Business in the Community

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Does business have the appetite to support the employability of people with convictions during a recession?

Edwina Hughes, Business in the Community

Geoff Smith, Compass Group

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Outline of Presentation

- A) Edwina Hughes – overview of business appetite to support employment of people with convictions
- B) Geoff Smith – Compass Group experience of supporting people with convictions into work

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Business appetite?

- More competitive job market, not as many vacancies for anyone
- Companies want clear value for money when they invest in social issues
- Companies who support ex offender initiatives continue to do so e.g. Carillion, Timpsons, Wates, Compass Group, National Grid etc.
- Companies are interested in supporting employability of people facing multiple barriers to work – including ex offenders, homeless people, long term unemployed and care leavers
- Business case rests on risk management – managing risk is key to success

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Why do some employers seek to employ people with convictions?

- Recognise the social benefit of keeping people out of prison to improve social cohesion of local community
- Employers recognise the economic benefit of reducing re-offending : in employment = out of prison
- Relatively cheap way to recruit – working in collaboration with prison or probation services
- May be part of a recruitment strategy to recruit locally
- Recognise the need to break down stigma, understand the value of a second chance

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Why do some employers avoid employing people with convictions?

- Negative publicity – need a communications strategy in place
- Risk – lack of understanding regarding the risk someone with a conviction presents
- Don’t want to create issues with stakeholders including current employees – adopt a policy of disclosure, inform and consult stakeholders

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Determinants of success

- Company with commitment to employability, local community, social conscience
- Prison governor with passion and ability to resource a partnership with business
- Shape employability activities that are accessible to the prison population – in-house, in the community

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Current environment

- Recession, dampened interest?
- Incentive to support agenda has changed – more people looking for jobs so can’t use skills shortage argument
- Need to support employers with willingness to build relationship – meet, talk, follow up, explain barriers, suggest ways to work around them
- Need to address need for standardised risk management approach

Rehabilitation Project

Geoff Smith

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History

- Opportunity
- Leg Up
- Elongated Processes
- Individual Sites/Individual Processes!

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Stakeholders

- Prison
- MOD
- Site
- Compass

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Criteria

- Prison
- Compass
- MOD
- Site

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Business Case

- Local Community
- Business Risk
- Business Opportunity
- Aim
- Stakeholder

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5 Years On

- Successes
- Presentations
- Way forward

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Q&A/Discussion

- What gaps do you think employer support can fill?
- How can prisons and probation services work more effectively with employers?
- How can businesses work more effectively with prisons and probation?