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# Business Engagement in employing ex-offenders

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# The challenge

- UKDPC review (available on www.ukdpc.org.uk )
- Estimated 80% of problem drug users unemployed, 240,000 on benefits in England.
- Multiple problems: ex-offenders with criminal record. Also poor housing, mental health.
- Government focus on employment (welfare reform) and reintegration (Offender & drug strategies).
- 'Therapeutic' benefits of employment – reintegration, new identity etc.

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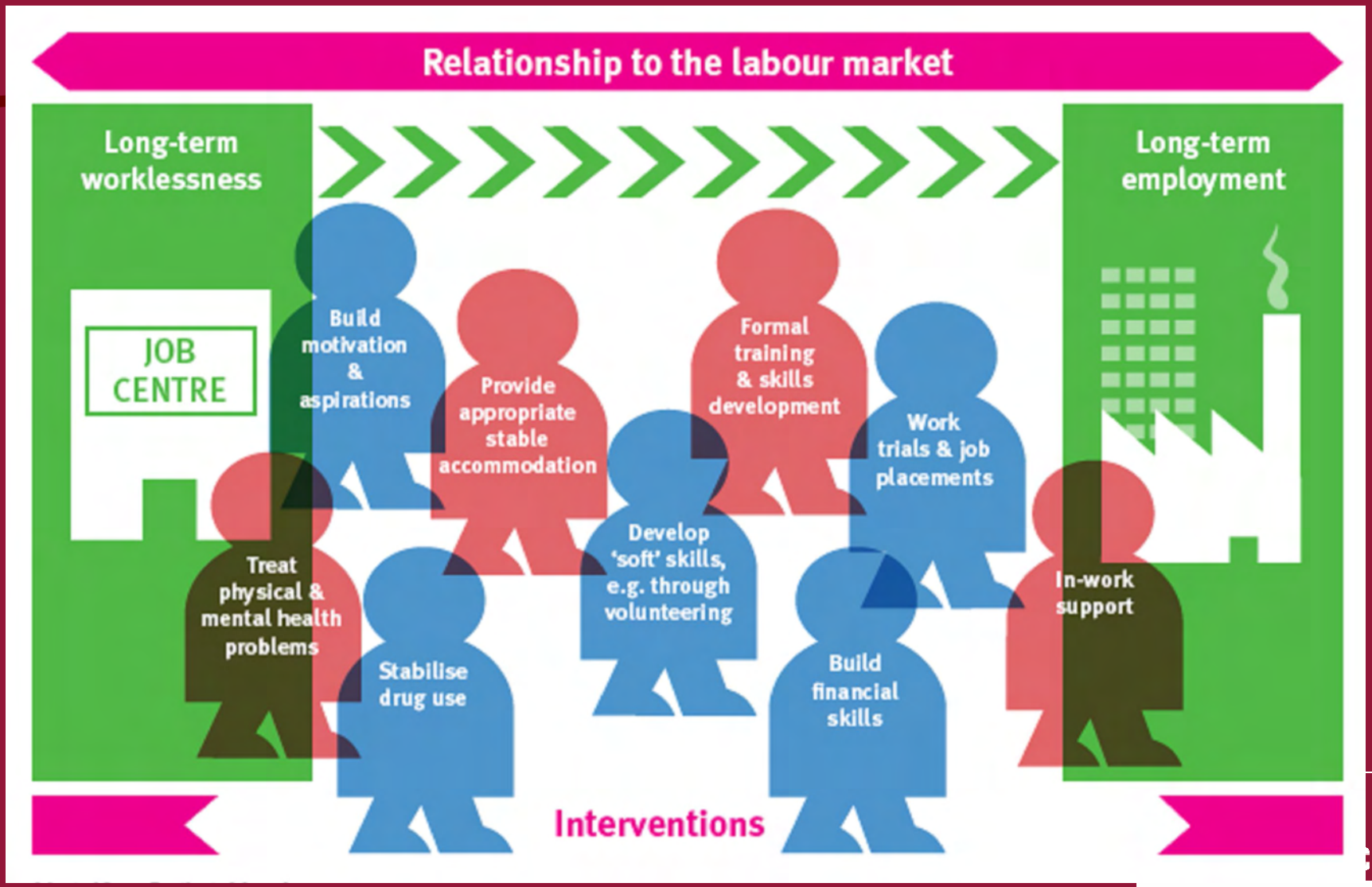
# Complex multiple needs



# Employer attitudes

- Obviously have to be ‘job ready’ – no one expecting employers to recruit people who aren’t.
- But **two-thirds** (90/135) of employers we surveyed would not employ a *former* heroin or crack user *even if they were otherwise suitable for the job*.
- Even among those willing to employ, often an arbitrary two-year drug free rule.
- Also concerns about methadone – in a separate study, 70% would not employ someone on a methadone support programme, and for a further 18% ‘it depends’.

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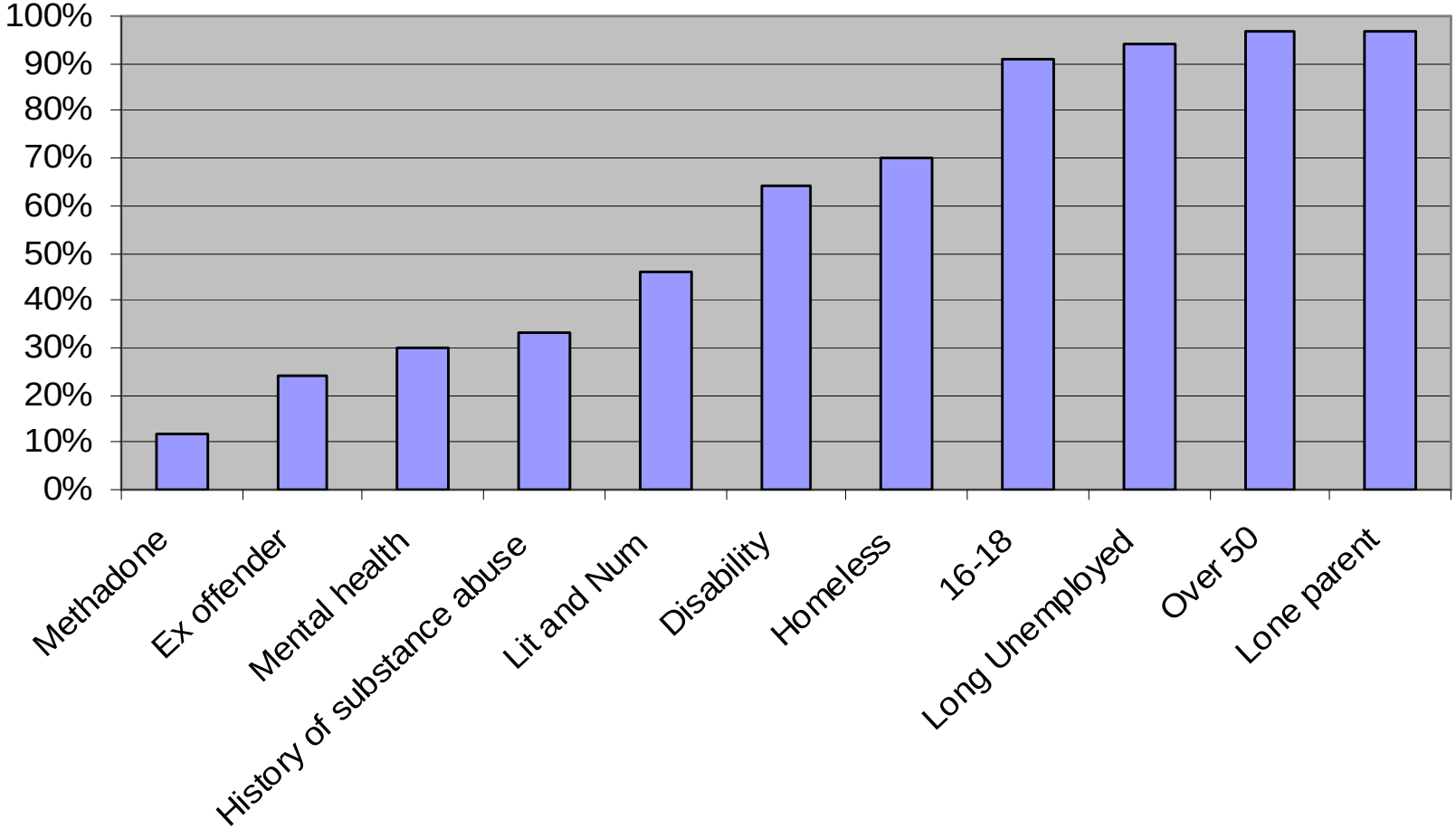
# % of Scottish employers saying they would employ from group




**Source**: Scott and Sillars, "Employers attitudes to hard-to-employ groups" 2003.

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# Employer perspectives

- Risk of employing PDUs
  - Reputation
  - Managing Drug Use
  - To other employees
- Fit For The Job
  - Reliability & honesty
  - Capability
  - Work Discipline
  - Stereotypical approaches to employing PDUs – lack of information

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# Employer perspectives

- **Support needs**
  - Update on employees progress +access to crisis support
  - Information on treatment strategy
  - Treatment conflicting with Work requirements
- **Treatment regime**
  - Problems of Maintenance-v-Abstinence
  - Regional approaches to abstinence influence employer perspectives
- **Recruitment issues**
  - Criminal record, general health problems, stable address
  - practice variable particularly depending on organisation size
  - concerns about disclosure of offending & drug use histories
  - Service providers reluctant to send people who might fail

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# Workplace drug & alcohol policies

- 60% of respondent organisations use the disciplinary procedure
- 60% organisations have rules about D & A at work
- 25%+ use a capability procedure as part of their approach
- 22% carry out some testing (mainly safety critical related)
- Only 33% employers train managers (just 22% train employees)
- 1/3 employers referred people for alcohol treatment (12% re drugs)
- Of those referred, 60% remained working subsequently

**Source**: CIPD survey 2007

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# Supporting and engaging employers

## What is needed?

- Information and guidance
- Greater use of volunteering & work placements
- Ongoing back-up support for employers and employees
- Incentives for employers
- Bringing local employer partnerships together with DATs & CDRPs
- Review of legislative / contractual barriers

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