

PRESS RELEASE

Senior leaders from across financial services gather at the House of Lords to launch new campaign on progression, productivity and growth

Progress Together launches 'Making the Invisible Visible' with support from financial sector leaders, policymakers and regulators

Senior leaders from across UK financial services, alongside policymakers, regulators and industry stakeholders, will gather at the House of Lords this evening for the launch of 'Making the Invisible Visible' - a major new campaign focused on addressing invisible class barriers affecting progression, productivity and growth across financial services.

Hosted by Progress Together at its flagship *Progress Pioneers* evening reception and sponsored by Baroness Mary Goudie, the event will bring together leaders from firms representing a significant proportion of the UK financial services workforce, alongside senior representatives from government, regulation and civil society.

The campaign launches against the backdrop of growing evidence that socio-economic background continues to shape perceptions of leadership and competence across business and financial services.

New research published this month found that investors perceived privately educated CEOs as a "safer bet", despite no evidence of stronger performance or decision-making outcomes - reinforcing wider concerns around how class, confidence signals and traditional leadership norms continue to shape progression into senior leadership positions.

The launch also comes at a time when financial services firms are facing growing pressure around productivity, workforce transformation, AI adoption and long-term competitiveness - increasing scrutiny on whether firms are making full use of the talent already within their organisations.

Progress Together's research, representing more than 210,000 employees across the sector, shows that high-performing employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds continue to progress more slowly into senior roles despite no link to job performance, contributing to attrition, disengagement and missed productivity across the industry.

The campaign aims to reframe socio-economic inclusion not simply as a fairness issue, but increasingly as a leadership, productivity and competitiveness issue for UK financial services.

Sophie Hulm, Chief Executive of Progress Together, said:

"Making the Invisible Visible is about helping the sector confront barriers that too often remain unseen, unspoken and unmeasured. If financial services wants to unlock productivity, strengthen leadership pipelines and remain globally competitive, we need to make better use of the talent already within our organisations."

“This campaign is designed to bring together evidence, lived experience and practical action from firms across the sector. We want leaders to engage visibly, share what works and help shape a more merit-based future for financial services.”

Alderman Vincent Keaveny CBE, Chair of Progress Together and former Lord Mayor of the City of London, said:

“The UK’s future competitiveness depends on how effectively we develop and progress talent. This is fundamentally an economic issue as much as a social one. Firms that widen progression pathways and unlock diverse thinking will be better positioned to innovate, grow and serve customers in an increasingly complex world.”

“The momentum behind this campaign reflects growing recognition across the sector that progression, leadership and productivity are deeply connected.”

Sheree Howard, Executive Director at the Financial Conduct Authority, said:

“An inclusive financial services sector supports stronger decision-making, better governance and improved outcomes for consumers. As firms navigate significant change across technology, skills and workforce transformation, creating environments where talent can progress fairly and effectively matters more than ever.”

The event will also feature contributions from senior leaders including: Jane Kielty, UK CEO, Aon, Justin Onuekwusi, Chief Investment Officer, St. James’s Place and Baroness Mary Goudie speaking on progression, sponsorship, representation and the business case for inclusive leadership.

Jane Kielty, UK CEO of Aon, said:

“Progression and sponsorship matter at every stage of a career, not just at entry level. Firms that create visible pathways for talented people from different backgrounds are more likely to retain high performers, strengthen leadership teams and improve long-term business performance.”

Justin Onuekwusi, Chief Investment Officer at St. James’s Place, said:

“Representation matters because financial services increasingly serves a diverse and changing society. When talented people can see leaders who understand different experiences and perspectives, it strengthens aspiration, trust and performance across the sector.”

Baroness Mary Goudie, sponsoring Baroness for the event, said:

“Too much talent across the UK still remains unseen, unheard or underestimated because of background rather than ability. Making the Invisible Visible is an important and timely campaign that challenges the sector to think differently about progression, leadership and opportunity. If we want a more productive, resilient and representative financial services sector, we must ensure talent can thrive regardless of where someone starts.”

The launch marks the beginning of Progress Together’s 12-month campaign that will combine sector research and benchmarking, leadership storytelling, employee voices, policy engagement, practical employer action as well as cross-sector collaboration. Campaign activity will also explore the relationship between progression, AI, workforce transformation and future leadership pipelines.



Progress Together is inviting firms, senior leaders and employees across financial services to contribute stories, insights and examples of practical action that help make progression pathways more visible, fair and effective.

The evening is expected to bring together senior representatives from organisations including the FCA, Bank of England, Aon, AXA, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Bloomberg, HSBC UK, NatWest, Deutsche Bank, Santander, Mastercard, Mizuho, Fidelity International, Standard Chartered and many others from across UK financial and professional services.

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About Progress Together

Progress Together is a not-for-profit membership organisation established following a government-commissioned taskforce into socio-economic diversity in UK financial services. The organisation works with member firms across the sector to improve progression, strengthen leadership pipelines and support evidence-led action on socio-economic inclusion.

Progress Together [members](#) include Santander, HSBC, Morgan Stanley, Fidelity International and Nationwide amongst others.

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