



HM Prison &  
Probation Service

New Futures  
Network

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a black top, working on a car engine. She is looking down at her work with a focused expression. Her left hand is visible, showing a tattoo of a zodiac sign (Scorpio) on her forearm. She is wearing a watch on her left wrist. The background is slightly blurred, showing parts of the car's engine and tools.

# Employing prisoners and ex-offenders

See what's on the inside

[offenderemployment.campaign.gov.uk](http://offenderemployment.campaign.gov.uk)

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Welding  
workshop at  
HMP Hull

# Introduction

A third of businesses state that they are unable to address skills gaps in their workforce, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Thinking outside the box about recruitment and exploring new talent pools can help overcome such challenges.

## New Futures Network

The New Futures Network (NFN) is a specialist part of the prison service that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers. They will help you to identify the best option for your organisation and put you in touch with similar businesses who are already working with the prison service.

There are a range of ways to get involved:

### Opportunities for serving prisoners

Employers can set up training and production facilities in a dedicated space within the prison estate. Workshops run by external organisations benefit from a dedicated workforce made up of serving prisoners. NFN will work with you to find out what will suit your business needs. This also helps prisoners gain valuable skills and qualifications which will increase their likelihood of securing employment after release.

### Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

Release on Temporary Licence, or ROTL, is a scheme which allows risk-assessed prisoners who are within two years of release to work while on day release from prison. This can be for a full working week or part-time. It allows you to offer training and work experience to a serving prisoner while you assess if they are right for your business, before possibly offering them a job on their release.

### Employment on release

Upon release, individuals can work and have full employee rights. The New Futures Network can help you arrange interviews with prospective candidates before they are released, so you can choose the best person for your business.

Over 400 businesses and government departments are providing employment opportunities to serving prisoners within industries workshops, ROTL placements and employment of prison leavers.



Gardening workshop at HMP Hull

# Reasons to work with prisoners and ex-offenders

Working with prisoners and ex-offenders has a whole range of benefits, including:



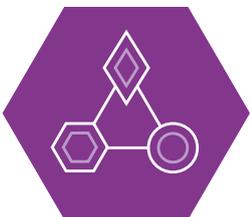
## Reducing initial recruitment and job advertising costs

The CIPD has calculated that filling the average non-managerial vacancy costs around £2,000. Opening recruitment up to prisoners and ex-offenders can help reduce overheads such as advertising as prisons can offer interview access to candidates. The time and cost of recruiting can be overcome by tapping into this readily available talent pool.



## Diversity, inclusion and social responsibility

Over two fifths of employers say hiring ex-offenders has increased the diversity of their employees. It has also been a factor in helping businesses to become more socially responsible. Actively hiring former prisoners is proven to reduce reoffending. Most offenders want the opportunity to turn their backs on crime and having a job helps them get their lives back on track.



## Resolving skills shortages

A third of organisations state that they are unable to address skills gaps, which is likely to have a knock-on impact on productivity and performance. Many prisons teach a variety of industry level skills, with prisoners achieving professional qualifications. Employers can tap into this talent pool to resolve skills shortages, as well as helping prisoners and ex-offenders get their lives back on track.



## Reducing staff absence

The biggest concern of employers around hiring ex-offenders is a worry that they may not be trustworthy. However, over 80% of employers of ex-offenders have positively rated their reliability, motivation, attendance and performance.

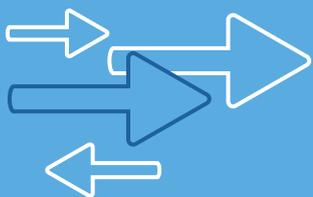


## Increasing staff retention

Evidence from employers such as Marks & Spencer shows that ex-offenders place a higher value on having a job because of a desire to stay out of prison. This often means ex-offenders have higher levels of loyalty and retention, which keeps institutional knowledge within your business.



Only **17%**  
of ex-offenders manage to get  
a job within a year of release



Ex-offenders who get a  
job after prison are up to  
**9 percentage** points less  
likely to reoffend



**86%**  
of employers of  
ex-offenders rate  
them as good  
at their job



**3 out of 4 people**  
would be comfortable  
buying from a business  
that employs  
ex-offenders



**81%**  
of people  
think that businesses employing  
ex-offenders are making a positive  
contribution to society



**92%**  
of employers say  
diverse recruitment has enhanced  
their reputation, helping them  
win new contracts

# Hear from businesses already working with prisoners and ex-offenders



**Do ex-offenders have any qualifications or the skills needed to work?**

“The guys on-site, they are just like everybody else that we come across as an employer. We find they come with a variety of skills and we ensure they are then given the correct training so they can go to work and join in with the team.”

**Claire Coombs, Development Manager, Keltbray**



**Can I really rely on offenders to be part of my workforce?**

“Pret has been working with both Working Chance and Novus for several years to take ex-offenders on to our Rising Stars Programme. We see this as an excellent talent pool with many Rising Stars enjoying a great career within Pret.”

**Nicki Fisher, Head of the Pret Foundation Trust, Pret A Manger**



**Will they turn up for work if I take a chance on them?**

“We have found that the level of retention of our graduates from the [prison] academy is higher than the level of retention of our normal employed sales floor workers.”

**Andy McBride, Head of Resourcing and People Shared Services, Halfords**



**Why should businesses employ ex-offenders?**

“We’ve started working with ex-offenders and people coming towards the end of their sentence because it allows us to secure a pipeline of talent coming into our business, at the same time as helping people start again as they leave prison. In the hospitality industry there is a nationwide shortage of kitchen staff – kitchen managers and chefs particularly – that we at Greene King are not immune to.”

**Greg Sage, Spokesperson, Greene King**

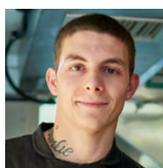
Watch video testimonials from businesses on our [website](#).



**Ex-offender Leigh**

“I was on the Halfords academy at HMP Drakehall and learnt how to repair a bike, give great customer service. I also learnt planning and resourcing skills ordering bike parts. I now work at Halfords as part of their customer and bike repair team.”

**Leigh, Former prisoner, now Halfords colleague**



**Ex-offender Tyler**

“In prison I got my level 2 catering course in HMP Glen Parva, I learnt to cook and run a kitchen. I’m now a chef in a busy pub kitchen working for Greene King.”

**Tyler, Former prisoner, now Greene King employee**

# Getting started – how to work with prisoners and ex-offenders

## Opportunities for serving prisoners

**Is your business looking for a space and workforce to make a product, or deliver a service?**

The New Futures Network can help you by working with prisons and partner organisations to set up training and production facilities within the prison estate, to meet your business needs.

**Find out more about how businesses are already working in this way:**

Redemption Roasters produces high-end coffee beans and trains prisoners in barista skills at HMP YOI Aylesbury.

Redemption Roasters decided to run part of their coffee business in a prison after speaking to HMP YOI Aylesbury about supplying barista training to prisoners. They're now the world's first organisation to roast coffee in a prison, employing the prisoners as their production team.

Coffee roastery at HMP YOI Aylesbury

The prison provided them with the use of a workshop, as well as a prison instructor to help oversee work. They supported Redemption Roasters to recruit motivated, high-potential prisoners. 100% of Redemption Roasters' coffee is now roasted and packed at the prison. It is then shipped to Dorset to be sold in their London café and distributed to buyers in the UK and Germany.

The prisoners get a high level of training in roasting, barista skills and customer service, which makes them ideal employees for the business on the outside. Redemption Roasters has already hired two men from the roastery to work in their London coffee shop.

**Max Dubiel, Founder of Redemption Roasters, said:**

“Setting up the roastery was actually not as complicated as we thought. We have had so much support from HMP Aylesbury itself and from the Ministry of Justice that we managed to get it on the road pretty quickly.”



## Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

**Are you interested in employing ex-offenders, but concerned that they might not be the right fit for your business?**

The New Futures Network can help by working with prisons to field appropriate candidates to join your business on day release, also known as ROTL.

ROTL enables serving prisoners who are within two years of release to leave prison to work in the community. This offers you the opportunity to see first-hand the skills and experience individuals can bring to your business. It allows individuals to gain valuable experience of the way your organisation works and receive any essential training before being permanently released and possibly joining your workforce. It also helps these individuals make a smoother transition back into the community.

**Find out more about how businesses are already working in this way:**

Timpson, the British retailer, recruit 10% of their workforce from prison, including offenders on ROTL.

Timpson has a long history of working with the prison service to employ ex-offenders, which started when James Timpson toured a local prison and spotted a prisoner with potential. As well as running training academies in prisons around the country, Timpson also hire prisoners on ROTL to work in their high street stores.

All prisoners who are eligible for ROTL are very carefully risk-assessed.

**James Timpson, Chief Executive of Timpson, said:**

“When I first started employing people from prison my biggest concern was what people would think – and that’s not just colleagues I work with, but also our customers. Far more people come to our shops because of what we do and see it as a really positive thing.”

Timpson employees working in one of their training academies



## Employment on release

### Are you looking for a new pool of skilled, enthusiastic people to work for your business?

The New Futures Network (NFN) can arrange for you to meet with prisoners before their release, so you can find out first hand about the skills they have mastered, prior work experience and qualifications gained – be they excellent customer service skills, first-class business planning or a solid foundation in something industry specific, like brick laying.

NFN will work with prisons to share information about suitable individuals, so you know you are employing the right person for your business.

### Find out more about how businesses are already working in this way:

Bernard Matthews visits HMP Norwich as part of their regular recruitment cycle, to assess candidates from the prison and offer contracts to start upon release.

Bernard Matthews works with HMP Norwich to fill vacancies at their turkey processing plant in Norfolk. Due to the organisation's rural location and a significant labour shortage in the area Bernard Matthews frequently need to run recruitment. They find it useful to tap into the keen talent pool from the prison.

The prison's reducing reoffending team help Vicki, HR manager at Bernard Matthews, employ the right people by providing a 'passport to work' document, which outlines each candidate's offences and behavioural record from the training or education workshops they've done while in prison.

The Job Centre Plus, housed within the prison, also supports by shortlisting potential candidates based on Vicki's guidelines. Once an offer is made, the job centre team also ensure men have the documents they need for Bernard Matthews' onboarding processes.

### Andrew Sherwood, HR Director at Bernard Matthews, said:

"I would recommend working with ex-offenders. Our experience has been that the people who come to work with us have been loyal and hard-working. Many of them have moved on to become machine minders or forklift drivers. It's a fantastic opportunity for them and it's great for us as well."

Vicki Bidnall, HR manager at Bernard Matthews, interviewing prisoner at HMP Norwich



# Tips for inclusive recruitment and onboarding

Recruitment practices can exclude ex-offenders from employment opportunities.

To be fairer, businesses can review their recruitment policies and practices, which will open up opportunities for ex-offenders. NFN can support you in hearing about more about opportunities and how to consider inclusive recruitment practices.

Consider what documentation will be required by the HR department before appointment; some forms of ID, such as proof of address, may be very difficult for prisoners to obtain and if possible this should be taken out of the process.

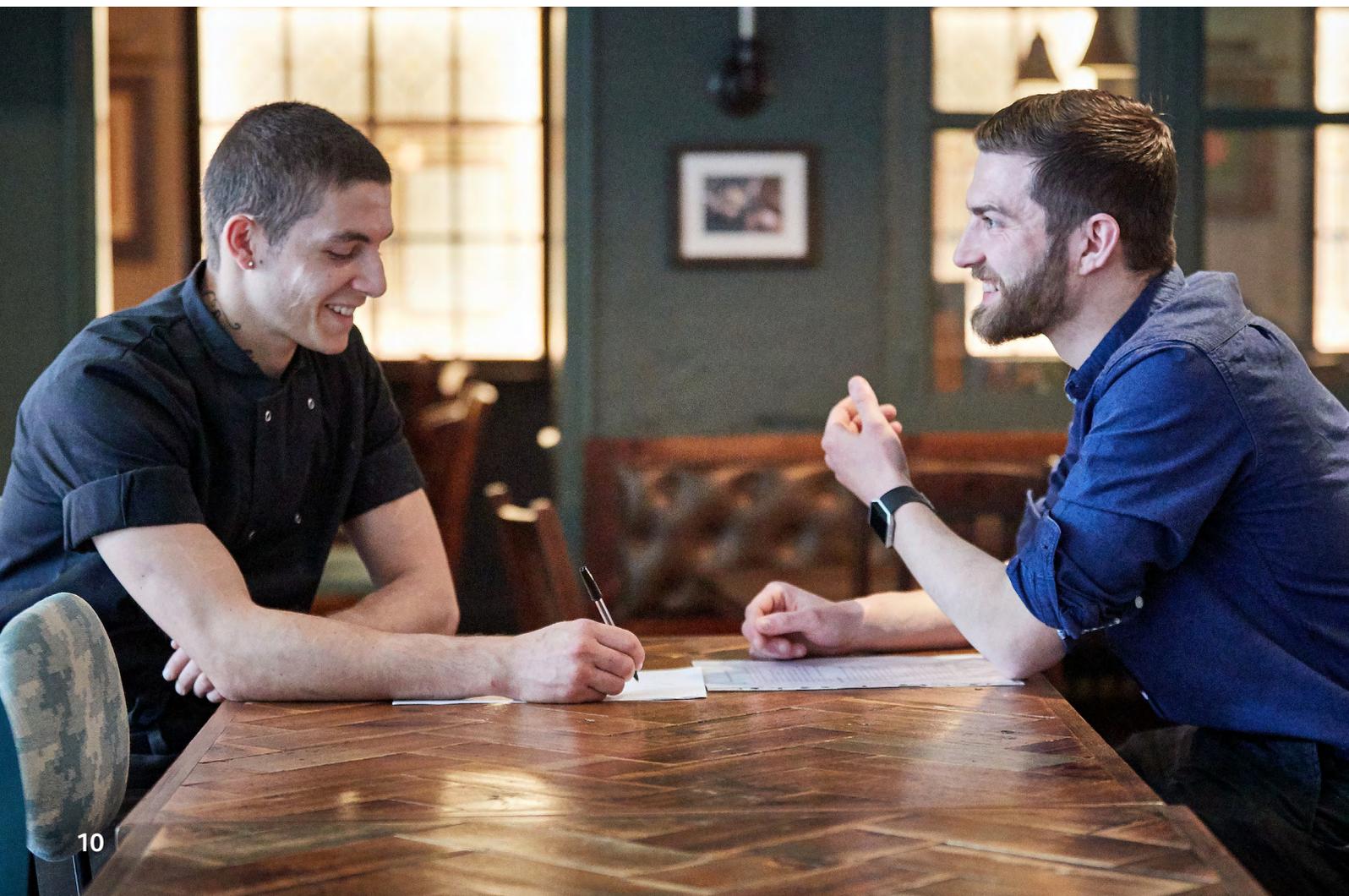
Consider adopting Ban the Box, a Business in the Community campaign that calls on UK employers to give ex-offenders a fair chance to compete for jobs. Companies that sign up commit to removing any tick box from job application forms that asks about criminal convictions and, if necessary, moving this question to later in the recruitment process so they fairly consider applicants' skills, experience and ability to do the job.

**Get more tips and advice on inclusive recruitment from social justice charities Nacro or Unlock.**

Read more about Ban the Box from Business in the Community:  
[www.bitc.org.uk/employment](http://www.bitc.org.uk/employment)



Greene King pub manager with hired ex-offender





Go to our website: [offenderemployment.campaign.gov.uk](http://offenderemployment.campaign.gov.uk)



Register your interest on the employer form



Once you've completed the online form a member of the New Futures Network will be in touch with you within a week to discuss your needs.



Prisoners working at construction workshop at HMP Brixton

