

Unlocking a better life

*Why we need an employment revolution
in our prisons and how to achieve it*



Will Tanner | Nick Tyrone

ONWARD >

About Onward

Onward is a campaigning thinktank whose mission is to develop new ideas for the next generation of centre right thinkers and leaders. We exist to make Britain fairer, more prosperous and more united, by generating a new wave of modernising ideas and a fresh kind of politics that reaches out to new groups of people.

We believe in a mainstream conservatism – one that recognises the value of markets and supports the good that government can do, is unapologetic about standing up to vested interests, and assiduous in supporting the hardworking, aspirational and those left behind. Our goal is to address the needs of the whole country: young as well as old; urban as well as rural; and for all parts of the UK – particularly places that feel neglected or ignored in Westminster.

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	2
<i>Summary of the argument</i>	4
<i>The challenge</i>	7
<i>International comparison: Norway</i>	15
<i>The attitudes of employers and the general public</i>	20
<i>Solutions: How to achieve an employment revolution in our prisons</i>	28
<i>Conclusions</i>	39
<i>Endnotes</i>	41
<i>Annex 1: Focus group transcript</i>	45

Foreword



A fine balance between compassion and economic responsibility defined the Conservative party that I worked for under David Cameron. A duty of care for the vulnerable in society steered much of the policy of that Government which I was so proud to serve under, and I have tried to carry this sense of compassionate conservatism into the work I do in the House of Lords.

I have always said that if you are given an honour, you must use it properly, and I have always tried to speak up for the voiceless in society. If you are serious about reforming society, people who are falling out of it cannot be an afterthought. They must be front and centre.

One of my priorities has been to encourage businesses to employ disabled people, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it makes no sense to waste the potential of so many members of our society. In so many cases, compassionate policy and sensible conservative action go hand in hand.

Of course it is right that if you have broken the law you should go to prison, but punishment must be paired with effective rehabilitation. A system which pushes people into a cycle of reoffending is no good for ex-offenders, or for society at large. As this paper highlights, improving opportunities for prisoners from their arrival at the gate, through to their entry into employment on release, is not only humane and just, but also makes economic sense.

For too long we have failed to tackle one of the key problems of our justice system: reoffending rates. This report clearly outlines the dilemma prisoners face when they re-enter society upon release. Too many leave prison without proper training and education, without a plan for employment and housing, and most importantly, without a sufficient support system to help them with their transition through the prison gate.

This report recommends a shift in the functions of prisons, from holding pens of idleness and boredom, to places of training, education and work. Action is needed to shift the attitudes of employers and to uncover the vast – largely untapped – workforce in our prisons. This also means a re-think of the role that employers have inside and outside the prison walls. The vulnerable in our society must no longer be defined by their past mistakes, but encouraged by their future potential.

As the Scandinavian case study in this report highlights, the perpetual cycle of the Criminal Justice system is by no means inevitable and if there is the political will, we can unlock a better life for ex-offenders. We must embrace an ambitious vision for our future, which gives everyone in our society a chance to succeed.

I stand firmly behind the ambitious and critically important recommendations presented in this report. I hope that the incoming leader will take a thoughtful look at this research and I call on them to utilise all the levers of government to implement these proposals.

Gabrielle Bertin, Baroness Bertin

Summary of the argument



Prisons have many uses but one of their most important roles is preparing offenders for a life away from crime. On this measure, they are failing and have been for some time. Nearly half of people leaving prison currently go on to commit another crime within a year of their release – a figure that has remained stubbornly high for over a decade.

The way we run our prisons is maintaining lives of crime and creating new victims. On all sides of the debate, people recognise we need a new approach. For some, the solution is to reduce the use of prisons and increase the use of community disposals to ensure people do not lose the stability of their family, home and work. Others argue that we need to make prisons more punitive to put people off crime in the first place and to deter them from going back.

This paper argues that there is another way to cut reoffending, keep the public safe and help ex-offenders unlock a better life: by turning prisons from holding pens of idleness into purposeful places of education and work.

Currently half of all offenders enter prison with the literacy and numeracy levels expected of an 11-year old and the vast majority leave prison without any improvement. The volume of prisoners participating in learning courses has fallen by 13% over the last two years and the number achieving GCSE level qualifications fell by two thirds between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Instead of purpose, prisoners' time in custody is characterised by idleness. Only a quarter spend 10 hours a day out of their cell and a fifth spend fewer than two hours a day in common areas. Ex-offenders we spoke to for this report told us that they had to ask repeatedly to be put on training – and were often rebuffed by the system. Even for those prisoners who are spending reasonable amounts of time out of cell, purposeful activity varies widely in quantity and quality from prison to prison. Their training is often unrelated to the experience they had before prison or the skills needed to get a job on release. It is unsurprising as well as tragic that just 17% of prisoners achieve PAYE employment a year after release.

Finally, the transition from prison into work in the community is inconsistent and poorly managed. The use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), where inmates leave prison to work during the day before returning to prison, is underutilised. Only 1 in 20 prisoners are employed through a ROTL scheme and use has declined by a third over the past five years. Despite some isolated cases, the risks for this activity are extremely low. From 333,000 combined days worked in 2016, only 17 led to employer dissatisfaction or re-offending.

To their credit, Ministers recognise this and have set out plans to turn the system around. The Government's Education and Employment Strategy, published last year, set out a vision "to put offenders on a path to employment as soon as they step foot in prison" and established the New Futures Network to change employer attitudes to ex-offenders. The Justice Secretary, David Gauke, has just announced plans to rationalise probation and increase the use of temporary licence to improve the through the gate transition.

We urge more power to ministers' elbows. If we can start to address the structural problems in how we prepare prisoners for work, we can expect reoffending rates, and with them crime, to fall. Evidence from the UK shows that offenders

who participate in education are 7.5 percentage points less likely to reoffend¹ and those who find paid employment on release are 20 percentage points less likely to reoffend within a year.² In Norwegian prisons, one of which we visited as fieldwork, all prisoners are mandated to do a full working day of education or training, prisoners receive the same education as everyone else, by the same providers, working towards the same qualifications. As a result, employment rates from custody are double what they are in the UK.

This report recommends a complete overhaul of the way the system treats offenders to turn prisons from places we *put* offenders for public protection, into places we *push* offenders to gain the skills to make a success of their lives when they leave.

We recommend that Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) redesigns the process from the moment a prisoner sets foot in a prison to the moment they leave with employment in mind. That means collecting data in reception about offenders' skills, work history and future ambitions; requiring every prisoner to do a full 40-hour week of education or training tailored to their skillset; matching offenders with relevant employers well before release; and encouraging greater use of ROTL to support the transition from prison into work.

This will require changes to how prisons and the prison staff operate. Prisons should have much closer links to the local labour market through the creation of Employer Councils for every prison, coordinated by the New Futures Network. Meanwhile, prison officers should be trained on a wider role to steward prisoners to employment and HMPPS should ensure that every prisoner has a working bank account, formal identification, and, if applicable, accreditation for work, on release.

Finally, the Government should encourage employers of all types to take former prisoners seriously as potential workers. Too often this is limited to a few companies working in spite of, not because of, the system. Companies are not as adverse to hiring prisoners as people think, but they struggle to know where to start. The Government should allow employers to use their Apprenticeship Levy to hire prisoner apprenticeships, exempt ex-offender employment from employer national insurance contributions, and launch a national campaign to bring employers into prisons to provide training, work readiness support and jobs on release.

Prisons are rightly places of punishment, but they should also be places of work. Giving every prisoner a road to a job is the best way to give them a route out of crime.

The challenge

*The problems with how we train,
transition and employ ex-offenders*



This section describes the biggest problems with how the criminal justice system prepares and transitions prisoners into employment, which lead to Britain's high reoffending rates, low levels of confidence in the criminal justice system and employer hesitation about ex-offenders as possible employees.

The following section explores public and employer attitudes to ex-offender employment, based on exclusive polling and qualitative research for this paper. The final chapter sets out our recommendations to affect an employment revolution among those leaving custody.

The problems with how we train, transition and employ ex-offenders

1. The vast majority of people leaving prison fail to get jobs on release

- Only 26.5% of ex-offenders enter some form of employment upon leaving custody. This falls to just 17% in payroll employment twelve months after release and remains at a similar level over time.³ This compares to an employment rate of 76.1% for working age adults, with employment at a 45-year high and vacancy rates at the highest level in two decades.
- This means that people leaving prison have some of the lowest levels of employment of any group in society. Among other low-employment groups, 57% of people leaving the armed forces are in employment,⁴ 51.3% of adults with disabilities are in employment,⁵ and just 25% of 19–21 year old care leavers are in training or employment.⁶ The Government has had specific strategies to improve employment among all of these groups for many years. The first dedicated Education and Employment Strategy for ex-offenders was published in 2018.
- The impact of low ex-offender employment rates on reoffending is considerable. Numerous studies have established a link between employment and rehabilitation, both in the UK and internationally. A 2011 review on what works to reduce reoffending for the Scottish Government found that “there is strong evidence that offenders with stable and quality employment are less likely to reoffend.”⁷ This is reinforced by a 2013 study for the Ministry of Justice which found that 39% of ex-prisoners who reported being in employment went on to reoffend within a year, compared to 59% of those who had not secured employment.⁸ Meanwhile, another international study of 7,476 ex-offenders, found that “of those who obtained a job (before recidivism or censoring), the recidivism rate is 33%, compared to 71% for those who did not obtain a job.”⁹ Unsurprisingly, the stability and purpose of a paid job has a positive impact on offenders' reoffending rates.
- In other countries, the link between recidivism and employment has led criminal justice officials to consider work as a defining aim of the criminal justice system. In Norway, for example, prisons are focused heavily on employment and deliver an employment rate for former prisoners of 34% a year after release – double that of the UK.¹⁰

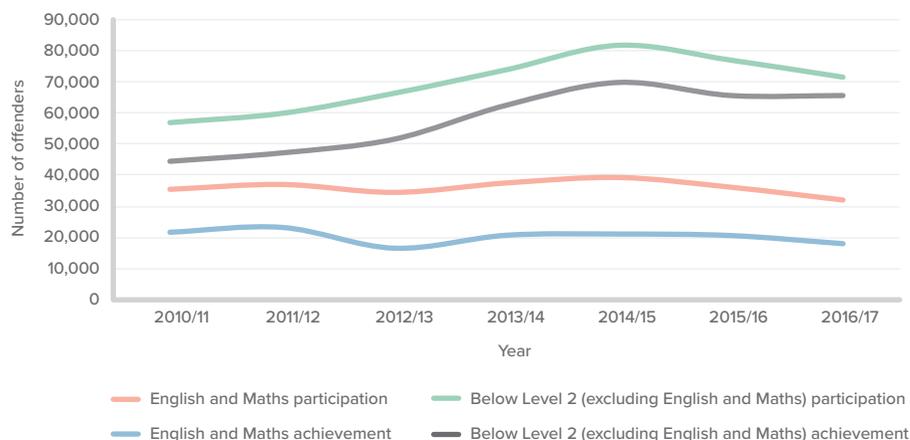
- In Norway, employment rates increase with the age of the ex-prisoner,¹¹ and all prisoners become more likely to be employed over time. 30% of 20–24 year old prisoners, for example, are employed a year after release, rising to half after five years.¹² The opposite is the case in the UK, where prisoners become less employable the further they get from the prison gates. 17% of prisoners are employed one year after release, but this drops to 15% after two years. The employment penalty for prisoners in England and Wales has been reversed for Norwegian counterparts: ex-offenders who retrain in prison are 40% more likely to be in work five years post-release than if they had not undertaken training.¹³
- The financial costs of this failure to get prisoners into work are considerable. In 2014, the Government published data to suggest that 28% of Jobseeker’s Allowance claims were made by individuals who had been convicted or cautioned.¹⁴ The OBR currently estimates that the JSA budget will be £1.7 billion in 2016–17, suggesting that nearly £480 million a year is spent on unemployment benefits for those with a criminal conviction or caution.¹⁵
- The societal costs are more worrying, as recidivism rates in England and Wales have remained stubbornly high for many years. In January–March 2017, the last quarter for which statistics are available, the proven reoffending rate for adult offenders released from custody was 47.9%, rising to 64.1% for adults who served sentences of less than 12 months and 68.2% for juvenile offenders released from custody.¹⁶ While these figures have been on a downward trajectory since 2010, they remain extremely high by historical and international standards.

2. Most prisoners need considerable remedial education, but do not get it

- A large proportion of prisoners have low level English and maths skills that restricts their employability post-release, but too few receive support to improve their literacy and numeracy behind bars. As the Government’s Education and Employment Strategy set out: over half of prisoners are assessed on reception as having the English and maths abilities of an 11 year old and a survey in 2005/06 found that 47% had no qualifications at all. More than two-fifths (42%) have been permanently excluded from school-age education.
- The majority of prisoners do not learn basic English and maths while in prison, and the numbers are falling. In 2016/17, the latest year for which statistics are available, 31,900 prisoners studied English and maths, down from a peak of 39,300 in 2014/15. Of these, just over half – 17,900 – achieved a qualification, down from 21,100 in 2014/15.
- Those that do learn basic skills often do low quality courses that have little or no value outside the prison system. The Government’s strategy acknowledges that “there are too many low-level qualifications being delivered that reap little to no reward for ex-offenders when trying to secure a job”.¹⁷ The vast majority of prisoner qualifications are at the level expected of 16 year olds: 80% of participation is on courses lower than Level 2 – the equivalent of A* to C at GCSE – and 83% of qualifications gained in 2016/17 were below Level 2.

- This is despite a considerable evidence base demonstrating the importance of quality education on future employment rates for prisoners. The employment rate for ex-offenders educated to Level 2 – the equivalent of A* to C grade at GCSE – is 72%, for example, compared with 43% for those with no qualifications.

Figure 1: Prisoner participation and achievement by qualification, learner volumes



Source: DfE (2019), *Further education and skills: November 2017*.

3. Prisons are too often places of idleness, rather than places of work

- Prisons were once places of punitive toil labour; they are now centres of idleness. Just 24% of prisoners spend ten or more hours of the day out of their cells across the prison estate and 20% spend fewer than two hours a day out of their cell. There is also considerable variation by type of prison: 58% of prisoners in open prisons spend ten or more hours out of their cells every day, but just 4% of young adults do. Until 2017/18, only 1 in 7 of offenders in training prison were out of their cell for more than 10 hours a day.

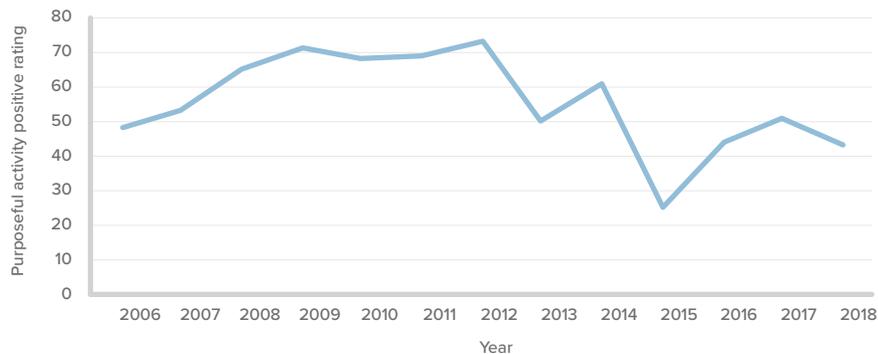
Table 1: Proportion of prisoners who spend more than ten hours out of cell each day (%)

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Local prisons	12	8	9	8	10	6	8	8
Training prisons	13	18	16	18	14.5	18.5	15	44
High security prisons	11	10	12	18	13	N/A	13	11
Open prisons	48	56	50	56	56	61	54	58
Young adult prisons	5	5	15	4	6	7	4	4

Source: HM Inspector for Prisons (2010–18).

- Prisoners’ lack of time out of cell is exacerbated by wide variation in the quality and quantity of purposeful activity available to prisoners during their sentence. Two years ago the Prisons Minister accepted that employment support was “patchy, inconsistent and does not happen everywhere”¹⁸ but there remain serious problems with the way training is managed and overseen within the prison estate.
- The Ministry of Justice’s own figures reveal that purposeful activity has been falling since 2012.¹⁹ Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the proportion of prisons receiving a positive rating for purposeful activity fell from 50% to 43%.²⁰ In recent inspections, inspectors found that the work that is made available to prisoners is often mundane and unrelated to resettlement objectives.²¹ The latest Annual Report from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons argued that “around half of prisons had too few places for the population, and even these were often unfilled”.²²

Figure 2: Share of prisons with a positive rating for purposeful activity



Source: HM Inspector for Prisons (2006–18).

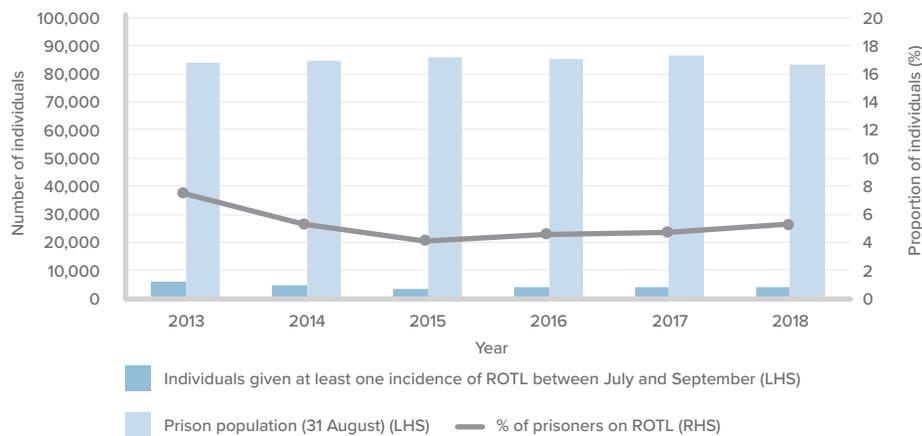
4. The transition from prison into employment is patchy and inconsistent

- It is unsurprising, given the lack of focus on employment within prison, that the transition from prison into employment is uncoordinated and chaotic.
- The main route for prisoners to gain employment experience prior to release, ROTL, is underutilised. Fewer than 1 in 20 prisoners are released on temporary license to work in the community before their release date. In 2016, the latest year for which data is available, 1,675 offenders were released on ROTL, working around 333,000 days in the year and gaining valuable experience in managing their work and income to help them transition on release.
- While employers and members of the public are rightly nervous about the prospect of prisoners conducting work in the community before their sentence has expired, there is limited evidence that these schemes increase risk to the public beyond isolated cases. There were only 17 incidents

in 2016 which led to employer dissatisfaction or an incident considered to be re-offending. This is equivalent to 19,400 days of prisoner work on release for every incident that occurred.²³

- The use of ROTL has declined by around a third over the past five years. In 2013, there were just over 500,000 days worked by prisoners on temporary release.²⁴ This decline has been marked at specific prisons once renowned for supporting prisoners back into the community through the stability of a job: at HMP Brixton, for instance, ROTL use has virtually disappeared simply due to a handful of incidents involving items being smuggled back into the prison.²⁵

Figure 3: Release on temporary license as a share of the prison population



Source: Prison Reform Trust, *Bromley Briefings, Summer 2018*.

- The uncoordinated transition at the end of an offender's sentence is exacerbated by administrative hurdles that still need to be addressed. The inability of prisoners to claim Universal Credit ahead of their release creates a delay of two to five weeks before they receive their first welfare payment. At the same time, the £46 discharge grant given to every prisoner upon leaving prison has not been adjusted for inflation since 1997, leaving prisoners £36 out of pocket in real terms and reducing their ability to support themselves until they find work or stable housing. 37% of prisoners stated they would need immediate help finding housing after release.²⁶ Of these, 84% reported needing a lot of help.²⁷
- People leaving custody also report finding it difficult establishing bare necessities which underpin the transition into work. For example, some employers believe that their employer liability insurance would be invalidated by employing people with prior or current convictions, although charities like Unlock suggest this is a common misconception.²⁸ Meanwhile, over four in five ex-offenders said it was harder to acquire home and motor insurance and four-fifths said that, when they did get insurance, they were charged notably more than they had been prior to conviction. Former prisoners stated that it was important for them to hold motor insurance (95%) and home insurance (86%).²⁹

The charity Unlock has found that between one third and one half of people in prison don't have a bank account and while HMPPS data shows 6,500 accounts were opened in 2016/17, this is only around 10% of the people leaving prison each year.³⁰ A two year action pilot by the Prison Reform Trust has also shown how many offenders leave prison without adequate identification, further frustrating their efforts to gain employment. While some Community Rehabilitation Companies now offer the ability for prisoners to apply for a new birth certificate, this process must be started 9 weeks prior to release.³¹

5. Too few employers are meaningfully engaged with prisoners before release

- Despite there being around 70,000 prisoners released from custody every year and a stable population of a further 80,000 in prison, there is a disconnect between employers in the real economy and the prison system. With some honourable exceptions, such as Timpson and Virgin Trains, the prison service has not succeeded in creating the conditions for employers to meaningfully support prisoners into employment on release.
- This is not for lack of trying. As the RSA set out: “There are not enough effective partnerships between employers, prisons, probation and trainers; prisons can put a lot of time into partnerships that fail or underperform.” At various points the Ministry of Justice has also attempted to establish a single body to engage employers, including One3One Solutions, a subdivision of HMPPS responsible for growing employment in prisons. However this was poorly understood by employers and seen as ineffective.
- Elsewhere, there are a variety of initiatives to link prisoners to employment during their sentence and on release from custody. These include the National Careers Service, which provides advice and guidance on job searches and self-employability; organisations such as Working Chance, which works with female offenders and provides training, and Code4000, which trains prisoners how to code.
- Jobcentre Plus has established a number of offices within prisons to support prisoners with work readiness and benefits advice, but with limited success. The Work and Pensions Committee argued that the Jobcentre Plus facilities in prisons are inconsistent and dismissed ex-offenders who are job-ready and keen to work as hard cases. In evidence, one official argued that work coaches are “being asked to take on really complex and challenging cases but are not being provided with the training and expertise”.³²
- Most recently, the Government has established the New Futures Network to “work side-by-side with employers to generate job opportunities”. It is recruiting experts in every geographical prison group to be responsible for engaging employers and brokering partnerships with prisons. While still early days, it has shown promising signs of bringing employers and the prison system together.

Case study: Timpson and Virgin Trains

Timpson and Virgin Trains are longstanding ex-offender employers and prominent advocates of the benefits of hiring people leaving prison.

Timpson recruit within 70 prisons, mainly from Category D facilities. The company runs three training academies behind bars at Liverpool, New Hall and Blantyre House prisons. Having started recruiting ex-offenders over a decade ago, approximately 10% of the workforce – around 270 people – now have criminal convictions.

Virgin Trains has made in-prison recruitment fairs part of its regular recruitment process and has removed the requirement for applicants to reveal whether they have a criminal conviction in recruitment forms. The company is also piloting a three-week training course for female offenders at HMP Styal.

Both companies attest to low rates of re-offending among their ex-offender employees and argue that ex-offenders have benefits over other employees. Timpson estimate that only 15% of ex offenders on their 450 person scheme have re-offended, while Virgin said none of their 30 ex-offenders have re-offended.³³ James Timpson has said that ex-offender employees are less likely to steal from the company than other colleagues and argued that: “They’re more loyal and, after being in prison, obsessed with turning up on time”.³⁴

Case study: The Clink

The Clink charity was established over a decade ago and opened its first restaurant in HMP Brixton in 2009, staffed by prisoners and run as a non-profit business. The restaurant is open to the public and is regularly ranked as one of the top dining restaurants in London on TripAdvisor.³⁵

It now operates restaurants in HMP High Down, HMP Cardiff, HMP Styal as well as HMP Brixton, all of which are staffed almost entirely by offenders serving time. The charity trains up to 200 offenders a day, with more than 800 offenders having gone through its programme since it opened its first establishment for the first time at HMP Brixton in 2009.

Analysis for the Ministry of Justice suggests that The Clink’s model reduces the likelihood of reoffending by between 3% and 15%,³⁶ while The Clink’s own research has linked the training with a 49.6% reduction in the probability of reoffending.³⁷

The Clink’s business model is highly replicable. In May 2018, The Clink Cafe opened in Manchester, staffed by a combination of offenders released on temporary license and homeless clients from the Centrepont charity.

International comparison: Norway

Lessons from Scandinavia



The Norwegian prison system is at the opposite end of the spectrum from HM Prison and Probation service in almost every respect. The Norwegian Correctional Service has a much larger proportional budget than HMPPS, higher staff to prisoner ratios, a more decentralised structure and a liberal ethos which the UK public is unlikely to support. It nevertheless provides a useful counterpoint to the experience in the UK.

Low recidivism rates and high employment rates for ex-offenders mean the Norwegian correctional system is often seen as the world's most successful service for rehabilitation. But this is a recent phenomenon. In the 1980s and 1990s, Norway had high recidivism rates. In one year, 63% of offenders re-offended within five years of release. In 1989, a prison officer was killed, shortly followed by another in 1991.

The resulting outcry led to cross party support for change. A White Paper in 1997 led to the creation of a new Penal Act in 2005, whose explicit goal was to reduce recidivism through improvements in the training and professionalism of prison officers, as well as to reshape the prison system more towards rehabilitation of offenders. This approach has been honed in subsequent White Papers and amendments to the 2005 legislation.

The guiding principles of the new approach taken in Norway over the last two decades are as follows:

- **The principle of normality.** As far as logistically possible, the deprivation of liberty alone is the punishment to be meted out to convicted criminals. In all ways possible, being in prison should be like being in society at large. This means that prisoners are able to vote, give interviews to the media, and access television, including pornography, in their cells.
- **The importance of reintegration.** Progression through a custodial sentence should primarily revolve around returning the offender back into the community in a way that is sustainable. Following on from the principle of normality, this means the prisoner would ideally transition through decreasing levels of custody as their sentence comes nearer to finishing, and that helping to train and otherwise prepare an offender for work post-release is vital.
- **The import model.** Each prison offers services provided by the same public service organisations which serve the wider population. Education in prisons is delivered by teachers from local schools and prisoners work to the same standards and qualifications; healthcare is delivered by staff employed by the local hospital to the same level of care, and so on. This creates a permanent link between the prison and the community in which it sits, and allows the health, education or welfare records of prisoners to follow them as they leave prison or re-enter the system.

The adoption of these three principles, combined with a focus on training prison officers to work within a revised environment, are seen as fundamental to the success of the Norwegian system. A fact-finding mission to Halden undertaken by Onward in March 2019 revealed first-hand the ways in which the prison system in Norway works – and what can be usefully taken from it for the prisons in England and Wales.

Visit to Halden Prison

Halden prison opened in 2010. It is a high security facility, the equivalent to a Category A in the UK, in which those imprisoned have committed murder, sexual offences, drug trafficking or terrorism of some description. Yet the environment is wholly different to the threatening atmosphere in many UK prisons. The Governor, Are Hoidal, is friendly with inmates, knows them by name, and they respond in kind.

Every inmate is required by law to spend 8 hours a day in work, education or training, with a variety of courses and jobs on offer ranging from manufacturing to mechanic and welding courses. Inmates discussed working towards specific and realistic employment goals – for example becoming a personal trainer or graphic designer – and many were working towards a degree level qualification.

Those working in the prison under the import model were supportive of its aims and comfortable in the prison environment. The teachers, healthcare staff and work supervisors were equipped with emergency alarms but none spoke of needing them, and all engaged with inmates unsupervised by prison officers during the working day. In nine years of operation, Halden has not had any acts of violence against a staff member by an inmate.

Prison officer training and role in Norway

One of the most important changes to occur in Norway has been the evolution of the prison officer role from a security focused profession, similar to the UK, to a mixed model combining security with social work. Officers undertake considerable extra training, up to and including degree level, and the job holds high esteem within society.

Below is a comparison between the Norwegian and UK prison systems, exposing striking differences in the role and training of prison officers:

Table 2: A comparison of prison officers in Norway and the UK

	United Kingdom	Norway
Description of role	Prison Officer	Correctional Officer
Starting salary (base)	£23,000–£30,000 depending on hours and location	£24,000
Education requirement	None	Higher Education
Length of training	10 weeks	2 years compulsory (+ 2 years optional)
Modules of training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of how a prison works; 2. What life as a prison officer is like; 3. What to expect in your role; 4. Basics on safety: cuffing, cell-searching, locking and unlocking doors; 5. First aid; food hygiene; health and safety; 6. The rules and regulations within the service. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to the Role of Prison Officer and the Norwegian Correctional Service I; 2. The law and execution of sentences and other legal topics; 3. Crime and punishment; 4. Introduction to the role of prison officer and the norwegian correctional service II; 5. Safety, security and risk management I; 6. Community reintegration and social work I; 7. Safety security and risk management II; 8. Community and reintegration and social work II; 9. Professional knowledge and ethics.
Qualification gained	Level 3 Diploma	Bachelor's degree in Correctional Studies
Number of trainees per year per prisoner	8.5 per 1,000	46 per 1,000
Average length of service	4 years ³⁸	11 years ³⁹
Applications per place	11 ⁴⁰	69
Responsible department	HM Prison and Probation Service	Ministry of Education

The systems show striking differences between the role and training between the two countries. Norway employs a model that attracts more qualified applicants, trains them to a higher standard and for longer, and in a range of social work skills alongside security protocols. In 2017, the Ministry of Justice implicitly recognised the weakness of the UK training requirement when they funded Unlocked, a new graduate recruitment scheme for the prison service.

Case study: Unlocked Graduates

Unlocked, which is similar to Teach First, offers university leavers a two-year leadership development programme in the prison service, where they work towards a newly created Master's degree in Leadership and Custodial Environments. The Master's curriculum echoes the Norwegian focus on rehabilitation and modules include: Custodial care in practice; Rehabilitation and desistance; Leadership and change; and Research methods. It is delivered part-time over two years during the graduate's placement in a prison.

Unlocked has proved successful in attracting graduates into the prison officer profession. In its first year, it had 600 applicants from which 50 graduates were accepted. In its second year, the scheme doubled in size, with 900 applications and over 100 new officers placed in prisons in London and the South East, including prisons in the youth and high security estates.

The scheme has also been effective in diversifying the profession. In the first cohort, 8 in 10 of Unlocked participants were women, compared to fewer than 4 in 10 for the prison service as a whole, and 1 in 5 came from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background, compared to 1 in 12 nationally.

Public opinion

*The attitudes of employers and the general public
to prisoner employment*



Employers are understandably reluctant to consider training or hiring someone with a criminal conviction. Previous polls have suggested that as many as half of employers would not recruit someone who had been to prison, and many continue to screen out candidates who have committed a crime in the early stages of the recruitment process.

To get an up to date picture of employer attitudes and to test public opinion more generally, Onward commissioned exclusive quantitative and qualitative research for this report. This included a series of polling batteries with business leaders and with the general public, completed by ComRes, and a series of focus groups and interviews done by Public First. The following sections describe both the results of our polling and a summary of the qualitative research.

1. Employer attitudes towards employing ex-offenders

For the business leaders survey, ComRes surveyed 1,200 business decision-makers conducted between 1st and 15th March 2019. Data were weighted to be representative of all UK businesses with an annual turnover of at least £250,000, by turnover, sector and region. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Overall, we found similar levels of engagement from employers as previous surveys.

- A third (34%) of business leaders say they would consider employing an ex-offender, compared to half who would not (48%). Only one in ten say they have an ex-offender employee(s) (10% vs. 72% who do not).
- Three in ten (28%) business leaders do not have any ex-offender employees and have a policy not to employ them. Only 1% of employers of all sizes had specific initiatives in place to recruit ex-offenders.
- One in five (19%) say they do not have any ex-offender employees and the type of organisation means it is not practicable. The same proportion (19%) say they do not have any ex-offender employees but would probably consider it.
- Larger businesses with 250+ employees (15%) are more likely to say that they have ex-offender employees, compared to medium sized businesses (9%) with up to 249 employees, and of those with up to 49 employees (7%).
- Half (49%) of business decision-makers working in manufacturing and two in five (40%) working in retail say they would consider employing ex-offenders. Wholesale was the sector most responsive to hiring ex-offenders, with 60% of firms saying they either definitely or would consider hiring those with criminal records. This may reflect the current tightness of the labour market in these sectors and the skill levels involved.
- Only 1% of business leaders had employed ex-offenders and had a bad experience with it and would not do so again. This compares to 8% of businesses that had employed an ex-offender and would be happy to do so again. 11% of wholesale businesses said that they had had positive experiences already with employing ex-offenders and would do so again.

When asked what type of initiatives would most likely encourage them to employ people leaving prison or those with previous criminal convictions, we found business leaders to be split over which initiatives would most encourage them, but they show relatively high levels of support for tangible policies.

- A third of employers (35%) place an employers' National Insurance contribution tax break on ex-offenders salaries, worth up to £1,400 per year, in their top three policies. A similar proportion (33%) say that active support for both the business and ex-offender to ensure they were well-supported during the transition from prison into the community is in their top three policies.
- Three in ten (30%) place the Government allowing the business to pay for ex-offenders training using money from the apprenticeship levy in their top three. The same proportion (30%) say that an initiative showing their business as being socially responsible by joining a 'Second Chances' scheme would be an initiative which would encourage them to employ ex-offenders.
- However, a similar proportion (32%) would say that none of the options tested were applicable, or they would make no difference. Those in lower turnover bands were the most likely to say this. 37% of business leaders from businesses turning over up to £4.9 million said that none of the options would make a difference, compared to 21% for those turning over £5 million–£24.9 million and 17% for business turning over more than £25 million. Those in the services industry (40%) are the most likely to select this option compared to 19%–26% for other industries.

The qualitative work for this report was conducted by Public First. To engage employers, Public First held a focus group with people who were responsible for employing staff at their organisation. They included a mix of small and large businesses, mostly from the private sector but with one attendee who worked in the public sector. The industries and trades represented a range of sectors; from catering, to retail, to domestic cleaning. All of them employed staff at a level where the idea of employing low-skilled offenders, or offenders who had only recently acquired skills, was entirely reasonable.

In the focus groups, employers' general attitude to crime and offenders was a mixture of traditional "firmness" tempered by a good deal of compassion for individuals and an understanding that circumstances sometimes led people to committing crime. In short, employers wanted both tougher punishment and more rehabilitation.

- The fundamental attitude of attendees was that people should be given a second chance and that most people deserved one. Several – three out of eight attendees – had employed ex-prisoners, some over long periods. Several of them had done so on multiple occasions. They were overwhelmingly positive about doing so. These had come to them via personal networks, rather than via any structural or policy intervention, or via a third party such as a resettlement charity.
- Virtually all the group were open to employing more ex-offenders. But there were two major considerations. First, employers wanted to know the type of offence that someone had been convicted of. Some offences were seen

as more troubling than others. For example, someone who ran a cleaning business was open to the idea of employing offenders but was worried about sending someone convicted of an offence of dishonesty into clients' homes. Crimes such as sexual offences were not discussed, but there also seemed to be an implicit and understandable differentiation between offenders who had made a bad decision, had suffered bad luck – and those whose offences suggested moral turpitude.

- Second, employers wanted to know more about the type of offender and whether they had managed to successfully control issues like addiction – or whether they were incorrigible, persistent offenders. Some attendees mentioned things like emotional support for those who had suffered mental health problems or family break-up. There was a belief that companies do not have the training to offer such things, ie the “handling” of an ex-offender.
- In general, the participants largely felt that it was the Government's responsibility to help train and educate workers, and that the Government have largely failed in that duty. For example, one respondent said: “Even if people have the mindset to change, they haven't got the help and the tools in order to change. So they fall back into doing the same things. The system sets up a lot of people to fail.”

2. The general public's attitude to prisons and the hiring of ex-offenders

For the general public survey, ComRes surveyed 2,033 British adults between 15th and 17th March 2019. Data were weighted to be representative of age, gender, region, social grade and voting intention. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Research has shown consistently that people see prison as a way to keep the public safe and punish offenders. We wanted to test whether this was still the case, how rehabilitation fared as a desirable outcome, and what the public's views were of prisoner training and employment, working with ex-offenders, and different schemes to encourage prisoner employment.

- Keeping the public safe and punishing offenders are the most important aspects or purposes of prison for the public. Over a third of GB adults say that the most important aspect or purpose of prison is to keep the public safe (36%) and a similar proportion say to punish offenders for crimes (32%). A further one quarter say these aspects are the second most important (26% and 25% respectively).
- This is most true of Conservative voters. Two in five (40%) 2017 Conservative voters place punishing offenders for crimes as the most important tested aspect or purpose of prison compared to 27% of 2017 Labour voters. Liberal Democrat voters are most likely to say that rehabilitation is the most important aspect (21% vs. 10% of Conservative voters).
- Rehabilitation of offenders is perceived as the most important aspect or purpose of prison by a smaller proportion of GB adults with 13% saying it is the most important aspect and 12% saying it is the second most important. A third (33%) of GB adults say that rehabilitation of offenders is the least

important aspect or purpose of prison out of the five aspects tested, compared to only 5% who say that keeping the public safe is the least important. Younger adults aged 18–24 are more likely than adults aged 45–54 to say that rehabilitation is the most important aspect or purpose of prison (19% vs. 9%).

- GB adults who voted Remain in the EU Referendum are more likely than their Leave counterparts to say that rehabilitation is the most important aspect or purpose of prison (19% vs. 8%) whereas Leave voters are more likely to say the most important aspect is to punish offenders for crimes (40% vs. 24%).
- Deterrence and the interests of justice are the least likely tested options to be seen as the most important aspect or purpose of prison by GB adults (8% and 6% respectively).

However, this general support for punishment and public safety masks a widespread perception that prisons have an important role preparing offenders for life away from crime.

- Four in five GB adults agree that prisons should prepare offenders for employment (82%). This is higher for older adults than their younger counterparts but this is largely due to higher responses of “Don’t know” among younger adults.
- This is true across parties and voting patterns. Five in six (85%) 2017 Conservative voters agree that prison should prepare offenders for employment; 92% of Liberal Democrat voters and 82% of Labour voters say the same. EU Referendum Remain voters are more likely than Leave voters to agree that prison should prepare offenders for employment.
- The public express some caution with regards to ex-offender employment. Five in six (86%) GB adults agree that it is important that employers check potential employees for past convictions during the recruitment process, half (49%) agree that some offences (e.g. sexual or violent) should prevent people from gaining employment. On both measures, women express higher levels of caution than men and older adults are more likely to agree than younger adults.

There is also widespread support for the idea that prisons should be places of work and training. When asked “to what extent do you agree or disagree that prisoners should be required to spend the majority of their time during the day out of their cells in education, training or work”:

- Three quarters (73%) of GB adults agree that prisoners should be required to spend the majority of their time during the day out of their cells in education, training or work. Approaching one in five (17%) who disagree and a further one in ten (10%) who say they don’t know.
- This was particularly true of older voters. Over four in five (83%) of adults aged 65+ agree that prisoners should be required to spend the majority of their time during the day out of their cells in education, training or work, significantly higher than younger and middle-aged groups aged between 18 and 64 (62%–75%).

- Men are significantly more likely than women to disagree that prisoners should be required to spend the majority of their time during the day out of their cells in education, training or work (19% vs. 14%). Adults who intend to vote Conservative are more likely than their Labour counterparts to agree with this statement (77% vs. 69%).
- Those that voted Remain in 2016 are more likely than their Leave counterparts to agree that prisoners should be required to spend the majority of their time during the day out of their cells in education, training or work (79% vs. 71%).

When asked, only three in ten adults (30%) agree they would be uncomfortable working or regularly doing business with someone they knew had a criminal conviction.

- People are most likely to say they would be comfortable working or regularly doing business with someone who has been convicted for a drug offence (39% comfortable vs. 29% uncomfortable) followed by theft (23% comfortable vs. 44% uncomfortable).
- Younger adults are generally more likely than older adults to say that they would be comfortable working or regularly doing business with someone with each conviction. For example, adults aged 18–34 are more likely than adults aged 55+ to say that they would be comfortable working or regularly doing business with someone who has a conviction for a drug offence (49% vs. 31%), theft (27% vs. 20%), or a violent offence (12% vs. 7%).
- Over two in five (45%) Labour voters say they would be comfortable working or regularly doing business with someone who has a conviction for a drug offence compared to 31% of Conservative voters.
- Only one in ten (10%) say they would be comfortable working with or regularly doing business with someone who has been convicted for a violent offence (vs. 71% uncomfortable) and one in 20 (6%) say the same of a sexual offence (vs. 81% uncomfortable).

There is limited awareness of companies or businesses which actively employ ex-offenders.

- Just over a third (36%) of adults agree that they are aware of such organisations, two in five (37%) disagree and over a quarter (27%) say they don't know.
- A quarter (23%) of GB adults agree that they are more likely to buy products and services from companies that actively employ ex-offenders; a third (34%) disagree and over two in five (43%) say they don't know – most likely due to low awareness.
- Adults who voted Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum are more likely than their Leave counterparts to report being more likely to buy products and services from companies that actively employ ex-offenders (28% vs. 20%).
- Conservative voters are slightly more likely than their Labour counterparts to agree that they are aware of organisations that actively employ ex-offenders (39% vs. 33%). However, Lib Dem voters are the most likely to say this (55%).

When asked who has the most responsibility for levels of ex-offender employment:

- Three in ten (29%) GB adults say that the Government is most responsible for tackling low rates of ex-offender employment followed by employers (16%) and individual offenders (13%). However, a quarter (26%) say they don't know who is most responsible.
- A third (34%) of men say that the Government is most responsible, compared to a quarter (24%) of women. Older adults aged 55+ are more likely than their younger counterparts to say that employers are most responsible (22% vs. 11% of 35–54 vs. 14% of 18–34).
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, Labour voters are more likely than their Conservative counterparts to say that the Government is most responsible (38% vs. 21%). Conversely, Conservative voters are more likely to say that individual offenders are most responsible (18% vs. 10%).

When asked to consider which policies they most support to encourage employers to hire ex-offenders, the general public generally chose unspecific policies linked to the prison system:

- Half (48%) of GB adults place “active support for employers and ex-offenders to ensure they are well-supported during the transition from prison into the community” in their top three initiatives that they would support to encourage employers to hire ex-offenders. A quarter (23%) place this as the policy they would be most likely to support.
- Employers working with the person in prison to prepare them for work after release and employers being seen as socially responsible by joining a ‘Second Chances’ scheme were the second and third most selected options (39% and 35% respectively).
- One in five adults (18%) answered that they are not supportive of these initiatives and a further one in five (21%) say they don't know which policy they would be most likely to support.

The qualitative research among ex-offenders, also done by Public First, constituted 8 interviews with people who had recently served prison sentences. All interviewees had served relatively-short custodial sentences. This is typical of the offender profile in England and Wales generally, where the average sentence for all offenders is not more than two and a half years. But within this group the interview pool included a range of types of offenders and offences. Offences were primarily those related to dishonesty (e.g. fraud) and drugs. Three of the offenders were women. At least one of the offenders had served multiple sentences.

- There was a real appetite for better employment support for people in prison. Ex-offenders report that provision is extremely patchy currently. Where interventions have been successful, these outcomes have depended on personal networks or one member of staff making a difference on his or her own, for example a staff member advising on how to get a CSCS card allowing an offender to work on building sites.

- Respondents revealed that current provision can be poor in precisely the sort of establishment where it is needed. For example, we spoke to an ex-offender who had served eight months in Feltham Young Offenders Institute who said he had never had any conversations with staff about training, and was not aware of anything on offer. This is consistent with our wider conversations with prison officers.
- Only a few of the ex-offenders we spoke to had spent large amounts of time out-of-cell while in a closed prison. Only one had achieved any qualifications – basic English and maths – while they were serving their sentences, and none had found the work they did relevant to the job they wanted to do on release.
- To ex-offenders, rules appeared to be incomprehensible and counter-productive. For example, a convicted fraudster, who knew she was barred from her profession as an accounts clerk after release, was told she was ineligible for training in prison because she was already qualified as an accounts clerk.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, the least-useful experiences offenders spoke about were from large, local prisons – places like HMP Pentonville. It was those serving sentences of more than a few weeks but less than years who were most impacted by poor training and education provision. These were places where time-out-of-cell can be minimal and offenders are simply not there long enough to undergo any serious process of rehabilitation.
- In contrast, respondents serving sentences in establishments which are self-consciously “training” prisons like Brixton reported having vastly more access to courses and work placement.
- The attitude of staff appeared to be highly inconsistent. Some spoke very warmly of the efforts that were made by staff who went out of their way to help, but most of our interviewees were unable to recall any helpful interventions. Mostly, respondents reported having to ask for help repeatedly: “I don’t think the system helps you. You have to ask them for it”, said one. “The system works against you 100%”, said another.
- The perception among ex-offenders that they are discriminated against by employers is partly set in reality, as many employers would rather not face the myriad complications of employing ex-offenders.
- There was universal support for apprenticeships in prison. One respondent said: “It would give you something to look forward to”, while another said: “Some of the lads I spoke to would like that. There’d be light at the end of the tunnel!”.

Solutions

How to achieve an employment revolution in our prisons



Prisons have many uses but one of them is to help prisoners find a life away from crime. A steady job and a stable pay packet are essential prerequisites to rehabilitation, and there is clear evidence from this country and internationally that having a quality job can reduce reoffending rates. The benefits from this – for society as a whole and to the exchequer – could be considerable.

This report also clearly establishes public support for the idea that prisons should be places of purpose, not idleness, and a clear willingness from a substantial minority of employers to employ ex-offenders if the conditions are right. The Government, to its credit, has recognised the opportunity and through the New Futures Network and Unlocked Graduates has started to move the dial.

This section sets out a series of recommendations to help the Government go further in achieving its aims. These recommendations focus not just on the prison estate but also on the incentives and structures for employers, where we see considerable latent support for rehabilitation if the system can be properly adapted.

Recommendation one: Redesign the prisoner journey to track offenders from reception through education and into employment

- From the moment a prisoner sets foot in prison to the moment they leave, HM Prison and Probation Service should be planning their route from prison into a stable job. The prison service should be collecting key information about prisoners, planning their learning and training through their sentence, enforcing their engagement with that plan, and tracking their engagement with employers to help them find work.
- This will require HMPPS to tackle a considerable data deficit: prisons do not currently record the skills and education of offenders on reception in prison, and do not track their progress centrally throughout their sentence. The central HMPPS database, p_NOMIS, holds a large amount of data but is largely security focused and rarely used to monitor rehabilitation progress.
- In our primary research, officers said that prisoner records often held behavioural and security issues, such as “shouted at a prison officer in 2014”, but was largely useless for education or training. Another said: “I don’t feel like I have or ever will have a comprehensive knowledge of what my prison even offers the prisoners. You’re told ‘unlock this guy, send him here’, but then I have no idea of what the guys then get up to, either in prison or on ROTL. There’s nowhere that this stuff is written down”.⁴¹ As set out in the previous chapter, many said the system and staff work against their future employment.
- We recommend that HMPPS urgently implements a more effective system to identify and map offender education and work history on reception in prison, recorded centrally for all prison officers to access. This could be based on the Needs and Resource Assessment used in Norway to assess the requirements of each prisoner on entry into the prison system, which covers healthcare, welfare, family life and accommodation, as well as basic skill levels, job history and healthcare needs.

- This should inform new Learning and Training Plans for every prisoner, tailored to their previous education and employment, planned over their full sentence and with a clear, realistic employment goal in mind. This could use a similar model to MAPPA, the comprehensive database which tracks security data on offenders that pose a risk to the public, using individual case files that can be constantly updated by prison officers, learning providers and prison employers to track prisoner education and training.
- At the beginning of each prisoners' sentence, the prison should determine whether each prisoner has a working bank account and an accredited form of identification. If not, the prison should take responsibility for ensuring that the prisoner makes formal applications to do so, ensuring that this is not left until the end of prisoners' sentences when it is too late.

Recommendation two: Every prisoner, irrespective of their sentence, should be legally required to be in education, training or work, every weekday, for at least eight hours

- We recommend that the Government introduces a new legal obligation for every prisoner, irrespective of the length of their sentence or nature of their crime, to either be in education, training or prison industry, for a 40 hour week. This is currently the exception, it should become the rule. Prisoners' ability to apply for conditional release, parole or enhanced privileges should be contingent on having a good record of compliance with this expectation.
- The current state of idleness in UK prisons is a recipe for poor behaviour in prison and reoffending on release. The fact that levels of learning and prison industry are in decline is extraordinary given the ambitions of ministers to reduce reoffending and bring order to the prison estate.
- The Norwegian correctional service is rightly perceived as too liberal for the UK political environment. Few politicians here could defend giving prisoners the right to vote or free access to pornography in their cells. However, it is striking that the Norwegian system asks much more of its prisoners than the UK system: every prisoner is required to work, study or train and if they refuse they suffer a financial penalty in the form of a docked prison allowance.
- This will require extra investment from the Treasury on the prison estate – at a time when there are multiple demands from the Ministry of Justice and a congested list of requests to HM Treasury ahead of the Spending Review. The returns on this investment would however be considerable – a 1% increase in the employment rate for former prisoners would generate £2.7 million in revenue from income tax and national insurance contributions in the first year alone, rising to £15.5 million if it also led to a 1% reduction in reoffending and a 1% fall in JSA claimants.
- This training should be delivered by local schools, universities and employers, not training providers commissioned centrally by the Ministry of Justice. The previous centrally commissioned service, Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), has been roundly criticised as focused on process rather

than outcomes, poorly performing and bureaucratic. In her review of prison education, Sally Coates argued that OLASS providers “viewed success in terms of drawing down the funding available to cover their costs”. At the time of her review, only 100 prisoners out of 101,600 learners participated in a full Level 3 course in 2014/15 (equivalent to ‘A’ level), with none participating at Level 4 or above.

- The Government has just awarded new Prison Education Framework contracts following the conclusion of the current contracts in 2019 and given governors flexibility over 10% of their education budget to drive innovative approaches to education. We believe the Ministry of Justice should initiate a new model from the end of the current contracts that imports education and training from local public services, which deliver to the same high standards they would be expected to deliver outside the prison. This would echo the Norwegian Import Model, whereby local schools are legally obliged to provide education services in local prisons, receiving a capitated budget per pupil for doing so.

Recommendation three: The role of prison officers and governors should be reorientated towards helping prisoners gain skills with an explicit duty to support employment and training

- The Government has set out long-term plans to improve the quality of prison officers and change their emphasis away from only security to a key worker scheme not dissimilar from the model used in other countries. This is welcome but the revolution is incomplete.
- The Ministry of Justice should introduce mandatory English and maths proficiency for all prison officers. This was introduced several years ago due to low levels of education among staff, but phased out due to difficulties recruiting officers. This was a mistake: the role of the prison officer is perceived to be unattractive precisely because of the lack of status accorded to it, and only by raising standards amongst officers will HMPPS be able to raise basic skills among prisoners. This is demonstrated clearly by both the Norwegian experience and the success of Unlocked Graduates.
- We recommend that HMPPS reviews the training requirement for prison officers to train them to a higher level of literacy and numeracy and invest in training for officers around employment support and job-readiness. This may include both classroom education and on the job work, as is the case with the Unlocked Masters degree. The latter should also be made available to all prison officers to apply for, encouraging professional development and exposing the wider prison officer workforce to the latest academic evidence.
- The same should apply to governors. If prison governors are to be handed more autonomy and accountability, the Ministry of Justice should expect to attract a higher calibre of candidate, expect them to stay in post for longer and to adopt innovative new approaches to transform prisoners’

lives. At present, the average tenure of a governor is only two years and anecdotally many commute to their prison for half the working week, meaning they have limited connection to the local community that they serve.

- To this end, governors should be held to account specifically on the education, training and employment outcomes of those within the prison, and the links established with local employers. HM Inspectorate of Prisons should include specific criteria on these within their assessments of prison performance, and this should form part of governor progression and pay reviews.

Recommendation four: Ministers should reform Resettlement Day Release licenses under ROTL to increase their use and enhance support for prisoners on release

- Use of Release on Temporary License has been restrained since the infamous “Skullcracker” case hit the headlines in 2013. This case, in which a violent armed robber went missing while on open release from prison, prompted an independent review of ROTL by HM Prison Inspectorate. In his response, the HM Chief Inspector made clear that while “the system for agreeing and managing ROTL has not kept pace with the increase in number and increase in risk of eligible prisoners”, the system has “an important part to play in protecting us all from the harm offenders might do”.
- Subsequent policy changes to tighten risk assessment and offender management have led to a marked decline in the use of Resettlement Day Releases, the form of ROTL where offenders are able to take part in community projects, attend training and educational courses, do paid work, and make arrangements for release before they re-enter the community. The use of ROTL has declined by around a third over the past five years.
- This is despite evidence that offenders granted ROTL have considerably lower levels of offending than other offenders. For those who had been released on temporary licence within six months of their release, the overall one-year proven reoffending rate is around 13%. This compares to the proven reoffending rate for all adult offenders released from custody in England and Wales during 2013, which was around 46% (Ministry of Justice, 2015), indicating a 33 percentage point difference.⁴²
- In order to drive higher levels of appropriate ROTL use, we recommend that prison governors from Category C and D prisons, which operate ROTL schemes, should transparently publish statistics on the number of ROTL placements available, the number of placements resulting in arrest or absconding behaviour, and the number of placements where the employer registers a complaint.
- At the same time, the Government should consider changes to ROTL to allow prisoners to build up more of a financial buffer ahead of release. Following the introduction of the Prisoners’ Earning Act of 2011, prisoners have 40% of all earnings made over £20 per week levied and paid into

the Victim's Fund. In order to incentivise work and training, while continuing to support victims, at no cost to the Government: Ministers could change this formula so that in the final 12 months of a sentence only 10% of weekly wages (including those under £20) goes into the Victim's Fund and within three months of release the prisoner can keep his or her entire wage packet.

Recommendation five: Every prison should create an Employment Council made up of local employers, charities and the local enterprise partnership

- There is no systematic link between individual prisons and their local labour market, meaning many businesses are unaware of the stock of ready and willing workers inside Britain's prisons and many prisoners do not speak to an employer ahead of their release. It is little wonder that few prisoners gain employment in the year following the year from prison.
- We recommend the New Futures Network works with every prison in England and Wales to establish an Employment Council, made up of 6–8 local employers, charity leaders and representatives from the LEP or combined authority. The purpose would be similar to that of community governors on a School Governing Body: to provide external challenge to the prison specifically around the issue of training and employment, as well as create links into the local community to provide training and jobs to support both within and outside the prison walls.
- The shape and composition of each Employment Council would differ according to local need and the local employment market. The role would also be wider than mere brokerage between employers and prisoners: they should take a role in convening local colleges, training providers, chambers of commerce and voluntary organisations around prisoner employment. This should include supporting the relationship between ex-offenders and employers around difficult subjects, such as the fact prisoners often need a month's pay in advance to pay for a deposit or prisoners' attendance at substance misuse meetings or mental health support. This hands-on approach will act as a vital support system for both ex-offenders and employers as they re-enter the workplace.
- Each Employment Council should meet regularly with the governor and senior leadership team and help them to develop meaningful programmes of training within prison linked to vacancies in the local labour market. In the course of this research, Onward has come across dozens of businesses keen to be involved in offender rehabilitation and willing to dedicate training, mentoring and recruitment resources to the problem of prisoner unemployment. This latent support should be mobilised in a coordinated fashion across every local area.
- We propose that every prison should work with their Prison Employment Councils to offer jobs fairs and recruitment days for prisoners within the establishment's walls. A pilot run by the Prison Reform Trust has shown

how powerful these fairs can be, with around half of prisoners wanting to attend and a fifth of prisoners who attended them gaining a job through the exercise. This might be industry specific – for example inviting automotive companies in the West Midlands into HMP Birmingham or wind turbine manufacturers into HMP Hull – to reflect local jobs likely to be available on release. The New Futures Network should gather data from this activity and build a national network of employers willing to support prisoner training and employment.

Recommendation six: Use the reforms to Community Rehabilitation Companies to deliver sustained employment support for prison leavers in the community

- In May, the Ministry of Justice announced that the contracts with Community Rehabilitation Companies would be ended early and supervision of offenders in the community would be undertaken by the National Probation Service, working with private or voluntary partners to deliver rehabilitation services. This is a welcome move: as Glenys Stacey, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, has said, the system as it stands is “irredeemably flawed”. Moreover, the transition from CRCs to the new system represents a considerable opportunity to improve the prisoner journey through the gate.
- Under the new arrangement, the new public sector service should be mandated to work with the prisons in their region to prepare each offender for release and effectively manage them into the community. It should be expected under the new regime that every prisoner has formal identification, a working bank account and identified accommodation in place three months before their designated release date. At present, because of contractual arrangements under CRCs, this is often not checked until the week or two before release, too late for any gaps to be rectified.
- The new National Probation Service areas are expected to contract private and voluntary sector providers for drug misuse services, training courses and unpaid work schemes. Given the failure of the existing contracts to make a work a priority, it is essential that these contracts specifically include employment outcomes such as education and training attainment and paid work, and that providers are held to account for progressing prisoners into the labour market.

Recommendation seven: The Government should deliver on the manifesto commitment to give employers a national insurance tax break to employers who hire ex-offenders

- The 2017 Conservative Manifesto set out a commitment that “for businesses employing former wards of the care system, someone with a disability, those with chronic mental health problems, those who have committed a crime but who have repaid their debt to society, and those who have been unemployed

for over a year [and, elsewhere in the Manifesto, veterans], we will offer a holiday on their employers' National Insurance Contributions for a full year.”

- This manifesto commitment has been subject to lengthy discussion between HM Treasury and the Ministry of Justice. The Treasury seems largely to be concerned about the lack of evidence that such tax breaks are effective at changing employers behaviour, and the deadweight cost of rewarding firms who would already employ former offenders. This is an unsurprising position.
- However, as our polling indicated, there is a substantial portion of employers who would find such a scheme attractive – 35% placed the policy among the top three policies that would encourage them to hire ex-offenders, and far more employers (a third) would consider hiring an ex-offender than currently do. This should give confidence that the cost would be outweighed by an increase in ex-offender employment, which in turn would generate employment tax revenue.
- In fact, if you assume that the median earnings for an ex-offender is £17,121 per annum,⁴³ the total income tax and employee national insurance contributions (£1,941.08) dwarf the potential loss of Employers NI (£1,171.48). This is before any savings from reduced Jobseeker's Allowance costs or savings from lower levels of reoffending, all of which are set out below.

Recommendation eight: The Government should introduce a ‘Prisoner Apprenticeship’ to allow employers to use their Apprenticeship Levy to train prisoners in prison and on temporary release

- The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy offers a further opportunity to encourage employers to consider prisoners as a source of labour. At present, employers are underspending their levy funds, leaving money allocated for training and human capital investment unspent. During the tax year 2017–2018, only £108 million of apprenticeship levy funds had been used for their intended purpose – as set against the £1.39 billion that had been collected under the levy scheme in total.⁴⁴
- Ministers have rightly sought to improve the process to allay employers’ concerns, including by allowing firms to share up to 25% of their levy with other businesses in their supply chain. However the levy remains extremely inflexible with regard to those in prison, given serving prisoners cannot technically be classed as employees and therefore do not qualify for levy funds.
- We recommend that legislation is changed to create a “Prisoner Apprenticeship” in which prisoners are classed as temporary employees for the purposes of the Apprenticeship Levy and firms encouraged to use funds, including any unspent levy funds, towards taking on prisoner apprenticeships. The apprenticeship framework includes provision for both classroom education and in-work training, both of which are possible inside prison or through an amended ROTL framework.

- In focus groups for this report, this was the proposal most strongly supported by both employers and ex-offenders themselves. It was universally seen as a good idea.
- Given the volume of levy funds currently going unspent and the growing support from employers towards corporate social responsibility, this could unlock considerable private investment in a group that has some of the worst employment outcomes in the country.

Recommendation nine: Ministers should launch a national campaign to encourage private companies to become involved in prisoner education, training and employment

- In our work, we have encountered a host of companies interested in supporting prisoners towards employment and becoming more involved in the prison system. National businesses including BT, Virgin, Timpson and Openreach have all committed to working with and hiring from the prison estate. The Twinning Project, founded by David Dein, has linked 32 leading football clubs to work with their local prison. There is a groundswell of energy to be harnessed.
- All of these businesses have the same complaints. They do not know where to start and often have to work around the system rather than with it to deliver meaningful programmes behind bars. If this doesn't change, there is a risk that the momentum will be lost and the goodwill of socially conscious businesses squandered.
- We recommend that the Government creates a Second Chances scheme, similar to the Investors in People accreditation that has supported best practice in people management since its establishment in 1991. Working with the New Futures Network and HMPPS, this scheme would work with employers to remove barriers to working in prisons, and recognise employers that contribute towards ex-offender employment through education, employment and training.
- Members of the Second Chances scheme could, for example, be expected to be a member of a prison Employment Council, attend recruitment fairs in prisons annually, offer training, apprenticeships or jobs to prisoners either within prison or upon release, and "ban the box" to remove criminal convictions from the recruitment process.
- In time, such a scheme could also consider the case for supporting greater levels of entrepreneurship in prison, working with social and other investors to offer microgrants to offenders who want to develop their own business. Around 60% of prisoners say they would "be interested in taking a business/self-employment course while in prison".

Estimate of the potential savings

These changes would be far reaching and radically shift the focus of prisons away from punishment and towards preparing prisoners for life away from crime. They also offer considerable potential savings to the Treasury that could be explored within the Spending Review.

- We modelled the savings from a reduction in recidivism and unemployment benefit claimants. A minor decrease in recidivism (1%) would lower the total cost of keeping those prisoners in custody by £12.5m per year. A 10% reduction would save around £125m. If we model a decrease in the number of ex-offenders being paid Jobseekers' Allowance, we find that this would save between £1.1m (a conservative estimate) and £11.4m (a more ambitious estimate) additionally each year.
- If we assume that the ex-offenders who no longer claim unemployment benefits or reoffend due to our policy interventions instead enter the workplace, we can add this to our estimates of the revenue generated from income tax and national insurance.
- A minor increase would raise £2.7m a year – comprising £1m, £1.2m, and £0.5m from individual NICs, employer NICs, and income tax respectively – one year after release from prison. This conservative estimate of a 1% increase in the employment rate rises to a total of £4.2m a year – or £1.6m, £1.8m, and £0.8m respectively – three years after release. Three years after release, if the employment rate increased by 10%, total revenue would equal £41.9m.

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Foregone prison costs	1% decrease in recidivism	£12,549,475	£12,549,475	£12,549,475
	10% decrease in recidivism	£125,494,752	£125,494,752	£125,494,752
Foregone Jobseekers' Allowance	1% decrease in benefit claimants	£1,140,031	£1,088,211	£1,088,211
	10% decrease in benefit claimants	£11,400,307	£10,882,111	£10,882,111
Individual NICs	1% increase in employment rate	£1,031,617	£1,334,175	£1,557,677
	10% increase in employment rate	£10,317,667	£13,343,702	£15,579,084
Employer NICs	1% increase in employment rate	£1,186,359	£1,534,301	£1,791,329
	10% increase in employment rate	£11,865,317	£15,345,258	£17,915,947
Income tax	1% increase in employment rate	£542,953	£656,494	£847,522
	10% increase in employment rate	£5,430,315	£6,565,899	£8,476,476
Total	Minor improvement	£16,450,435	£17,162,655	£17,782,395
	Best case scenario	£164,508,358	£171,631,722	£177,830,173

- We estimate the potential savings as the foregone costs of keeping an inmate in prison and foregone spending on unemployment benefits. For the former, we take the number of current offenders released in 2017, the recidivism rate, and average costs of an inmate to arrive at our figure of £12.5m and £125.4m (the conservative and ambitious estimates, respectively). In the latter case, we calculate the average spend on unemployment benefits per person and then apply this cost to the proportion of prisoners claiming such benefits on release. This then allows us to estimate the total savings to be gained if the number of claimants was reduced by 1% and 10%.
- Our estimates for the increases in income tax and National Insurance contributions that would accompany a rise in the employment rate of ex-offenders are based on experimental statistics from the 2013 Ministry of Justice, Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue & Customs data share. We use data on the number of offenders released per year, the proportion of those who enter P14 employment and the median and third quartile wages of ex-offenders to calculate the number of individuals above different payment thresholds and the corresponding taxation that would be owed. As such we are able to model the effects of an increase in the number of ex-offenders in employment and subtract from this our estimate of the current amount paid as income tax and NICs.

Conclusions



The prison system is currently not working for prisoners or the public. Too many people leave with the same poor levels of education and skills that they go in with. None have coordinated training and education plans tailored to their experience and their ambitions. The result is high levels of idleness behind bars and low levels of employment on release.

This is despite compelling evidence that a job helps keep people on the straight and narrow, and that a pay packet has a marked deterrent effect on offenders. This is entirely consistent with the longstanding centre right belief in the importance of work and the Government's own ambitions to let everyone, no matter their background, go as far as their talents will take them.

The time is ripe for a new approach. The labour market has never been tighter and employers never more anxious about where to find quality staff. A restricted immigration regime post-Brexit is likely to create further shortages in jobs that were previously filled by European workers: in hospitality, retail, horticulture and construction. The Government should turn prisons from holding pens into training centres.

This will require radical change. Prisoners will be expected to be out of cell engaged in purposeful activity. Prison officers will need to do more to track their progress, steward their studies and link them to jobs on the outside. The public may need to become more accepting on Release on Temporary License and working alongside ex-offenders. Also employers will need to become far more integrated into the prison system.

But if the political will is there, there is a way. This report sets out a number of concrete policies that could affect meaningful change. We hope that the Government, employers and prison governors recognise that the prize is worth pursuing.

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Annex 1

Focus group transcript



Focus group with hiring managers in low – and medium skilled industries

Can you describe the kind of person who ends up in prison?

It varies.

Yeah, anyone can end up in prison.

What I've read is that a lot of older people are ending up in prison because of fraud.

A lot of youngsters nowadays... teenagers. More than the older generation.

There's so many gangs no, and the knife crime is getting worse. There were two just yesterday in Harrow.

One was a machete.

We're taking after America with knife crime.

America has always been worse with knives and guns and stuff.

It's like the wild west now.

And it's happening during the day as well – in broad daylight.

Where do you hear about crime from?

It's on social media a lot. If you're scrolling through Facebook, people share the posts. It pops up quite a lot on there.

The local news. I go on there all the time. If someone is stabbed locally, obviously you're interested and you find out where it was, and then avoid those areas.

A lot of people are looking at ways to stop knife crime. Is sending people to prison the right thing to do about that?

I think prison sentences should be longer for knife crime now because it's getting out of hand.

I think judges are sometimes too lenient on sentences and people don't learn a strong enough lesson. There have been situations where we were too lenient and then the same person commits the same crime again... so we need to crack down harder on certain things.

I don't think people have any fear or respect for the law.

No, they don't.

It's not like when I was their age. It's all different.

And it starts in school. There's no respect for teachers, whereas we were a bit in fear of the teachers.

We were actually.

Yeah.

But now they're not.

Would you describe yourselves as people who believe in law and order?

Yeah.

(Note: All in agreement).

Of course, otherwise you've got chaos.

Think about the people who end up in prison. Are they bad people or unlucky people or sad people...?

Not necessarily bad.

Unlucky.

I know someone that went to prison for three years and he was from a wealthy background. He just got in with the wrong crowd. That was when he was 21 and he's now 40. But he turned his life around... got a lovely house, wife, kids. He's a nice guy.

If you go out and you stab someone, you're a terrible person.

Mental health plays a part. Some people don't get the right help.

And family life.

I think some people find that being in prison is actually easier than being out – because they get three meals a day and somewhere to sleep.

What do you think is the purpose of prison?

Some people get a TV, Playstation, any drugs they want.

It should be rehabilitation. They should go in there and be taught why what they did was wrong, how to better themselves, what they should be doing.

The whole justice system is pathetic. It creates criminals.

Some people come out worse, because they mix with other criminals.

People come out and reoffend – and it's like 'look at me I'm the hardest guy because I've been in prison for four years'. Then the gangs respect them.

People should learn from what they've done.

It's not strict enough and people should fear it. Obviously people don't (fear prison) because they come out and reoffend.

People are released and put back into the same situations. We need to move them away from all that.

Even if people have the mindset to change, they haven't got the help and the tools in order to change. So they fall back into doing the same things. The system sets up a lot of people to fail.

I think it should be a punishment, it should be hard. It also serves to keep us safe from people that should be away from us. Why should they have the same lifestyle as us, out here working and living our lives. If you've committed a crime, you should be in jail. Rehabilitation, sure, but initially it is a punishment.

They're saying it costs about £150,000 a year to look after one inmate. It's madness. Especially when they could be in there for 20 years.

You hear kids say 'there's nothing for us to do'. Well, there's no parks or anything...

If you set up community halls, they just end up wrecking them. You try and do something for them but then someone comes along and wrecks it.

How much training and education do you think prisoners get at the moment?

Not very much

I would have thought it was on a sliding scale. So if you're in for less than a year I doubt there is much training at all. If you're in for a longer period there's more time for training.

The longer you're in for, the more chance you have of getting a qualification.

It's whether they want to. You can't force them.

There's that restaurant based out of a prison, the Clink. That's good for learning skills and easing the transition out of prison.

Do you think inmates should work in prisons?

Yes.

(Note: All in agreement).

Yea, it should be mandatory.

They should give something back to society while they're there.

I'm not sure there would be enough jobs for them.

I think some inmates should have to go into national service, to work for one of the armed forces for a period of time.

I think they should bring back national service anyway.

Absolutely.

The countries that have national service have crime rates far lower than ours.
I think we're one of the only countries in Europe that don't do national service.

What other jobs could inmates do in prison?

I know some prisons sell plants and the inmates do gardening.

Pick some litter, get rid of the graffiti. Pay something back. And they're doing the jobs that are unlikely to get done anyway. Councils don't have the budget to do some of that stuff.

Has anyone here worked with someone that had recently served a sentence?

(Note: Some members of the group (3 out of 8) have employed ex-offenders).

I've taken on some people that had been inside, and given them a chance.

I've employed three or four guys that have criminal records and been to jail.

We've not allowed to take on ex-offenders, because it's schools... In other places I've worked, like kitchens, you can. But because it's to do with kids in schools, if anything comes up on the DBS we have to say no.

How would you feel about employing an ex-offender?

There's always that worry. You've got to give people a chance but in the back of your're mind you still worry about certain things.

It depends what they've done. For someone who committed fraud, as long as they don't have access to money, bank accounts etc. then they're probably no risk to the company.

If it's a misdemeanor from 20 years ago, then give them the benefit of the doubt.

Do any of you work for organisations that have policies around employing ex-offenders?

We don't have a policy as such, but at the interview we have to ask them if they have any past convictions.

What about if it was an offence to do with dishonesty?

I would be very wary, because of the stock we have. But we already have employees that steal. We get a lot of theft.

Do your employment application forms have a box to tick for people to disclose criminal records?

Yeah we do.

Only at the interview stage.

For a lot of jobs you don't have a CRB.

Do any of you find it difficult to find staff?

Sometimes it takes a while to find the right one. In our line of work it's usually by word of mouth.

Where do you advertise?

Online. Social media occasionally. Or notes in the shop window.

What about the rest of you?

Some people apply without any idea how much hard work the job is. They stay for a week and then leave because they can't hack it.

How do you think the labour market is going to change over the next couple of years?

Not sure.

I have a lot of European employees, so they don't know what's going to happen.

They're probably the majority of our workforce.

Most of my kitchen staff are Polish.

The work ethic of the Polish staff is really good. If you take on an English person, they don't want to put the hours and the work in. I'm sorry to say it.

Do you think it will become harder to find staff over the next few years?

Depends on the outcome of Brexit.

For those that don't currently employ ex-offenders, would your companies be interested in doing so?

I would consider it, depending on what they had done.

I'd be nervous about someone who had been in prison for theft, especially cleaning people's houses. Clients wouldn't like it.

Nor would I, as a customer or an employer.

It depends how long ago it was. The person might have changed since then.

What about someone who was released in the last six months?

It really depends on what the offence was and what business you're in.

I do feel for some people who get out of prison and they're willing to change and work hard. But it's difficult for the employer to fully trust that person.

If it's someone who's keen and wants to work... We've employed homeless people as an initiative the company was running and we found that they were the hardest working guys there. They were grateful for the work. It might be the same for ex-offenders. If you're the only one giving them a chance they might work extra hard and really knuckle down. You'd need to have a chat with them to find out what they're like, or get more information from prison, a report maybe, so you can get an idea of the person.

Do prisoners get careers guidance?

Usually not.

It's just probation usually.

Probation just seems like somewhere they have to go and check in.

It seems ridiculous that there isn't any assistance prior to them getting out.

You're just sending them back to nothing.

Does anyone know the current prison population?

89,000.

75,000.

It's currently around 84,000 to 85,000.

There have been incentives to get rid of minor sentencing, below six months, because it's too expensive.

This goes back to the amount of resources it takes to keep someone in prison.

Have any of you visited a prison for any reason?

Note: Some members of the group have visited a prison.

I visited when my pal was in.

So have I.

Do you know any businesses that go out of their way to employ ex-offenders?

Timpson.

Why do you think that is?

A bit of PR. It's good. I watched a program about it and the person was saying that the ex-offenders are the best employees because they are grateful for the work.

Maybe they have a scheme set up with the prisons so they know they're going to get the right type of candidate.

I would have thought supermarkets would hire a higher proportion on ex-offenders. It's a route back into the workforce straight away and doesn't require specialist skills.

What sort of staff are the most difficult to find at the moment?

Reliable.

Do you think that ex-offenders are reliable or unreliable?

Depends what they did.

It also depends on their personality. They could be genuinely sorry for what they've done – they want to work and turn their life around. Or it could be someone who has no interest at all and just wants to steal and not knuckle down.

If it is the kind of person who realises they are lucky to have a job then they will work hard. Not everyone is as welcoming as Timpson.

Is there anything ex-offenders need in terms of support?

I don't think it helps to chuck them in at the deep end. Going into work could be a big change – adjusting to the outside world. They should have some help with that.

Help with accommodation.

Learning how to budget.

What sort of support would you offer?

Education. Help people getting NVQs. In my industry, catering, help people get up the ladder.

I don't think it's the employer's job to offer that help. It needs to be a government thing.

(Note: General agreement that support should be offered by the state, rather than employers).

You could tie it into probation or something.

Unless you have a large company that can afford it, there would need to be a financial incentive.

Companies are not trained to handle this kind of thing.

It needs to be someone trained. You can't expect any regular person to know how to help these ex-offenders.

Would it reassure you if the probation service was on-hand to provide support – all the things you have mentioned so far – to ex-offenders?

Yeah I think so.

There is a problem with lack of support.

(Note: The group was fairly ambivalent about this).

If there was no support at all, would you be less interested in hiring ex-offenders?

I don't think you should take that full risk, that full responsibility, on your business.

Tell me a bit about the ex-offenders that you have employed.

So at my pub we hired a few. They did cleaning and bar work. They were quite good actually. They were reliable. I had no problems with them. One of them is still there after two years.

The main one I took on had anger issues. Sometimes he was really good – lovely guy – but unfortunately he was a bit unreliable at times. We tried to work with him... Now and again you could see why he'd been inside. He had some issues and wasn't the most stable person, which is a shame because he wanted to learn. But you have to wonder, would your efforts be better channelled into other people?

Any other issues with employing ex-offenders?

The public perception. If you employ them as cleaners and then a customer discovers that they've been in prison, they might not be happy having them in their house.

I think it impacts your insurance, if they insure you at all.

They represent my company, so I need to know I can trust them with clients. I'm putting my business on the line.

I'd be concerned about addiction as well. If they haven't got it under control, they are more likely to steal.

Colleagues. It could exacerbate existing problems with staff stealing things.

Depending on what they've done, are they safe to work with other people?

And with data protection laws you're not allowed to say. You can't declare it to other people.

Other employees might not be comfortable working with them. You need a strong team.

Everyone needs to work well together.

Would you consider working with a local prison to help prisoners train?

Yeah.

I'd do it.

My company isn't big enough to do that.

I'd need a choice regarding the type of offender that I'd be working with.

Yes, that's very important, I think. It really depends what they're in for. If they're in for anger issues or violence then you don't want them in the kitchen. It can be quite a stressful place.

If they don't want to work, there is no point having ten guys sitting around bored. You need people who want to learn because otherwise you're wasting your time and resources. You need a caseworker to determine whether a person wants to be there and is interested in furthering their career when they get out.

Which of these are the most important?

Cheap labour?

If they're an employee, you still pay them at least the minimum wage.

What if you could pay them less than the minimum wage?

No.

If they've served their time, then they're out.

It wouldn't be fair.

How are they going to survive on less?

A way of filling vacancies?

Depends what they've done.

It's another labour source.

Corporate social responsibility?

I think that is one of the main reasons companies do it.

Would it improve your reputation in the community?

Not necessarily.

No, I don't think it would.

If it goes wrong it's on your head.

It isn't something I would advertise.

It's different to helping people living homeless on the streets.

I've hired ex-offenders – I did my research. But I wouldn't promote it.

Everyone deserves a second chance?

It depends what they've done.

And how many times they've done it.

Say that you have workers who are motivated to stay with you through loyalty or because they are under some form of supervision. Would that be a good reason to employ them?

No.

(Note: All in agreement).

Here are some ideas I would like to run by you. Should employers get tax breaks for hiring ex-offenders?

Yes.

It would make a difference.

A bit of incentive for the employer.

Yeah, you're taking people out of unemployment.

Should employers be able to hire apprentices while they are still in prison?

Yeah, that's a good idea.

If they're young – 17 or 18.

And it's lower risk for us.

(Note: The group was supportive of this idea).

Should prisoners have to do eight hours of work per day?

Yes, I think they should.

The time will go by quicker for them.

There would be less chance of them getting into trouble if they were occupied.

It would give them a purpose – a reason to get up each day rather than sitting around.

Could prisons have employment councils where local employers work with governors to support training and jobs on release?

Yes, definitely.

(Note: All in agreement).

Would you be interested in participating in something like that?

Maybe.

If I had a larger company I would.

What would be the point of it?

Helping the community.

Making it a better place to live.

Should employers be banned from asking about criminal background at the first stage of recruitment?

No.

As a private business you should have the freedom to ask whatever questions you need to ask prior to interview, because you time is money.

(Note: All in agreement).

Should you be allowed to discriminate against prisoners?

It all comes down to what they did.

I think that's the main thing.

So you want disclosure.

Yeah.

I want to know at the earliest stage possible.

Don't want to waste anyone's time.

(Note: All in agreement).

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About the authors

Will Tanner

Will Tanner advised the Prime Minister Theresa May between 2013 and 2017, as a Special Adviser in the Home Office and as Deputy Head of Policy in 10 Downing Street. He has also previously worked for the leading communications firm, Portland, and for the independent thinktank, Reform.

Nick Tyrone

Nick Tyrone is the former Director General of the Red Tape Initiative and former Executive Director of the think tank CentreForum. He has written several books including *Apocalypse Delayed: Why the Left is Still in Trouble* in 2017. Nick is currently working with Onward on finding ways to get more ex-offenders back into employment.

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