



An Advice Guide

for employers considering
recruiting someone with a
criminal conviction.

About this guide

People with criminal convictions can make a valuable contribution to many businesses, but misconceptions mean they are often not considered for roles. **With more than one million vacancies across the country**, it's important that employers consider all avenues available to them when recruiting to fill vacancies, including exploring employing people with criminal convictions.

Sodexo has launched its **Starting Fresh** programme, which is encouraging and providing guidance to employers on proactively hiring people with criminal convictions.

This guide breaks down some of the myths that exist around hiring people with criminal convictions, and provides a Q&A based on our many years of addressing business concerns. You should find answers to most of your questions here but please do **contact us** if you would like more information.

How to approach the conversation inside your business

Your business may have questions about who they are able to hire, and what requirements there are around asking for details of someone's prior convictions. This guide sets out some of those situations, and you can find out more on the **Starting Fresh hub**.

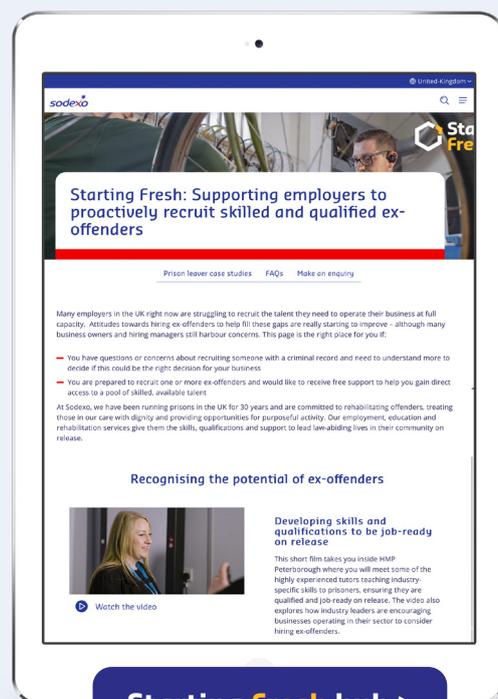
With well over 100 prisons around the UK, your business is likely to be in the vicinity of one which you might be able to visit. There you can learn more about the skills training that is on offer. People with criminal convictions also live in every community, so you shouldn't think you'll be unable to recruit from this group if there is no prison nearby.

Your business can also become a **Ban the Box** employer, simply by removing from your application forms the check box about whether someone has convictions, unless of course that information is essential to the role.



More than 100 companies have signed up and the **Ban the Box website** has lots of useful information about how it works.

Your business may have misconceptions about employing people with criminal convictions, and you can use the myth-buster below to help you address these.





Your questions answered

Below are some questions we are often asked by businesses seeking advice around potentially employing people with criminal convictions, with answers and information you may find helpful.

1 Where can I go to get more information?

You can visit Sodexo's Starting Fresh hub, where there are resources designed to help you discover the underutilised community of people with criminal backgrounds and support them in the workplace, as well as case studies of what impact this has had on the companies and individuals involved. For guidance on changes to criminal records legislation, you can visit the Government's [website](#).

2 What type of roles can I fill with people who have a criminal record?

People with criminal convictions often have everything employers need. This ranges from academic qualifications such as English and Maths GCSEs, to vocational qualifications in fields where there are currently skills shortages, including construction, hospitality, hairdressing and more. Most people also worked successfully before their offence and may have worked on Release on Temporary License (ROTL), so they will often have work experience to draw on.

3 If I'm going to open up my talent search to include people with criminal convictions, how can I get help regarding the recruitment process?

There's support out there to make the process easier and faster, for example broker organisations that will actively find candidates for businesses. They can also arrange recruitment days and interviews inside prisons and will stay in touch to help your new hires get settled. Businesses can find out more about them here or contact Sodexo for more information.

4 Do I have to wait for someone to be released from prison to provide them with a work opportunity?

No, businesses can offer work opportunities for serving prisoners if they qualify for 'Release on Temporary License' (ROTL). This means they are allowed to leave the prison grounds during the day and work part-time or full-time in the community. This is a key part of the resettlement process, and many employers will offer people this job permanently when they have completed their sentence.



5 Are the qualifications gained in prison the same as those candidates might gain outside of prison?

Yes. Whether someone's attained a Level 2 Hairdressing NVQ or a Grade 9 GCSE in Maths inside a prison, they've reached exactly the same standard as anyone else with this qualification. Prison learning centres are OFSTED-inspected and use the same assessors as other providers. People are often surprised by how sophisticated the set-up is. If you'd like to see it for yourself, you can talk to New Futures Network or get in touch with us.

6 How do I become a 'Ban the Box' employer?

Businesses can become a 'Ban the Box' employer by simply removing the 'previous convictions' check box from application forms, unless of course that information is essential to the role. More than 100 companies have signed up, and the [Ban the Box website](#) has lots of useful information about how it works.

7 Most roles on my site require employees to be DBS-checked - does this rule out recruiting someone with a criminal record?

Not necessarily. If there is a good candidate who has a criminal record, employers can conduct a risk assessment about the nature of that offence and the impact for the specific role in that location. This will help them ascertain whether the offending history presents a risk in relation to the job they would be asking the individual to do. There are of course certain roles that have more robust risk assessments than others, particularly those that involve working with children or vulnerable adults - these do rule out the majority of offending histories.

8 I am an employer with job opportunities which could be suitable for people with criminal convictions. I am only comfortable hiring someone that was convicted of a non-violent crime. Is it possible to make this distinction?

Employers can [contact Sodexo](#), who can refer them for further support.

10 As an employer potentially interested in hiring ex-offenders, would it be possible to visit my local prison and see the skills training in action and/or hold a recruitment day in the prison?

Yes absolutely. We would welcome employers to come in and visit if they felt this would support their ability to employ even one prison-leaver. Please just contact us to arrange. If your local prison is not a Sodexo-run establishment, we can still support you in making that connection

11 What risk assessments are done prior to a prison leaver being put forward for a job vacancy?

There are a number of risk assessments that are completed at this stage. These include looking at their current offence, their previous convictions and taking into account their behaviour in prison. We will always consider the risk of harm that a prisoner poses both to themselves and others before considering suitability for a job vacancy. We will also liaise with employers prior to any placements to discuss the process and provide the opportunity for them to ask questions.

12 What risk assessments are done before a prisoner joins a workshop or skills training?

We will firstly consider a prisoners suitability by looking at their current learning ability and outcomes. We will then appropriately match a prisoner to a workshop or skills training, and ask for a risk assessment from the offender management team. This risk assessment will examine suitability based on their offending history and current behaviours in custody. Prisoners will be sifted out of the process if it is felt they do not meet the criteria based on risk and need.

Myth-buster

1 **Perception:** Half of people with criminal convictions find a job within a year of release.

Reality: False - the sad truth is that people with criminal convictions find it incredibly difficult to get a job, often in spite of the fact they might have completed professional qualifications or had experience running the prison café or cleaning the premises. Although the Government has made significant strides in employment, doubling the number of prison leavers in employment after six months since April 2021, there is more to be done.

2 **Perception:** Employers must perform criminal record checks on all prospective employees.

Reality: False - not all employer's will perform criminal record checks or ask about an individual's criminal history. Some jobs, for example where they involve working with children or vulnerable adults or in finance or law, are legally required to undertake criminal records checks.

3 **Perception:** People with criminal convictions who get a job after prison are as likely to re-offend as those who don't.

Reality: False - finding a job offers purpose, structure, and offers people with criminal convictions the chance to join a community. This is backed by government research which shows those with a job after prison are **less likely to reoffend**.

4 **Perception:** Consumers would be uncomfortable buying from a business that employs people with criminal convictions.

Reality: False - the overwhelming majority of people are comfortable buying from a business that employs people with criminal convictions. Government sources suggest 75% of Brits do not have a problem with this. We have to bury this perception, as misunderstanding consumer behaviour is preventing people with criminal convictions from finding appropriate roles and successfully reintegrating into society.

5 **Perception:** Hiring people with criminal convictions will increase the recruitment and job advertising costs of businesses.

Reality: False - according to the CIPD, the average non-managerial vacancy costs around £2,000. Opening recruitment up to people with criminal convictions can help reduce overheads such as advertising, because prisons can offer opportunities and interview access to candidates. Prisons also employ dedicated staff that collaborate with recruiters to assist in pairing organisations with the right talent.

6 **Perception:** Prisoners can't do qualifications such as GCSEs and NVQs whilst in prison.

Reality: False - education courses in prisons can lead to qualifications that are recognised by employers outside prison, such as GCSEs or NVQs. Prisoners may also be able to do a distance learning course, for example [Open University](#).





Starting Fresh

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