



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Ban the Box Campaign Report

ONE MILLION JOBS LATER

2021



The impact of

**BAN
THE
BOX**



ONE MILLION JOBS LATER: THE IMPACT OF BAN THE BOX

The Ban the Box campaign calls on employers to remove the criminal conviction tick box from application forms in order to give people with convictions a fair chance to compete for jobs.

Introduction

In 2013, Business in the Community (BITC) launched one of its longest-standing and recognised campaigns, Ban the Box. Back then, employers were reluctant to consider the idea of opening their talent pool to people with criminal convictions - 75% of employers surveyed by Working Links stated that they would discriminate against a candidate with a criminal conviction.ⁱ

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

Employers were concerned that removing the criminal convictions tick box from applications would increase risk for their business, make their recruitment process more complicated, or require extra capacity to support people with convictions.

Seven years on, the campaign now covers more than one million jobs, thanks to a growing movement of employers who have committed to Ban the Box and adopt a fair approach to the recruitment of people with criminal convictions.

With every employer that signs up to the campaign, more people with criminal convictions can compete for jobs based on their skills and

experience rather than being excluded for a past mistake.

Ban the Box is being adopted by organisations of all sizes and sectors in the UK – including large national businesses, charities and community organisations, regulated industries, and the public sector.

It allows businesses to benefit from a diverse, untapped talent pool, while also bringing down the £18.1 billion annual cost of reoffending for businesses, taxpayers, and communities.ⁱⁱ Ban the Box employers make the campaign a core component of their inclusive recruitment strategy, and many go on to create tailored programmes and partnerships.

To understand the impact of Ban the Box, BITC has conducted a survey of over 40 Ban the Box employers. The insights gathered in this report demonstrate the benefits of becoming a Ban the Box employer - a simple step every employer in the UK can take, regardless of their size or sector, to open up their talent pool to the 11.7 million people with criminal convictions and to demonstrate social value.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ban the Box makes business sense, and we believe it should be standard recruitment practice.



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FOREWORDS

When we first launched Ban the Box in 2013, there were few businesses willing to consider employing people with criminal convictions. As the early adopters of the campaign began to experience the benefits of removing the criminal records tick box from the first stage of the application process, and share their experience, we have gradually seen perceptions shift.

Now, more than one million jobs are covered by the campaign which is a sign that employer attitudes are changing. Yet, while Ban the Box is a simple change that all employers can make, too many employers revert to template recruitment forms, unaware of the barriers these may present for 11.7 million people with convictions.

Seven years of campaigning and our survey of Ban the Box employers shows the tangible benefits of removing the criminal conviction tick box. We would like to thank all of our Ban the Box employers for adopting an inclusive approach to people with convictions.

These employers are trailblazers, leading the way for Ban the Box to become standard recruitment practice in the UK.



**Nicola Inge, Employment and Skills Director
Business in the Community**

We are proud that Boots was one of the first businesses to become a Ban the Box employer in 2013. The turning point for us came when I hosted a Seeing is Believing visit at a prison, meeting individuals that I could see would make brilliant employees.

That something as simple as a tick box could prevent our business from accessing talented applicants was concerning, and so we took the necessary steps to remove this barrier.

In the years since, Boots has continued to champion the campaign and broadened our work with prisons and prison-leavers.

Ban the Box is the right thing to do for our society, but I also firmly believe in the business benefits of the campaign. The survey insights in this report demonstrate how the simple change of removing the tick box can bring benefits for recruitment, diversity, reputation, and commercial advantage.

We are delighted that we are now just one of more than 150 employers signed up to the campaign and we urge all UK employers to join us.



**Marco Pagni, Group Legal Counsel and Chief
Administrative Officer
Walgreen Boots Alliance**

Recently, I came across a job where the company didn't ask on their form – although they did say they would ask for a disclosure from whoever was successful. I knew I would be a strong applicant, so this gave me the confidence to apply. Six months on, I'm loving my job and so thankful that they took such an inclusive approach. I wouldn't have applied otherwise.

Paul, UK employee

My offence happened because of complicated personal circumstances and there's never space to explain on an application form. I have applied for so many jobs and never heard back. I know my qualifications are good, so I know that it's because I've had to tick the box. When I applied for my current job, I really appreciated the fact that I was not asked about criminal convictions straight away.

Daphne, UK employee

BAN THE BOX SURVEY INSIGHTS

Participation

In total, 43 Ban the Box employers completed the Ban the Box Survey, which asked them to share how becoming a signatory has impacted their organisations' performance and reputation, with a view to celebrating progress and profiling success stories across the network of employers.

- The majority of responses received (40%) were from large UK employers.
- Most responses were from the Construction sector, followed by Accountants & Management Consultants and Education & Employability. A total of 24 sectors were represented in the survey.
- 12 success stories were received.

There have been a few examples of people telling us that they felt empowered to apply for a job with us because we have banned the box.

Amey, 2019

Motivations for joining Ban the Box

Business in the Community's '[Why Ban the Box](#)' factsheet lays out compelling reasons for organisations to sign up to the Ban the Box campaign including:

- addressing skills shortages
- increasing diversity
- demonstrating responsible business.

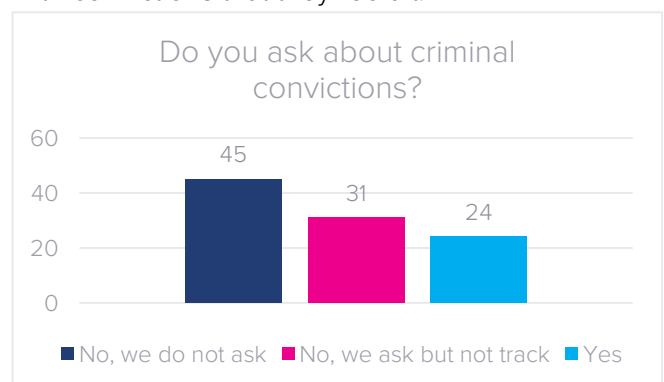
The survey results strongly support this existing evidence.

77% of employers stated that their motivation to become a Ban the Box employer was to demonstrate responsible business.

Other motivators included reducing re-offending (65%), addressing skills shortages by tapping into an untapped talent pool (53%), and improving customer reputation (14%).

Asking about criminal convictions

The Ban the Box campaign has one simple ask: that employers create fair opportunities for people with criminal convictions to compete for jobs based on their skills and experience by removing the tick box from application forms. Ban the Box employers may still ask about criminal records at a later stage of the recruitment process if required. Yet the majority of the employers surveyed disclosed that they have stopped asking about criminal convictions altogether and three quarters of respondents do not track the number of people with convictions that they recruit.



Those that do ask and monitor these numbers reported having employed a total of 283 people with criminal convictions since signing up to Ban the Box.

1 in 8 of those monitoring the number of employees they recruit with criminal convictions had hired at least one person with a conviction

Impact of Ban the Box

The Ban the Box campaign has now reached more than one million jobs. Given the nature of this campaign, the exact numbers of people with convictions that have gained employment as a result of Ban the Box can be difficult to quantify. The Ban the Box Survey specifically asked employers to answer the impact questions based on their perception of the campaign and to support their views with qualitative evidence when applicable.

Internal reception

4 in 5 employers believe being a Ban the Box employer has been received well by colleagues within the organisation

Traditionally, both the public and business have been reluctant to work with people with criminal convictions because it was viewed as an increased risk to colleagues, customers, or reputation.

However, the fact is that somebody with a criminal conviction does not automatically represent an exceptional risk. In fact, most employers that have been bold enough to remove the tick box from application forms, report higher levels of staff engagement and retention as supported by our survey findings.^{iv}

External reception

74% of employers believe being a Ban the Box employer has benefitted their reputation

The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer found 86% of respondents believe that CEOs must lead on societal issues rather than waiting for government to impose change on them^v. It is no surprise that increasingly consumers expect business to step in when the government is not able to alleviate societal issues on its own and to leverage their power to support the communities where they operate.

Being a Ban the Box employer demonstrates to the public that the organisation is acting as a responsible and inclusive business and that they are bringing down the £18.1 billion cost of re-offending in the UK.^{vi}

People with criminal convictions have something to contribute to society, and they are being unfairly prevented from a second chance. It is not just our civic duty to give ex-offenders a fair chance of finding work, it makes total business sense for us and the wider UK economy.

James York,
Corporate Responsibility Director, Costain

Numbers employed

Mainstream recruitment practices that ask about criminal records on application forms as a filtering mechanism often exclude people with criminal convictions and discourage this cohort from even considering applying. People with criminal convictions feel anxious about disclosing their past fearing that they will be judged or discriminated against.

60% of employers believe that being a Ban the Box employer has increased the numbers of people with criminal convictions employed by our business

A Business in the Community survey of prisoners at HMP Nottingham in 2015 found that a third would not consider applying for a job with a tick box, and 47% would not tick the box, many for fear of automatic rejection.^{vii}

A lot of companies judge you by what you've done in the past, before even looking at your qualifications or what you can bring to the company. With Tideway, they don't look at that. They just treat you like a normal human being.

Tideway employee, 2020

Being a Ban the Box employer reassures people with criminal convictions that the organisation has a positive attitude towards them and that they will be

given an opportunity to be judged based on their skills and qualifications rather than their past mistakes. This increases applicants' confidence, encouraging them to apply to be part of a fully inclusive workforce.

IMPACT STORY

Being a Ban the Box employer and setting up our [Making Ground Initiative](#), Kier is very proud that through the initiative, 88 prison leavers have been enrolled on the scheme, and 49 of them went on to secure permanent employment. The initiative restores prison leavers' self-esteem which can be eroded by their experience of being in custody and provides training to seek full time employment at the end of their sentence."

Kier Group

Diversity and inclusion

Race equality in the workplace is as important for business as it is for society. Yet many employers have not considered the impact the criminal conviction tick box could be having on their inclusion strategy. Racial disparity in the criminal justice system means that black people are disproportionately represented at every stage.^{viii}

IMPACT STORY

“CK joined us some 10 years ago having just finished the last of his custodial sentences spanning some 20 years. 10 years on, I couldn't have had a more dedicated and conscientious employee and he uses his lived experience in the workplace in a hugely positive manner.”

Intuitive Thinking Skills

Research indicates that having a criminal record disproportionately affects people from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds^{ix}. Black people are over three times as likely to be arrested as White people in England and Wales, and this over-representation continues throughout convicting and sentencing^x.

The reasons for this are complex, however this continuous over-representation has often been attributed to deep-rooted inequality and discrimination in society, as well as a lack of proportionate representation in policing and justice.

42% of employers believe that being a Ban the Box employer has increased the diversity of their employees.

Being a Ban the Box employer means you are recruiting future talent from a more diverse talent pool. People with criminal convictions come from all walks of life and may have faced discrimination all of their lives. By giving someone a second chance, employers have the power to tackle some

of society's biggest issues, whilst benefitting from a diverse and trustworthy workforce.

Employers can also go further by working in partnership with employability organisations to target candidates directly, supporting people from BAME communities and young people.

Recruitment and skills

35% of employers believe that being a Ban the Box employer has addressed the skills shortages in their business

Skills shortages are costing employers in the UK a record of £6.6 billion a year on inflated salaries, temporary staffing, recruitment fees and training^{xi}. By accelerating the changes that were happening in some industries as a result of automation and changing the ways of working, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an even greater demand for certain skills that businesses are finding it hard to fill despite rising unemployment.^{xii}

Coupled with Brexit, this means many UK employers are having to re-think how they recruit. Ban the Box employers have found new and creative ways to recruit from an untapped, diverse talent pool in their area. Ban the Box employers are going beyond removing the tick box from application forms, to develop tailored approaches to directly recruit ex-offenders from prisons or through third sector partners.

IMPACT STORY

Joining Ban the Box has been a great positive step for us. We have promoted this on our website, our LinkedIn as well as to the agencies we work with and our membership base via our marketing channels. Since joining Ban the Box, we have changed the way we recruit into the business. We only use agencies to recruit so we have raised awareness with them, and they also now do not disclose to us if someone has a criminal conviction whereas they would have previously. They actively promote Ban the Box so that they are able to attract more people with criminal convictions to apply and our recruitment process has become a lot more diverse since signing up. We wholeheartedly support the initiative.

REC

Find out how construction companies are tackling skills shortages with Ban the Box [here](#).


Commercial advantage

With government ramping up its social value requirements, businesses seeking to secure public sector contracts must be able to demonstrate how they will deliver on the government's social value.

Some Ban the Box employers have been successful in demonstrating value to society by actively employing people with criminal convictions, and this trend is likely to continue in line with enhancements in social value requirements.

IMPACT STORY

Costain is a contracting organisation and on some of their contracts where they have placed people with convictions, they have been able to impress clients with the social value created. Many of Costain's public sector clients are becoming increasingly more interested in contractors delivering high social value outcomes as part of a contract.



I'M CLEAR. THERE'S A REAL COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE TO OUR WORK WITH EX-OFFENDERS. I GET ACCESS TO A HUGE POOL OF TALENT THAT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS AREN'T EVEN LOOKING AT. SOME OF THE MOST HIGHLY SKILLED PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET HAVE BEEN IN PRISONS.

Scott Hill, HR Director Interserve



Engaging with suppliers

Engaging a wider network of employers with the Ban the Box campaign is a fundamental step to make more jobs accessible to people with criminal convictions. Though it is not a requirement, a lot of BITC's Ban the Box employers go on to engage further with the campaign by raising awareness of the issue within their networks including supply chains. Around **one third** of employers stated that they have engaged with their supply chain about Ban the Box in the following formats:

- Through workshops and supply chain forums.
- Informing supply chain that they are Ban the Box employers and requesting feedback on their recruitment processes.
- Setting targets.

IMPACT STORY

Costain created a supply chain forum where contacts and best practice examples could be shared. Costain use the forum to visit relevant charities, prisons, and rehabilitation services to further outcomes.

Other initiatives

Committing to Ban the Box is the first step to improving employment outcomes for people with criminal convictions. It shows applicants they will not be judged on past mistakes but rather on their skills and capabilities to carry out the job role. However, most Ban the Box employers believe further engagement and initiatives are fundamental to bring Ban the Box to life.

1 in 4 employers have formed partnerships with a criminal justice organisation or a prison

The majority of employers agreed that being a Ban the Box employer has led to them networking with other business who also support those with convictions. Employers have also found it helpful to partner with criminal justice organisations who often have the connections with prisons.

THEMES

Going beyond banning the box

The most common theme amongst respondents was the acknowledgement that banning the box is the 'foot-in-the-door' to introduce the topic of employing people with criminal convictions in their organisations. Many respondents believe that for organisations to see the true benefit of employing people with convictions, organisations need to engage with the cohort directly through initiatives and partnerships with key stakeholders. According to the survey, employers are likely to partner with criminal justice sector organisations (41%) and prisons (39%) equally.

IMPACT STORY

Through working with prisons and criminal justice organisations, **Amey** has found opportunities to employ prison leavers. They have a number of examples from their [Clean Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent](#) (CRED) programme, working with Recycling Lives, and working with prisons directly such as Drake Hall in Staffordshire.

We partner with Offploy and hired individuals directly via that route. It has been part of our Diversity & Inclusion strategy to actively hire and work with ex-offenders

Guidant Global, 2019

People with criminal convictions are just like any other employee

Unsurprisingly, one of the most common themes observed in the survey was the positive tone with which employers wrote about people with criminal convictions. The success stories shared as part of the survey strongly demonstrate that once a person with a criminal conviction is given a chance to explain their past, they go on to thrive in their roles and progress.

I had no idea what to expect as I hadn't been to any interviews for years. It was refreshing to know that Kier weren't interested in our qualifications, only our personalities and how we work together. After a few days I was offered an Operatives position, I accepted and was over the moon. A few days after that I was asked back for a further interview and was then offered a position as Apprentice Technician.

Kier's Making Ground initiative participant

Measurement challenges

Based on the survey responses, it was observed that respondents find it difficult to measure the success of the campaign and that a better mechanism to assess the actual outcomes would be beneficial to help take the campaign a step further. For now, most employers rely on individual stories and programmes, to showcase the success of banning the box. This is partly due to the nature of the campaign, but it would be useful to explore a system where employers will be able to review their performance and receive feedback on how they can improve.

Other themes

Other themes emerging from the success stories were as follows:

- Customers respond well when organisations can demonstrate social value created from employing people with convictions.
- Some employers conduct risk assessments before offering a role to ensure the individual is fit for the role.
- Being a Ban the Box employer supports and aligns with organisations' Diversity and Inclusion strategies.
- Ban the Box is a useful framework to share with other employers to begin the conversation about fairer recruitment.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Ban the Box Survey insights illustrate both the value that employers gain from taking this step, and the powerful impact that this has on people with criminal convictions. Banning the criminal conviction tick box enables people with convictions to enter the workplace or progress their careers; but often it also leads to employers taking further steps to support people with convictions through partnerships which benefit all of society, and particularly the 11.7 million people with criminal convictions in the UK.^{xiii}

Gaining employment can make all the difference – 39% of those who secure a job after release from prison reoffend and this leaps to 59% for those who do not find employment.

Prison Reform Trust, 2019

Most importantly, the survey insights demonstrate that seven years on, Ban the Box can and should be adopted by all UK employers. There is no organisation too large or too small, and no sector too regulated or complex, to benefit from removing the criminal conviction tick box.

This report shows the impact that can be made by just 150 employers, compelling us to call for Ban the Box to be standard recruitment practice in the UK.

BEING A BAN THE BOX EMPLOYER MEANS GIVING OUR BUSINESS THE BEST CHANCE TO FIND THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE ROLE, WHILE REDUCING REOFFENDING FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY. AS AN EARLY SUPPORTER OF BAN THE BOX, IT HAS BEEN BRILLIANT TO SEE OTHER BUSINESSES DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF TAKING A FAIR APPROACH TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS.

Marco Pagni, Group Legal Counsel and Chief Administrative Officer, Walgreen Boots Alliance

CALL TO ACTION

**BAN
THE
BOX**

After seven years and a million jobs we are calling on all UK employers to adopt Ban the Box as standard recruitment practice, because it benefits job seekers, business and society. Now is the opportunity for businesses of all sizes and sectors to seize the opportunity and build back responsibly, ensuring no one is left behind.

Join the growing movement by signing up to [Ban the Box](#).

ⁱ Working Links, 2010

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Justice (2019) *Economic and social costs of reoffending: Analytical report*

ⁱⁱⁱ ONS (2020)

^{iv} Ministry of Justice (2020) [Employing prisoners and ex-offenders](#)

^v Eldeman Trust Barometer 2021. Accessible [here](#).

^{vi} Ministry of Justice (2019) *Economic and social costs of reoffending: Analytical report*

^{vii} BITC survey of prisoners at HMP Nottingham, 2015

^{viii} Ministry of Justice (2017) [Lammy Review](#)

^{ix} Ministry of Justice (2017) [Lammy Review](#)

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

^{xi} People Management (2020) [Firms spend record £6.6bn plugging skills gaps, report finds](#)

^{xii} CEPS, fc, 2020

^{xiii} ONS, 2020