

PRIME IMPACT REPORT 2024-25

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

The PRIME Commitment

When the Sutton Trust released its *Elitist Britain* report in September 2025, the findings were sobering. Across multiple sectors, the UK's most powerful and influential individuals remain five times more likely to have attended private school than the general population – a disparity that has seen little improvement since 2019.

Among the report's key recommendations was a call for employers to take a sector leadership role if they are making significant efforts to tackle social mobility by sharing best practice. Collaboration within sectors was highlighted as essential, with PRIME's work in the legal sector cited as a leading example.

At PRIME, collaboration is fundamental - between our member firms and our partners, and between law firms and their clients. We believe meaningful change in the legal industry can only happen by working together. A crucial part of this collaboration involves sharing data from individual PRIME work experience programmes. We're therefore pleased to report that this year's annual survey saw our highest ever completion rate since its launch four years ago.

Impact Snapshot

From the 90% of members who completed the survey.

98% of members offered an element of their work experience programme in person. This remains up from 94% in 2022-23.

1,570 students took part in PRIME work experience. This is comparable to 2023-24.

24 members paid students for taking part in their work experience. This is a continuous increase since we began our surveys in 2021-22.

This strong level of participation enables us to more accurately assess and report on the collective impact of PRIME work experience programmes during 2024-25, demonstrating the power of sector-wide collaboration in driving forward social mobility. Since our inception in 2011, PRIME members have delivered over 19,000 weeks of work experience.

Student Eligibility and Demographics

Behind these numbers are individual students, individual experiences and individual stories. Each student has their own background, views, and potential and it is essential that the individual students who are given the opportunity to take part in PRIME work experience are those most in need of support. It remains the case that social mobility is not - and should not be - defined solely by attendance at a state school. Many young people face multiple and complex barriers that are not captured by school type alone.

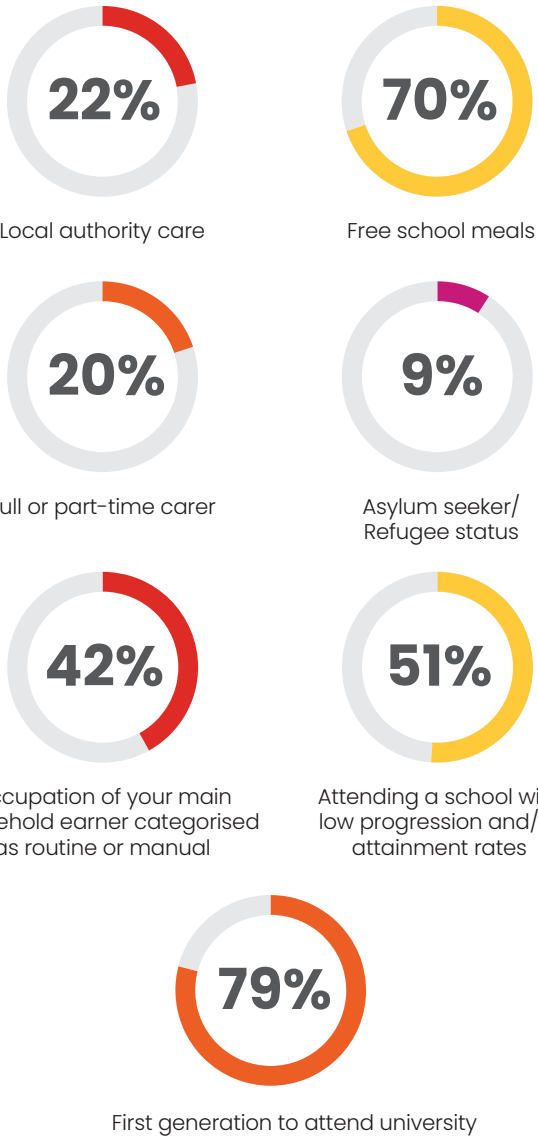
Following on from the Sutton Trust's report Selective Comprehensives 2024 that we referenced in our Impact Report last year, their Social Selection on the Map delves into the geographical patterns of socio-economic segregation in the comprehensive system as a whole, showing the wider impacts of selection. A key finding was that about half of schools take in fewer Free School Meals pupils than their local area with most of the top schools showing signs of social selection.

PRIME has always looked beyond 'state-school attendance' as a measure of social mobility. Our eligibility criteria layers on top of this baseline, the necessity for students to meet one or more additional criteria. Reports such as this demonstrate why this approach is so important. Additional criteria, including attending a school that has a below average A-Level or Higher point score and/or a low rate of progression to higher education and being a full or part-time carer are essential to ensuring that work experience initiatives are available to those in greatest need.

This year, we've changed the way we collect data on student eligibility, enabling us to report in more detail on the specific additional criteria PRIME students meet. This more granular approach gives us deeper insight into the challenges and circumstances many PRIME students face.

The high percentages of students meeting different additional criteria also demonstrate the importance of looking beyond state school attendance alone when assessing eligibility and need.

Students participating in PRIME work experience programmes*



Percentages reflect only those programmes from which data was collected on the specified eligibility criteria.

In our last report, a significant number of members reported offering places to students based on the occupation of their main household earner, specifically where it was categorised as routine, manual, or long-term unemployed. Our new approach to data collection allows us to quantify this more accurately, showing that 42% of students met this criterion in 2024-25.

When looking at the gender of PRIME students, for those members that had this information, female students continued to be overrepresented, with data for this report showing that 71% of PRIME students were female, 28% male and 1% preferred not to say. This appears to be a deepening trend. Whilst, as we highlighted last year, this is standard across school age outreach programmes, with girls outperforming boys at school and in terms of university attendance, it is increasingly important for members to consider how they might attract more male applicants.

Programme Design

PRIME has close to 60 members, made up of a diverse mix of law firms and in-house legal teams from across the country. Each member is unique - with its own culture, values, and way of working - and this individuality is reflected in the thoughtful and inspiring ways that the various work experience programmes have been delivered.

The PRIME Commitments that members follow allow for flexibility in how their programmes are designed and delivered. Each member can therefore create an experience that showcases who they are and what they do, while still offering the same level of meaningful, high-quality opportunities to young people that go beyond simple observation.

Across the length of the programme, students often get to take part in hands-on tasks and interactive skills sessions, gaining a real insight into life in the legal profession. Students also receive tailored career advice and support and have the opportunity to meet a wide range of employees — from trainees and apprentices to senior partners.

Alongside time in the office, last year alone, members reported including in their PRIME programmes a wide range of opportunities such as court visits, trips to university law schools and time spent with clients (or in the case of in-house teams, time with law firms), all giving students invaluable insights into what it's like to work in the legal profession.

A key part of many programmes is collecting feedback from student participants, allowing firms to reflect, adapt, and improve their offerings year on year. This commitment to continuous improvement was evident in the high number of firms that reported on their feedback processes this year, highlighting a sector-wide dedication to delivering high-quality, impactful experiences for young people.

> I really enjoyed experiencing different areas of law gaining first-hand experience of the day-to-day work of a lawyer. I found the mock interviews very useful in building my confidence which I can utilise for future interviews.

PRIME student at Gowling WLG in 2025

> The networking opportunities, workshops and hands-on experience in departments left me with a clear idea of my future goals and allowed me to engage in tasks that I wouldn't have otherwise.

PRIME student at Ashurst in 2025





Clients

The partnerships between PRIME member law firms, member in-house legal teams and clients are a testament to the collaborative spirit that drives PRIME. By working together, the experience and impact of the programmes offered to students are enhanced.

Lloyds Banking Group, a PRIME member since joining in 2024, encapsulates this spirit of collaboration. In addition to supporting fellow member firm Shepherd and Wedderburn — hosting students for a day as part of their Edinburgh-based PRIME programme — the Legal & Secretariat function of Lloyds Banking Group also launched its own five-day, face-to-face work experience and insight programme focused on social mobility.

This inaugural programme welcomed 43 Year 10 students from Trinity Academy in Leeds. Over the course of the week, students developed key employability and negotiation skills, learned application and interview techniques, explored diverse career journeys, and participated in practical case studies that brought the law to life. The programme concluded with an engaging and interactive negotiation exercise, rounding off a transformative experience.

> They seem to have had an amazing experience! Even the independent travel every day, accessing the building and having to think about appropriate dress etc has taught them a lot of life skills!

Teacher from Trinity Academy, commenting on the experience for their students in 2025



Work Experience Format

In 2024-25, 98% of our members offered at least some element of their work experience in-person, highlighting a continued commitment to providing students with meaningful, real-world experiences.

Balancing the unique impact of in-person experiences with the broader reach of virtual programmes remains an ongoing consideration. Virtual formats are essential for students in areas where our members do not have a physical presence, ensuring opportunities are accessible regardless of geography. They also enable significantly greater numbers to participate. For example, this summer Lloyds Banking Group ran a two-day virtual programme alongside their in-person programme, reaching more than 3,600 students across the UK. Such numbers wouldn't be possible for an in-person event.

Other members, such as Ashurst and Addleshaw Goddard, also run virtual programmes alongside their hybrid programmes, ensuring students can participate, no matter their geographic location.

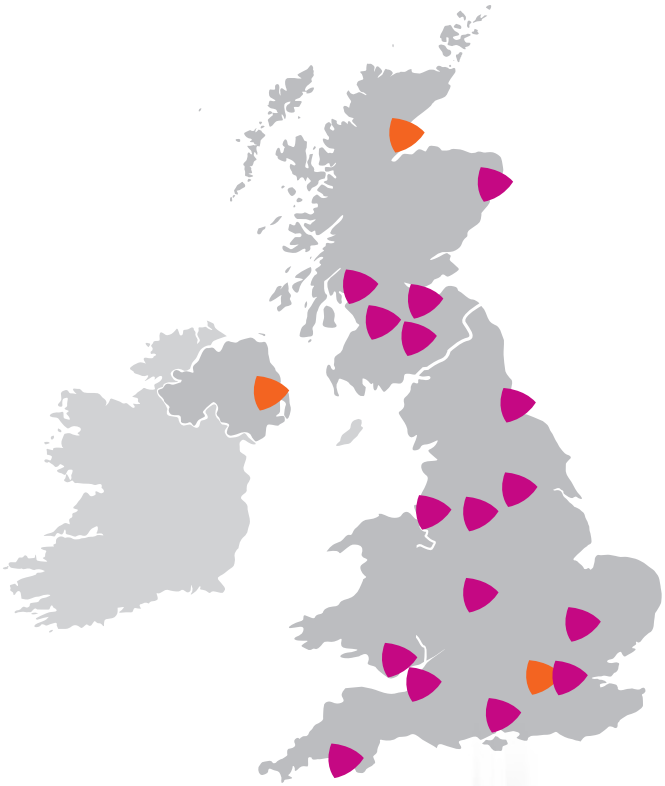
To support this blended approach, PRIME continues to offer its own virtual work experience programme, which members can use to complement their in-person provision. It serves as a flexible tool — whether as preparation ahead of a placement, a follow-up activity, or a standalone alternative for students unable to attend in person or who did not secure a place. To date, more than 4,000 students have enrolled in the programme. The results speak for themselves: students' understanding of a career in law increased from 28% before the programme to 86% after completing it, demonstrating the real value virtual work experience can deliver.

> What I really liked about the programme was how practical it felt. The tasks weren't just abstract legal exercises — they showed me how lawyers actually think about clients' problems and balance the legal issues with commercial realities.
>
> **PRIME Virtual Legal Work Experience Student**

Reach

The Sutton Trust's 2025 research brief *The Opportunity Index* highlighted that Britain is a country in which "where you grew up can have as much, if not more, impact than your family's individual socio-economic circumstances."

It is imperative therefore that opportunities are offered to students across the country and particularly in those areas where there are less favourable opportunities for young people. In 2024-25, in-office placements at our members were offered to students in 19 different locations:



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

Whilst this is three more locations than in 2023-24, we need to expand this reach further. To facilitate this, a key priority for PRIME is to bring more regional firms on board as members and we're delighted to have welcomed a new team member in 2025 who will be dedicated to this work. To complement and strengthen our student-facing delivery in social mobility cold spots, our recruitment efforts are initially focused on the West Midlands and North-West.



‘Why not Law?’

Expanding our reach further has been possible with the continued delivery of our virtual Why Not Law? workshops. Targeted at schools in areas where social mobility is low - known as “cold spots” - the workshops are designed to ensure that young people who might not otherwise consider law as a career have the chance to explore it as a viable option.

With the support of our members and Hark, these sessions help challenge perceptions about who can pursue a legal career, while also providing students with a clearer understanding of the various routes into the profession.

In the last academic year, the programme reached 1,391 students aged 12–14, bringing the total number of students engaged since the project’s launch to 3,475 across 56 schools. Importantly, our reach extended across all four nations of the UK, with 17 schools located in the devolved nations, an increase from 12 in 2023–24.

The impact has been clear, with 92% of students who attended now believing that anyone can pursue a career in law, regardless of their background and 90% being more aware of the different routes into a career in law.

> My favourite part of the workshop was getting feedback from solicitors after our debate, I found this very helpful.
>
> **Student**

The age of students attending the workshops is purposely younger than those attending PRIME work experience programmes. By introducing legal career pathways to students earlier, we’re laying the groundwork for long-term impact. Early exposure helps younger students understand the breadth of opportunities, such as work experience placements and mentoring, available to them as they progress through their education.

Delivery in 2024-25 was made possible by the support of 93 volunteers from 23 PRIME member firms and in-house legal teams who shared their own experiences of entering the legal profession and provided constructive feedback to the students on their responses to challenges.

> The session was fantastic! I was very impressed. It felt like you were in the room. The court case was my favourite bit - inspired! The lawyers & the quizzes all worked well. A masterclass in how to offer a virtual workshop.
>
> **Teacher**





Showcasing Opportunities

In order to increase awareness of the opportunities available through PRIME, we have enhanced our presence across social media channels and worked closely with our members to showcase the diverse programmes on offer. This ensures that more students are informed about — and able to access — valuable work experience opportunities while celebrating the successes of our member firms and in-house legal teams.

Our Instagram and TikTok channels have a large following of students who look at the content to find out about open work experience opportunities as well as hear tips and advice from PRIME Board members, alumni and other representatives on how to enter the legal profession.

This year, these efforts included filming engaging content at Morton Fraser MacRoberts and A&O Shearman. As well as providing students with a unique insight into what attending a PRIME work experience programme might be like, such content also showcases the successes they can lead to. At MFMac for example, supporting their programme was Jamie Stewart, a Senior Solicitor who participated in a PRIME work experience programme himself 11 years ago.

Members can also film their own programmes, showcasing to prospective PRIME students what it is like to take part in our work experience. Our video content guide for members, with tips and tools for firms and their PRIME students on how to film their own content, can be found in the member area of our website.

Through ongoing collaboration with our members and a dedicated focus on engagement, we remain committed to broadening access to meaningful work experience and career development opportunities across the UK.

> “It’s really important that we support initiatives like PRIME because otherwise there would be a whole raft of excellent lawyers who wouldn’t have an opportunity or a route to get into the profession.”
>
> **Jenny Dickson, Partner, Morton Fraser MacRoberts LLP**

Beyond Work Experience

In 2024-25, members reported offering at least 34 former PRIME students opportunities within their firm or team, including vacation schemes, training contracts, and apprenticeships. While not all of these students returned to the firm where they first completed their PRIME experience, many secured roles across the wider PRIME membership.

Since we began tracking this data in 2021-22, we have been told of **224 former PRIME students** who have gone on to secure early career opportunities within member firms — demonstrating the lasting impact of a PRIME work experience programme.

Actual numbers are likely to be significantly higher. To build a more complete picture of PRIME's long-term impact, we encourage all members to include questions in their recruitment processes to help identify applicants who have taken part in PRIME or other early careers programmes. This data is vital in demonstrating the value of these initiatives and the collective commitment of the legal profession to improving access.

> My experience has given me a unique and in-depth look behind the scenes of a law firm, showing me how different teams work together to support both the business and its people.

PRIME Student
at Norton Rose Fulbright LLP in 2025

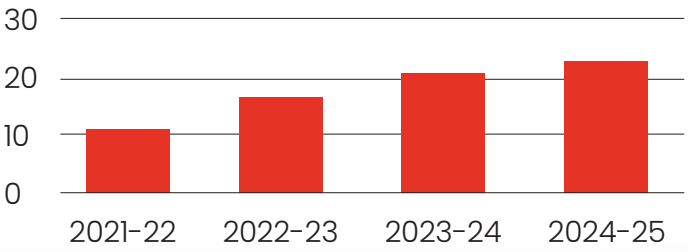
Financial Assistance

One of the PRIME Commitments is for members to provide financial assistance to their PRIME students to ensure they can participate in work experience. At a minimum, this means pre-purchasing lunch and travel expenses for students.

In recent years, an increasing number of members have gone further by offering payments to their students. We welcome this initiative, as it responds to the reality that some young people may need to give up essential paid work in order to take part in work experience, something that would otherwise prevent their attendance. For 2024–25, 24 of our members have reported offering payment to their students, helping to remove financial barriers for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

We urge member firms to continue reviewing their ability to provide financial support to students. Where payment is not possible, the minimum commitment remains to pre-purchase lunch and travel to ensure no student faces financial obstacles to participation.

Number of members paying their PRIME students







Partners

For many PRIME members, the teams responsible for delivering their PRIME programmes are small — sometimes made up of just one or two people. They are skilfully supported by colleagues across their firms and organisations, from partners welcoming students, to apprentices sharing their journeys into law, and in many cases, by outside organisations too.

A recommendation to employers in the Sutton Trust's Elitist Britain report was to use organisations working with young people to target outreach and work experience opportunities to under-represented groups. This is something PRIME member firms are already doing well. In 2024–25, our member firms and in-house teams collaborated with 24 different organisations, many of them PRIME partners, to deliver their powerful and impactful programmes. These organisations support a range of activities, from student recruitment to workshop delivery. Member firms also maintain valuable links with schools, universities, and local councils to further enhance their outreach.

Throughout 2024-25 PRIME's partners have also supported us with the delivery of our webinar series for members. These informal and insightful sessions allow our members to learn from each other, share ideas and challenges and, ultimately, push each other to do more. They have included:

- Supporting Socially Mobile Students - Zero Gravity alongside Ashurst
- Enhancing your work experience programme - Peppo Tutors

This support is very much two-way, and we were delighted to assist one of our partners, Peppo Tutors, with the delivery of their law careers festival, Power Up Fest, this summer. The event showcased the legal profession to over 1,150 young people, 94% of whom rated it as excellent or outstanding.

Alongside many PRIME members, we manned a stand in the Opportunities Tent, where we were privileged to meet the students attending and listen to and answer their thoughtful questions.

PRIME Board member, Molly Lewis, also delivered four main-stage sessions to students, explaining the different routes into a career in law and the support PRIME offers to individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds in accessing legal careers.

It was amazing to have PRIME alumni support us with this event, selflessly giving up their time to share with students their first-hand experiences of PRIME and the steps they have taken since. Events such as this provide a great way to maintain contact with PRIME alumni.

Apprenticeships

The Institute of Student Employers' *Recruitment Survey 2025* found that the balance between graduate and apprentice hiring is shifting for a number of employers. Overall, graduate hiring had fallen by 8% year-on-year, yet apprentice hiring increased by 8%, suggesting that large employers are continuing to invest into this route.

37 of our members have reported that they offer apprenticeship opportunities. These include both legal apprenticeships and apprenticeship opportunities within business services departments. In addition to allowing students to filter their work experience search by members who offer apprenticeships, we've also created a dedicated page listing current apprenticeship opportunities.

For many students, particularly those who may have limited support at home or school, knowing where to find these opportunities can be a challenge. Bringing them together in one accessible place helps to make the process clearer and more manageable.

> I also found out that you don't have to go straight to university to become a lawyer there are other routes like apprenticeships that aren't talked about as much. The experience really opened my eyes to the different paths and possibilities in the legal world.

PRIME student at CMS in 2025



PRIME Students

"I realised that law can be a lot more accessible than I thought it was."
PRIME student at Brodies in 2025

"It shows me that law could be a thing I could do in the future."
PRIME student at Morton Fraser MacRoberts in 2025

"I feel more confident in knowing what is expected from people starting out in their law careers, and found that the profession isn't as intimidating as what I first assumed after talking to various employees, who were all very friendly.
PRIME student at Pinsent Masons in 2025

"It has really helped me to understand what it is like to work at a city law firm."
PRIME student at Stephenson Harwood in 2025

"It was an incredible opportunity to gain first-hand insight into life at a leading law firm!"
PRIME student at Shepherd & Wedderburn in 2025

Thank you to all our members who provided data on their 2024-25 programmes.

A&O Shearman, Addleshaw Goddard, Aggreko, Arnold & Porter, Ashurst, Baker McKenzie LLP, Bird & Bird LLP, Boodle Hatfield LLP, Brodies LLP, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Burness Paull, Clifford Chance, Clyde & Co, CMS, Cooley LLP, DAC Beachcroft, Darwin Gray LLP, DLA Piper, Eversheds Sutherland, Farrer & Co LLP, Fladgate LLP, Freshfields, Fried Frank, Gibson Dunn, Gowling WLG, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, HFW, Hogan Lovells, Irwin Mitchell, Kirkland & Ellis International LLP, Latham & Watkins, Lewis Silkin LLP, Linklaters LLP, Lloyds Banking Group, Macfarlanes, Michemores, Morton Fraser MacRoberts, Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, Osborne Clarke, Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP, Pinsent Masons, Shepherd and Wedderburn LLP, Sidley Austin LLP, Skadden, Slaughter and May, Stephenson Harwood, Thorntons, Trowers & Hamlins, Weightmans LLP, Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP, White & Case LLP, Withers LLP, Womble Bond Dickinson LLP.

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