



# Challenging the many myths around the recruitment of ex-offenders

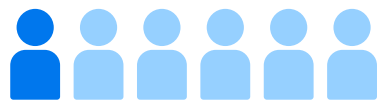


According to figures from the Ministry of Justice, 81% of people\* believe that businesses who choose to employ ex-offenders are making a positive contribution to society — yet many organisations remain reluctant to take this vital step.

With only 17% of people, on average, securing employment within a year of their release, this leaves the overwhelming majority struggling to take those first strides towards a brighter future.

17% = roughly

**1 in 6**



But that needn't be the case. With the right support, prison-leavers can become valuable members of the workplace, bringing a unique set of skills and life experience to their role.

Here, we dispel some of the myths surrounding the employment of those with previous convictions, while highlighting just a few of the positive outcomes which can prove truly transformative for both business and wider society.

## Why should businesses hire someone with a previous criminal conviction?

Figures show that those who secure employment following their release are less likely to re-offend. As a result, hiring from this sector of society represents an important investment into the future, at a time when people need it the most.

The justice system is bursting with talented individuals; entrepreneurs, techies and talented craftspeople, prisons are a melting pot of largely untapped potential just waiting to be discovered.

Equality of opportunity has never been a hotter topic within the workplace. Adding a further layer of diversity will increase a business' credentials in this area and, importantly, will further support their corporate social responsibility strategy.

Organisations can vet participants with a criminal conviction in the same way that they would any other potential employee. As with any hiring process, there will be a probationary period in place, during which an employer can track factors such as punctuality and attendance.



# Up to 20% of the population have a criminal conviction

...making ex-offenders a substantial portion of the available talent pool. Ultimately, a previous record need not be a barrier to a successful future — for many of the individuals that we work alongside, a previous mistake can become a catalyst for positive change.

## How can Employment Advisors support those with convictions in securing employment?

Explaining the previous points and advocating, not just for that specific job seeker, but for all participants with criminal convictions, may help employers to consider a fresh approach to future job campaigns.

Research has shown that if an applicant has good character references, proof of performance or trained skills, they are much more likely to be considered for a role. Mentioning these factors can make a hugely positive difference to an employment decision.

It can be helpful to contextualise the offence. Emphasise if the conviction would have no impact on the line of work in question, or highlight the period of time that has passed since the crime. Setting the scene in this way, can help to further reassure an employer of an applicant's suitability.

Draw upon the company ethos in explaining how a particular participant fits with a business' values. Often, organisations will provide important insight into the workplace culture through their website. This frequently includes buzz words such as 'inclusion' and 'equality of opportunity'. An Employment Advisor can highlight to an employer how, by hiring a candidate with a criminal conviction, they will be re-enforcing the ethics and morals of the organisation.

Speak to management about any concerns. What is the person basing their fears on? Have they ever hired someone with a criminal conviction before? Are they building up a picture of what to expect based on what they have seen on TV? The reality is often much less daunting.

Reassure employers that having completed a basic disclosure check on an applicant with a criminal conviction, they will probably know more about this participant and their risks than that of someone who has no history of convictions



Share details of Recruit! by Unlock, which provides [resources to support employers](#) throughout the recruitment journey.

\* Source: <https://gov.uk/government/publications/unlock-opportunity-employer-information-pack-and-case-studies/employing-prisoners-and-ex-offenders>