

## Second Chances Charter

### Background

The employment of former offenders is a widely debated and often stigmatised topic. Employing people with convictions, enables them to access a second chance in life and it is a significant factor in reducing re-offending. Rehabilitation and reducing re-offending will cut crime, result in less victims of crime, less pressure on policing, our public services and the criminal justice system, a saving of tax payers money, break the cycle of crime and former offenders will have an opportunity to make a positive contribution to society.

Former offenders are people that organisations can recruit, employ, train, shape and build lasting relationships with. Organisations that currently employ people with convictions have expressed the view that they are often committed, determined and loyal employees.

Despite the wealth of information available that illustrates the benefits of employing people with convictions, they still experience many barriers when trying to access employment. These barriers can include public perception, negative labelling, stigma and dehumanisation.

Organisations also experience many barriers when trying to employ people with convictions. They include:

- experiencing pushback and negative attitudes from colleagues/management/partners.
- finding it overwhelming to navigate the sector.
- navigating the process relating to DBS checks.
- having organisational capacity for people with convictions in their business.
- previous negative experiences/interactions causing a bias.

This is why the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner ('the PCC'), Simon Foster, outlined a commitment to helping and supporting people with convictions into employment, in his 2022-2025 Police and Crime Plan. In the Plan, the PCC outlined his commitment to develop a charter, in partnership with the public and private sector, to encourage recruitment of ex-offenders.

To advance that commitment, the PCC dedicated the theme of his Annual Business Summit, on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022, to the importance of employing ex-offenders and the added value that providing people with a second chance in life, can bring to an organisation. The Summit enabled discussions to be had with dozens of West Midlands based businesses on the Second Chances Charter, that businesses would sign up to, outlining a commitment to the principles set out in the Charter.

The aims of the charter are to assist people with convictions to access a second chance in life by obtaining employment, whilst at the same time ensuring that employers are able to employ people with ability and talent, that they might not have otherwise have considered for employment.

Several recommendations were made by businesses, which we have fed into the creation of the Second Chances Charter. Recommendations included:

- Creating one reliable source with micro-site/ 'one-stop shop' which provides resources for organisations signed up to the charter.
- Co-launching the Charter with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

- Education of employers, not just those signed up to the charter, on the positive value of employing former offenders.
- Providing organisations with support in employing people with previous convictions.
- Ensure jobs are appropriate for the person and will not increase their chances of re-offending – organisations emphasised that they cannot place any person with convictions into any role.
- Holding an employability event to launch the charter that people with convictions can attend and speak to organisations committed to the charter.
- To keep re-designing the charter, when launched as more information becomes available.

The information gained from the Business Summit in 2022, along with additional conversations conducted outside of the summit, fed into the creation of a draft charter. A task and finish group, with multiple leading organisations in this space, was set up to work on finalising the draft charter, to create a Second Chances Charter Website and to plan the Charter's launch.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023, the Second Chances Charter is due to be launched at the PCC's 2023 Business Summit. Key cornerstone businesses will have signed up to the Charter in advance of this launch but from the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 the Charter will be open to all.

#### **Responsibilities for those signed up to the Second Chances Charter**

Organisations signed up to the Second Chances Charter are agreeing to comply with the principles set out in the Charter, by providing equal opportunities for people with convictions, for example, through guaranteed interviews, entry-level jobs, workplace mentors, training, work experience and incentives.

## The Second Chances Charter

By signing up to the Second Chances Charter, we as an organisation agree to:

- Provide equal opportunities for people with convictions. We will do this by:
  - Guaranteeing interviews for applicants who meet the essential criteria: see advice for disability confident guaranteed interviews scheme [here](#).
  - Ensuring our organisation has [entry-level jobs](#) for those with skills gaps.
- Help and support people with convictions to gain experience. We will do this by:
  - Guaranteeing [work experience](#), so that people with convictions can be given a chance to try out work and understand what they can expect from a working environment.

Gaining experience should be encouraged when people with convictions are employed and begin their role, for example, organisations should do this by:

- Providing a [workplace mentor](#)
- Providing [training](#)
- Being willing to provide support to the employee
- Provide practical support to employees, for example, providing them with a [bus pass](#) or [flexible working hours](#)
- Give fair consideration, to [banning the box](#) on application forms – people with convictions should not disclose any record until after the initial application stage, in a conversation with the hiring manager.

To be a bronze signatory, you must commit to 1 of the above. To be a silver signatory, you must commit to 3 of the above. To be a gold signatory, you must commit to 4+ of the above.

You must also place reference to the Second Chances Charter on Job vacancies, for example, “We are a Second Chance Charter employer, committed to ensuring that people with offending histories can access employment”.

Please sign here to state agreement to the above:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_