

HSBC Social Mobility

These are the experiences of colleagues who volunteered to share their stories

I often question whether I have the right to be here.

Social mobility means that class or someone's early background shouldn't affect their chances in life.

My dad was unemployed for a fair bit of my childhood, so we had free school dinners and uniform grants and all of that sort of thing.

My mum was on benefits.

So we spent quite a bit of time in a women's refuge.

My mum had to borrow money just to put food on the table.

I didn't know people who worked in offices. I didn't know people who'd gone to university. Everyone was a tradesman.

I didn't see anything else other than that within my, sort of, community. I didn't know anyone who'd worked in a bank.

I was the first in my family to go to university.

And obviously I didn't go to the top university.

We just simply couldn't afford it.

Everybody seemed to know everyone else and it was almost like a secret club that I wasn't part of.

And I suppose it caused me to put on a bit of a mask I suppose.

In the first decade of my career I probably, I think I dressed like a 35-year-old when I was a 25-year-old, you know.

A lot of people that I grew up with say, "you speak differently now".

Having to feel like I have to be uber polished.

This is your big chance, there's no bank of mum and dad.

You're on the back foot. You're having a conversation, your mind is going.

And that's very stressful actually, because you can't really be yourself.

I think it was a big staff dinner or something and I was one of the grads, and just the cutlery, I was like, oh my God, what do you do with all this? And I was quite conscious of not knowing.

Because of your background, you feel like you have to prove yourself even more so.

Coming from a lower socioeconomic background makes everything harder because, you know, you don't have that professional network.

Networking for me is the number one. There were fundamental parts of the bank that I didn't know about just because I hadn't spoken to the right people.

And perhaps I'm going to have to fight a little bit harder to get to the places I want to in life.

It's been quite mentally exhausting, draining.

There's a bit of imposter syndrome.

Oh yeah, almost every day.

How can I dare to believe that I can make a better life?

I never thought in a million years that I'd work in a bank.

I've stopped asking, "why me?" And I've started saying, "why not me?"

I firmly believe, coming from a background where I started as a cashier, your career opportunities are limitless.

When I started to believe in myself, my world got bigger.

That's a good thing about HSBC, for being able to understand that I can kind of mix into different environments, but still be myself.

And I am typically Glaswegian, straightforward, and I think I've used that to my benefit through the years.

In the role that I do, I deal with a lot of businesses. I think a lot of those people are from working class backgrounds. I think it's, it's refreshing for them to kind of have their bank manager come out and talk like me and look like me.

HSBC serves a full spectrum of clients, and I think for us to be able to understand the needs of those customers, our workforce needs to reflect that.

There's bright people from all over, from every background. You know, if they think, you know, I won't fit in at banking because I didn't go to private school or I'm not posh or whatever it happens to be, you know, then we'll lose some of those smart people to other places.

Even just the fact of conversations like this, people learning that actually people have come from all sorts of backgrounds.

It's really important within a team to make sure that everybody feels they've got a voice and everybody does have a voice, not just feels they've got a voice.

One of the things that I would encourage anybody from a different socioeconomic background is don't make assumptions. It's important to me because I feel I made it, and I think others should be able to do the same.

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For sharing your stories.

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