

Government should consider a statutory “ban the box” for all employers and improve the support to people released from prison

Monday 19 December, 2016

The leading charity for people with convictions has welcomed a [report published today by the Work and Pensions Committee](#) which calls on government to drastically improve the support provided to people released from prison and do more to encourage employers to recruit people with convictions.

Christopher Stacey, Co-director of Unlock, said:

“Today’s report shows that current government policy is failing people with convictions. There is no one person in government with responsibility for helping prison leavers into work and no clear strategy for how different agencies should work together to get people with convictions into employment.

“We are delighted that the Work and Pensions Committee has listened to the evidence that we submitted and has made a number of recommendations which, if implemented by government, would vastly improve the chances of people with convictions to become positive members of society rather than burdens of the state. Only a quarter of people leaving prison have a job to go to, yet stable employment significantly reduces the likelihood of people re-offending in the future.”

“Employers need to be encouraged to change their recruitment practices, and piloting a reduction in National Insurance contributions for those who actively employ people with convictions is a welcome step forward. Unlock supports the Committee’s recommendation of taking the “ban the box” campaign further by considering putting it on a statutory footing for all employers. We know that this practical change in recruitment practice, alongside other ‘fair chance recruitment’ measures, increases the chances that employers will recruit people with convictions.”

“We are pleased that the Ministry of Justice is working on a new employment strategy. This needs to be done jointly with the Department for Work and Pensions and place significant focus on people with convictions in the community. Crucially, it must recognise that no level of training or education in prison will overcome the negative approaches taken by employers, so supporting and challenging employers in their recruitment practices needs to be a fundamental part of this strategy. More broadly, government needs to fundamentally reform the law around criminal records disclosure to prevent the unnecessary and disproportionate barriers that people face long after they’ve served their sentence.”

– Ends –

Notes to editors

1. Press/media enquiries should be directed to Unlock’s spokesperson, [Christopher Stacey](#), Co-director. Email stacey@unlock.org.uk or call 07557 676433 (daytime or out-of-hours).
2. Christopher Stacey is Unlock’s spokesperson and available for interview.
3. Unlock is an independent, award-winning charity for people with convictions which exists for two simple reasons. Firstly, Unlock assists people to move on positively with their lives by empowering them with information, advice and support to overcome the stigma of their previous convictions. Secondly, Unlock seeks to promote a fairer and more inclusive society by challenging discriminatory practices and promoting socially just alternatives.
4. There are over [5 million people](#) in the UK that have a criminal record.
5. Unlock’s website is unlock.org.uk.
6. High-resolution images for media use are available from Unlock’s [Flickr account](#).
7. The Work and Pensions Committee held an inquiry into support for ex-offenders. The report published today is available on their [website here](#) and a summary of the inquiry is [available here](#).
8. Unlock submitted written evidence to the Committee – [available here](#).
9. Unlock gave oral evidence to the Committee, which can be [watched online here](#).
10. Unlock also carried out a survey on people released from prison – [available here](#).

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Unlock - for people with convictions

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