

Sodexo encourages Scottish energy businesses to close skills gap through ex-offenders employment

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[Sodexo's Energy & Resources division](#) is bringing together leading organisations and partners within the energy supply chain to find solutions that will help bridge the current skills gap, with a particular focus on the training and recruitment of ex-offenders and marginalised individuals.

On 15th November, Sodexo hosted its Purpose-led business roundtable at its Aberdeen offices with Sodexo Energy & Resources senior leaders and HMP Addiewell personnel, along with Sean Haley, CEO Sodexo UK&I, and businesses within the energy industry.

Recent research from PwC Green Jobs Barometer has identified that the energy sector is facing a significant skills shortage that will continue in the years to come across nuclear, hydrogen and renewables – as the UK is also on a path to fully deliver on net zero targets while providing energy security.

Discussing best practices and how collaboration can help overcome some of the recruitment challenges in the sector, the event highlighted initiatives and the ongoing work with local businesses to boost ex-offenders' and marginalised individuals' employability skills.

A survey commissioned earlier this year by Sodexo revealed that 62% of UK businesses in the private sector partaking in the research were struggling to recruit. Considering ex-offenders to bridge the skills gap could therefore partially solve this challenge, while providing them with the right opportunities that will help them to positively transition back into the community and reduce the risk of re-offending.

The roundtable also explored how collaboration can support other marginalised groups such as the homeless, and Sodexo's partnership with charity Change Please. Some of the initiatives have included barista training to over 50 people experiencing homelessness, as well as delivering a carbon-neutral coffee offer.

Sodexo shared additional ways Scottish businesses can get involved:

- Future Skills Programme, working with employers and training providers to create and deliver training programmes to prisoner leavers approaching release. Businesses involved in the process are required to provide a minimum of a guaranteed interview or job commitment to those who managed to complete the full course.
- HMP Academies offer dedicated learning environments in prisons where employers train prisoners for employment on release. HMP Addiewell, for example, offers up to 40 hours per week to support prisoners' growth through a purposeful activity. The employability team at the prison has also partnered with the Construction Industry Training Board to run regular Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) courses. This is the operative test taken by most construction workers, including bricklayers, labourers, and carpenters.
- New Futures Network, managed through prison services, aims at fostering partnerships between prisons and employers.

Ed Morrow, Managing Director of Energy and Resources, Sodexo UK & Ireland said: *"As a purpose-led organisation, collaboration is necessary to drive positive change forward. The challenges the industry is currently facing must be addressed rapidly in order to best support the UK's efforts to decarbonisation."*

"Bringing partners and local businesses today has been a fantastic experience to discuss how employing ex-offenders and prison leavers can ultimately support some of those challenges. We're aware that more work can be done in this space, and we'll continue to start conversations with local businesses about the positive impact of our Starting Fresh initiatives."

Sodexo has been encouraging businesses to proactively consider skilled and qualified ex-offenders through its [Starting Fresh](#) programme, which launched in March 2023. As part of its Social Impact Pledge, Sodexo has committed to fulfilling all appropriate positions with 5% of ex-offenders.

Sodexo's Energy & Resources business aims at providing quality services that support the wellbeing and answer to the evolving needs of employees working in often isolated and complex environments.

Delivering services that range from catering, hospitality, welfare, facilities management, property management and refurbishments, Sodexo works with various environments, from corporate offices to offshore, remote, and industrial sites.