

Employing young people with criminal convictions

“Most of my convictions were under the age of 18 and I don't think I should have to suffer my whole life for stupid mistakes made as a youngster”



Young offender, Glen Parva Young Offenders Institution

Young people face barriers

12% of 18-24 year olds in the UK are unemployed - twice the national overall employment rate of 5% (ONS 2016). Young people face significant challenges getting into work.

Our research with the City & Guilds Group found that the biggest barrier faced by young people applying for jobs is a **lack of previous experience**, with **57%** affected. **1 in 3 people** also find the **process of applying for jobs** difficult.

And that's without a criminal record

For young people with a criminal record, finding a job becomes even harder. Many employers use application forms to filter out candidates with criminal convictions, not allowing them the opportunity to fully explain their convictions and demonstrate the skills and qualities they could bring to the employer.

In a survey of young offenders at Glen Parva YOI, 'having a criminal conviction' was the most commonly cited barrier to work, highlighted by two thirds of young offenders who took part.

Young people not in education, employment or training are twenty times more likely to commit a crime. (Prison Reform Trust, 2015)

The value of employment

Re-offending rates for the youngest people in the UK criminal justice system are chronically high - **68% of under 18s re-offend** within one year of being released from custody, compared with 46% of the adult population (MOJ 2016)

The social and economic costs of young people re-offending has been estimated at anything up to **£19 billion** a year. (Prison Reform Trust, 2012)

A timely intervention

Employment is widely recognised to reduce re-offending, contribute to health and wellbeing, and provide a route out of poverty. What's more, young people who are in work are significantly less likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

By employing a young person with a criminal conviction you could make a key intervention in the life of a young person who otherwise might have a very different future.



Take action

Employing young ex-offenders is good for society, but it makes business sense too. There are more than **16,000 young people in custody** in England and Wales and tens of thousands more receive criminal convictions in the form of cautions and fines.

Many young offenders are receiving employment and skills training in prison. If your approach to recruitment excludes young people with criminal convictions, you could be missing out on the best person for the job.

40% of offenders surveyed said they had learnt new skills in prison which would help them to find a job.

1 Ban the Box

Removing the criminal record tick box from application forms gives young people the opportunity to prove themselves on the basis of the contribution they can make to your business.

By asking at a later stage you can better understand the circumstances of the conviction and assess any potential risks within the context of the role and your business.

Find out more at bitc.org.uk/banthebox

3 Get Futureproof

Removing the tick box is only one part of developing a fair and open recruitment process for young people. Our Futureproof campaign, backed by the City & Guilds Group, identifies many other steps you can take to inspire, hire, and grow young talent.

Start by using our free Youth Employment Assessment Tool at futureproof.bitc.org.uk

2 Work with prisons

Many businesses are discovering the benefits of working with prisons. A partnership with a prison could secure a pipeline of skilled, diverse and committed workers for your business.

Our Reducing Re-offending through Employment Network provides a platform to learn from businesses already engaging in this work through collaborative meetings and prison visits.

Get in touch at banthebox@bitc.org.uk if you would like to get involved.

Case study: Interserve

Interserve needs a continuous stream of skilled workers, which is why they set up their Facilities Management Academy in HMYOI Brinsford, a young offender's institute. Delivered in partnership with Milton Keynes College, the academy trains prisoners with the skills needed to work for the company, offering them a guaranteed interview on release.

“First and foremost, it’s about doing the right thing. But also the reality is that by doing this we open up an untapped talent pool.”

Scott Hill, HR Director, Interserve