

## **What are the benefits of employing an ex-offender?**

Employment is one of the key issues which can affect reducing re-offending. The Clink's priority is to train graduates so that they can find full time employment, usually in the hospitality industry, when they are released from prison.

But there can sometimes be a stigma around employing someone who has been to prison, despite the fact that it is estimated that one fifth of the working population has committed an offence. The Clink works in partnership with third party agencies [Springboard] with the right expertise and with employers to provide vital long-term support to the graduates throughout their career. This extra support network has helped employers to feel confident in employing our graduates.

## **But why should I employ an ex-offender from The Clink?**

- Ex-offenders can fill skills and labour shortages that exist in many industries. The Clink graduates are trained throughout the programme and gain accredited City and Guilds qualifications in food service, food preparation and also cleaning qualifications with the British Institute of Cleaning Science.
- In addition to their qualifications, The Clink graduates have had valuable professional experience and are motivated to succeed.
- Recent research shows that two thirds of employers found employing ex-offenders had been a positive experience for them. (*Employing ex-offenders to capture talent*, CIPD, May 2007) In addition, the majority of the employers in the study found that ex-offenders integrated well with other staff, were reliable, had good attitudes and were honest.
- It showed that employers reported that reoffending when in employment was very rare.
- It is in the graduates' interests not to reoffend when they are released. If they break the terms of their licence they are likely to go back to prison.

## **How much am I entitled to know about the offence that the graduate has committed?**

- Employers can ask people to volunteer information about criminal convictions which have not been spent but when a conviction has become spent, an ex-offender can decline to volunteer this information unless the employer has special rights to ask for it.
- The Clink's policy is to ask the prisoner to write a disclosure letter to their potential employer.
- The prison service has very stringent security checks to ensure that it offers the appropriate trainees for the Clink to interview and consider taking on.

## **Are there risks if I employ an ex-offender?**

- There are risks to employing any potential staff member, not just ex-offenders. All of The Clink's ex-offenders are assessed on the sort of risk they could pose to a company and then only matched to jobs that they are suitable for.

## **Can I do anything to help manage any risks of employing an ex-offender?**

- Though each Clink graduate will be rigorously assessed to check that they are suitable for the role, employers should consider whether the graduate's skills,

experience and conviction circumstances weigh up against the tasks they will be required to perform and the circumstances in which the work is to be carried out.

- For example:
  - What level of supervision will the graduate receive?
  - Does the post involve any direct responsibility for finance or items of value?
  - Will the job present any opportunities for the graduate to reoffend in the course of work?
  - Will the post involve working with particularly vulnerable people?
  
- Working in partnership with other organizations with experience of dealing with offenders is a good way to share the risk. [The Clink works in partnership with Springboard, a specialist charity which provides long-term support and mentoring to each graduate before and after they leave prison.]

### **Should I tell the staff who will be working with the graduate that they have a criminal record?**

- No. You are legally obliged to ensure that information regarding offences is kept confidential unless there is a specific reason for doing so. Only the people directly responsible for recruitment should be informed of an applicant's criminal record.

### **How much should I pay the graduates if they work for me?**

- You should pay them the appropriate rate for the job or above the National Minimum Wage, as you would for any other employee covered by the National Minimum Wage Act 1998. Ex-offenders must not be treated less favourably than other workers in comparable employment.

### **Could I organise work experience placements for a Clink graduate with my company?**

- Work experience can be a positive way of getting to know the offender and gauging whether they are an appropriate candidate for you to employ. If you wanted to offer an internship to a Clink graduate it would be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, The Clink's priority is to get paid employment for its graduates so that they can sustain themselves once they graduate. Unless the work experience provided the chance for long-term career progression for The Clink graduates, it would be unlikely that it would be appropriate.

**For more information about employing ex-offenders please visit Her Majesty's Prison Service website:**

<http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk>