

# OPENING DOORS 2021

The Brokerage's  
Manifesto for a fair  
and inclusive recovery



THE BROKERAGE



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## The Brokerage's Manifesto for a fair and inclusive recovery

We are a year into the global Covid-19 pandemic, and while vaccines provide hope for a return to normal life, it is clear that some of the economic and social impacts are likely to be felt for years to come.

Emerging evidence<sup>1</sup> suggests that young people have already been one of the worst-affected groups in the labour market and history tells us that they are often one of the last groups to benefit from economic recovery.

Furthermore, many young people have missed months of in person learning and had their GCSE and A-Level exams cancelled, exacerbating feelings of uncertainty about the future during a crucial time of their lives.

As we rebuild our economy, **our priority is therefore that young people's voices are heard**, especially those from less-advantaged and Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. This group holds the key to creating a different society and world of work, so we need to ensure that their insights are heard and acted upon in a meaningful way. We collected their views in early 2021 via our network of candidates, mainly made up of less-advantaged young people based in London and the South East. We found that **nine out of ten of them are worried about their future in view of the impact of Covid-19**. Many of them reported having to alter (or expecting to alter) their career or education plans as a result of the crisis and key concerns included worries about their qualifications and a lack of work experience and job opportunities.

1. RESOLUTION FOUNDATION. Jobs, jobs, jobs – Evaluating the effects of the current economic crisis on the UK labour market, 27 October 2020



# THE CONCERN...

...is that the crisis will further exaggerate existing divides within our society. Indeed, a recent survey of graduate recruiters found that more than half of them had become more reliant on personal networks and word-of-mouth recommendations during the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. However, rather than sit back and wait for these deeper divides to become entrenched we at **The Brokerage believe that the crisis also provides a 'door of opportunity' to create workplaces that embrace all talented young people, regardless of their socio-economic background.**

Jobs in finance and professional services should not just be accessible to people from privileged backgrounds and already less-advantaged young people should not be cut off from high level careers as a result of the crisis. Instead, we think that everyone should be able to determine their own career path, in line with their ability and aspiration and this can only be achieved via access to meaningful work experience and real jobs.

Organisations that have – and make the most of – diverse talent are more successful. And while many organisations want to do things differently, only a real commitment by corporate leaders and accountability will result in significant change.

**This means employer commitment to real action that opens doors to all young people.**

The global pandemic has deeply challenged the world of work's status quo with more people working remotely in jobs that we thought were not suitable for flexible working. Debates like Black Lives Matter have also highlighted that the current status quo is biased. Adhering to this bias is problematic, especially in business, because growth requires change.

**Organisational practices that worked for one generation of employees will not work for the next and now is the time to challenge the way things have always been and think about how we can make them better.**

How can we create a working world that promotes success and innovation whilst delivering a fairer society that works for all? Instead of a society that supports only one or the other, we envisage a world where success and fairness are mutually reinforcing. The focus now needs to be on how to put the structures in place that support that vision of the world, because there is still a long way to go for this to be the new reality.




# WE KNOW...

... that even before the pandemic, fewer than 20% of people working in higher level professions such as law, management consultancy or financial management were working class<sup>3</sup>.

There is so much untapped talent. We know that the talented young people we work with would and should get professional jobs easily, if it wasn't for lack of connections, the 'wrong' accent or skin colour and their socio-economic backgrounds. We also know that Covid-19 has almost certainly made this situation harder for them as remote working and recruitment freezes close even more doors and opportunities for these young people who are already shut outside.

**To seize the opportunity, we need to open doors.** Our young people are skilled, talented, resilient and determined. We at The Brokerage are well placed to bring them to you but what they need are **real opportunities, in real workplaces.**

When we asked our young people what the most important things are that employers should do now, they overwhelmingly said: offer us paid internships, provide short unpaid work experience and give us mentoring opportunities with professionals.



This is why we are asking employers to unite with us to **provide 100 paid internships over the summer of 2021** alongside committing to five other key tangible actions that will make your workplaces more inclusive. We have developed these using insights from our network of young people and corporate partners, as well as drawing on our 25 years of experience as a social mobility charity running successful programmes.

Just as important as opening doors we also **need employers to open their minds to listen to and understand what young people from less-advantaged backgrounds need** in order to access and thrive in professional jobs. Too often we are trying to find a solution without having actually consulted with those at whom the interventions are aimed. We are setting out to change that by directly involving our young people in advising employers on how to change their organisational practices.

# THE DATA...

Why we all must  
**ACT NOW**

Prior to  
Covid-19 fewer than  
20% of people working in  
higher level professions such as  
law, management consultancy  
or financial management  
were working  
class

91% of  
young people  
are worried about  
the impact of Covid-19 on  
their future career  
prospects

50% of  
young people  
have had or expect  
to have their career  
plans disrupted as  
a result of  
Covid-19

70% of  
Brokerage candidates  
impacted by exam cancellations  
were worried about how employers  
would perceive their academic record  
and 64% believed their grades  
would have been higher had  
the exams gone  
ahead

The number  
of people aged 18-24  
claiming unemployment  
related benefits increased by  
290,500 from February 2020  
to February 2021, an  
increase of  
124%.

GCSE and  
A-level exams  
were cancelled in 2020  
and 2021, impacting an  
estimated 2.5 million  
young people

54% of  
young people  
have had or expect to  
have their education plans  
disrupted as a result  
of Covid-19

The  
number of  
internships available  
fell by 64% between  
May 2019 and  
May 2020

When asked  
what employers  
could do to support young  
people during the recovery, the  
most popular responses were to offer  
paid internships (65%), offer short work  
experience placements (53%) and offer  
mentoring from professional  
volunteers (52%)

57% of  
graduate recruiters  
said they had become  
more reliant on personal  
networks and word-of-mouth  
recommendations during  
the pandemic



**ROKERAGE**

# EMPLOYER ACTIONS:

In order to open doors to the financial and professional service sectors for young people from less-advantaged backgrounds, corporates should:

## 1 Work together to provide 100 paid internships over the summer of 2021

### EMPLOYERS:

We are asking employers to provide virtual and hybrid working internships despite the ongoing pandemic – just because our working lives are largely based on remote working at the moment this should not mean closing your ‘virtual’ doors to young people who desperately need a professional experience of working life. In the last year there has been a significant drop in internship opportunities for young people (a report by Glassdoor in May 2020 found a 64% fall in internships as a result of the pandemic). This is also a key way for employers to access different talent.

### THE BROKERAGE:

We will work with a group of employers to deliver these internships to provide young people with a real – if virtual – experience of work. The Brokerage Summer Placement Programme will identify, match and on board the most relevant young people for your internship, saving your businesses precious time and providing you with keen, ready to learn, unique candidates.

The programme will provide a modern meaningful work experience placement helping improve the chances of young people and aiding them in achieving their full potential. We have developed a new framework, for both interns and employers, for virtual, hybrid working and face to face internships, to ensure they continue to be as effective as a fully in-person experience.

## 2 Review existing recruitment practices to ensure all early career opportunities are available to all less-advantaged young people

### EMPLOYERS:

We are asking employers not to revert to the “who you know” approach of recruitment but to ensure that all of their early career opportunities (including internships, apprenticeships, graduate roles and other junior positions) are open to and advertised to our cohort of less-advantaged young people. In addition, we would like employers to look at adapting their recruitment practices to give our young people a fair chance of success. This includes reviewing how roles are defined, what language to use in your job description; ensuring marketing materials are representative and inclusive; clarity about the interview process and ensuring that interview questions are structured and assess for skills and potential. This should also include a review of entry-requirements to ensure that these are not an unnecessary barrier, e.g. the requirement of A-levels for Level 3 apprenticeships.

### THE BROKERAGE:

We will advise organisations on their recruitment processes, using insights from our 25 years of experience of working with less-advantaged young people. We will also provide employers directly with access to our young people who will review and advise on recruitment practices and talent propositions based on their lived experience, so employers can adjust their practices in a way that speaks directly to the group of people they are trying to attract, instead of needing to guess why young people are not applying to their roles. We will also continue advertising roles directly to our network of diverse young people and we are able to provide employers with opportunities to meet and engage with this group.

### 3 Unite to provide 1,000 hours of volunteering to help young people develop their work-related skills and knowledge of the professional world

#### EMPLOYERS:

With so much uncertainty and a lack of access to traditional work experience opportunities young people are crying out for quality one-to-one support and opportunities for online learning relevant to their future careers.

By providing time for your employees to volunteer to support a young person or group of young people during the working day, you will be both meeting a crucial need, whilst also fostering a culture of increased empathy and social understanding amongst your workforce.

#### THE BROKERAGE:

We will provide young people with opportunities to increase their awareness about careers in the financial, legal and professional services sectors via our outreach workshops, covering in-depth industry knowledge and the skills and capabilities to apply for these jobs.

In addition, we will bring together employees from those sectors with our young people for one-to-one mentoring.

### 4 Collect data and map how inclusive your culture currently is and commit to tracking it with clear KPIs

#### EMPLOYERS:

In order to succeed in developing truly inclusive workplaces where all individuals, regardless of background, ethnicity or gender are able to develop to their full potential, it is vital that organisations first understand their existing make-up and culture.

Everyone has a different experience of the workplace, employers therefore need a tool that helps them to understand what the lived experience of diverse employees in their workplace really is. Only that data will then allow employers to set goals and targets, implement interventions and monitor progress to achieve meaningful change.

#### THE BROKERAGE:

We support employers in their journey, wherever they are in terms of data collection to create a culture where everyone belongs.

We have developed our own employee culture survey ready to implement in any organisation, which collects data across key measures of inclusivity and employee wellbeing.

We can provide employers with an objective external view and help them implement practical solutions driven by the insights we hold.

## **5 Upskill and support line managers to recruit, manage and lead diverse groups of talent and enable them to thrive**

### **EMPLOYERS:**

Managing a diverse team is challenging and requires skills, self-awareness, empathy and insights. We therefore need employers to invest in up-skilling their line managers to get the best out of diverse talent.

### **THE BROKERAGE:**

We will share with employers the insight that we have gathered from our young people and alumni over the past 25 years in terms of the challenges that they have faced while trying to navigate their careers.

We have developed an experiential workshop that helps managers to get the best out of talented young people from all backgrounds. This explores how to embed equity into management practices by helping managers to understand the additional structural barriers less-advantaged young people face, as well as how to unlock the potential and strengths young people bring as result of their lived experiences.

## **6 Work with other employers across industries and sectors to share insights and practical solutions that drive social mobility**

### **EMPLOYERS:**

Many of the employers we work with have already begun to make changes and develop opportunities that will have a long-lasting impact on the future prospects of the young people we support.

However, in order for these practices to become ingrained and lead to wider organisational and even societal cultural changes, it is important that employers are prepared to share and learn from each other. Sharing best practice and case studies of interventions that have made a real difference will help others understand what works.

Employers will also benefit from the wider organisational advantages that come with being more diverse and inclusive. Smaller organisations are at an advantage in that they can test and make changes quickly, meaning that larger corporates could have a lot to learn from them.

### **THE BROKERAGE:**

We will build on the work we have been doing with our Corporate Leaders Forum, which allows our partners to discuss and share best practice and insights directly with each other, by developing a peer-to-peer learning mechanism where partners can genuinely work together to support each other in changing their practices and becoming more inclusive organisations.

Ultimately more socially diverse workplaces and society stands to benefit us all therefore we are keen to promote knowledge sharing and collaboration in order to create positive change together.



WE ARE A SOCIAL MOBILITY CHARITY  
COMMITTED TO BREAKING THE CORPORATE MOULD.

We believe in equal access to opportunity irrespective of background or race, and talented young people getting the jobs they deserve in a world where their ability and aspiration alone determine their career path.

For nearly 25 years we have supported less-advantaged young people achieve their career potential; providing opportunity and helping them take their first step into a professional career.

Our award winning programmes have helped thousands of talented young people. These are largely funded via our corporate partners, who support us via our partnership agreements. There are different levels of partnership available as part of our funding model.

We also work with employers to drive a culture shift in the workplace, helping them make meaningful change and include diverse talent irrespective of background or race.

Together, with our corporate partners, our alumni and our volunteers, we are Changemakers; every day we see the impact of our work and the life changing effect it has on thousands of young people each year.

For more information about partnering with us, please contact [Susheel.Sharma@thebrokerage.org.uk](mailto:Susheel.Sharma@thebrokerage.org.uk)

[www.thebrokerage.org.uk](http://www.thebrokerage.org.uk)



THE **BROKERAGE**

**TOGETHER**  
**WE ARE**  
**CHANGEMAKERS.**