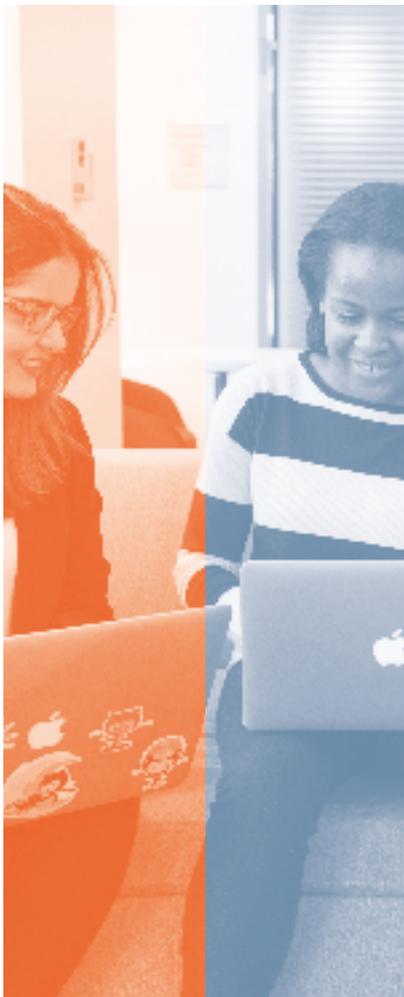




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LET'S TALK



ABOUT CLASS

A collection of resources designed to support inclusive conversations between teams on the importance of socio-economic diversity in the workplace

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WHY TALK ABOUT SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND (SEB)?

Introduction: Why your workforce should start talking openly about social mobility in the workplace

Social mobility matters. A person's opportunities in life shouldn't be determined by their circumstances at birth.

Whether you have a fully-fledged strategy for diversity and inclusion (D&I) in your organisation, or you're just starting to embed D&I principles, it's important to make sure you're thinking (and talking!) about socio-economic background alongside other characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity.

This resource pack is designed for organisations at any stage in their social mobility journey. It includes a selection of resources aimed at getting the conversation around this important issue started.

Whatever your role in the organisation, an inclusive culture needs to be owned by everyone – this pack contains information and advice on how to secure buy-in from leadership, how to communicate your plans to your workforce, as well as how to get them involved in the conversation around socio-economic background.

Why talk about class: How embracing socio-economic diversity can benefit your organisation

The advantages of promoting social mobility and socio-economic diversity to your organisation could be dramatic. Research has shown that organisations that build diverse teams experience the following benefits:

IMPROVED BRANDING

43%

of businesses with a more diverse workforce have higher profits.¹

MOTIVATION

83%

When companies foster a more inclusive work environment, 83% of millennials are found to be actively engaged with their work.²

PRODUCTIVITY

87%

Inclusive teams make better business decisions 87% of the time...

RECRUITMENT

58%

of candidates look at a company's diversity & inclusion efforts when researching a prospective new employer.⁴

60%

... and twice as fast, delivering 60% better results.³

RETENTION

22%

Companies with inclusive cultures have 22% lower turnover rates.⁵

- 1 "Delivering growth through diversity in the workplace | McKinsey." 18 Jan. 2018, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
- 2 "The Radical Transformation of Diversity and Inclusion The Millennial" 27 Mar. 2015, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-inclus-millennial-influence-120215.pdf>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
- 3 "Hacking Diversity Hacking Diversity with Inclusive Decision Making." https://www.cloverpop.com/hubfs/Whitepapers/Cloverpop_Hacking_Diversity_Inclusive_Decision_Making_White_Paper.pdf. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
- 4 "diversity & inclusion report 2019 – Hays." <https://cloud.email.hays.com/hts-diversityinclusion2019>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
- 5 "Inclusive Mobility: How Mobilizing a Diverse Workforce ... – Deloitte." <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/Tax/us-tax-inclusive-mobility-mobilize-diverse-workforce-drive-business-performance.pdf>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.



Next steps – How to start the conversation

Whatever your role is in your organisation, there are steps you can take right now to get the conversation about class in your workplace started:

I'm an HR Director

- Speak to your leadership team and get their buy in.
- Set up workshops within your workplace to talk about socio-economic background.
- Explore our [Employer toolkits](#) and start collecting the data on which to base your next steps.

I am a member of the Leadership team

- Talk to your workforce about social mobility.
- Appoint champions/people responsible for driving forward the social mobility agenda in your workplace...
- ...then regularly review progress at board meetings and senior leadership team meetings.



I am an employee advocating for socio-economic diversity

- Speak to your HR team or leadership to secure buy in – use the information above to convince them of the value of talking about socio-economic background.
- Set up workshops (lunch & learns, after work discussions) to talk about socio-economic background...
- ...then create an employee network for peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, to coordinate outreach activities, and more.

2



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SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE UK – EXAMINING THE BIG PICTURE

How to use this resource

This section is designed to give you a clear and short overview of the issues affecting social mobility in the UK, with key facts on the situation.

Share it with your people so they can have informed conversations on social mobility in the UK and understand the important role businesses like yours have in helping to stop the cycle of low social mobility.

A brief introduction to key terms

Before we talk about class and socio-economic background, it's important to be aware of some key phrases that are used throughout this resource pack and which will help inform discussion and clear up any initial misunderstandings participants may have.

SOCIAL CLASS

Class can be a loaded term. Class encompasses a range of socio-cultural and geographical factors. Objective measures of assessing family income may not necessarily match up with individuals' perceptions of their social class status, and individuals may feel less comfortable talking about social class. However, class can invoke a range of tacit assumptions and practices, from how to dress and talk to food choices and hobbies, and using the term can expose the negative ways that these assumptions affect attitudes and behaviours.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND (SEB)

Socio-economic background is the term to refer to the particular set of social and economic circumstances that an individual has come from. It permits objective discussion of the influence of these circumstances on individuals' educational and career trajectories; and it can be objectively measured by capturing information on parental occupation and level of education. The Office for National Statistics categorises jobs using the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification. We then recommend employers collect and analyse the three largest groupings, which include: managerial and professional, clerical and intermediate, and routine and manual occupations.

HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

You are from a high socio-economic or 'professional' background if your highest earning parent worked in a managerial and professional

occupation. Examples include: CEOs, senior police officers, doctors, journalists, barristers, solicitors, teachers and nurses.

INTERMEDIATE BACKGROUND

You are from an intermediate background if your highest earning parent worked in a clerical and intermediate occupation. Examples include: shop owner, garage owner, taxi owner, secretary, nursery nurse, clerical worker and call centre agents.

LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

You are from a 'working class' background if your highest earning parent worked in a routine and manual occupation. Examples include: receptionists, electricians, plumbers, butchers and van drivers.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The term we recommend employers use to describe their efforts to promote more diverse workforces. This accurately captures the drive to create diverse and inclusive workplaces based on a person's background.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is the link between an individual's income and occupation and the income and occupation of their parents. It is about where people end up in comparison to their parents or relative to their peers. It is often used by policymakers to look at people's outcomes in life. In a society with high rates of social mobility, your outcomes are not tied to what family you are born into. In a society with low rates of social mobility, like the UK, the family you

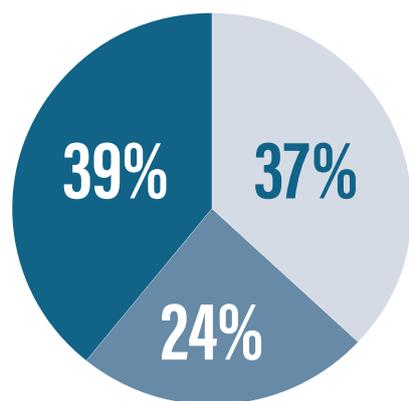
were born into significantly predicts the type of job and income you will have. It is widely adopted as a way of describing the importance of creating opportunities for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to enable them to become more economically successful.

Understanding the extent of the issue

While social mobility is fundamentally about ensuring that a person's occupation and income are not tied to where they started in life, it is also about much more than that. It is about fairness across society and ensuring that people of all backgrounds get equal opportunities and choices in early years, at school, in further education, in universities and at work.

A skilled, talented, diverse workforce is essential to economic

The national benchmark: the UK workforce by socio-economic background



- Professional or 'higher' SEBs
- Intermediate backgrounds
- Working class or 'lower' SEBs

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-social-mobility-and-the-pandemic>

2 "State of the nation 2021: Social mobility and the pandemic – GOV.UK." 21 Jul. 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-social-mobility-and-the-pandemic>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.

success. However, at this critical time, social mobility is stagnant and people from professional and managerial backgrounds continue to enjoy profound advantages in the labour market, compared to those from working class backgrounds.

Across the UK, those from better-off backgrounds are 60% more likely to land a top job than their working class peers.¹ Just 34% of people from working class backgrounds work in professional occupations, compared to 60% of those from professional backgrounds

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

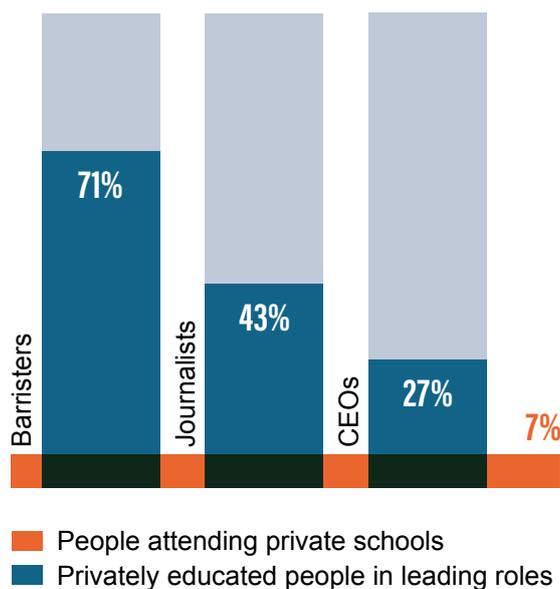
In the UK, those from professional backgrounds are 60% more likely to be in a professional job than their working class peers.

This immobility has remained stagnant over the past four years, despite government interventions.

THE CLASS PAY GAP

Due to the gap in access to professional jobs and worse progression prospects for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, **people from working class backgrounds earn 24% less a year than those from professional backgrounds.** Even when those from working class backgrounds are successful in entering professional occupations, they earn on average £6,000 per year less than their more privileged colleagues in similar roles.²

The power-gap: the percentage of privately educated people in leading UK roles



CAREER PROGRESSION

Research shows that – on average – **people from lower socio-economic backgrounds progress more slowly than those from more privileged backgrounds.**³ For example, in sectors such as financial and professional services, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds take a year and a half longer on average to reach partner than their colleagues from higher social groups.

MIGRATION

Moving regions often helps people get better jobs, however those from working class backgrounds are often less able or have less desire to move regions and are less likely to move to London, where the most opportunities are.

³ “Who gets ahead and how? – Bridge Group.” https://www.thebridgegroup.org.uk/s/Socio-economic_report-Final.pdf. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.

DOUBLE DISADVANTAGE – CLASS, DISABILITY, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

Just 21% of people with disabilities from working class backgrounds enter the highest occupations versus 43% of people with disabilities from professional backgrounds. Women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to experience downward social mobility than their male or white counterparts.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

People from working class backgrounds generally face the highest levels of unemployment.

LIVING STANDARDS

In England, there are now 500,000 more children in poverty than in 2012. Child poverty significantly harms a person’s social mobility potential.

Those from working class backgrounds are less likely to own a home than those from more privileged backgrounds.

All of these indicate lower living standards which could jeopardise current and future social mobility.

WELLBEING

Individuals from more disadvantaged areas are more likely to suffer from lower levels of wellbeing.

GROUP DISCUSSION – WHERE DO THE BARRIERS EXIST?

How to use this resource

This section is intended to prompt discussion and support employees to understand barriers that exist in the workplace for low SEB employees and applicants.

Share it with participants in focus groups, working groups meetings and other internal discussions. Breakout groups can use the ‘Conversation starters’ to facilitate more in-depth discussion around barriers and privilege.

Identifying the barriers for people from low socio-economic backgrounds (SEB) in the workplace

Being committed to socio-economic diversity and inclusion is important to make sure that your workplace culture is inclusive, but it’s important that the policies and practices your workplace adopts to recruit and progress staff are reinforcing and building on this commitment.

In this resource, we outline the most common barriers faced by people from low SEB entering and progressing in their career, and invite colleagues to discuss how effectively their workplace’s current policies are taking socio-economic diversity and inclusion into account.

Where to focus your efforts

OUTREACH

How your company builds its pipeline of potential talent can have an affect on the socio-economic diversity of your workforce. A diverse talent pipeline is more likely to lead to a diverse workforce.

Targeting outreach toward Further Education colleges or universities with more diverse student bodies can help to ensure you're reaching low SEB applicants.

Looking beyond traditional recruitment centres such as London and targeting your outreach activities at social mobility 'coldspots' – where levels of social mobility are low – can help to improve outcomes for people from a low SEB and could help the organisation access a wider pool of untapped talent.

Conversation starters

- What does our outreach programme look like? Do we make an effort to target people from less privileged backgrounds?
- Which schools and universities do we partner with as part of our programmes – do we have close links with institutions with diverse student bodies?

HIRING

Many common hiring practices create barriers for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

When advertising for new roles, requiring specific qualifications may unnecessarily put up a barrier to applications from low SEB applicants with skills or potential, but who have not had the same opportunities as more privileged applicants. Hiring managers should be sure that

the requirements of the role are appropriate and should aim to hire for skills and potential, rather than qualifications or 'polish'.

Non-graduate entry routes can be an important way of promoting diversity at entry-level; apprenticeships (levels 2 and 3 in particular) for example can be a highly effective way of hiring and training new staff without requiring higher qualifications.

Conversation starters

- Are the qualifications we ask for in our job adverts 100% necessary for the role? When is it mandatory to require a degree qualification? How might someone have equivalent experience but not a degree?
- How flexible are we when it comes to hiring? How could changes to our hiring practices enable us to recruit from outside of urban centres?



What do we mean by ‘fit’ and ‘polish’?

An employee or applicant’s ‘fit’ or ‘polish’ should have little bearing on their performance in a role. However, these ‘middle class’ attributes “are at times conflated with perceptions of talent”, according to research by the Bridge Group.⁹

Over time, a preference for polish over skills and experience can put low SEB employees at a disadvantage, as perceptions of polish are often based on shared experiences or references exclusive to those from privileged backgrounds. This is common in organisations with predominantly professional jobs such as in financial and professional services or in the UK Civil Service.¹⁰



PROGRESSION

Socio-economic diversity and inclusion is not just about who gets in, it’s also about #WhoGetsOn. Different organisations have a wide-range of policies and practices in place to support progression and promotion for their employees, some of which may act as potential barriers to people from low SEBs.

Progression frameworks where there is too large a ‘jump’ from one position to the next can make it harder for employees – particularly those in low paid jobs – to learn and demonstrate the required skills to progress.

Some roles lack a list of clearly defined skills required to progress, making it likely that informal ‘hidden rules’ dictate who gets on. As a result, progression becomes dependent more on informal sponsorship, access to accelerator roles and even cultural fit than it is on demonstrating particular skills.

In these cases, navigating these routes can be dependent on guidance from senior mentors. This can put low SEB employees at a disadvantage compared to more privileged peers, when mentors – typically also privileged – choose mentees in their own image.

Conversation starters

- How did you learn to progress in this organisation – who and what were the most useful guides when looking toward promotion opportunities?
- What are the roles or positions in the workplace which offer exposure to senior leaders or offer the opportunity to work on high profile/high-impact assignments? How are these typically assigned?

- 1 “Who gets ahead and how? – Bridge Group.” https://www.thebridgegroup.org.uk/s/Socio-economic_report-Final.pdf. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.
- 2 “Navigating the labyrinth – GOV.UK.” 20 May. 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/navigating-the-labyrinth>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021.

CULTURE

So your organisation is becoming more socio-economically diverse, but is your culture inclusive?

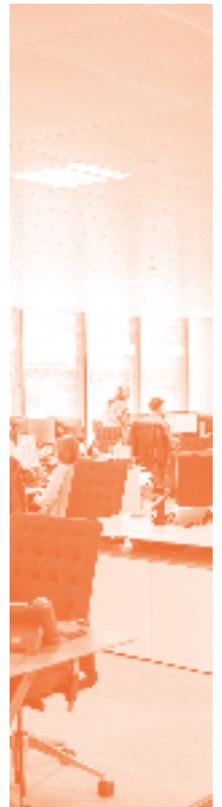
A culture that is inclusive of people from low socio-economic background, which values the perspectives of people from low SEBs, and in which low SEB individuals feel welcome

and able to talk openly about their background is vital, both for employee productivity and retention.

While an inclusive culture is owned by all, it requires buy-in from leadership and a commitment to driving it forward at every level within the organisation.

Conversation starters

- How can we ensure more senior-level focus on socio-economic inclusion in the workplace? At what junctures is senior-level involvement most useful to drive forward this agenda?
- How could a social mobility network help to foster inclusion in our company?



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HOW TO START A CONVERSATION WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION

How to use this resource

This resource is designed to support HR, leadership and internal communications teams to initiate discussions with employees around social mobility.

Use it to inform the design of leadership or internal communications around your plans to improve socio-economic diversity.

Step 1

Build a clear narrative around social mobility

Starting a conversation internally can be a challenge, so it's important that you acknowledge how complex the issue is and have a clear foundation on which to invite everyone in your organisation to get involved.

Remember you're trying to start a conversation – and a conversation is rarely one way. You do not need to have all the answers right now,



but you should show that – as a senior team – you’ve thought about the following as part of your narrative:

1. What do we mean by socio-economic diversity and inclusion, and why does it matter to the organisation?
2. What are we already doing as an organisation to further socio-economic diversity and inclusion?
3. How do our efforts around socio-economic diversity and inclusion fit within the organisation’s wider diversity and inclusion strategy?

TIP: Listen to your workforce to decide what terms to use.

We recommend using: low socio-economic background or ‘working class’; intermediate socio-economic background; and high or ‘professional’ socio-economic background.

However, ‘class’ can feel like a loaded term to some, whereas to others ‘low vs. high’ can feel like a values judgement. Start a conversation with your employees to see what language they prefer.

Step 2

Appoint a respected, senior voice to champion socio-economic diversity and inclusion in your organisation and a key figure with operational responsibility

Now that you have a clear narrative around social mobility, it is time to put your words into action.

While every employee should have a stake in your diversity and inclusion strategy, it is vital that someone in a senior-level role is accountable for driving forward the social mobility agenda.

Doing so will let employees know that someone is in a position to hear and respond to feedback as well as to make real positive change.

Knowing this will make it more likely that employees engage with the conversation.



Step 3

Be clear on what you intend to do – and why

No matter whether you’re just starting or your strategy is already embedded, **it’s important to be transparent with your employees on what actions you are taking to promote socio-economic diversity and inclusion.**

Whatever interventions you make, be clear on how they fit in with the strategy, how the changes will improve opportunities and how they won’t be used to disadvantage others.

TIP: Are you collecting data on the socio-economic background of your employees and applicants?

It is important to be clear on why you are doing this and how this information is used.

Individuals asked for this information can be reluctant to provide it if they are unsure why the question is being asked OR if they feel that this information will be used to target them in some way.



Step 4

Create opportunities for employees to engage and invite them to share their experiences

Talking about socio-economic background remains taboo in many professional situations, so it is important to create safe spaces in which low SEB employees can share their experiences and in which their more privileged colleagues can listen and engage.

Set up focus groups to have open discussions about socio-economic background between colleagues (more information on how to facilitate a focus group is in the next resource).

When inviting individuals to share their stories, make an open call to the whole organisation rather than asking

specific individuals. No one should feel forced to share anything they would prefer not to share.

If members of your senior team are in a position to share their own stories, doing so can be a way to start the conversation. For example, you could ask a senior manager to share their experience on your organisation's intranet.

Alternatively, an internal forum such as a 'lunch and learn' session could provide a more interactive setting in which to share and discuss experiences and encourage others to share theirs in response.

TIP: Culture is owned by everyone in the organisation

It's as important for those from a high SEB to take part in conversations as it is for their low SEB colleagues.

By widening engagement across the whole organisation, you can create opportunities for those from different backgrounds to be allies – enabling them to actively promote and advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefits everyone.



FOCUS GROUPS – FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR STAFF

How to use this resource

This resource includes guidance for setting up internal working groups/discussion forums on the issue of socio-economic background.

Use this resource to support the design and delivery of working group sessions and as a basis for the conversations between colleagues.

Creating an inclusive and brave space

Building an inclusive culture involves creating a welcoming space where everyone has an opportunity to share their experiences if they wish. Many organisations choose to set up employee resource groups (also known as a staff network), which can play a vital role in driving the socio-economic agenda forward in the workplace.

As a starting point, however, setting up a focus group can help to begin the initial conversations with your workforce on what socio-economic background is and why it matters to the organisation. Here, we set out guidance and advice on how to set up a working group and how to make the most of time you've set aside.



To host these conversations, it's important that you find and equip people who can help facilitate them. They can be staff within your organisation that take on this role, or you may consider bringing in a trained facilitator. The latter is particularly helpful if you want everyone to be able to participate in the conversation or there already is some tension in the organisation that would benefit from being held by somebody from outside the organisation.

HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD BE IN A FOCUS GROUP?

We recommend having a maximum of 15 people per group, the smaller the size the better as there will be more time for each person to have the chance to speak and hear others.

HOW LONG SHOULD FOCUS GROUPS BE?

We recommend setting aside no less than an hour and a half for these initial conversations – people need time to settle into this topic, so if the session is too short, they will already be thinking about their next meeting before you can really get going. How our socio-economic backgrounds make a difference to our lives encompasses so many stories and dimensions that can't be squeezed into a one-off one hour session. If possible, also leave some processing time for people afterwards – for example, by scheduling the session just before their lunch break or towards the end of the day, so people don't have to switch straight back into task mode for the next meeting.

HOW MANY FOCUS GROUPS SHOULD I RUN?

Run multiple sessions, on different days and at different times, virtual and in-person, to enable as many people as possible to participate. You might find it helpful to send around a link in advance so people can watch, listen to or read something about socio-economic background to spark some thoughts or questions for the conversation. If you do this, make sure you give people the time to do that before the session.

Put in some time with your facilitators after the first round of conversations to reflect on how it went, what came up and where you want to go from here. It might not be useful to set out a full programme at the start, but you could say to people at the beginning of the session that this is the start of something with more to come, so they know the conversation can continue.

HOW DO I OPEN THE SESSION?

The first five minutes of the session are particularly critical as they set the tone for the conversation. People will pick up cues from your words but also your body language about how safe this space feels for them and, therefore, how much of themselves they will be willing to show.

Here are a few things we recommend you include in your opening:

A BIG WELCOME

Letting everyone know you are glad to see them, appreciating them for taking the time and effort to be here and welcoming them with a genuine smile.

EXPLAIN WHY WE ARE HERE

Don't assume the purpose is clear – people will have different expectations or reasons for coming, so communicating why you have set this up, why this conversation is important to you and what you most hope this session will enable is really important to allow people to land and know what they are in for.

MODEL HUMILITY

Acknowledge the complexity of the topic and that you have a lot to learn. You could say something like: “We haven't done this before, and this conversation can feel uncomfortable. We may and

probably will get things wrong, but we're going to try anyway because this is really important to us and we're here to learn.” By saying this you're letting people know it may take a while for everyone, including yourself, to feel comfortable with this conversation and that is okay. It is likely that in the first session you will only scratch the surface.

From there, we recommend you spend a bit of time talking about how you collectively want to have this conversation.

CREATE A TEMPORARY CONTAINER FOR THE CONVERSATION

This is not only to distinguish the session from other meetings and events, but also to co-create rules and boundaries for this type of gathering.

Discuss with the group how you want to be together in this conversation and what guidelines would be helpful to make this a brave space. You can invite people to write down their suggestions and share them with the group in response to questions such as:

1. What can I do and ask other people to do to make this a brave and welcoming space?
2. What can I avoid to make this a brave and welcoming a space?

Continues overleaf >

'How do I open the session?' cont.

You could ask people to write two or three suggestions on a post-it note and allow time to read them out to the whole group. Perhaps you'll immediately see similarities or patterns between people's ideas. This will give everyone a sense of people's preferences and concerns, and can serve as a reference point to go back to if boundaries are crossed.

If they don't come up naturally, we recommend including a point around confidentiality (what is said in this conversation stays among this group), consent (nobody is forced to share anything they don't want to) and speaking from one's own experience only, not on other people's behalf (using "I" statements).

HOW DO I APPROACH THE TOPIC?

Unless you are working with a very small group, it can be very helpful to break people up into smaller units to get into the depth of the conversation. It can be a lot easier to share your thoughts with one other person than to speak in front of a whole group.

If you are hosting the session virtually, make good use of the breakout room function and give people enough time to speak in pairs or triads (minimum of 5 minutes per person). If you are meeting in person, you could even offer people the option of going outside for their chat, which can also help people feel more relaxed.

If there is already high trust in the group, you could invite people to reflect and share with one other person how they relate to their

own socio-economic background, reminding them that they get to choose how much they want to share.

If people are perhaps new to each other or there is some tension in the group, you could give everyone five minutes to individually write down their reflections on the above question. In pairs or triads, ask them to share with each other how it felt to think about their background. This gives people the option of revealing more if they would like, while also making it okay to steer away from personal details. Then come back together and gather reflections – this will still give you a good sense of where people are at in this conversation.



HOW DO I MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS ENGAGED?

Plan in at least one break and use it to check on anyone you think might be struggling and ask what they need. This can go a long way in enabling people to stay in the conversation.

During the break, also reflect on who has spoken so far and who hasn't. Make sure you hear everyone's voice at least once by the end of the session. You may consider directly inviting people who haven't spoken to contribute if they would like, and to ask those who have been very actively engaged to make some space for others to come forward. This way you help the group to take collective responsibility for the conversation.

After the break, you could also include a moment of fun that can help people to relax and connect with their sense of humour.

HOW DO I CLOSE WELL?

Just as you've supported people to land in this conversation, it is your responsibility to help everyone to exit well. Thank people for their engagement and be clear about what happens next, but don't close with the practicalities. Instead, create an opportunity for people to make sense of the conversation they've just had. You could ask:

1. What's one thing you're taking away from this conversation?
2. What surprised you in this conversation?
3. What question(s) did this session raise for you?
4. What's one thing you want to practice after you leave this (virtual) room?

You could invite people to post their answers in the chat or on post-it notes on the wall.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO SPARK CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Below are some suggested questions to get your group thinking about socio-economic diversity and inclusion in more depth:

1. How could your socio-economic background contribute to the career you end up in?
2. How could where you are physically born make a difference to the opportunities that are available to you?
3. What could the advantages of a privileged background be when it comes to accessing and progressing in a career?
4. What are some of the barriers those from working class backgrounds face in progressing at work? (If needed, prompt people on skills, training, access to opportunities, stereotypes, accents, support networks, awareness of opportunities, peer groups and role models).
5. What are some of the challenges someone from a working class background might face when coming into a business like this?
6. How might our current culture and ways of working make people from working class backgrounds feel excluded? What microaggressions¹ and structural barriers can we identify that are happening here?
7. What can we do about it as a business? (collect these ideas and suggestions and feed them upwards)
8. How can we help normalise asking people for their socio-economic background when we ask about other diversity characteristics such as gender or ethnicity?
9. How can colleagues and managers from privileged backgrounds create an environment and culture that is inclusive of everyone, regardless of their background?
10. How can we make sure people who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds hear about opportunities available here and in other organisations, and are supported to apply for them?

¹ A small act or remark that makes someone feel insulted or treated badly because of their race, sex, etc., even though the insult, etc. may not have been intended, and that can combine with other similar acts or remarks over time to cause emotional harm.

KEEPING THE CONVERSATION GOING: NEXT STEPS AND RESOURCES

How to use this resource

This section is designed to give you a clear and short overview of the issues affecting social mobility in the UK, with key facts on the situation.

Share it with your people so they can have informed conversations on social mobility in the UK and understand the important role businesses like yours have in helping to stop the cycle of low social mobility.



Next steps

If you are interested in taking the next steps, further resources are available on the [SocialMobilityWorks.org](https://socialmobilityworks.org) website:

- Use our [Social Mobility Maturity Assessment](#)¹ to assess how far along on your socio-economic diversity and inclusion agenda your workplace is currently. You can use the result to choose the most relevant toolkit for your business or organisation.
- Adopt a strategic approach that works for your organisation, making sure to collect data on your workforce's socio-economic background and use the information to inform your approach.
- Use the resources below to start to build your own case studies based on the conversations you've had in the workshops – for examples of individual case studies, see the Social Mobility Commission's Instagram: [SocialMobilityStories](#).² (Make sure that you get permission from anyone whose story you wish to share as part of a case study and check with them before publishing!)
- Set up a dedicated employee resource group or social mobility network to keep the conversation going.
- Adopt a 'socio-economic inclusion month' to raise awareness within the organisation and encourage people to share their stories.
- Ask senior leaders to write blogs on your intranet or other internal communications channels, explaining why this agenda matters and encouraging people to disclose their background when asked.
- Check out resources and organisations below for more information and to find out more about the organisations and initiatives working to improve socio-economic diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

1 "Social Mobility Progress Maturity Assessment." 6 Aug. 2021, <https://socialmobilityworks.org/maturity-assessment/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

2 "Social Mobility Commission (@socialmobilitystories) – Instagram." <https://www.instagram.com/socialmobilitystories/?hl=en>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.



Resources for HR Directors:

A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING STAFF NETWORKS³ – CIPD, MARCH 2021

Guidance on how to set up staff networks.

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE: AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE⁴ – THE SUTTON TRUST, JULY 2020

This guide is aimed at employers looking for detailed advice to improve social mobility in the workplace, aimed both at those taking their first steps to improve socioeconomic diversity in their workforce, as well as giving practical tips and guidance for those who are already further into the process.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT CLASS: A GLOSSARY OF TERMS: SOCIAL MOBILITY COMMISSION⁵

The Social Mobility Commission has a glossary of key terms on the socialmobilityworks.org website that can help if you or others in your organisation are struggling with any of the information here.

EMPLOYERS MASTERCLASS, LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE⁶ – SOCIAL MOBILITY COMMISSION, JULY 2021

Talking about class is the first step to building an inclusive culture. Check out our most recent masterclass for employers on how to take the next steps.

THE SOCIAL MOBILITY EMPLOYER INDEX⁷

Run by the Social Mobility Foundation, the Index is an important benchmarking initiative that ranks Britain's employers for the first time on the actions they are taking to ensure they are open to accessing and progressing talent from all backgrounds and it showcases progress towards improving social mobility.

SOCIAL MOBILITY AWARDS⁸

The Social Mobility Awards (SOMOs) recognises the efforts of organisations and individuals to promote socio-economic diversity and inclusion in their work.

3 "A guide to establishing staff networks – CIPD." 15 Mar. 2021, <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/reasons/diversity/staff-networks>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

4 "Social Mobility in the Workplace: An Employer's Guide – Sutton Trust." 29 Jul. 2020, <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/social-mobility-in-the-workplace-an-employers-guide/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

5 "Appendix – Social Mobility Commission." <https://socialmobilityworks.org/toolkit/appendix/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

6 "Social Mobility Commission Leadership & Culture Masterclass Recap." 5 Jul. 2021, <https://socialmobilityworks.org/blog/social-mobility-masterclass-recap-leadership-culture-whos-driving-the-social-mobility-agenda-in-your-workplace/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

7 "Social Mobility Employer Index." <https://www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

8 "UK Social Mobility Awards." <https://www.somo.uk/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

In some rare cases the topics of discussion within this resource pack may be uncomfortable or could bring to the surface other issues your staff may already be struggling with. If you're concerned about the impact of these discussion employees' mental health, support is available:

SAMARITANS⁹

Samaritans offer listening and support to people and communities in times of need. Every year, Samaritans volunteers spend over one million hours answering calls for help via our unique 24-hour listening service, email, letter, face to face and through our Welsh language service.

MIND¹⁰

Mind provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.



9 "Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen." <https://www.samaritans.org/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

10 "Home | Mind, the mental health charity – help for mental health" <https://www.mind.org.uk/>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.