the country. The Social Mobility Foundation has praised the firm in particular for its school outreach work..

In 2021-22:

- 100% of the firm's outreach was conducted at non-selective state schools and 62% of the young people who took part were eligible for free school meals ;
- Browne Jacobson introduced a mentoring scheme specifically for aspiring young black lawyers to address the under-representation of this group across the profession;
- The firm partnered with Forage, a leading global virtual platform, to launch a "free to access" work experience programme for 16-18 year olds;
- The firm hosted its third virtual FAIRE career insight event in October 2022, attracting over 3000 participants, with more than 53% of participants taking part being Black, Asian or Minority ethnic, 77 % female and 64% from lower socio-economic backgrounds. More than 23,500 students have benefited from the FAIRE programme since inception.

Caroline Green, Senior Partner at Browne Jacobson, who leads on diversity, inclusion and well-being at the firm, said: "We are incredibly proud to maintain our position as the leading employer for social mobility in the UK and our ranking is testament to the hard work and dedication of so many of our people. As a firm we recognise that academic qualifications are not the only measure of success and the initiatives we have implemented have significantly widened the pool of talent as well as fostering a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

"At Browne Jacobson, we believe in fairness and that success should not be dependent on "who you know". We do not have limitless resources and our success has been achieved through a change of approach that everyone can adopt. We are delighted to share best practice to encourage other employers to level the playing field."

Rt Hon. Alan Milburn, Chair, Social Mobility Foundation, said: "The economic crisis is widening the deep social divide in Britain. Young people are on the frontline of this great divide which is why employer-led social mobility efforts are so vital to creating opportunity based on merit and not social class. The employers represented in this year's Index are proving that it is possible for aptitude and ability, not background or birth, to decide your progress in life. They are doubling down on improving social mobility, but many more employers need to join them. In particular it is lamentable that just one profit-rich energy company othered to enter the Index. That is an abdication of their social responsibilities."

Sarah Atkinson, CEO, Social Mobility Foundation, said: "Well done to all the organisations which submitted this year – especially the 31 firms who have participated six years in a row. In the context of recovery from the pandemic, economic uncertainty and ongoing political upheaval, these employers are rightly continuing to prioritise social mobility as an investment in the future. The Index shows businesses and organisations are starting to lead the way to combat the cost-of-living crisis for their employees. Opportunity creation for

the next generation must be at the top of their agenda, especially as working people are struck with a class pay gap and the rise in living costs eating away at their salaries. The SMF stands ready to support employers of all sizes in their social mobility journey."

The Index is created by the Social Mobility Foundation and identifies those employers that have taken positive action to improve social mobility in the workplace. It assesses firms on a number of key areas including working with young people, attracting talent, routes into the business, recruitment, selection, and progression. This year 149 businesses and public sector organisations – employing nearly one million people entered.

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