

Sodexo collaborates with The Purpose Coalition to expand employment opportunities for prison-leavers

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Carolyn Harris MP, Member of Parliament for Neath and Swansea East, recently hosted a parliamentary reception at the House of Commons. Organised together with Sodexo UK & Ireland and The Purpose Coalition, the event highlighted the transformative potential of hiring ex-offenders and how businesses can drive greater employment opportunities for this untapped talent pool.

During the reception, Mark Goodyer, HR Director, [Sodexo UK & Ireland](#) welcomed Rt Hon Justine Greening, Chair of The Purpose Coalition, who announced a new collaboration between The Purpose Coalition and Sodexo's Starting Fresh programme.

Launched last year, Starting Fresh provides proactive steps for more businesses to recruit candidates directly from prisons, creating more sustainable employment opportunities which are essential for successful reintegration into society.

The partnership announced last week, aims to extend the programme's reach by uniting organisations within The Purpose Coalition that are committed to breaking down barriers to employment. Together they will work towards hiring more prison-leavers and people with criminal convictions.

As part of this collaboration, The Purpose Coalition will lead new research to gain insights from those in the justice system on how employers can better support them into work at the end of their sentence. This research will be conducted using the Purpose Coalition's Community Assembly model. These assemblies are designed to empower prisoners by directly involving them in discussions about their barriers to

employment and rehabilitation.

Participants will identify key challenges, propose practical initiatives, and provide actionable recommendations for employers and policymakers. The findings will help shape future work programmes that address need, enhance rehabilitation, and aim to reduce reoffending. At the heart of the project is ensuring that the voices of those furthest from opportunity are at the heart of potential solutions.

Across the UK, more than 11 million people hold a criminal record, many of whom face significant barriers to finding employment despite having the potential and drive to contribute meaningfully to the workforce. With over one million job vacancies across the country, this untapped talent pool represents a key opportunity to address workforce challenges while driving social impact.

Speaking at the reception, Tony Simpson, Justice Chief Operating Officer, Sodexo UK & Ireland, emphasised the importance of removing barriers to employment: “We believe in the power of business to drive social mobility and be a force for good. As the operator of six prisons across the UK, we see first-hand the transformative impact that meaningful employment can have on individuals leaving the justice system. Our prison employment leads work with a wide range of employers to create sustainable jobs, helping people rebuild their lives.

“Through our longstanding partnership with The Purpose Coalition, we aim to unite more purpose-driven businesses to create further opportunities and continue to challenge perceptions.”

Rt Hon Justine Greening, Chair of The Purpose Coalition, added: “Last week’s announcement marks an important milestone in our mission to ensure that opportunity is accessible to everyone. By integrating the expertise of Sodexo’s transformative Starting Fresh programme with The Purpose Coalition, we are aiming to reach even more employers committed to delivering real social impact for individuals, including those leaving the justice system.”

The collaboration was inspired by a visit to the Sodexo-run HMP Addiewell prison earlier this year by Purpose Coalition leaders, including Engagement Director, Lord Walney. This visit showcased the positive impact being created by Sodexo’s Starting Fresh programme and highlighted opportunities to enhance rehabilitation through strategic partnerships.

The event at the House of Commons underscored the necessity of initiatives like Starting Fresh in supporting the government’s plans to break down barriers to opportunity for all. By providing guidance to employers and policy makers on proactively hiring individuals with criminal convictions, the programme addresses common misconceptions and highlights the valuable contributions these individuals can make to the workforce.