

HARD-WORKING. LOYAL. HIRED.

The employer's quick guide to hiring people with convictions

Around 11 million people in the UK have a criminal record. Many are skilled, motivated, and desperate to prove themselves.

Overlooking them isn't just unfair – it's bad for business.



75%

of employers who hire people with convictions say they would do it again.



1 IN 3

working-age adults in the UK has a criminal record.



50%

lower staff turnover is reported by some inclusive employers.

Why it makes business sense



Lower recruitment costs – High staff turnover is expensive. Candidates with convictions are often highly motivated to hold down work. They tend to stay.



Access untapped talent – A tight labour market means you can't afford to rule people out. Many candidates have trade skills, management experience, and professional qualifications.



Loyalty that pays off – Timpson, Greene King, and Halfords all report that employees hired through prison programmes are among their most reliable staff.

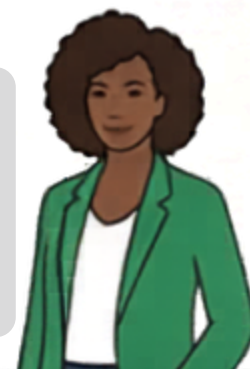


Tax incentives Some employers may be eligible for financial support when hiring people leaving custody. Ask your local Jobcentre Plus about available schemes.



What the law says

The Rehabilitation of offenders Act 1974 means many convictions become "spent" after a set period. Candidates don't have to declare them, and you can't ask. Most jobs don't require a DBS check – and for those that do, different rules apply.



Turn over to find out how to get started.

GETTING STARTED

Five practical steps for inclusive hiring



1. Review your application form

Remove blanket tick-box questions about convictions. Ask only what's relevant to the role. A conviction from 15 years ago is probably not relevant to a warehouse job today.



3. Do an individual risk assessment

If a candidate discloses a conviction, assess the specific risk for that specific role. Consider: how long ago, what were the circumstances, and what has changed since?



5. Consider a ROTL placement first

Release on Temporary Licence lets people open prisons work for employers before release. It's a low-risk way to try before you hire – many become permanent employees.

"But what if it goes wrong?" Most employers never have an issue. And if you do need to manage a problem, the same employment law that applies to everyone else applies here too. You are not taking on extra legal risk simply by hiring someone with a conviction.



2. Train your hiring managers

Make sure whoever interviews candidates understands what they can and can't ask, and what "spent" means under the Rehabilitation of offenders Act.



4. Partner with specialist organisations

The New Futures Network connects employers directly with prisons. The Oswin Project, Nacro and the Prison Reform Trust offer free advice and can help you recruit effectively and safely.

Useful contacts

New Futures Network

newfuturesnetwork.gov.uk – connects employers with prisons across England and Wales

Nacro

nacro.org.uk – free advice on employing people with criminal records

The Oswin Project

oswinproject.org.uk - works with people inside prison and on release, offering employment and volunteering, also supports employers.

Unlock

unlock.org.uk – charity supporting people with convictions into work

Jargon buster

Spent conviction – one that no longer needs to be declared after a rehabilitation period under the Rehabilitation of offenders Act 1974.

DBS check – a Disclosure and Barring Service check, only required for specific roles such as working with children or vulnerable adults.

ROTL – Release on Temporary Licence, which allows prisoners in open conditions to work outside before release.

New Futures Network – the Ministry of Justice programme linking employers directly with prisons.