

Sodexo launches Starting Fresh toolkit to help employers recruit ex-offenders

1 year ago



[Sodexo UK & Ireland](#) has today marked the first anniversary of Starting Fresh with the release of an employer toolkit. The toolkit builds on resources the organisation launched last March to help bridge the gap between businesses struggling with skills shortages and the under-utilised talent pool of people with criminal convictions.

One year ago, research commissioned by Sodexo found that while 62% of UK private sector businesses were facing recruitment challenges, a third had not considered hiring ex-offenders.

These findings informed the launch of Starting Fresh, which leverages Sodexo's extensive experience in managing prisons and as an inclusive employer, to advocate for and provide employment opportunities for this often overlooked group.

In its first year, Starting Fresh has facilitated over 300 job opportunities through many new partnerships with companies like Marriott Hotels, Burger King and Iceland. These collaborations have included employer days in prisons, allowing businesses to meet potential employees and learn about their skills and qualifications first hand.

Through Starting Fresh, Sodexo has also built new relationships and created employment pathways between the prisons it manages and its business, resulting in candidates from across the prison estate being referred for roles at Sodexo.

Sodexo, a Ban the Box employer, continues to expand Starting Fresh beyond its own organisation by collaborating with prison teams and agencies, providing valued expert advice and support. Working with [New Futures Network](#), it has streamlined the pathway between prisons (including those not operated

by Sodexo) and its business. Additionally, it has created a toolkit for Members of Parliament to use within their constituencies to encourage businesses to consider hiring ex-offenders and to offer valuable information about finding employment to their constituents with a criminal background.

In addition to New Futures Network, Sodexo continues to work with over 20 external partners who all have the common goal of supporting those from prison into employment. These include [The Oswin Project](#), [Clean Sheet](#) and [Novus Works](#), who help remove the perceived barriers associated with the employment of ex-offenders, which hold back the reintegration of people into communities.

Building on this extensive work over the past year, Sodexo has now launched an employer toolkit to extend the support and reach of Starting Fresh to more employers, helping them to discover the talent available from this under-utilised community of people.

Tony Simpson, Justice Operations Director, Sodexo UK & Ireland, said:

We believe in the transformative power of gainful employment for people with criminal convictions, and are keen to drive recognition of the immense value they can bring to both businesses and the communities they serve.

Nearly 50,000 people leave prison every year, many emerging with formal qualifications they didn't have before in construction, cleaning, catering, hospitality, hairdressing and many other areas. They are skilled and job-ready, equipped with the skills, qualifications and experience to transition into the workforce.

Our employer toolkit has been built to help organisations proactively engage with our prisons and partners to start the hiring process with prison-leavers.