



FACTSHEET

WHY BAN THE BOX?

The Ban the Box campaign calls on UK employers to give ex-offenders a fair chance to compete for jobs by removing tick boxes from application forms that ask about criminal convictions.

Are you finding it hard to recruit?

Every employer wants to recruit the best person for the job. But does your business:

- Ask about convictions at the first stage of the application process?
- Operate blanket exclusions for ex-offenders?
- Expect recruiting managers to understand and respond to the disclosure of convictions without guidance?



If so, you are probably excluding people with criminal convictions from roles for which they may be qualified and capable of doing.

Over 11.7 million people in the UK have a criminal record.

Home Office, 2019

Recruit from an untapped, diverse talent pool

The Lammy Review in 2017 highlighted how excluding based on prior convictions disproportionately affects people from Black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. The proportion of youth prisoners identifying as BAME rose from 25% to 41% between 2006-16ⁱ.

Whether someone has paid fines or served time, employment can help break the cycle of reoffending. Ban the Box employers look at people's skills and abilities first, creating fairer, more diverse workplaces.

This opens up a vast pool of talent and brings down the £18 billion a year cost of reoffending for businesses, taxpayers, and communitiesⁱⁱ.

If an ex-offender secures employment, they are 29% less likely to re-offend compared to 59% if they are unemployed.

Prison Reform Trust (2019)
[Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile – Winter 2019](#)

Criminal convictions: the facts

- Most people with a criminal record haven't been to prison and of those who have, the majority (67%) committed a non-violent crimeⁱⁱⁱ.





- Black people are over three times as likely to be arrested as white people in England and Wales^{iv} and this over-representation continues throughout the criminal justice system^v.
- An ex-offender who has been crime-free for 7-10 years is at no more risk of offending than someone without a conviction^{vi}, however depending on the length and type of sentence, a number of criminal convictions will never become 'spent' so will always have to be disclosed, if requested^{vii}.

Two thirds of employers that employ ex-offenders would recommend others do the same.

Ministry of Justice (2019) YouGov poll

Four steps to Ban the Box

1. **Explore the social and business case** – assess the benefits with key stakeholders.
2. **Assess legal, regulatory, and contractual requirements** – our sector-specific guides can help.
3. **Develop your recruitment process** – decide when and how you will ask about convictions and ensure a fair process by training recruiters.
4. **Ban the Box** – communicate internally and make changes to your recruitment materials. Finally, complete our sign-up form and plan your launch with us.

For more detailed guidance, please see our [Ban the Box Employer Guide](#).

CASE STUDY

Ricoh UK – how Ban the Box helped to create an inclusive culture for people with convictions

Ricoh UK signed up to the Ban the Box campaign in 2014 and have continued to be a strong business champion for ex-offenders. Since then, they have developed relationships with prisons and offered placements to prisoners on temporary release.

James Knox, Community Investment Manager at Ricoh UK says the key to creating an inclusive environment for ex-offenders is exposure. “There is a cultural change that needs to happen,” he says. “Far too often people are surprised when they learn that someone here has a conviction because their previous perceptions of ex-offenders are entirely negative”.

These perceptions have changed as more employees – including senior leaders – have volunteered to support with employability workshops. As well as encountering people with convictions whilst volunteering, Ricoh UK has helped to improve perceptions by employing ex-offenders. Whilst they do not ask about criminal convictions of job applicants at the point of application, they are clear that employees with offending backgrounds are empowered to disclose their past to colleagues without judgement.

The business case

Ban the Box employers and organisations that employ people with criminal convictions are positive about the benefits to the individuals and their businesses. They say Ban the Box has enabled them to:

- **Address skills shortages** – find the skills they need from a wider, more diverse talent pool.
- **Increase diversity** – work in partnership to target candidates directly, supporting people from BAME communities and young people.





- **Improve retention rates** – organisations that actively employ people with criminal convictions report higher retention rates, reliability, and productivity among that cohort.
- **Improve customer reputation** – 79% of people think that businesses employing ex-offenders make a positive contribution to society^{viii}.
- **Demonstrate responsible business** – employers bidding for contracts say this gives them a winning edge.

81% of employers agree that employing ex-offenders has helped their business.

Ministry of Justice (2019) YouGov poll

More than **145 employers** from various sector including Boots, Virgin Trains, Costain, Fujitsu and the Civil Service have committed to creating fair employment opportunities across a combined **940,000 roles**. They decide whether, when and how to ask about convictions later in the recruitment process, which benefits their reputation, employee retention and productivity.

Sign up to Ban the Box to reach diverse talent and stop the cycle of reoffending.

Further information and support

- **Unlock** – supports employers in the fair recruitment of people with criminal convictions.
- **Nacro** – supports employers employing individuals with a criminal record.
- **StandOut** – supports people preparing for release from prison by equipping them with the tools, skills and mindsets needed to apply for work.
- **Offploy** – supports employers through a four step journey to benefit from recruiting people with criminal convictions.

ⁱ Ministry of Justice (2017) [Lammy Review](#)

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Justice (2019) [Economic and social costs of reoffending – analytical report](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Home Office (2019) [Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2019](#)

^v Ministry of Justice (2019) [Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2018](#)

^{vi} Disclosure and Barring Service (2019) [Rehabilitation periods](#)

^{vii} Ministry of Justice (2019) YouGov poll

^{viii} Ministry of Justice (2019) YouGov poll

