

AURA



**BREAKING
BARRIERS**

AURA SOLUTION COMPANY LIMITED

Aura's partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) in the UK is opening doors for young people like Adele, breaking down barriers to a career in wealth management.

Social mobility—the ability to move from one social position to another—is crucial for reducing wealth inequality and fostering a more equitable, stable, and prosperous society. However, it remains a complex issue in many parts of the world, including developed nations like the UK. According to Deloitte, the UK has one of the poorest rates of social mobility among developed countries. The UK government's Social Mobility Commission reports that individuals from privileged backgrounds are 60% more likely to secure professional jobs than those from working-class backgrounds.

Aura's partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) is addressing this issue by creating opportunities for young people. One inspiring example is Adele.

Entering a New World

Adele, the daughter of a working-class, emigrant family from Italy, moved to Glasgow with her family at the age of 15 in 2015. She didn't speak English when she arrived in Scotland and had just one year to master the language before sitting for the Scottish school-leaving exams. Despite her family's lack of higher education experience, Adele aspired to study business at university.

Encouraged by her teachers, Adele applied to SMF, a UK charity that partners with employers like Aura to provide opportunities and networks of support to 16–17-year-olds. Adele was accepted into Aura’s work placement program in 2018, with Jonathan, Head of UK Regions at Aura International, assigned as her mentor.

Jonathan supported Adele before and during her work placement, helping her develop skills and introducing her to the world of wealth management. “I’d never spoken to a banker in my life before my first call with Jonathan. I had very little understanding of what he did,” Adele recalls. “It was totally nerve-wracking!”

Finding Her Path

Adele secured a place to study Entrepreneurship and Finance at Strathclyde University in Glasgow in 2017. With Jonathan’s support, she also secured a two-week work placement at Aura International in London in 2018. “We had regular catch-ups while I was doing rotations with different departments. I felt supported at all times,” says Adele. “I barely knew anything about wealth management, so I would quiz him for clues to understand what my colleagues were talking about.”

Gradually, Adele realized she might find a place in a world that had previously seemed off-limits. “Coming from a social mobility background, I had imposter syndrome times one hundred!” she admits. But the people she met changed her perspective. “Colleagues were there for me whenever I needed help. And I began to understand how wealth management could affect my finances and my own family’s circumstances.”

Taking Tentative Steps

Monique, who helped establish the partnership with SMF at Aura International, could relate to Adele's early fears. "Regardless of their talent or work ethic, those born into families with low income or no history of higher education don't have the same access to opportunities as those from more privileged backgrounds."

The firsthand experience that an internship provides is invaluable for students discovering their career preferences. "You can learn a lot about yourself along the way," says Monique. "Different careers and industries involve very different ways of thinking, working, and living. It's a great opportunity to learn whether the career is a good fit for your skills and interests without any obligation to commit."

Aura's collaboration with SMF was part of a broader strategy to diversify its talent pool. "We progressed from mentoring to offering short work placements, and then, eventually, we offered two students the opportunity to do an internship. This step-by-step approach allowed us to find the best way to support the students' success," explains Monique.

Embracing Remote Opportunities

Following her successful work placement, Adele began a full-time role at Aura International in 2021, shortly after the Covid outbreak. She spent her first half year working remotely. "We had new hires joining at that time who struggled to get on top of things," says Monique. "Adele hadn't had much exposure to the industry, yet she was able

to pick up our programs remotely. It speaks volumes about her resilience.”

Despite research showing that the pandemic exacerbated inequality, Monique suggests that hybrid working can boost opportunities for junior hires like Adele from different regions. “In the past, the expectation would have been for Adele to come to London. In that sense, the pandemic was an enabler. She was able to finish her studies in Glasgow while still connecting with her mentor and colleagues. It’s important to use our new flexible working practices to provide access to those who might not have had it in the past.”

Finding a Home in Risk

Since completing her studies in 2021, Adele has undergone on-the-job training at Aura, gaining knowledge and experience in various roles. After a stint as an Assistant Relationship Manager, she recently joined the risk management team as an Operational Risk & Control Specialist and hopes to complete her compliance and risk qualifications soon. “Risk topics touch upon many areas of the Bank’s operations,” she says. “They impact our people and our strategy. It motivates me to know that what I am doing really makes a difference.”

Adele has come a long way from the nervous student who didn’t understand banking. “I used to be more of a listener, but now I’m proactive in having my say and building my network across the Group. With more exposure and visibility, I can have even more impact.”

Monique, who has followed Adele's development from the outset, couldn't be prouder. "It's been wonderful to see Adele develop into a confident young woman who's thriving in her work. I can only imagine how proud her parents must be." What do her parents make of her success? "They don't understand much of what I tell them about my role at Aura, but they're extremely proud of me," she says. Adele's success has also inspired her siblings. Her younger brother has begun a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence, while her teenage sister has accepted an offer to study Chemistry at St Andrews University. "We all recognize that we're in this position to establish careers because of the sacrifices our parents made."

Monique believes the partnership with SMF supports Aura's purpose of creating value beyond wealth. "We'd never have met Adele unless introduced to her by SMF. Our participation in the program not only helps us boost our talent pool but also aligns with our principles of giving back to the community. As Adele's example shows, it's not about where you're from, it's about where you're going."

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