




PRIME

IMPACT REPORT

2023-24



Together with our members, we are working to improve access to, and socio-economic diversity within, the legal profession.

The PRIME Commitment

There is power in collaboration. Collaboration between our members and collaboration between law firms and their clients. It is only through working together that our industry can change, and it is inspiring to see the collaborative approach of all our members.

This year's report from the [Social Mobility Employer Index](#) in fact named PRIME as an example of a cross-sector social mobility initiative which allows industry-specific data and best practice to be gathered and shared, organisations to collaborate on resources and targets to be set at a sector level.

Following the completion of our annual member survey, we are able to report on the collective impact of PRIME work experience programmes in 2023-24. The statistics shown in this report relate to the 85% of members that completed our survey. It is part of the PRIME Commitment to share data amongst PRIME members and so we will be looking for all members to complete this next year. This sharing of information enables the membership to develop and assure the quality of the commitments made under PRIME.

Impact Snapshot

From the 85% of members who completed the survey.



100%

of members offered an element of their work experience programme in person. This was up from 94% in 2022-23.



1,693

students took part in PRIME work experience.



21

members paid students for taking part in their work experience. This is four more than in 2022-23.



In-house legal team provided a behind-the-scenes look at the importance of corporate lawyers in the finance world.



PRIME student at Latham and Watkins PRIME in 2024

Clients

With so many PRIME member firms already partnering with their clients to enrich the work experience they provide to their students, last year we began to invite clients to become more actively involved and join PRIME themselves.

We are delighted that this year Lloyds Banking Group have done so, becoming our first in-house member. Their in-house legal and secretariat team are making plans to launch their first work experience programme next year. In the meantime, they have embraced the spirit of collaboration and demonstrated their commitment to social mobility by supporting PRIME member law firm Shepherd and Wedderburn with their PRIME work experience programme as well as working with other panel law firms and Lloyds Banking Group more broadly on their social mobility initiatives.

Aggreko also joined PRIME this year and were the first in-house legal team to launch their PRIME work experience programme. They welcomed six students to their offices in Dumbarton, allowing them to see how legal teams function within a wider business and to learn about the different paths to becoming a lawyer. Students met colleagues from diverse teams in engineering, procurement and HR and took part in activities that provided them with an insight into the skills in-house lawyers use in their work across disciplines including IP, Procurement, Compliance and Corporate/Commercial Law. The collaboration between law firms and clients continued, this time with Aggreko's students attending a mooting session at another PRIME member, Brodies.



aggreko



Eligibility

It is essential that the students who are given the opportunity to take part in PRIME work experience are those most in need of support. Supporting social mobility cannot and should not be simplified down to reaching students who are attending state schools. Various research pieces from the Sutton Trust looking at school admissions, repeatedly uncovers evidence that England's top state comprehensive schools are, in practice, often highly socially selective.

Their most recent report '[Selective Comprehensives 2024](#)' shows that "the average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) is still lower in the top 500 comprehensive schools compared to all comprehensive schools. These schools also have a significant gap between the FSM rates in their local area (as defined by the areas they draw their pupils from), and the FSM rates of their actual intakes, meaning that **disadvantaged pupils are less likely to get into top schools than others, even if they have one in their local area.**"

It is more essential than ever therefore to ensure that we look beyond 'state-school attendance' as a measure of social mobility. [PRIME's eligibility criteria](#) layers on top of this baseline, the necessity for students to meet one or more additional criteria. This includes the familiar criteria of being in receipt of FSM and growing up in a household where no parent or guardian attended university but also includes school specific criteria, looking at those that have below average A-Level or Higher point score and/or a low rate of progression to higher education.

This mix of criteria allows us to make sure that work experience initiatives are targeted correctly. For 2023-24, an increasing number of members have reported high numbers of students being offered a place on the basis of the occupation of their main household earner being categorised as [routine, manual or long term unemployed](#).

A key finding this year is the number of students on our programmes who meet multiple additional criteria. It is so important to collect this information from students to ensure that resources are targeted where they can make the biggest difference and to allow robust reporting.

This year, we also collected data on the gender breakdown of our PRIME students. For those members that had this information, females were overrepresented. Whilst we were looking at small numbers in some instances, there was evidence of programmes being 60% female or higher and, in one instance, 100%. Whilst this is standard across school age outreach programmes, with [girls outperforming boys](#) at school and in terms of [university attendance](#), it is worth members considering how they might attract more male applicants.





I loved the experience. It really gave me a real perspective of what a law career would look like for me. I was also fascinated by the vast variety of backgrounds and experience of the lawyers.

PRIME student at Shepherd and Wedderburn in 2024



In-person work experience

This year, 100% of our members have offered an element of their work experience in person. This is up from 94% last year and from 66% the year before.

It is always a tricky balance between in-person and virtual programmes. Whilst a virtual work experience may not replicate the magic for a young person of walking into a law firm or in-house legal team for the first time, it does allow students from harder-to-reach areas of the country to access the opportunity. This year's **Social Mobility Employer Index** highlighted entrants as performing well where they were offering both virtual and in-person work experience, detailing that doing so, and ensuring they are equally high-quality means that those who can't attend in-person for any reason – caring responsibilities or living too far away, for example – can still benefit.

Many of our members take this approach. Addleshaw Goddard, for example, run their **Legal Explorer Programme** across the year, with monthly workshops, mentor meetings and finish with a week of hands-on work experience in one of their offices. And, for those that are not within commuting distance of one of their offices, they have a Legal Access Week which is a virtual programme to gain insight into the legal sector and different careers available at the firm.

Virtual programmes, alongside in-person programmes, may allow a larger number of students to take part. In 2023-24, with more member firms offering in-person programmes, we have seen a drop in the number of students attending.

Usually, where the programme has an in-person element, our members recruit students from within a commutable distance of where the work experience takes place. This allows students to travel to the office daily, with travel expenses paid upfront by the PRIME member firm or in-house team. We have created some best practice guidance around travel and the provision of accommodation for those firms that wish to recruit students from areas further away from their office/s, allowing them to potentially reach students in social mobility cold spots.

PRIME continues to offer its own **virtual work experience programme** which members can use to complement their in-person programmes. This can either be used as a preparation tool for their in-person programme, as a follow up or, as an alternative for those that are unable to attend an in-person programme, or are unsuccessful in securing a place on one. To date, over 3,200 students have enrolled on the programme.



It covered a lot of law and really made me think about certain elements. It introduced me to what real law work could look like and what aspects of it I may want to chase in the future.

PRIME Virtual Legal Work Experience student

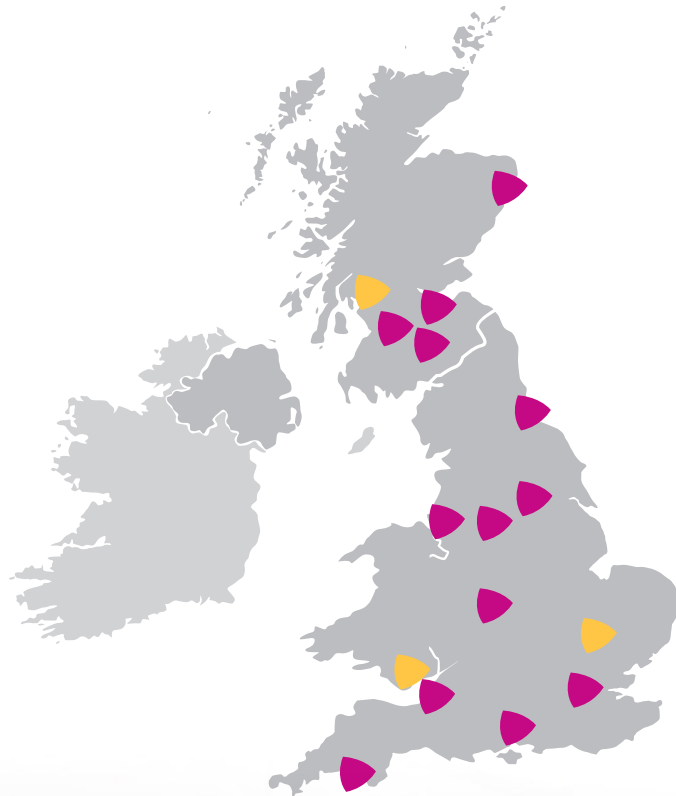


Reach

With more and more in-person work experience programmes being offered, which is positive, it is important to look at where in the country these opportunities are being offered.

The Social Mobility Commission's [State of the Nation 2024 Report](#) has improved its geographical breakdowns, giving a much greater insight into how outcomes vary locally rather than regionally. Referencing Labour Market Opportunities for young people as a driver of social mobility, the report highlights that those Local Authorities with less favourable opportunities for young people tend to be in the North East and North West, as well as in older industrial and port areas.

It is imperative therefore that we are able to offer work experience to students across the UK, particularly those areas where there are less favourable opportunities for young people. In 2023-24, in-office placements at our members were offered to students in the following areas, which includes **three new locations**:



- Aberdeen
- Birmingham
- Bristol
- Cambridge
- Cardiff
- Dumbarton
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Leeds
- Liverpool
- London
- Manchester
- Newcastle
- Plymouth
- Sheffield
- Southampton

Whilst this increase in reach is positive, we are not making as much progress here as we would like. For 2025, we have set a key priority to bring more regional firms on board as members. This will include a review of the PRIME Commitments to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' for such firms and investing in our outreach to them. As we review the commitments, we will liaise with our members to gather their input.





‘Why not Law?’

Where we are having clear impact in expanding the geographical reach of opportunities is with the delivery of our legal insight workshop for schools in social mobility cold spots. These are defined as those areas where social mobility is poor. Now, more than ever, young people in these areas need the opportunity to hear about career options and begin to believe that law is a viable one for them.

With the support of our members and **Hark**, we have continued to deliver our ‘Why not Law?’ workshops to students at schools in these areas, changing their perceptions of who can have a career in law and increasing their understanding of the routes into law. In 2023-24, through this project aimed at students aged 12-14, we reached 1,137 young people. 90% of those that attended now think that anyone can pursue a career in law, regardless of their background and 87% were more aware of the different routes into a career in law. We are delighted to have committed to expanding the project further in 2024-25 with a target of 40 schools, ultimately reaching more students.



My favourite part was learning about how to get into law because I now know the ways I can do it.

Student



I thought it worked very well. Excellent use of guest speakers from the North-East of England.

Teacher



Financial assistance

Our members have always pledged to support PRIME students by providing financial assistance so they can attend work experience. They do this by, as a minimum, ensuring that lunch and travel expenses are pre-purchased for students.

When we published our first impact report, looking at the year 2021-22, 11 members also offered payment to PRIME students, responding to the fact that some young people might have to forego essential vacation and regular after-school work in order to attend a work experience programme. In many instances this would prevent students from attending the work experience. Last year this had risen to 17 members and now, for 2023-24, we are delighted that the number of members compensating their students in this way has risen further, to 21.

Partners

Many PRIME programmes wouldn't be possible without the support of other organisations. In 2023-24, our members worked with 28 different organisations, many of them PRIME partners, to deliver their powerful and impactful programmes. Their involvement ranged from student recruitment to workshop delivery. There are also additional links with schools, Universities and local councils.

Our partners have also supported PRIME this year with the delivery of our webinar series. Sessions have included:

- Selecting Students for a PRIME Work Experience Programme – Rare Recruitment
- How can apprenticeships be used to increase social mobility in the legal sector? – The Sutton Trust
- Utilising virtual platforms to support your PRIME work experience programmes – Forage
- Mentoring with Purpose – Connectr
- How to design an engaging and interactive programme for young people – 2-3 Degrees

This series has given members the opportunity to learn from each other, share best practice, celebrate successes and discuss challenges as well as solutions. We have been delighted to see firms and in-house teams forging connections across the profession as a direct result of attending these sessions.



Beyond Work Experience

Whilst PRIME's principal focus is on the access end of the journey into law, aligned with this is a desire for socio-economic diversity within the profession, something that our members share. After all, if we were to simply offer work experience to students from diverse backgrounds but then not take the steps required to employ, retain, reward, and promote them appropriately, we would be failing.

This year, PRIME member Freshfields set a social mobility-focused recruitment target as an essential step in expanding access to the legal profession and strengthening the sense of belonging among future trainees and current employees. It is now aiming to recruit at least 20% of trainees from "lower socio-economic backgrounds" across their 2024-2026 recruitment cycles. They join another PRIME member, Slaughter and May, who last year launched their dedicated social mobility targets and action plan, which aim to increase the total workforce representation of lower socio-economic background individuals at the firm from 18.8% to 25% by 2033.

As more and more of our members include questions in their recruitment processes that allow them to track whether applicants have been involved in any of their early careers programmes such as PRIME work experience, we can build a picture of the impact. This year, at least 66 past PRIME students have been offered vacation scheme places, training contracts or apprenticeships at PRIME member firms, up from 45 the reporting year before.

The more data members are able to collect in relation to student outcomes, the easier it will be to demonstrate the impact of their PRIME work experience programmes.

This look 'beyond work experience' can often begin with demonstrating to students how those from similar backgrounds to themselves progress within their organisation and the profession. The easiest way to do this is to involve these colleagues in PRIME programmes, something that many members do. We have also created a series 'PRIME Stories' videos featuring PRIME alumni who are now at various stages of their legal careers.

- Karishma
- Josh
- O'Neill

Members can share these with PRIME students on their next programmes and can also encourage students to sign up to PRIME's [alumni platform](#).



It was really exciting. Seeing so many backgrounds within the interns and even the lawyers themselves. We got to speak to the managing partner as well which is really cool, so seeing people at the top.

PRIME Student at Brodies in 2024



Apprenticeships

A top tip for employers in this year's key finding's report from the Social Mobility Employer Index was to offer a variety of routes into an organisation, including apprenticeships. For many students wishing to pursue a legal career, the university route may not be feasible or desirable. Apprenticeships can therefore be a fantastic alternative, since they involve working and studying concurrently.

39 of our members have reported that they offer apprenticeship opportunities, which is an increase of three from last year. These include both legal apprenticeships and apprenticeship opportunities within business services departments. When searching for work experience opportunities on our website, students are able to filter by those members that offer apprenticeships. This is a popular search, indicating that more and more students are wishing to start their career journey with work experience at a firm, or in-house team where there is the opportunity to continue it via the apprenticeship route.

Navigating the application process for all routes into a career in law can be daunting and overwhelming. To help, we have collated a list of these **apprenticeship opportunities** on our website, so that students are able to easily see when opportunities are available and how to apply.



I only have positive feedback – the week was really informative and helpful. It definitely confirmed that I want a career in law and that I am set on an apprenticeship.

PRIME student at Gowling WLG in 2024



PRIME Students

"I feel that I have gained a realistic insight on what it would be like to work at an international law firm. This experience has also strengthened my interpersonal skills and has further encouraged me to pursue a career in the legal profession."

PRIME student at Pinsent Masons in 2024

"I gained a lot of confidence from this work experience, and I learnt that there are so many areas of law that are surprisingly more fun than what you would expect".

PRIME student at DLA Piper in 2024

"Throughout the week each of us had the opportunity to shadow lawyers at different levels, from trainees to partners!"

PRIME student Sidley Austin in 2024

Thank you to all our members who provided data on their 2023-24 programmes.

Aggreko, A&O Shearman, Addleshaw Goddard, Arnold & Porter, Ashurst, BCLP, Bird & Bird, Boodle Hatfield, Broadfield, Brodies, Burness Paull, Clifford Chance, Clyde & Co, CMS, Cooley, DAC Beachcroft, Dentons, DLA Piper, DWF, Eversheds Sutherland, Farrer & Co, Fladgate, Freshfields, Fried Frank, Gibson Dunn, Gowling WLG, HFW, Hogan Lovells, Irwin Mitchell, Kirkland, Latham & Watkins, Lewis Silkin, Linklaters, Lloyds Banking Group, Macfarlanes, Morton Fraser MacRoberts, Norton Rose Fulbright, Osborne Clarke, Penningtons Manches Cooper, Pinsent Masons, Shepherd and Wedderburn, Sidley, Skadden, Slaughter and May, Stephenson Harwood, Trowers & Hamlins, Weightmans, White & Case, Withers, and Womble Bond Dickinson.



admin@primecommitment.co.uk
www.primerecommitment.co.uk

