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Research Note September 2008

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Encouraging the employment of ex-offenders

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Each year, in England and Wales, approximately 66,000 offenders will return to society from prison.[1] At least three-quarters of them will be unemployed and almost two-thirds will re-offend within two years.[2, 3] Apart from the impact on victims, every prisoner who re-offends costs the criminal justice system an average of £65,000 up to the point of imprisonment, and as much as £37,500 for each year in prison.[4, 5] The estimated total cost of re-offending to society is £13 billion per year.[6]

Re-offending and employment are linked: offenders released from prison without a job are twice as likely to re-offend than those released with employment already lined up.[7] Unemployment is the most significant barrier to successful re-integration and makes it harder to maintain stable accommodation or to earn money legitimately.

But although most policy experts agree that gaining steady employment is crucial to reducing recidivism there are few robust evaluations establishing the success of programs to achieve this. Some employment programs in the UK that appear to reduce recidivism can be extremely selective and the reduction in recidivism is shown only after this selection has been made — skewing the results.

Getting offenders back to work will help reduce the skills shortage in England and Wales: the CBI believes that skills shortages have a 'serious' impact on a third of businesses.[8] But by not employing ex-offenders, businesses are excluding the fifth of the working age population that has a criminal conviction.[9] Despite concerns about the safety of clients and customers, the experience of those employing ex-offenders is overwhelmingly positive.[10] To encourage more of this, there could be a network for employers to share their experiences of employing ex-offenders.

The welfare-to-work model, recommended by Policy Exchange in *Paying for Success* and recently adopted by the two main political parties in the UK, is also an appropriate model for ex-offenders released from prison, a so called 'prison-to-work' model.[11]

The Government should offer payment based on performance to any organisation which places and maintains ex-offenders in employment. Local councils could then partner with these organisations to provide a one-stop assessment and referral centre to help place offenders in employment.

The economic benefits to the taxpayer and to the economy of introducing such a scheme are significant. We estimate that such a model could save the taxpayer more than £300 million annually.

However, the benefits of this scheme are not just economic. Common sense tells us that a stable job is a critical part of an offender's journey back into society. Employment provides independence, status, earning power, a structured routine, social contact and a sense of purpose and direction. Helping ex-offenders into employment will have a significant and lasting impact on the level and costs of crime and go some way in tackling the social exclusion that is prevalent in the re-offending community.

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Barriers to employment

The barriers to employment facing ex-offenders fall into three main categories: employer attitudes, lack of skills and legislation. In order to tackle the issues of offender employment, all three factors need to be addressed.

Employer attitudes

Concerns about employing ex-offenders can often lead employers not to consider them for jobs. Some of the concerns are well-founded but others are based on misunderstandings and false perceptions. Common issues include: the nature of previous offences, perception of risk, potential danger to staff and customers, damage to reputation and lack of a support network for employers.

Nature of offence

The nature and seriousness of the offence concerns two-thirds of employers.[12] Sexual offences cause the most concern to employers and over half take these offences into account when recruiting an ex-offender for a job.[13] But these offences only account for 1.5% of common indictable offences committed in the UK: theft and handling stolen goods account for most of these offences.[14]

Perception of risk

The recruitment of offenders is considered to be a high-risk strategy. Offenders are thought of as untrustworthy and likely to re-offend against the organisation and its employees.

Employer attitudes

- **81%** of employers cite 'protecting customers and employees' as the main reason they don't employ ex-offenders
- Employers are most concerned about sexual offences (**61%**) yet they account for only **1.5%** of all common indictable offences
- **65%** of those employers that had promoted employing ex-offenders say it had delivered a positive impact on their corporate reputation

Danger to staff and customers

The most common reason given in a Department for Work and Pensions study for not wishing to recruit someone with a criminal record was protecting customers and employees (81%).[15] This is supported by a University of Manchester study which claims that 95% of employers see the potential risk to staff of employing ex-offenders as 'very important' or 'important'.[16] Employers are also concerned that their employees are likely to feel uncomfortable working with ex-offenders.

Damage to reputation

Fear of damage to corporate profile and reputation by employing ex-offenders is another common concern of employers. Few organisations (8%) with experience of employing ex-offenders choose to promote this through the media due to an unwarranted fear of bad press, however 65% of those that had promoted employing ex-offenders say it had delivered a positive impact on their corporate reputation.[17]

Lack of information and support

Lack of information and support is a significant barrier for employers considering employing ex-offenders. More than two-thirds of employers say that they would find guidance on risk assessments and safeguards useful in connection with ex-offender employment, as well as more information about legal obligations (52%) and awareness-raising training (51%).[18] Employers would also find personal support for ex-offenders (e.g. a mentor) and access to employer support (e.g. a nominated contact person) helpful (63% and 57% respectively).[19] Among employers with no experience of ex-offenders, more than half of them want access to employer networks to discuss practical experiences of employing ex-offenders.[20]

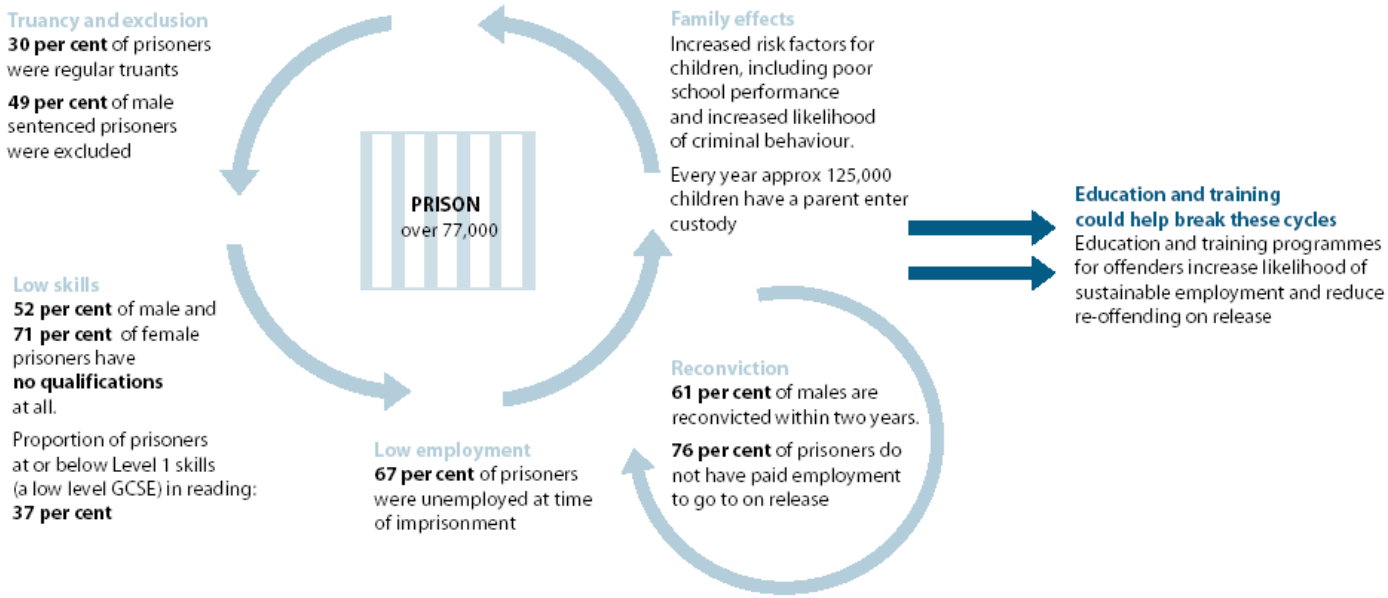
Lack of skills

The second significant barrier to employing ex-offenders is their lack of necessary skills. The most recent published research found that prisoners typically have a poor level of basic skills and a disappointing education and employment record. More than half left school with no qualifications, and a third with literacy skills at or below those expected of an 11 year old.[21]

Only half of prisoners have the reading skills, one-fifth the writing skills and less than one-third the numeracy necessary for 96% of all jobs.[22] This is unsurprising; nearly a third of offenders were regular truants from school and almost half of all male prisoners were excluded from school.[23, 24] 60 to 70% of prisoners were using drugs before imprisonment, around one-third were not in permanent accommodation and over 70% suffer from at least two mental disorders.[25, 26]

Based on previous experience, employers rated the following 'soft skills' and qualities as most important when considering employing ex-offenders: honesty (92%), reliability (89%), personal behaviour (84%), punctuality (79%) and social skills (64%).[27] This reflects the importance of accountability and the ability to work well in a team.

Learning, skills and employment can help break the cycle of offending[28]



Legislation

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 requires ex-offenders, if asked, to disclose their previous convictions to employers. This requirement lasts until a period of time has passed without further convictions, when they become 'spent'. For shorter offences this can take up to 10 years and for those sentenced to over two and a half years in prison the requirement to disclose lasts for the rest of their lives – a requirement which affects around 100,000 ex-prisoners at any one time.[29, 30]

The Police Act 1997 enables employers to have access to reliable information about job applicants' criminal records. The Act created a new body, the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), which is now responsible for the disclosure of criminal record information to individuals on request, with a copy to the employer for the two higher-level disclosures.[31]

This is a significant barrier for ex-offenders, although there has been improvement in recent years. In 2002 two-thirds of employers said they would routinely ask about criminal convictions when considering job applicants and three-quarters of those surveyed said they would treat a candidate less favourably if they were aware that they had a criminal conviction.[32] Now only one in seven organisations ask job applicants if they have a criminal record.[33] Nevertheless, 57% of ex-prisoners seeking work say that they have had difficulties because of their criminal record.[34]

Policy context

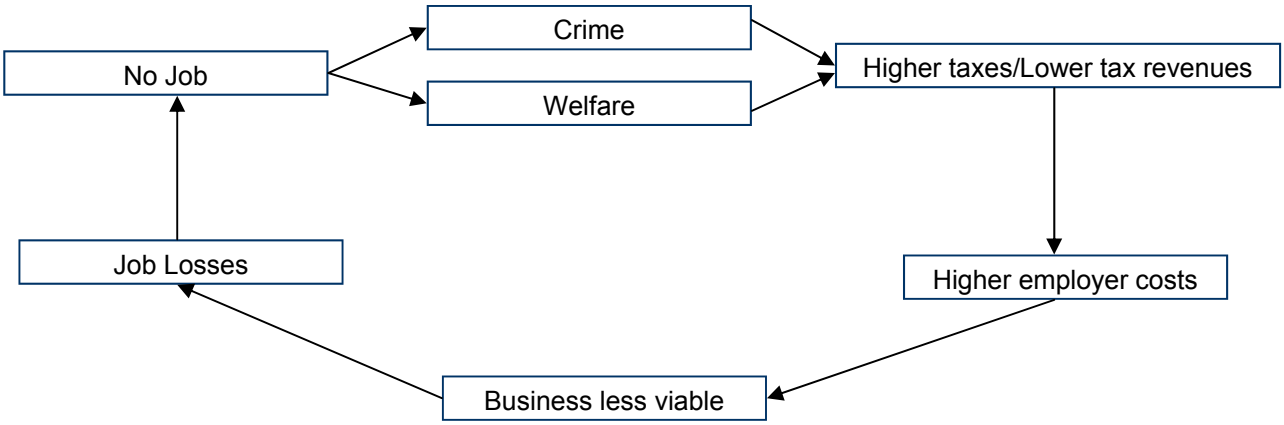
Various Government departments have policy initiatives in this area. The Ministry of Justice, *Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan* (2004) outlines seven pathways including one that focuses on education, training and employment. This action plan sets the context for subsequent work and was followed by the Green Paper *Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment* (2005) and then *Reducing Re-offending through Skills and Employment: Next steps* (2006).

The most recent scheme set up by the Ministry of Justice and supported by the Department for Work and Pensions is a vocational training scheme based at HMP Wandsworth. It is aimed at securing jobs for prisoners on release by giving them skills in high demand by employers. The project has been set up in partnership with Cisco and Panduit and is supported by construction company Bovis. The scheme trains prisoners in voice and data cabling installation, providing them with skills in an area where demand for skilled employees outstrips supply by at least 20%. On release, offenders are offered the opportunity to secure employment and further training.[35]

Although these schemes are to be commended, the scale is small and has little impact on the figures. There is currently no national scheme that would encourage the employment of ex-offenders to any significant degree.

The business benefits of employing ex-offenders

The benefits to business of employing ex-offenders can be great, and the consequence of not engaging them costly. The cost of re-offending is estimated at £13 billion per year.[36] This cost, largely covered by taxation, will add to business' tax burden.



Many employers are already seeing the benefits of employing ex-offenders; around half of UK employers report experience of employing ex-offenders.[37] Only 6% of employers surveyed in 2002 said that employing people with convictions had been a negative experience, compared with two-thirds who said it was positive.[38] Four times as many employers, with experience of employing ex-offenders, say that their experience is better than expected than those that say it is worse. [39] The benefits to business of employing ex-offenders are compelling:

1. It can resolve skills shortages

Employers have difficulty filling one-half of all vacancies – and skills shortages have a serious impact on one-third of businesses.[40] More than eight out of ten employers are experiencing recruitment difficulties due to skills shortages and lack of experience.[41] These shortages are primarily in construction industries; but also hotels and restaurants, retail, distribution and skilled manual jobs.[42] Availability of candidates to fill vacant positions has been in decline for over a year.[43] 7.3 million people in England and Wales have a criminal conviction, around a fifth of the working-age population.[44]

2. High levels of performance and retention

87% of employers who have experience of employing people with convictions consider them at least as productive as other workers and three-quarters find them at least as reliable.[45] Employers with a positive experience of ex-offenders stated the chief reasons were that they settled into work well with colleagues (86%) and performed well (82%).[46]

3. It can be a cheap and transparent recruitment route

Offender employment programs are effective recruitment tools.[47] Employing ex-offenders from prisons, probation or other agencies means that companies have access to clear and transparent CVs and good risk assessment procedures. One in three adult males under the age of 40 has a criminal record, and according to the CIPD, 88% of job applicants admit to substantial lying on their application form; the probability of employers already employing ex-offenders without knowing it is quite likely.[48] By recruiting ex-offenders intentionally through trusted and established programs, employers can make recruitment decisions based on the full facts.

4. Demonstrates a commitment to corporate social responsibility

Employing ex-offenders demonstrates that a business takes social responsibility seriously. The case for corporate social responsibility is clear. According to Mori, 84% of the British public think that knowing about a company's activities in society and the community is important in forming an opinion of that organisation.[49] And in a 2006 survey of graduates, 72% said they would have to feel happy with the ethical record of a prospective employer - regardless of which sector they wanted to work in.[50]

Existing schemes designed to get offenders back into work

There are currently a number of organisations and partnerships that engage in the issue of employing ex-offenders both in the UK and abroad. They are provided by a mixture of public, private and voluntary organisations.

Our research highlights some of the more innovative and high-impact approaches to placing the offender population into employment in the USA. Although the case studies analysed are slightly different from each other, they are all based on the welfare-to-work model that helps welfare claimants into employment through payment incentives to private providers.

The USA has the highest incarceration rate in the world: over 700 people for every 100,000 of the population.[51] Over 90% of them will be released from prison: around 630,000 offenders will return to society every year.[52, 53] As a result, prisoner re-entry has become a high priority for politicians and policymakers.

America Works (USA)

America Works is a for-profit organisation that specialises in moving unskilled and minimally experienced welfare recipients into existing private sector jobs. Their approach works through intensive work readiness training and basic skill-building, rapid job attachment, and intensive support services during the probationary period to ensure job retention. Unlike traditional employment and training programs, America Works does not emphasise an academic curriculum or speculative, job-specific training.

America Works specialises in providing employers with candidates who are prepared for the world of work, understand appropriate work behaviour, will show up regularly and on time and are ready and able to learn quickly on the job.[54] Since their inception, over 100,000 individuals have been successfully placed and retained in employment.

Since 2001, America Works has been running a Criminal Justice Program which places offenders in employment.[55] It is based on the same methodology as its welfare-to-work employment initiative and applies to men the same private-sector approach to work placement that it has used successfully with welfare mothers. One key difference between the welfare-to-work program and the offender-to-work program is the need to spend some time explicitly addressing issues that arise from the job-seeker's criminal record. Another difference is that job seekers are referred by parole officers, and rather than working with government welfare officials, America Works staff work closely with corrections officials.[56]

America Works in numbers

- **3,000** ex-offenders are placed in employment each year
- Each offender placed in employment by America Works saves the US taxpayer **$30,000** annually
- The re-offending rate for participants in the program is **2 - 5%,** compared to the national re-offending rate for male offenders of **66%**
- The average cost to place and maintain an ex-offender for 6 months is **$5,000**

Ex-offenders are given an intensive orientation, lasting up to six weeks. This includes information on getting a job, working, interviewing, dress and behaviour. They are then placed by sales representatives in private firms that recruit low-skilled labour from America Works.[57]

Once placed, corporate representatives from America Works visit the clients on the job, talk to employers, and help to deal with any problems that may arise. For ex-offenders this could range from substance abuse and absenteeism to issues with accommodation or health.[58]

America Works is financed through incentive ('pay-for-performance') payments, receiving $1,000 for each initial job placement, then a further $1,000 for each placement that lasts 30 days, $1,500 for 90 days and a final $1,500 for 180 days.[59] The total payment for an average ex-offender (who remains in place for 180 days) is $5,000.[60]

The Criminal Justice Program places 3,000 ex-offenders into employment each year.[61] Each ex-offender placed in employment by America Works saves the US taxpayer $30,000 annually.[62] The re-offending rate for participants in the program is 2 - 5%, compared to the national re-offending rate for male offenders of 66% within three years.[63, 64]

Center for Employment Opportunities (New York City)

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) was started by the Vera Institute of Justice and has been run autonomously since 1996.[65] CEO prepares over 2,000 ex-offenders each year to move into mainstream employment.[66]

Parolees come to CEO from the state prison system. After receiving several days of pre-employment instruction, they are assigned to work crews that CEO maintains through its Neighbourhood Work Project (NWP). There they do maintenance and repairs for local government agencies. Their attendance and performance is monitored daily, and they are also paid daily, which meets their need for immediate income. Pay is $6.75 an hour, the New York State minimum wage.[67]

Clients work full time, four days a week. On the fifth day, they report to a Vocational Development Program (VDP), where they work with a 'job coach' who instructs them on job interviewing and helps them straighten out personal problems that could interfere with working. After two weeks in NWP, they also see a 'job developer', who lines up interviews for them with private employers.[68]

CEO in numbers

- **2,000** ex-offenders placed in employment each year
- Each offender placed in employment by CEO saves state government **$47,500** annually
- The re-incarceration rate for participants in the pilot program was **50%** less than the control group rate
- It costs CEO **$33,220** a year to provide a slot in its community work crews

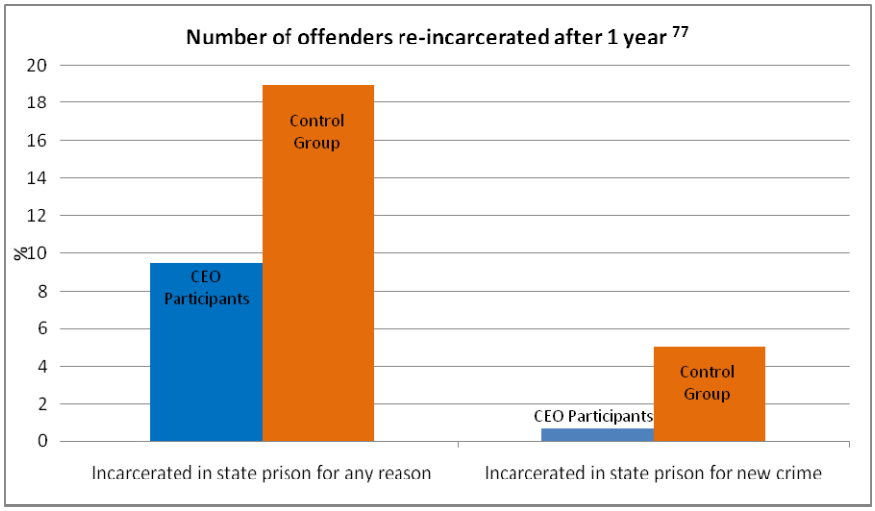
Clients stay in NWP as long as is needed to get a regular job, with a limit of 75 days.[69] After placement, they are followed up at 30, 60, 90 and 180 days.[70] CEO's job retention rate is around 45% at six months and 34% after a year.[71]

The scheme is funded mostly by the parole system, the agencies that hire its work crews and other government agencies. It costs CEO $33,220 a year to provide a slot in its community work crews.[72] Since an average of six clients will hold a slot in a year, the cost per client is only $5,537.[73] Furthermore, these costs are largely defrayed by the income CEO earns from the agencies that employ its crews. The net cost is only $3,219 per slot, or $536 per client.[74] Of the over 2,000 parolees who come to CEO each year, 200 fewer offenders return to prison.[75] For every 200 people, CEO's program saves State government $9.5 million, or $47,500 per offender.[76]

As part of a random assignment evaluation conducted by MDRC, a leading education and social policy research unit, those ex-offenders who were referred to CEO between January 2004 and October 2005 were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the normal CEO program (NWP) or a control group (with limited job search assistance). In addition to the full sample, two sub-groups were studied: 'recently released ex-prisoners' (those enrolled within 3 months after release) and 'not recently released ex-prisoners' (those enrolled more than 3 months after release).

The graph presents recidivism measures for the 'recently released' group. It shows two sizable effects of the program: a 10 percentage-point decrease in overall re-incarceration, as well as a 5 percentage-point decrease in incarceration for a new crime.[78]

In comparison to the control group, this equates to a 50% decrease in incarceration rates in state prison for any reason.[79] MDRC notes that impacts of this size, in a criminal justice random assignment study, are "rare".[80]



Comparison between America Works and Center for Employment Opportunities

Both CEO and America Works arrange and oversee work, while providing work orientation and casework. But America Works does not regard transitional jobs as necessary, whereas CEO does. America Works believes that only placing clients with regular employers can prepare them to work and that creating jobs in government is a waste of time and money. If clients fail, and some do, America Works gets them further positions until they succeed. CEO, by contrast, sees a need for supported work. It is worth noting that due to the higher cost of public employment programs, the placement costs for CEO are approximately double that of America Works.[81]

Even if one accepts the need for transitional jobs, the CEO positions are short, lasting at most seventy-five days. Positions in other work guarantee programs have lasted six months to a year or more, in part because more time was thought necessary to instil work discipline. Longer assignments might improve job retention after clients move on to private jobs. On the other hand, longer positions cost more, and many clients placed in public jobs for enforcement purposes leave them quickly. Average tenure in a government job is far less than the assignment. CEO finds that whether a client can succeed at work is usually settled well before seventy-five days.[82]

Although there are differences between America Works and CEO, the underlying theory is the same. Getting offenders into employment is cost effective and reduces recidivism. But how do these providers integrate with government on a local level? The City of Newark, New Jersey, provides a good example of how this can be done.

Opportunity Reconnect (City of Newark, New Jersey)

Each year, over 1,700 Newark residents return from prison.[83] Over the past thirty years, the prison population in the State of New Jersey has more than quadrupled and state spending on corrections has grown at twice the rate of the rest of the state budget.[84] Within three years of release approximately 60% of these individuals will be re-arrested, 43% will be re-convicted for new crimes, and 38% will be re-incarcerated.[85] The Mayor of Newark, Cory Booker was elected on a platform that promised to help place offenders into work. His city's scheme, Opportunity Reconnect, is discussed here.

Opportunity Reconnect is a re-entry 'one-stop centre' for parolees, probationers and returning offenders in Newark/Essex County located at Essex Community College. It is staffed by multi-agency personnel from New Jersey Parole, New Jersey Department of Corrections, county and city welfare agencies, employment services, emergency services, housing agencies, and other agencies. There are lead case managers who process, assess, and track participants. They help create individual re-entry plans and coordinate partners for implementing those plans.[86]

The mission of Opportunity Reconnect is to ensure that ex-offenders returning to the Newark/Essex County area have access to services that support them becoming self-sufficient and productive members of society. Opportunity Reconnect provides continuity of services during offenders' transition from the criminal justice system to the community. It enables integration of multiple case plans (pre-release, probation and community agency services) and helps participants negotiate complex social service systems.[87]

Opportunity Reconnect takes a holistic approach to rebuilding the lives of people who typically have been cut-off from mainstream society. It helps returning ex-offenders overcome obstacles such as not having valid identification, healthcare, housing, job training, education or employment. The program serves 60-100 returnees weekly.[88]

One of the service providers based at Opportunity Reconnect is America Works which again, via performance-based contracts, helps the ex-offenders into employment. America Works provides direct job placement for Opportunity Reconnect clients that are ready to be placed.

Public-private partnerships have the potential to leverage resources and expand the scope of available services. They can succeed if both the public and private entities have the flexibility to operate outside of their established institutional norms. As such, Opportunity Reconnect has formed an inter-agency task force led by the City of Newark and charged with building collaborative inter-agency relationships. The on-site partners in this 'mixed economy' fit into three categories: public sector service providers, criminal justice agencies and private sector service providers.[89]

Models such as Opportunity Reconnect are difficult to implement because of the many partnerships and operational agreements that must be developed. Yet this type of structure offers a way to provide coordinated services across multiple areas involving a number of partners.

Four important elements aided the planning and vision of the Opportunity Reconnect initiative:[90]

- A secured partnership with the state criminal justice system that allows for the pre-release identification of offenders and their needs, so that the re-entry plan can be planned and coordinated from prison to community;
- An aggressive and comprehensive employment strategy that incorporates life skills, educational, and vocational training, work experience, job placement, and job retention assistance;
- An array of human and supportive services that address basic life needs including housing, transportation, health insurance, medical treatment, counselling, peer mentoring, and reunification with families;
- A network of community service providers to provide a continuum of care in communities for ex-offenders which reduces service fragmentation and duplication, while promoting increased capacity and service linkages.

Analysis

Components of a successful re-entry program

There are four key components for a successful prisoner re-entry program. The models in this research note combine these four elements and are the key to their success:[91]

- The supervisor (e.g. probation officer) must monitor the actual work or job search and must have some quick way to reward good behaviour and penalise bad;
- The program should maximise available employment opportunities and must not allow people who might resist taking menial positions the excuse that jobs are unavailable;
- There should be some kind of orientation to the demands of working. Men and women who have lived behind bars need some instruction;
- Participants in the program should have help dealing with other problems in their lives, such as health, housing and relations with their families.

Discouraging inefficient behaviour

The design of the incentives for the providers must discourage inefficient behaviour, such as:[92]

- 'Deadweight' loss - A 'deadweight' loss is a payment for helping people to get jobs who would have got them by their own efforts;
- 'Creaming' - 'Creaming' is where suppliers select or focus their efforts on those clients who are easier to get into work. This is less likely if providers are paid more for the harder to place or for increasing the proportion of their case load who find work above a base level;
- 'Parking' - 'Parking' is ignoring or devoting least attention to the hardest to place clients who actually need the most intensive support. 'Parking' is likely to be a particular problem if the remuneration system provides additional resources or rewards for helping the hard to place only after they have been unemployed beyond a threshold period.

The structure of performance payment incentives

As 'pay-for-performance' schemes offer the best chance of results, the full fee for putting an offender through the program should only be paid if offenders stay in employment for 12 months after their initial placement. Model contracts might be structured so that:

- 25% of the total cost per participant enrolled is paid monthly over six months to cover overhead costs;
- 45% of the cost per participant is paid as each participant completes three months of continuous employment at one work site;
- 30% of the cost per participant is paid as each participant reaches 12 months of employment, not necessarily at the same work site.

Economic analysis of employing ex-offenders

The most effective programs designed to get ex-offenders into work will significantly reduce the cost of crime. Building on an extensive business model prepared by Rutgers Business School and Integrity House for drug offenders in New Jersey, and using statistics from the America Works and CEO initiatives, we have been able to estimate the potential savings of introducing a performance-based incentive for employing ex-offenders in the UK.[93]

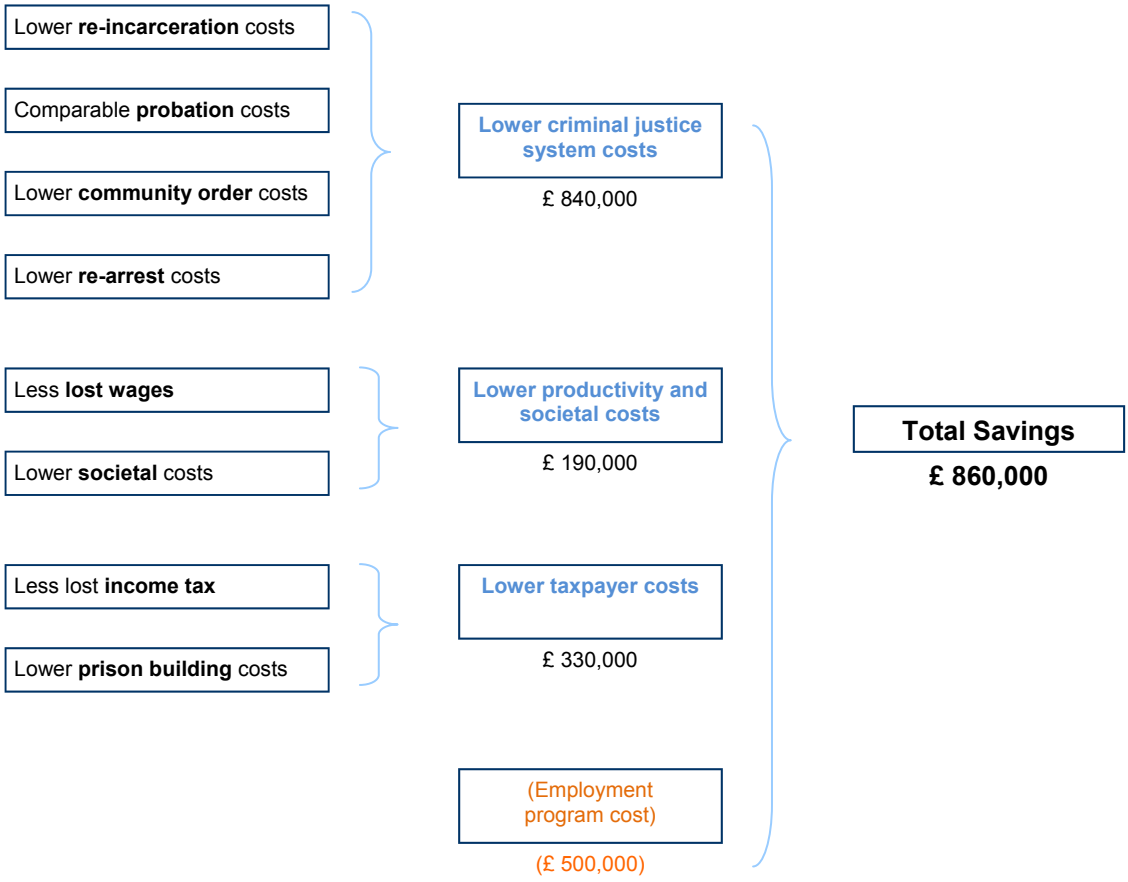
The model accounts for a wide range of costs incurred by re-offending. These include; direct criminal justice system costs, such as re-incarceration; community costs, such as victim losses; and additional taxpayer costs, such as lost income tax. Whilst these factors cover a significant proportion of the overall cost of re-offending, they are by no means exhaustive, lending the model to a more conservative estimation of the total savings of a reduction in re-offending. For example this does not include added childcare costs of those incarcerated.

The most robust information suggests that well designed schemes will reduce the recidivism rate by a significant amount (in some cases up to 60%). For this model we have used a moderate estimate of a 15% (absolute) reduction in the re-offending rate over two years; a conservative yet realistic reduction based on figures from the earlier schemes. Higher (and more probable) estimates would generate even greater savings.

The diagram below represents the following scenario:

100 ex-offenders are put through an employment program costing £5,000 per person. Assuming this results in a conservative 15% reduction in the re-offending rate, the total savings of the program to society come to approximately £860,000 per year. This figure is made up of lower criminal justice system costs, lower productivity and societal costs and lower taxpayer costs. The saving per ex-offender successfully placed in employment is around £8,600 per year.

In any one year, the number of potential ex-offenders put through the program is calculated as the number of prisoners leaving prison, minus the expected number of recidivists in that year and those who leave jail with a job lined up. When scaled up to the actual number of offenders who leave prison each year (66,000) the potential savings amount to more than £300 million per year.[94]



Recommendations

Employing ex-offenders can be beneficial for business, the taxpayer, society and most importantly for the individual offender. Our economic modeling and program evaluations point us to a number of recommendations:

- **The Government should offer payment based on performance to any organisation which places and maintains ex-offenders in employment**

The model should be based on successful welfare-to-work programs. It should be administered primarily through the Ministry of Justice through the National Offender Management System (NOMS), in partnership with the Department for Work & Pensions and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. In order to discourage 'creaming' and 'parking' the payments should be tiered so that there are incentives to find work for the most difficult to place offenders. The organisations that will receive payment will be from the private, public and voluntary sectors.

- **Local councils could design rate tariffs and provide a one-stop assessment and referral centre to help place offenders into employment**

Although the overall budget for prison-to-work programs should be set centrally, the actual rates could be designed locally. Offender employment initiatives (such as Opportunity Reconnect) could also be run locally. Local governments better understand their offender population needs and employment shortages, and can be flexible to the demands of the locality. In the City of Newark, the program is based in a local community college which is easily accessible to the local population.

- **The focus of education and training in prisons should be on skills tailored to the needs of employers**

There is a clear need for training and development to be provided in prisons that would be of value to employers. This will increase the employability of offenders and ex-offenders, and will facilitate their rehabilitation and the reduction of reoffending. As well as basic and technical job skills there is a clear employer need, evidenced by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey, for soft workplace skills like honesty, reliability and personal behavioural skills – especially as employers are very concerned about violent behaviour.

- **A network for employers to share their experiences of employing ex-offenders should be established**

This forum would help employers understand that employing ex-offenders is in the interest of their business. It would help build confidence through greater awareness and understanding of the experience of organisations which have employed/ employ ex-offenders.

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Previous research

Crime and Justice is one of Policy Exchange's key areas of research.

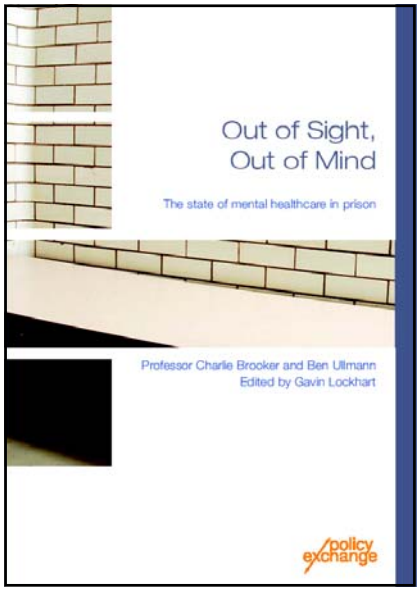
Out of Sight, Out of Mind (2008) assessed the state of mental healthcare in prison. While there has been progress in acknowledging the prevalence of mental illness amongst prisoners, the investment and delivery structures are still not adequate. In 1996, Lord Ramsbotham, then Chief Inspector of Prisons, wrote a report that was heavily critical of prison healthcare services. And although matters have improved since then, progress is slow. *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* argues that Lord Ramsbotham's findings are as relevant today as they were 12 years ago.

Going Ballistic (2008) showed that the nature of the threat from gangs, guns and knives is changing, and the Government must change its approach if communities are to stem the tide of youth violence. The research findings support four primary arguments: that official crime figures do not reflect the experiences of many communities in England and Wales; that information and intelligence sharing between agencies is lacking; that early intervention and prevention work needs to be targeted and expanded and that the relevant legislation governing gun and knife crime is a mess.

Unlocking the prison estate (2007) suggested a way forward for modernising prisons. By releasing the value in the prison estate the Government could generate sufficient funds to construct modern prisons that are fit for purpose and offer a greater number of prison places.

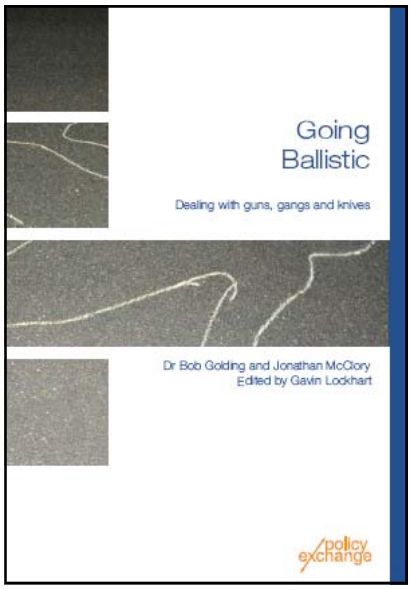
Recent Publications from the Crime & Justice Unit

Out of Sight, Out of Mind



Unlocking the prison estate

Going Ballistic



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Policy Exchange is an independent think tank whose mission is to develop and promote new policy ideas which will foster a free society based on strong communities, personal freedom, limited government, national self-confidence and an enterprise culture. Registered charity no: 1096300. Policy Exchange is committed to an evidence-based approach to policy development. We work in partnership with academics and other experts and commission major studies involving thorough empirical research of alternative policy outcomes. We believe that the policy experience of other countries offers important lessons for government in the UK. We also believe that government has much to learn from business and the voluntary sector.

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