

Social mobility key to diversity and inclusion strategies – Caroline Dunn



By **Chantal Kapani** | 4 March 2024

'Insurance, and careers in the city or in financial services were difficult to find out about,' says chief underwriting officer

The industry has acknowledged that social mobility is an essential component of a comprehensive diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy.

That was according to Caroline Dunn, chief underwriting officer at Zurich, who told *Insurance Times* that in the “last five years” there has been a “a move to champion diversity and inclusion” in the industry.

According to the intergovernmental Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, social mobility “refers to change in a person’s socioeconomic situation”.

“Social mobility is linked to equality of opportunity – the extent to which people have the same chances to do well in life regardless of the socioeconomic background of their parents, their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, birthplace, or other circumstances beyond their control,” it explained.

Caroline Dunn, who joined Zurich UK as chief underwriting officer 1 November 2021, is one example that the industry has shifted its focus to social mobility.

Dunn joined the insurance industry through the RSA graduate scheme.

However, Dunn explained that she “knew nothing about [the insurance industry]” prior to beginning her career in the industry.



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“As I was growing up and thinking about what I wanted to do, things such insurance and careers in the city or in financial services were difficult to find out about,” she said.

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Not having the contacts needed to know what careers and opportunities are out there creates an additional barrier to entry for young people, she said.

Dunn’s explained that her “passion” lies in opportunities and fostering diversity within Zurich, with a particular emphasis on addressing social mobility.

Fostering young talent

In a bid to introduce young people to the insurance industry, Zurich introduced its [Kick Start Mentors](#) scheme.

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The programme, launched last year (9 March 2023), operates in partnership with five state-funded secondary schools as part of Zurich’s Early Careers scheme.

The initiative aims to attract young people from Birmingham, Hampshire and the London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Croydon and Newham to the insurance sector.

Dunn explained that the insurer has also shifted towards a “more skills-based” approach in early career recruitment with the aim of eliminating barriers.

For example, to ensure a “level playing field”, the insurer [“scrapped” group interviews for neurodiverse applicants](#) applying to graduate and internships last year (4 September 2023).

Zurich UK said this approach would “provide every applicant who is assessed, successful or not, bespoke feedback to support their recruitment journey”.

Candidates applying as graduates will not need to divulge the university they attended during the application process and the use of CVs will not be part of the selection process.

Dunn explained that Zurich’s commitment to implementing practical measures aimed at cultivating a welcoming and inclusive organisational culture.

“It is about [young people], starting to think about what’s next for them and what career opportunities are out there,” said Dunn.

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