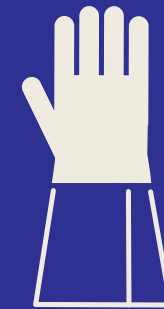
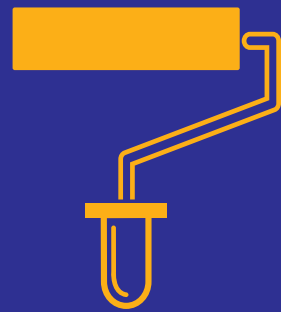
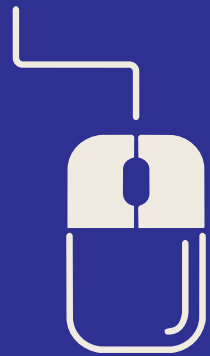


EMPLOYERS' HANDBOOK



THE **EX**CEPTIONALS.ORG

ABOUT US

The Exceptionals champions inclusive recruitment by providing practical guidance on the hiring process, sharing best practice, and linking businesses with leading rehabilitation organisations offering training, recruitment and ongoing support.

This resource pack provides a clear overview of the hiring process with signposts to further information.

These factsheets are designed as a framework for information, inspiration and discovery. They don't cover every aspect of recruitment, they are a roadmap to start your journey to inclusive recruitment.

RESOURCES

1. Business Case

Reasons why it is good for your business.

2. Employer's Journey

Simple steps to follow, from inspiration to recruitment.

3. Candidate's Journey

Insight into the hurdles faced when reintegrating into the community and the support available.

4. Points of Engagement

Look at the best way your business can engage with this cohort both in prison and in the community.

5. Risk and Disclosure Guide

Understanding risks and their management.

6. Top Ten Tips

Key takeaways for successful employment.

7. Glossary of Key Terms

Useful and accessible.

8. Pitch: How to Sell it into Your Company

Get management on board.

9. Industry Quotes

From businesses who have successfully hired from this talent pool.

STABLE
EMPLOYMENT
HALVES
REOFFENDING
RATES FROM
35% TO 19%.



WHY EMPLOY AN EXCEPTIONAL?



£23bn

THE COST OF
REOFFENDING
TO SOCIETY IS
ESTIMATED TO
BE £23 BILLION
A YEAR.

POLLING COMMISSIONED BY
THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
FOUND THAT

90%

of businesses who
employ people
with convictions
said they are
reliable, good at
their job, punctual
and trustworthy.



“If you want loyalty,
resilience, the hardest
working people, hire
those who have faced
and overcome challenges
in life. They are survivors
and doers. The best
employees you can have.”

Rick Mower
Managing Director, RAW Workshop

THEY CAN
BENEFIT THE
WHOLE COMPANY

65%

of organisations
that chose to
promote inclusive
recruitment of
prison leavers
in the media
reported a
positive effect on
their corporate
reputation.

MORE PEOPLE THAN
YOU WOULD IMAGINE
HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD



In England and Wales
13m
people have a record,
which is 1 in 4 of the
working population.

THE EMPLOYER'S JOURNEY



EXPLORE

WHERE DO I START?

The first step on this journey is to explore the possibilities.

>> The Government's New Futures Network is a great place to start when recruiting prison leavers: **New Futures Network**

Also speak to organisations who are already working in this field and who can support you.

>> Visit our directory to find the right person to talk to: **The Exceptionals - The Directory**



CONNECT

HOW CAN I FIND THE RIGHT APPLICANTS?

Often the best outcomes are those delivered in partnership.

There are a number of great rehabilitation and specialist organisations working to support people with convictions into employment.

>> Our directory has details of these partners: **The Exceptionals - The Directory**



ENGAGE

HOW DO I KNOW CANDIDATES WILL HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS?

Now you have connected with the right partners, it is good to participate in an employer led event in prison. It is a chance to meet potential candidates.

There might also be an opportunity to offer work experience, apprenticeships and placements on ROTL.

>> Work with a **specialist recruitment partner** like Working Chance, Tempus Novo or Offploy.



HIRE

AM I OPENING MYSELF UP TO RISK?

Consider working with an expert. For example, Dominic Headley & Associates, is a specialist consultancy that empowers organisations to make informed decisions on hiring individuals with criminal records or serious allegation issues.

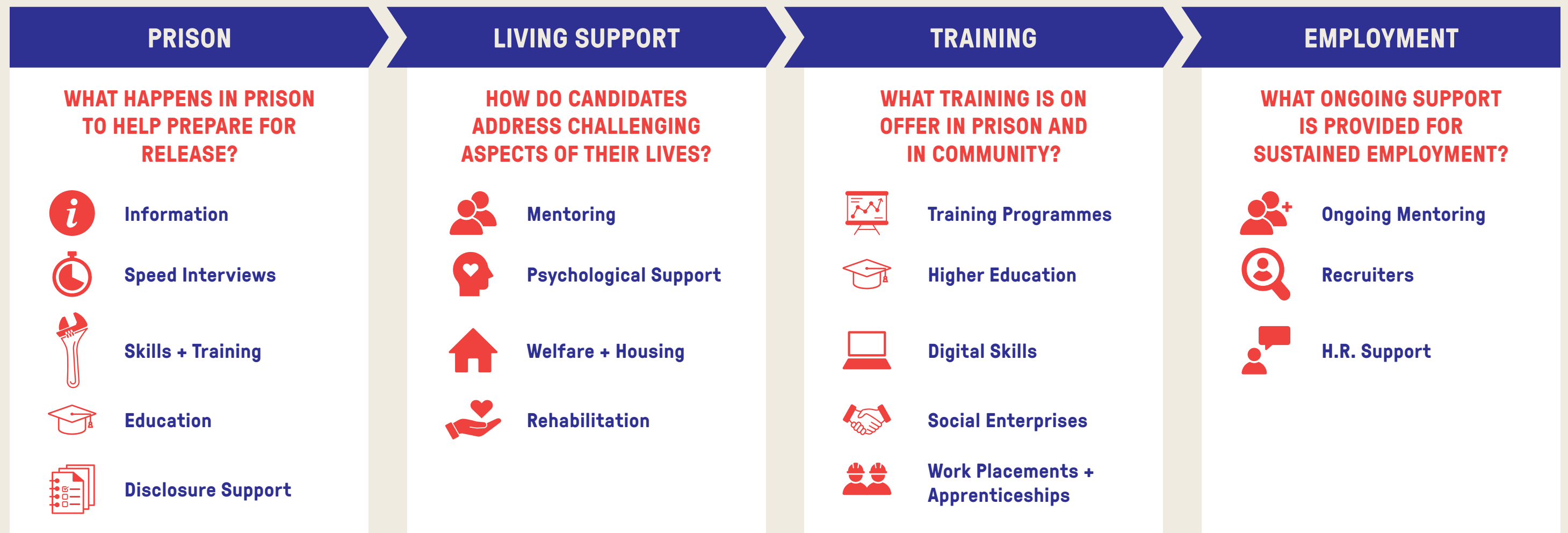
>> You can find their details and also specialist recruiters on **The Exceptionals - The Directory**

>> See our **factsheet on risk and disclosure**.

THE CANDIDATE'S JOURNEY



As an employer it is useful to understand the support each potential candidate can receive, both in custody and through the gate, to help them with their succesful reintegration into society.



THERE ARE ORGANISATIONS THAT HELP CANDIDATES PREPARE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT TO MANAGE THEIR LIVES EFFECTIVELY

>> TO CONNECT WITH THESE ORGANISATIONS [VISIT OUR DIRECTORY](#) >>

EMPLOYER'S POINTS OF ENGAGEMENT



EXPLORE

Build on your initial interest and connect with the community.



ENGAGE

There are different ways to engage with candidates in prison and through the gate. Some could lead to direct employment. Others allow you to explore the talent in this community whilst giving back as a company.



EMPLOY

Once you have decided to widen your recruitment to include people with convictions then there are lots of different ways that you can employ a candidate.



EMPLOYERS' NETWORKING EVENTS

There are events that offer the chance to network with sector specialists and other employers at different stages of the recruitment process.



PRISON TOURS

A prison tour will open your eyes to the wealth of talent available. These can be organised by local rehabilitation partners or specialist organisations.



WORKSHOPS AND SKILLS TRAINING

A partner organisation can help you attend or host a workshop or specific training programme.



CREATIVE PROJECTS

Work in partnership with a charitable organisation to run a creative project, in prison or in the community.



CAREERS FAIRS

Connect with talent at a careers fair inside a prison or in the community and take part in speed interviewing.



MENTORING

Consider mentoring people with convictions. This is a great way to help boost their employability.



RELEASE ON A TEMPORARY LICENSE (ROTL)

Consider offering a work placement via ROTL. This can be an invaluable stepping stone for candidates and can lead to long-term employment on release.



THROUGH THE GATE

Connect with a specialist or local recruitment partner and hire someone with a conviction.



PRISON INDUSTRIES

Explore the business opportunities prison industries could offer - bakery, waste management, light industry, catering and agriculture are all common activities.

RISK AND DISCLOSURE



STEP ONE

THE ROLE

- Adopt a Ban the Box approach. Request disclosure at a later, more appropriate stage – e.g. shortlisted candidates, prior to interview.
- Take a person-centred approach to risk management. Look at the role in question, assess risk in relation to its specific duties and the individual's circumstances.
- If you carry out checks, use the DBS eligibility tool and guidance to help determine what level of DBS check is required, i.e. basic, standard, enhanced, or enhanced with barred list checks www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check



STEP TWO

THE CANDIDATE

- Make informed decisions. Consider how long ago the offence(s) occurred, any mitigating circumstances, the openness of the applicant, your knowledge of the applicant and any professional references. Remember to document the rationale behind each recruitment decision.
- If the role is covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974, it is unlawful to discriminate against an applicant on the basis of a spent caution or conviction.
- Consider reputational and cultural risks to the business – e.g. negative media or online coverage of the offences, client reaction, staff discomfort. Plan how to manage these if they arise.



STEP THREE

TRAINING

- Work in a partnership to stay informed and break down unnecessary barriers.
- Attend training events and workshops.
- Connect with recruitment experts e.g. **Dominic Headley & Associates (DHA)**.
- Provide ongoing training and effective work-based support such as a supervised mentoring or a buddy scheme.



STEP FOUR

EMPLOYMENT

- From time to time, employment can go wrong. This is a natural part of the recruitment process.
- Look at ways of managing any external factors that may affect the candidate's ability to perform.
- Be flexible where you can.
- You may wish to consult **Nacro's Employer Advice Service** or **Working Chance** at workingchance.org.uk for more guidance.



TOP TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT

- 1 PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS ARE AN UNTAPPED WORKFORCE**
Given the chance, they often prove to be exceptionally loyal, reliable and hard-working employees with valuable skills.
- 2 INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS**
It strengthens your workforce, enhances your reputation, and delivers real social value.
- 3 SCALE IS NOT CRITICAL FOR IMPACT**
You don't have to be a large business to make a meaningful impact. Small and medium sized companies also benefit from the loyalty, motivation, and strong work ethic that these employees bring. It is not about scale – it is about giving the right person the right opportunity.
- 4 THERE IS NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL APPROACH**
There are many ways to engage with this community, and you don't have to go straight to hiring. You can get involved through mentoring; hosting or supporting training events; offering apprenticeships; or partnering with social enterprises and charities that work in prisons and support people through the gate.
- 5 RISK IS NOT INSURMOUNTABLE**
Take a person-centred approach to risk management. Look at the role in question and assess risk in relation to its specific duties and the individual's circumstances.
- 6 SHARING KNOWLEDGE IS ESSENTIAL**
Talk to employers who have recruited from this talent pool – learn from their experiences, challenges and practical approaches.
- 7 PARTNERSHIP IS KEY TO SUCCESS IN THIS SECTOR**
You don't need to do this on your own. There is a myriad of amazing organisations and individuals working in this space. They offer practical advice, support and resources for employers as well as helping candidates to manage the challenges they may face
- 8 EXPERTS EXIST TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS**
Work in partnership to stay informed and break down barriers. Attend training events and workshops. Consider working with a risk management expert, such as Dominic Headley & Associates.
- 9 THERE ARE TOOLS TO BRIDGE THE GAP**
If it aligns with your company's employment needs, ROTL (Release On Temporary License) can be a highly effective option. It creates one of the strongest pathways to sustainable employment by building confidence, trust, and experience before release.
- 10 SHOUT ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS**
Share your story and inspire others. By doing that you can help demystify the process and break down barriers to recruitment. You can also make a real difference by recommending partner organisations and other experts who supported your journey.



A GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

CIC (COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY)

A company or social enterprise that wants to use their profits and assets for the public good.

CIO (CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION)

A CIO is a corporate structure for charities. It provides some of the benefits of being a company under a bespoke charity structure.

CP (COMMUNITY PAYBACK)

Service users work on projects to benefit the community. This might be in association with local authorities or charities related to horticulture, maintenance or construction.

ETE

Education, training and employment.

R.O.T.L (RELEASE ON TEMPORARY LICENSE)

ROTL enables serving prisoners to leave a prison establishment on day release to work in the community.

SPENT CONVICTION

A conviction which, under the terms of Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, can be effectively ignored after a specified amount of time. The amount of time for rehabilitation depends on the sentence imposed, not on the offence.

UNSPENT CONVICTION

Unspent convictions are those records that have not yet reached this defined time and are still subject to disclosure when applying for jobs.



HOW TO SELL IT INTO YOUR COMPANY



Identify and share the reasons why this is beneficial for your **business needs**. For example, are you expanding and have a skills shortage, or are there social value commitments or contractual requirements driving this? Make your business motivations clear.



Understand what motivates your team - look at **core company culture and values** and how this sits in line with those.



Explain the **concept** and how to ensure **success**. Be clear on policy. For example, are you excluding any offenses? Consider working with a specialist partner on **risk management** and **guidelines**.

SHARING THE BUSINESS CASE



Share key statistics on the **business benefits**. 90% of businesses who employ people with convictions said they are reliable, good at their job and trustworthy.



Collaboration is key. Working with **specialist partners** delivers the best outcomes.



Involve key people from the company in the decision making, attend networking events and speak to other companies who have already hired from this talent pool.



Celebrate your success. Share your knowledge and experiences with other potential employers.

INDUSTRY QUOTES

“It makes good business sense: we need a skilled construction workforce for the future and there is so much untapped talent in the prison estate.”

Debbie Akehurst
Former Head of Economy and Communities, Landsec

“We’d really encourage other business to consider supporting offender rehabilitation and of course we’d invite them to get in touch with us and we’d be delighted to showcase our work.”

Joanthan Crookall
Former Director, Halfords

“We’re proud to be working with ex-offenders and want to share the benefits to other employers to support more people into employment. Thank you to The Exceptionals for celebrating the work we have done.”

Lisa Crawford
Former Head of HR, HSS Hire

“Our Rising Stars programme is about creating opportunities and recognising the potential in people. Several participants have gone on to secure permanent roles at Pret, demonstrating what can be achieved when people are given the opportunity and support to succeed.”

Tanja Mrnjaus, Employment & Training Manager, The Pret Foundation

“We’re trying to provide meaningful, long-lasting, inspiring careers for people. That’s really the heart of what we’re doing.”

Thea Tomison
Director, Advisory, KPMG

“At COOK, diversity and inclusion is about turning up to work, being part of something and being accepted just as you are. Whoever you are, whatever your past, whatever your background, whatever you believe. Turning up and being welcome.”

Annie Gale, Head of Raw Talent and Apprenticeships Cook