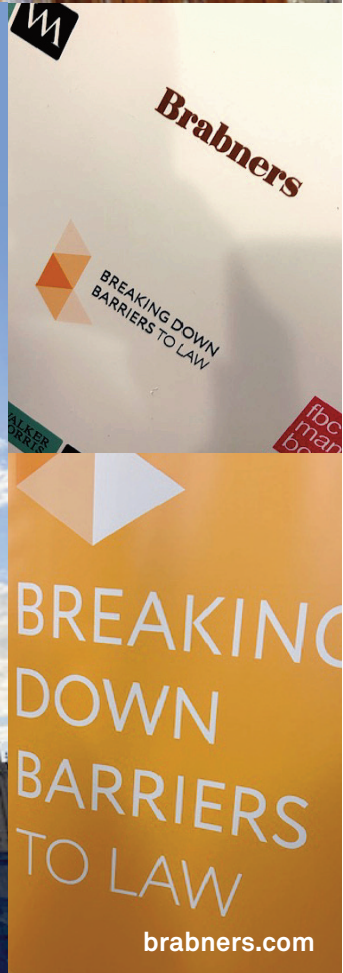


Brabners

Breaking Down Barriers to Law



Brabners

We make the difference



Brabners is proud to be part of the Breaking Down Barriers to Law taskforce.

Led by Rt Hon Justine Greening, Breaking Down Barriers to Law works with participating regional law firms to develop a strategic and countrywide approach to embedding social mobility in the legal sector and playing a proactive part in boosting opportunity.

The profession still faces several challenges in the delivery of equal and inclusive opportunities to diverse, under-resourced, and underrepresented groups. The high costs of legal training, the barriers to accessing education, and the absence of aspiration and role models can all provide significant challenges.

As a purpose-led leading independent law firm with a national reach that is proudly anchored in the North, we are committed to demonstrating that business can bring about positive change by supporting and attracting talent that more closely reflects the communities in our regions.

We aim to focus on key themes of outreach, access, recruitment, and progression and explore how we can best support those from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds. We look to offer opportunities where they can access programmes to raise awareness of what is available to them and subsequently raise aspirations. This is coupled with a focus on how recruitment continues to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and equality.

Through a range of outreach and access programmes that offer opportunities, education, and ambition, Brabners is committed to making a significant impact on social mobility and widening participation in the profession. Our work with education providers, employability leads at universities, charity partnerships, and social mobility groups, all support best practices to engage with individuals and groups in our community.

Our aim is to demonstrate our values through the utilisation of our outstanding colleagues, embracing the opportunity to evolve our practices, educate and assist those who are passionate about supporting a learning culture by offering opportunities to be role models and mentors, encouraging innovation in our approach to delivering purpose-led, impactful opportunities for all.

Our values and our behaviours in Breaking Down Barriers to Law at Brabners will have a significant social impact whilst making a difference in attracting, engaging, supporting, and progressing talent in our communities.



Outreach and Access

Outreach plays a central role in the success and sustainability of businesses — it also serves to foster much-needed diversity and inclusion across the legal sector.

By proactively engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, law firms create a more representative and enriched talent pool, as well as creating an environment that benefits from a range of perspectives and experiences.

Ensuring fair and equal access to opportunities is critical in firms' wider dedication to inclusivity, talent development, and social impact. This involves multifaceted approaches offering a diverse range of opportunities to work, train, and gain experience with organisations.

We proactively engage with education providers in our communities, where we believe we play a vital role in promoting inclusivity, equality, and diversity by contributing to the education and career development of individuals in our surrounding communities.

Work Experience Opportunities

There are disparities in levels of access to the legal profession, often accessed through family or friends. This is a challenge for those without those connections and an inherent disadvantage for those from less privileged backgrounds. Our legal and non-legal Insight programmes are accessible to all and an opportunity for everyone regardless of background or educational status to access our profession.

Our non-legal insight days offer masterclasses from our enabling functions. Subject matter experts in marketing, business development, IT, finance, learning and development, and talent acquisition offer guidance on careers where knowledge, skills, and behaviours from these sectors support our legal professionals.

Our legal insight days are differentiated to support individuals at differing stages of their journey. A-Level law students benefit from workshops where they can access and understand a variety of sectors in a commercial law firm. Second and third-year degree students gain knowledge to support a successful application, commercial awareness, and valuable insights from our trainees' lived experiences.

Soft skills are often the biggest barrier for those from underrepresented and under-resourced backgrounds and these sessions are included in every programme at Brabners including support with application writing, case study practice, writing skills, and mock assessments.

We are committed to ensuring candidates learn skills that will benefit them in any sector or working environment.



Outreach and Access



We ensure these programmes are accessible to all. Individuals can enrol on any applicable programmes in any of our locations with no application process.

Candidates register via our **Early career's website** and this ease of access ensures we have wider outreach and individuals have wider access to a variety of opportunities.

Our recently relaunched Vacation schemes offer a fantastic opportunity for individuals to access a week-long placement at Brabners.

Traditionally a pathway to a training contract, Brabners' Vacation schemes offer candidates the option to spend a week with us and experience our culture and offices and meet our colleagues without the commitment to an assessment process to obtain a training contract.

It is important that candidates feel our culture and values to decide if we are their firm of choice, ensuring our firm is accessible for all. This allows freedom of choice and enables us to break down barriers by engaging with candidates who face challenges in accessing these opportunities.

The Real living wage is provided for the duration of the placement, supporting individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds, and removing barriers where we can.

For those applying for training contracts with us, they have the flexibility to choose to apply for a standalone assessment day or accompany their assessment day with the Vacation Scheme, ensuring individuals who are not in a position to attend a full week's programme are not disadvantaged, giving them choice and flexibility in their assessment location.

What comes next

Further develop our assessment centres to ensure inclusivity by offering differentiated tasks, supporting a range of abilities and skills for candidates to display their very best attributes.

Assessors will be provided with training to support effective, and purpose led feedback for candidates that will promote personal and professional growth and give candidates the opportunity to improve, develop and grow as they continue to move forward in their careers.

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Charity partnerships

Charity partnerships represent purposeful commitment to our local community engagement.

By creating and delivering equal opportunities through bespoke insight days for underrepresented groups and tailoring our workshops to meet their needs, we are able to work with organisations such as LTSB, Leadership through Sport and Business, and Pathways to law via the Sutton Trust, social mobility charities that prepare and support bright young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We work with them to provide programmes to develop skills that will help regardless of their chosen career path, particularly for young people who face significant barriers to accessing a career in law.

We offer workshops that support building confidence, good application writing, interview guidance, access to our professionals to raise aspirations, and networking with our colleagues to offer links to the profession.

Tailoring our programmes to ensure engagement, purpose, and success. We acknowledge the power of small interactions for those harder to reach young people and the value this can add to those with little access to the profession.



What comes next

Expansion of our educational reach and actively engage with schools at all levels. Raising Awareness of the pathways to the profession, including the power of apprenticeships and the opportunities available in a legal profession. By educating students of all ages on the different pathways to law informs students from a young age, increases their attainment in education and raises their aspirations, creating more direct pipelines of talent.

Work with our affinity groups to engage with harder to reach groups. This will involve targeted efforts to connect with communities facing unique challenges in accessing legal education, career paths or support networks. By doing this we aim to bridge gaps, provide tailored resources and create pathways for individuals who may encounter the highest of barriers.

The introduction of a social media platform showcasing our Early Careers opportunities and evidencing life at our firm through video content, online webinars and digital resources. Ensuring candidates have accessibility to content, news feeds, programmes and updates. We want to show a wider representation of our firm, ensuring candidates see people in our firm who have similar life experiences, believing it is achievable.

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Collaboration with Higher Education



We are actively engaged with all our surrounding local universities, giving students access to our offices through online or face-to-face workshops, webinars, brunches, and networking lunches.

Brabners colleagues also visit law schools to deliver masterclasses.

Being visible and accessible as a firm plays a crucial role in demystifying the profession, allowing individuals to see people who look like them, fostering a more inclusive culture for Brabners.

We are keen at Brabners to demonstrate our diversity and inspire those looking for an organisation that embraces difference.

We also recognise that traditional routes to law can be a barrier, we, therefore, work with employability leads in universities to ensure individuals are aware of the pathways available to the profession, particularly through non-traditional pathways.

What comes next

Mentoring programmes will provide advice and guidance from our colleagues throughout various stages of their education, that provide role models that represent the full breadth of society.

Internships will provide year-long placements to support access to the profession.

Opportunities with the Prince's Trust utilising our colleagues access to volunteer days to support young people in the community.

Access for mature students, re-entering work life following changes in their personal and professional circumstances. Life experience offers a breadth of skills and knowledge that are to be harnessed and learnt from. Offering individuals, the opportunity to retrain and reskill.



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Recruitment

Recruitment is the linchpin for cultivating a diverse and inclusive organisation and legal sector.

By adopting inclusive hiring practices, law firms actively contribute to the creation of a workforce that reflects wider society. Diverse teams bring a richness of perspectives and experiences, improving the firm's capacity for innovation and adaptability.

Contextualised recruitment is now embedded in our application process for our Vacation Scheme and Training Contracts, this enables us to take into consideration external factors that may have contributed to a candidate's grades and experience. It incorporates indicators that contextualises circumstances of socio-economic disadvantage that help us to assess a candidate using a fairer indication of potential.

The route to become a trainee solicitor has diversified with the introduction of the SQE. With so many training providers and routes to qualification available, it can be difficult to decide which is the right pathway to take.

We provide all our candidates with the opportunity to register for webinars with our partner education providers to support them in their decision-making, helping them to navigate the complexity of the pathways.

We have worked closely with BARBRI to ensure routes to qualification are flexible, purpose-led, and adaptable to support an array of personal circumstances. Together we have been able to offer a range of SQE courses supporting individual needs and personal circumstances.



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Recruitment

The introduction of the Brabners Bursary of up to £12,500 has ensured that a candidates postgraduate (including non-law) journey is fully funded through to SRA admission.

The flexibility of the bursary allows candidates to choose a pathway that suits their personal circumstances.

The bursary is offered to all candidates who are successful in obtaining a training contract with us, therefore removing any financial barriers that may hinder access or progression.

Outside of early careers, we have a specialist talent acquisition arm that forms part of our People team. The team ensures that our channels to market are diverse and inclusive to candidates of different backgrounds. We use a range of assessment tools to ensure that candidates are evaluated based on their skills and qualifications rather than biases.

Through our attraction and assessment tools, we emphasise our flexible working policies that allow our colleagues to balance their personal and professional responsibilities, making the legal sector more accessible to a wider range of people.

What comes next

Expansion of our routes to solicitor qualification by offering apprenticeship opportunities alongside our traditional training contracts to support candidates being able to earn while they learn. This alternative provides flexibility and accessibility to routes of qualification, boosting our talent attraction.

Wider access to our recruitment programmes by offering hybrid assessment methods. Online webinars prior to face-to-face assessment will support anxious candidates who are concerned about what to expect, how to dress, what questions to ask. We want to ensure candidates are confident and relaxed, by addressing and developing softer skills during the recruitment process. Development of wider skills ensures we are able to support development of behaviours and offer advice, guidance and feedback to all candidates, ensuring that there are no barriers for candidates to be able to present their best selves and be given the best opportunity to shine.



Progression

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION

Q & A

TODAY WE HAVE LOOKED AT :

NETWORKING

PRESENTING

INTERVIEWING

COMMUNICATION

EMPLOYABILITY

Progression is central to cultivating a legal sector that embraces social mobility, diversity, and inclusion at all levels.

Law firms prioritising inclusive progression practices actively contribute to creating leadership and decision-making structures that reflect the diverse communities they represent. Diverse leadership fosters innovation, improves decision-making, and contributes to a dynamic organisational culture.

Brabners Career Pathways provides an opportunity for our early career colleagues to progress in their career and professional development, providing a range of pathways to empower and enable our colleagues to thrive and progress at Brabners.

Apprenticeships and non-traditional pathways are available for legal and non-legal routes for all colleagues regardless of previous levels of study.

Offering level 3 programmes allow individuals to start in administration roles and progress to substantive legal positions through on the job learning and experience.

This raises aspirations for colleagues who would like to consider changes in career paths and offers our managers the opportunity to identify and progress talent in our firm regardless of previous qualifications and current role.

Our new progressive policies and toolkits help steer effective career conversations, identifying and harnessing ambition.

Progression is supported with paid study leave and purpose-led check-in's, in addition to offering funding for study materials and resources. Consequently, removing any barriers to learning.

We aim to provide a range of career pathways to empower and enable our colleagues to develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours to navigate their professional journey with us.

We have implemented Success Profiles and career and promotion laddering for transparency and to encourage well rounded areas for progression.

What comes next

Programmes to support our young professionals, where our colleagues can learn from their peers through masterclasses and workshops. Engaging with the local professional communities through bespoke sessions and providing networking opportunities with peers and cross sector mentoring. Identifying, encouraging and supporting the next generation of future leaders, equipping them with a strong understanding of the regional opportunities and developing, whilst enhancing their personal and professional development.

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