

Sodexo to offer guaranteed interviews to ex- offenders

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Sodexo, which employs more than 30,000 people in the UK and Ireland, has announced a significant milestone in its commitment to social mobility by introducing guaranteed job interviews for people with criminal convictions as part of its [Starting Fresh programme](#).

Applicants with a disclosed criminal conviction who meet the job criteria and pass the required screening will now be guaranteed an interview, giving them a vital opportunity to re-enter the workforce and rebuild their lives. Several Sodexo sites have already embraced this initiative, successfully hiring individuals into a variety of roles across its food services and facilities management business and seeing the benefits first-hand. The organisation's Frontline Talent Acquisition team is working closely with hiring managers to ensure the process is adapted to the unique needs and safeguarding requirements of each site. Sodexo's Starting Fresh programme was created to support more employers in proactively recruiting trained and qualified prison-leavers – from any prison, not just the six prisons operated by Sodexo.

In the last year, Sodexo's Prison Employment Leads have placed more than 700 prison-leavers into sustainable employment in industries such as retail, hospitality and construction. During the year to date, Sodexo has employed 96 people with disclosed criminal convictions, with a third of these hires coming through the Starting Fresh programme – meaning Sodexo has employed them directly through one of its prisons within six weeks of release. Sodexo is keen to be clear though that it is a 'Ban the Box' employer – only requiring disclosure where vetting is necessary for the role – and, as such, will never know the full true number of people with criminal convictions recruited into the business.

Tony Simpson, Justice Chief Operating Officer, Sodexo UK & Ireland said: "Sodexo currently operates six prisons, and we see first-hand the transformative power of meaningful employment for individuals with criminal convictions. Gainful employment not only reduces reoffending but also delivers immense value to businesses and the communities they serve. "We are determined to help improve outcomes for people leaving prison by creating opportunities that allow them to rebuild their lives. Initiatives like Starting Fresh demonstrate our commitment to driving change and making a real difference where it matters most."

Mark Goodyer, HR Director, Sodexo UK & Ireland added: "At Sodexo, we believe in the power of second chances and the untapped potential within every individual, where all can belong, act and thrive. By guaranteeing interviews for people with disclosed criminal convictions, we are not just opening doors to employment within our business but also breaking down barriers to opportunity. This initiative reflects our commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce while making a meaningful impact on individuals, businesses, and communities alike."

Sodexo, which has been running prisons in the UK for 30 years, continues to expand Starting Fresh beyond its own organisation by collaborating with prisons (including those not operated by Sodexo), businesses and more than 20 external partners, including The New Futures Network, The Oswin Project, Clean Sheet, Novus Works and The Purpose Coalition.

These collaborations aim to remove barriers to employment and support reintegration into communities. Through partnerships with New Futures Network, Sodexo has also streamlined recruitment pathways between prisons—both Sodexo-operated and others—and its business. To amplify its impact, Sodexo created a toolkit for Members of Parliament, equipping them with resources to encourage businesses in their constituencies to consider hiring ex-offenders and to assist constituents with criminal records in finding employment. Earlier this year, Sodexo launched an employer toolkit, encouraging other businesses to tap into the potential of this under-utilised workforce and contribute to creating a fairer society.