

**Don't let
a tick box
stop you
harnessing
talent**

Positive action to recruit people with criminal records into the arts, media and cultural sectors

Why arts and culture?

Research shows that arts and culture can have real impact on reducing reoffending and changing public perceptions about what people with experience of the criminal justice system can achieve. Every year Koestler Arts showcases the talents hidden in prisons and secure hospitals at the iconic Southbank Centre. The London School of Fashion and Central Saint Martins run projects in collaboration with prisons to support design and manufacturing skills, and many more examples of skills development exist within the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance network.

So how about turning this into employment? According to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the creative industries are worth £91.8bn a year to the UK economy and are growing faster than any other sector. Taking positive action to enable people with convictions to find employment can improve diversity, inclusion and skills gaps – providing huge economic, social and cultural benefits for all.

Why Ban the Box and create fair recruitment practices?

Employers often ask candidates about criminal convictions at the initial stage of a job application. This puts up a barrier to people with convictions, telling them they won't be given a chance.

“Ban the Box gives people the confidence and motivation to apply – they know they've got a chance because they will be judged on their skills, strengths and experience first, rather than their past.”

David, a person with convictions employed by a Ban the Box employer

Ban the Box calls on UK employers to give people a fair chance to compete for jobs by removing the tick box from application forms and asking about criminal convictions later in the recruitment process. So far, over 120 employers have signed up. Our message to employers is this: **don't let a tick box stop you harnessing talent.**



Background

There are currently over 80,000 people in prison in England and Wales, with over 250,000 more serving sentences in the community. More than 11 million people have a criminal record. Despite compelling evidence that employment is a leading factor in reducing reoffending, only 17% of people are in PAYE work a year after coming out of prison and 75% of employers say they would discriminate against someone with a criminal record.

Benefits for employers

1 Access to a wider, more diverse talent pool

Over half of employers struggle to fill vacancies due to skills shortages. People with criminal records have a wide range of skills to suit almost any sector, making them ideal job-ready candidates.

2 Access to valuable employees

One national high street brand reports an 83% retention rate for employing people with convictions, much higher than for the rest of their workforce. People with convictions often have higher levels of loyalty because of the higher value they place on having a job and staying out of the criminal justice system.

3 Savings on recruitment costs

Filling the average non-managerial vacancy costs around £2,000. Opening recruitment up to people with criminal records can help reduce those overheads. Ricoh UK estimates each person it recruits directly through Ban the Box and its work in prisons saves the company £390.10.

4 Reputational benefits

65% of organisations that promote their efforts in the media report a positive impact on their corporate reputation.

5 Responsible business credentials

Ban the Box is evidence of an organisation's positive contribution to local communities and wider society. Employers bidding for contracts say this gives them a winning edge.

6 Make a difference

Most people leaving the criminal justice system want the opportunity to turn their backs on crime. Having a job helps them get their lives back on track and is proven to reduce reoffending.

What's wrong with the box?



- 1 People deselect themselves and don't apply
- 2 There's no opportunity to contextualise or explain
- 3 It can lead to indirect discrimination
- 4 Legally, no employer has to ask at application.

The need for change is clear and Ban the Box provides a simple step for all employers.

There's no one-size-fits-all model

Every employer that signs up to Ban the Box states their commitment to considering applicants' skills, experience and ability to do the job first. Where necessary, they ask about convictions at a later stage in the recruitment process that suits their business. A wide range of organisations have signed up:

- Boots has led the way in the retail sector, championing the campaign with its supply chain.
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP has shown that regulated industries can do this too, and now ask about convictions after offer of employment.
- Interserve Support Services has highlighted the case for facilities management firms to sign up to improve diversity and inclusion.
- Bloomsbury Institute was the first higher education provider to Ban the Box for both students and staff.
- National Museums Liverpool is a Ban the Box employer. It asks whether an individual has any criminal convictions once they have been offered the role, as part of the new starter process.

“At National Museums Liverpool we are committed to making our recruitment a fair process, which enables, and encourages, all suitable candidates to apply.”

Laura Pye, Director, National Museums Liverpool

Working with prisons

Some employers recruit directly from prisons, recognising men and women being released from prison as an untapped talent pool. These employers work with prisons to either train or identify prisoners with the skills and aptitudes they are looking for.

The New Futures Network (NFN) is the new, specialist part of the prison service that brokers partnerships between employers and prisons. It helps make the process of working with prisons as easy and productive as possible for employers. For more information contact the NFN CEO at duncan.oleary@justice.gov.uk



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Simple actions to take...

1 Sign up to Ban the Box

It is an effective way for organisations to demonstrate their willingness to remove unnecessary barriers to people with convictions from applying for roles and opportunities:

If you don't have a tick box...

Sign up online: www.unlock.org.uk/banthebox to send the message that you recruit based on skills first.

If you do have a tick box...

There is support available from Unlock or Business in the Community: www.bitc.org.uk/whybanthebox to Ban the Box and develop a new recruitment process.

2 Review your recruitment approach and adopt fair chance recruitment practices

Use Unlock's principles: recruit.unlock.org.uk/principles to make sure your HR policies reflect your commitment to being an inclusive employer.

3 Take positive action to develop opportunities in your organisation

Provide apprenticeships, work placements and training opportunities, alongside specific vacancies targeted at people with criminal records.

Find out more...

recruit.unlock.org.uk/arts
info@artsincriminaljustice.org.uk

