



# HM Prison & Probation Service

## **The Benefits of Employing Ex-Offenders**

### **Case Study Questions for HMP The Mount**

#### **Overview:**

HMP The Mount is a category C, adult male prison that looks after up to 1028 convicted men. It is a training and resettlement prison which means that the staff and volunteers assist in the men's rehabilitation through various different interventions. Additionally, as they come to the end of their sentence, the establishment assists with their resettlement back into the community.

#### **The Challenge**

Helping to rehabilitate prisoners to lead law abiding lives and resettle prisoners back into the community is important for everyone. Firstly, it helps ensure the communities in which we all live are as safe as possible for everyone and secondly, it helps those who have worked hard to address their issues and behaviour, get back on their feet to live law-abiding and productive lives once released.

Here at HMP The Mount we work to achieve this through numerous interventions. We help prisoners to develop their academic abilities from learning to read and write to support those undertaking Undergraduate courses to help them get the skills they need to turn their lives around. Furthermore, we address their behavioural problems through courses such as anger management or substance abuse. We also have workshops in which the men can learn practical skills which include woodwork, bike repairs, printing, picking and packing (warehouse work) and farms and gardens. Hence, HMP The Mount is a community which helps to induce positive change through various provisions. Now, we are looking to take this to the next step by reaching out to local and national employers to help secure prisoners work on their release, which would help to give them the second chance they have so diligently worked towards.

However, this isn't an easy task and understandably who would think to recruit from their local establishment when a job vacancy becomes available? And yet there are many reason why the can be among the most valuable members of the workforce.....

#### **The Solution**

As the Business and Community Engagement Manager at HMP The Mount, I liaise with employers and encourage them to be more open minded about the pool of over 1,000 men who could become such an asset to their businesses. My role involves showing potential business around the

establishment, to show them all the positive work of the HMPPS and the positive engagement of the prisoners in our facilities and resources. It also involves presenting employers with the benefits of employing ex-offenders, at as many events as the community will allow me to attend (!) It's also about discussing and creating opportunities, such as developing Employer's Fairs at the establishment so that men in the last six months of their sentence can meet potential employers and talk about vacancies, their skillset and eventually hold interviews.

So what are the benefits of employer an ex-offender? You may be pleasantly surprised to discover there are many. For example;

- Statistics show that if ex-offenders are able to secure employment on release, the chance of re-offending decreases. This helps to reduce the crime rates and the associated costs to the taxpayer. Furthermore, it helps to make our communities a safer place for everyone.
- Ex-offenders are often very hardworking, loyal, valuable and committed, often going that extra mile to prove themselves – because a job provides them with a second chance. In fact, over 60% of employers found that they worked as hard as, or harder than, those with no convictions.
- It allows your business to unlock opportunity and tap into a new pool of talented, highly motivated people who you might not have considered before.
- Employers such as Marks & Spencer demonstrate that employees recruited from disadvantaged groups have lower turnover rates.
- It eradicates recruitment costs.
- It makes good business sense, as according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), over half of employers struggle to fill vacancies due to skill shortages.
- The Justice Secretary is looking to incentivise businesses if they employ ex-offenders under ambitious new plans being unveiled, where employers may be offered a National Insurance Contributions holiday if they hire people from this group.
- Breaking down barriers by help to changing beliefs – show ex-offenders they can do it, they are valuable and there are more beneficial and rewarding options than crime.

### **The Results**

So as an establishment we encourage employers to get involved in the Employer's Fairs and come and see all the good work that goes on behind the walls – who knows what positive opportunities it could offer you and your organisation. And such events work! They are already happening throughout the country in other establishments with some really positive results. For example, over 90% of respondents from over 120 business stated that employment events have encouraged them to further explore working with prisons in order to employ ex-offenders. Furthermore, 92% of inclusive employers say it has enhanced their reputation – often helping them win new contracts.

If you'd like a discuss the opportunity of employing ex-offenders and the employers events further, please contact Sarah Barrett, Business and Community Engagement Manager at [sarah.barrett@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.barrett@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk) or on 01442 836 498.