

Business in the

Community



Business Brief

WHAT'S THE RISK?



Employing young adults
with criminal convictions

Business in the

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Business in the Community stands for responsible business

We are a business-led charity with a growing membership of 850 companies, from large multinational household names to small local businesses and public sector organisations. We advise, support and challenge our members to create a sustainable future for people and the planet and to improve business performance.

Our members work with us to define what responsibility looks like in the workplace, marketplace, community and the environment – and we share what we learn about driving performance through responsible business practice.

Business in the Community is one of The Prince's Charities, a group of not-for-profit organisations of which The Prince of Wales is President.

We work locally, nationally and internationally through a network of partners world-wide and have 28 years' experience of working with communities in greatest need.



Barrow Cadbury Trust

The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent, charitable foundation, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised people in society.

The Trust provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on the West Midlands. It also works with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, seeking to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society.

www.bctrust.org.uk



Transition to Adulthood Alliance

The T2A Alliance has been established by the Barrow Cadbury Trust. The Alliance is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals working to improve the opportunities and life chances of young people in their transition to adulthood, who are at risk of committing crime and falling into the criminal justice system. The T2A Alliance aims to raise awareness of the problems this group faces and to secure policy change to improve their lives.

www.t2a.org.uk

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Contributors

Our sincere thanks go to the following companies and organisations that contributed to this research, including:

Lend Lease, Timpson, M&S, Barclays, Cadbury, Serco, Carillion, Ringway, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, YSS, St. Giles Trust, Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust, Northamptonshire Probation Trust, HMP Lewes

This business brief was written by Edwina Hughes, Campaign Manager: Reducing Re-offending, Business in the Community, 2011

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SUMMARY

This research has been carried out against a backdrop of a youth prison population of which 63% have no previous work experience (Working Links, Prejudged: Tagged for Life, 2010; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009) and a total prison population of over 86,000 of which 90% has offended before (Ministry of Justice, The problems and needs of newly sentenced prisoners: results from a national survey, 2008). Together these issues reflect a situation where, in the absence of good work, young unemployed people are committing crime, entering prison, being released and re-offending quickly.

By talking to a small group of employers we seek to understand some of their concerns when it comes to employing young adults with unspent criminal convictions. The research explores what employers do to minimise and manage the risk of employing from this group and asks whether a standardised risk management process used by prisons, probation and employers (as appropriate) would mitigate concerns and create a proactive response among employers.

Company case studies are available in Appendix Two.



FEWER THAN TWO IN TEN UK EMPLOYERS HAVE KNOWINGLY EMPLOYED EX-OFFENDERS. HOWEVER, NINE IN TEN STATE THEY ARE OPEN TO DOING SO IN PRINCIPLE.

(Working Links, Prejudged: Tagged for Life, 2010)

This research points to four findings and two broad recommendations.

Three of the findings focus on actions or approaches that currently assist employers to recruit and employ ex-offenders. The exercise found that employers who already support the employability of ex-offenders may:

- 1 Work in partnership and share the risk - voluntary organisations understand the particular barriers this group faces and make effective partners.**
- 2 Provide work experience opportunities - these give the young person an experience of the world of work and may help the employer select appropriate candidates.**
- 3 Consider the circumstances and personal journey of the individual – including a realistic assessment of risk to protect the individual and those with whom he/she comes into contact.**

These findings seem to suggest that companies willing to recruit from this group should adopt this practice in order to successfully recruit and retain talented young people who have unspent criminal convictions. Added to this, the research was underpinned by the assumption that a standardised risk assessment process would support more employers to provide employment opportunities to young people with unspent criminal convictions. However, insight from respondents indicated instead that:

- 4 A standardised risk assessment process that has buy-in from probation, prisons and employers seems like a distant goal because currently there is very little common understanding of risk among this group.**

Recommendations

In light of this, the recommendations point to a need for more and better sharing of good practice among employers, a channel through which to promote this good practice and some generic guidance on risk management to aid employers interested in employing young people with unspent criminal convictions. Broadly speaking, the research recommends time and resource is committed to creating:

1 Generic guidance for employers to help them manage risk

2 Channels through which employers can share and publicise examples of good practice

It is anticipated that these recommendations may contribute to the debate among employers and organisations that seek to support young adults with unspent criminal convictions about the perceived risk they present to employers because of their status. It will also seek to address the way in which employers and third party referral partners manage their processes in order to increase their propensity to employ from this group.



**63% OF THE PRISON
POPULATION HAVE
NO PREVIOUS WORK
EXPERIENCE**

(Working Links, Prejudged:
Tagged for Life, 2010)

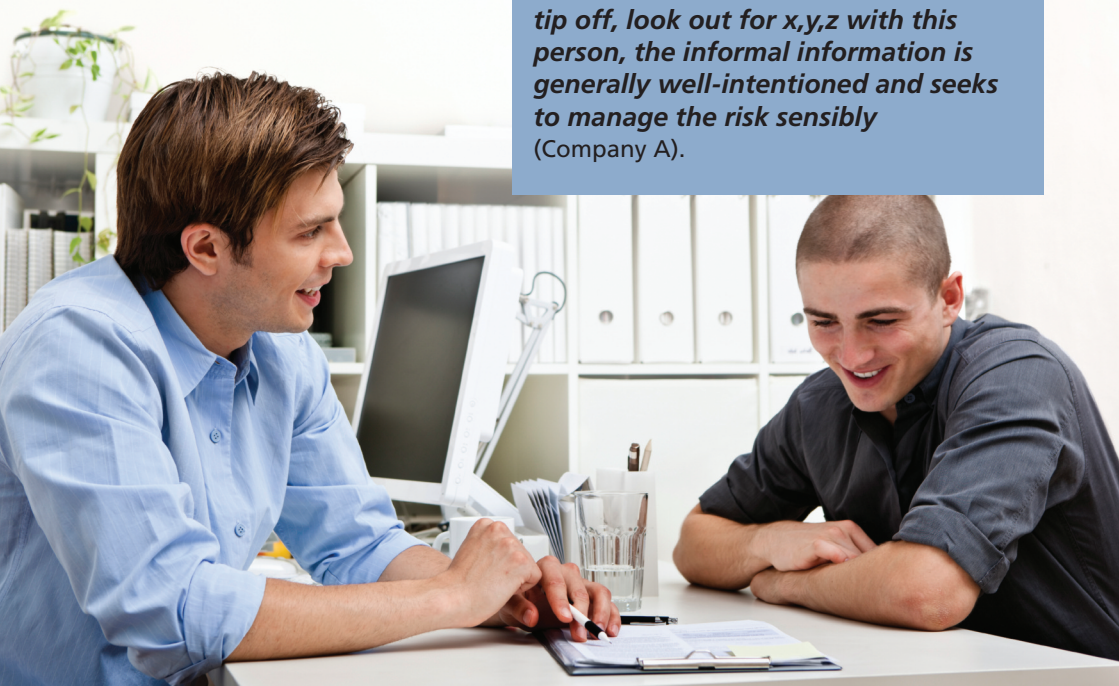
OBSERVATIONS FROM EMPLOYERS

Employers consulted through this research provided some valuable insights to how they manage risk and what they would welcome by way of support to manage risk.

The importance of working in partnership to effectively manage the risk of employing people with unspent criminal convictions was mentioned by a number of the employers with whom we consulted. Some felt that probation could help to inform and manage risk; others felt that a relationship with a voluntary organisation was invaluable.



Probation can inform the employers thinking on risk, they will provide the formal information – the forms etc. They will also provide the informal information – the walk to the lift, the tip off, look out for x,y,z with this person, the informal information is generally well-intentioned and seeks to manage the risk sensibly (Company A).



OBSERVATIONS FROM EMPLOYERS

A number of employers pointed to the benefits of a work placement – as a way to enhance the employability skills of the individual and as a way for the employer to assess the suitability of a candidate for employment.



[Referring charity] nominates an individual, someone from HR goes to meet them with [Referring charity] contact, this is a sort of informal interview, if they click the person is given a work placement. It's the work placement that helps the company to decide whether an individual would be suitable for a job offer. This office has taken four or five people over three years, about a third of these placements have translated into jobs (Company B).

In some instances a pre-selection day helped to identify likely candidates for placements.




Each individual will go through a pre-selection day from which they are picked to go ahead and do pre-employment training; this gives the company a few weeks to judge the risks and see if they are manageable. We will use this time to explore what their listening skills are like, how they manage feedback, how they will interact in the workplace (Company C).

The value of having some in-house understanding of criminal convictions was noted by some employers as important at the outset of an employability programme of this type.



After the referral is received a full assessment is done – it's more of a personal chat involving info on background, previous offences, and look for a lot of information. The conversation is confidential unless permission is given to share information or they disclose information that suggests they are a risk to the community (Company B).



Finally the utility of a standardised risk assessment tool was considered according to its merits and limitations.



Advantages to risk assessment would be that an individual in a company is never sure they are covering all the right things. We still find it difficult – fish in the dark, never sure you are covering the right things, just a starting point. We are worried that we might be assessing the wrong things, things that aren't risks; we don't currently talk to other employers about how they manage risk (Company D).

In response to whether a standardised risk assessment for use across different business sectors would be feasible, some employers pointed to the difficulty of creating something that could be accepted across sectors.



Creating an effective risk assessment tool for businesses across different sectors would be difficult - the level of risk associated with a particular individual may vary widely depending on the role and the type of organisation they are placed with. Some generic guidance for potential employers backed up with example scenarios might prove more useful. Each business could then adapt their existing risk management procedures as appropriate (Company E).



OBSERVATIONS FROM EMPLOYERS

A number of respondents felt that generic guidance rather than a standardised risk assessment tool would be more useful to them.



A set of guiding principles might be more valuable than a form. Principles would contextualise the offence and reduce barriers into employment. We would want the guiding principles to cover information like:

- *How long is it since the offence?*
- *Is there a pattern of offending?*
- *How serious was the offence?*
- *Is there danger of replicating it at work – are there opportunities to do so in the workplace?*
- *Was the crime on impulse or on purpose?*

You could use the guiding principles to guide the conversation with HR, look at whether your business provides any opportunities for repeat offending (Company A).



CONCLUSIONS

This research suggests it is unlikely and possibly undesirable to seek to create an entirely standardised risk management process for employers

because so many elements are subjective according to the culture of both the employer and the type of employment being offered.

The findings of this research, echoed by employers sitting on the leadership team of the **Employers' Forum for Reducing Re-offending** (Appendix One), is that employers are willing to support the employability and employment of people with unspent criminal convictions but they need support and guidance to do so. The importance of risk management within this request for support helps to identify where attention needs to be particularly focused.

At the moment prisons, probation and employers all use different risk management approaches.

The type of risk assessment done by prisons depends upon the offender and offence, and while probation will consistently carry out an OASys (Offender Assessment System) its emphasis on employment is somewhat limited and not necessarily accessible to employers. Meanwhile employers carry out their own risk management often in collaboration with a referring organisation (with its own set of criteria against which to gauge risk) that may or may not tap into some of the insights from probation or prison.

Furthermore, employers cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group - as a general rule they are not collaborating with each other to recruit, therefore good practice is not being shared. As a result, there is currently no standardised risk assessment that employers unilaterally recognise or accept.

All of this information points to the opportunity to create guidance for employers, ideally informed by their own experiences as well as the experiences of those working in prisons, probation and voluntary organisations. This guidance would help to profile best practice processes and help employers manage risk. This will lead to more young adults with unspent criminal convictions in work which will reduce offending and create benefits for the individual, the employer and the tax-payer.



APPENDIX ONE:

Employers' Forum for Reducing Re-offending

A Employers' Forum Vision and Mission

Vision

To support people with criminal convictions to become valued employees and to eradicate re-offending through the provision of quality employment.

Mission

To value skills and talent above previous criminal convictions by creating more employment opportunities for people with convictions both within their own businesses and through their supply chains.

This group and the campaign will create the opportunity to gather further intelligence from companies about the barriers that currently prevent them from employing from this group as well as to pilot ways of working that may increase impact. Findings will be cascaded through this group and their supply chains, they will also be highlighted to the membership as appropriate.

B Leadership Team of Employers' Forum for Reducing Re-offending

| Company | Member |
|-----------------------|--|
| Timpson | James Timpson, CEO, Chair |
| Lend Lease | Val Lowman, Managing Director, BeOnsite |
| Compass Group UK | David Platt, Operations Director Government Services, North Region |
| Cisco Systems Limited | Richard Roberts, Operations Director, UK Distributed Government |
| Serco | Jeremy Stafford, Managing Director of Serco Home Affairs |
| Sodexo | Natalie Bickford, HR Director, Sodexo UK and Ireland |
| Camden Garden Centre | Mike Jackson, Head of Social Enterprise Development and Training |
| Greggs | Roisin Currie, People Director |
| Wiltan | Alison Itani, HR Director |
| MITIE | Paul Ferry, Business Development Director - MITIE Care and Custody |
| TFL | Iain Smith, Head of Skills |
| Chapelfield | Davina Tanner, General Manager |
| DHL | Huw Jenkins, Global Business Director (Supply Chain) |
| M&S | Jenny Wallage, Head Of Employee Support |
| NOMS | Simon Boddis, Deputy Director, Head of Offender Employment Skills and Services Group |

APPENDIX TWO: Case studies of companies supporting employability of those with barriers to work

CASE STUDY 1



BeOnsite – Lend Lease

BeOnsite, a not-for-profit company, was established by Lend Lease, not only supporting the training requirement of the property industry supply chain, but seeking to build a more diverse workforce, demonstrating to government a new way of tackling reoffending, city centre worklessness and the skills shortage.

BeOnsite takes a wide variety of individuals who have been socially excluded including the long term unemployed, ex-offenders and those with low skill levels, and supports them into work. This employer-led model involves a short pre-employment programme followed by on-the-job training which provides a pathway into a specific trade or skill set. Each person's path is discussed and mapped out with contractors to provide clear routes from entering employment to becoming a fully qualified tradesperson.

IMPACT

- Lend Lease and BeOnsite have supported over 12,000 people finding construction employment and a further 26,000 people going into retail jobs
- Media publicity for BeOnsite events has significantly increased the company's public profile and reputation, particularly as the company had taken a strategic decision to continue to operate BeOnsite in the midst of recession
- BeOnsite has become a crucial part of the wider Lend Lease business. It has provided tailored, industry specific training for over 220 people and full-time, paid employment for over 130 individuals at a variety of projects around the UK, meeting the needs of the local authorities and communities where Lend Lease works
- Job sustainment - BeOnsite has shown that it can create sustainable employment solutions – over half of the 110 trainees at one major East London project have sustained their jobs for over six months and many have been promoted.

CASE STUDY 2

Marks & Start – M&S

Marks & Start is the country's largest company-led employability programme, and represents a major commitment within the company's Plan A vision.

In order to reach out to the most disadvantaged groups, the initiative works in partnership with Gingerbread, The Prince's Trust, Remploy and Business Action on Homelessness. The company commits to delivering 650 2-4 week placement each year for candidates in M&S stores and offices across the country. Partners provide the wrap-around support required pre and post-placement and candidates are supported every step of the way with buddies, coaches and co-ordinators.

In 2004 M&S decided to set up a programme that would not only raise aspirations and employment prospects of participants, but would also help with four key business objectives:

- Develop employee skills (through buddying) and improve employee commitment, loyalty and pride in M&S
- Integrate community activity throughout M&S
- Provide focus for external communications and increase customer awareness of community initiatives
- Provide recruitment opportunities and diversity within the Company.



IMPACT

- The Marks & Start programme has resulted in the recruitment of nearly 1500 employees, who otherwise would be an untapped pool of candidates due to their employability barriers
- Achieving a 40% into-work rate within three months of placement completion
- Marks and Start has trained over 4500 disadvantaged people and over 1800 have found employment
- Evaluation demonstrates that over 90% of participants feel the placement improved their confidence and that they feel more motivated and committed towards employment
- Through the lone parents programme, Marks & Start helped to lift over 800 families out of poverty since the programme began in 2004.

CASE STUDY 3



Rehab - Compass Group & ES

The **'Rehab'** project prepares women for sustainable employment when they leave HMP Drake Hall. As well as helping the women out of a cycle of re-offending, it has helped solve the perennial recruitment problems at the local MOD Swynnerton Training Camp.

Offenders normally work at the camp for six to nine months before being released on parole, though some have been employed for two years now. During that time, regular appraisals take place to evaluate progress with bi-monthly meetings between ESS, the offender and the prison's outwork liaison officer to maintain close contact and provide necessary support.

The women are paid the same rates as permanent ESS staff. They are allowed to access a small part of this income from prison, using the rest to help support their families and themselves on release.

IMPACT

- Since its inception, in 2004 over 60 women who have gained basic qualifications now have work skills and an employment record to help them on release
- 2010 saw the company take our first trainee chef, which was a resounding success. The young woman has since been released and is working in the catering industry in her home town, and to date has not re-offended
- To date, no participants are known to have re-offended since their release from prison
- The long standing recruitment problem at this rural site, have all but disappeared. There is now a reliable, committed group of women eager to work with the permanent team. Knowing there is always a full complement of staff has improved morale and job satisfaction enormously
- ESS have saved money: recruitment costs, once a significant monthly item, are almost zero.

CASE STUDY 4

St. Giles Trust

St Giles Trust is a growing UK charity offering wide-ranging services helping ex-offenders and disadvantaged people. It aims to break the cycle of re-offending by providing ex-offenders support in areas such as housing, education, training and crucially employment.

What distinguishes St Giles Trust is their principle of using qualified, skilled ex-offenders to deliver services to their clients. This peer-led approach gives their services a level of credibility which is vital when working with a target group who can be difficult to engage and mistrustful of anyone they perceive as being in authority.

Around one-third of the workforce at St Giles Trust has a criminal record and is employed in a range of roles including frontline caseworkers, head office reception, as administrators and as project leaders. They include a fully reformed man in his 40s who had clocked up over 80 convictions to a young woman who previously worked in the City and spent a few months in custody after just one offence. They all found it difficult to obtain a job because of their criminal convictions.

St Giles Trust trains people with criminal convictions to NVQ Level 3 in Information, Advice and Guidance which is the benchmark qualification for anyone looking to work in the advice sector. Those who successfully gain the qualification can then apply for jobs at St Giles Trust.



IMPACT

- An independent economic evaluation of one of St. Giles' Trust flagship services supporting prison leavers found that it reduced re-offending by an additional 40% and delivered £10 in savings to the taxpayer for every £1 invested in it through reduced costs associated with offending
- St Giles Trust has won the Sunday Times Best 100 Companies to work for in 2009 and 2010 and attributes this largely to the diversity of its workforce, chiefly brought about by the number of ex-clients it employs
- The charity's services have won many other awards including the Charity Awards 2007 and 2009, The Justice Awards and Centre for Social Justice Awards
- It is one of the partners involved in delivering the Social Impact Bond pilot at Peterborough Prison. The team delivering this high profile project comprises largely ex-offenders.

CASE STUDY 5

Timpson Academies - Timpson

Timpson selectively recruits both men and women directly from prison. The company has over 100 examples of ex-offenders who have quickly become a crucial part of the shops team and have not returned to their previous criminal past. For the last ten years, James Timpson has been developing links with various prisons to find suitable candidates to work in their shops. During this time the company has forged relationships with some 60 prisons and has had over 120 ex-offenders (Foundation colleagues as they are known) pass through the doors. Timpson currently employ 87 full time Foundation employees.

There are now four Timpson Academies across the country – there are two Timpson Academies where prisoners are intensively trained in all aspects of shoe and watch repairs, engraving, customer care and health & safety. There is even a mock up shop that prison staff use that creates a unique customer service opportunity. These are based in HMP Liverpool and HMP Wandsworth. The Timpson Academy at HMP Forest Bank in Manchester trains prisoners in welding, patching and stitching. The fourth Timpson Academy is connected to Max Spielman Photo Processing (a Timpson company). This Academy operates out of HMP New Hall in Wakefield.



IMPACT

- Supported 120 people into work
- Works in collaboration with 60 prisons
- Timpson currently employ 87 full time Foundation employees.

“Timpson looks beyond the label of ‘offender’ when recruiting to see the skills and potential each individual possesses. This benefits us because we find people who are motivated and enthusiastic about working for us. It also benefits the individual as employment gives them the best possible chance to avoid reoffending. It’s great seeing our Foundation colleagues gaining confidence as they learn the required skills to run a Timpson shop”.

(James Timpson, Chief Executive, Timpson)

For the full report please visit:

www.bitc.org.uk/community/employability/reducing_reoffending
www.bctrust.org.uk

For more information on the campaign to reduce re-offending through employment please contact:

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'If we learn to value skills and talent over previous criminal convictions we will enhance our workforce and help to support the reduction of re-offending through employment'

Huw Jenkins, DHL, Member of Employers' Forum for Reducing Re-offending

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