

Criminal record reform to help ex-offenders into work

Rehabilitation of offenders to be boosted by removing barriers to employment.

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- Adults no longer criminalised for life for nonviolent offences committed in childhood
- Changes will not apply to sensitive roles or most serious offenders

Ex-offenders striving to turn their lives around through work will be backed by new legislation changing what they must disclose to employers.

For the first time, some sentences of over four years will no longer have to be disclosed to employers after a specified period of time has passed. This change will not apply where offences attract the most serious sentences, including life, or for serious sexual, violent and terrorism offences.

Regular work is a major factor in breaking the cycle of crime but many ex-offenders find it impossible to get a job, with just 17% in employment a year after release from prison, and as half of employers would not consider hiring an ex-offender.

In addition to the rule change for longer sentences over four years, the period of time for which shorter sentences and community sentences have to be revealed to employers will be scaled back. The exact length of these 'rehabilitation periods' will be determined following discussions with stakeholders.

The proposed reforms recognise that the longer someone goes without committing a further crime, the lower the risk they will reoffend.

Secretary of State for Justice, David Gauke, said:

The responsibility, structure and support provided by regular work is an essential component of effective rehabilitation, something which benefits us all by reducing reoffending and cutting the cost of crime.

That's why we are introducing reforms to break barriers faced by ex-offenders who genuinely want to turn their lives around through employment.

While these reforms will help remove the stigma of convictions, we will never compromise public safety. That is why separate and more stringent rules will continue to apply for sensitive roles, including those which involve working with children and vulnerable adults.

Currently, where a sentence of more than four years is passed, crimes committed decades earlier, including those committed as a child, must be disclosed to employers for the remainder of the offender's life. For example, an individual sentenced to a lengthy sentence for theft half a century ago would still have to tell employers to this day.

This creates a disproportionate barrier to employment which prevents ex-offenders from moving on with their lives.

In his review into the treatment of and outcomes for BAME individuals in the criminal justice system, David Lammy MP found that current rules are "trapping offenders in their past, denying dependents an income, and costing the tax-payer money."

The Government has acted in light of his recommendations, as well as those of the Justice Select Committee and of Charlie Taylor made following his review of youth justice. The reforms set out will be introduced as new legislation when parliamentary time becomes available.

They will only apply to non-sensitive roles, with separate and stricter rules for those working with children or vulnerable adults, as well as national security roles or positions of public trust.

Notes to Editors

- Detailed proposals on how we will amend the 'rehabilitation periods' for shorter custodial sentences and non-custodial sentences offences will be set out following engagement with stakeholders later this year.
- The rules for sensitive roles are subject to a recent Supreme Court judgment, to which the Government will respond later in the year. We are

looking closely at this as we move forward with reforms to the disclosure regime.

- Only individuals who have stopped offending will have their convictions spent.
- If an individual reoffends during their rehabilitation period, they will have to disclose both their original and subsequent offences to employers for the duration of whichever rehabilitation period is longer.