

# Leading UK business bosses help prison leavers get work in crime-cutting drive

- top business chiefs to drive thousands of prisoners into work to cut crime
- 91 prisons will benefit from new 'Employment Boards' by next spring
- prison leavers with a job much more likely to go straight – cutting £18 billion cost of reoffending

Leaders from big-name firms such as Lotus Cars and Sodexo will chair new Employment Advisory Boards which are being rolled out across the prison estate following a successful trial.

The boards act as a link between jails and employers, making sure that offenders use their time in prison to gain the skills and links to job opportunities they need to head straight into stable work upon release.

This is crucial in tackling the £18 billion cost of reoffending, cutting crime and boosting public protection, as ex-offenders in steady jobs within 6 months of leaving prison are nine percentage points less likely to commit further crime.

Employment Advisory Boards have already been established in 20 prisons, and will be up and running in all 91 'resettlement' prisons in England and Wales by April 2023.

Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Dominic Raab MP, said:

Getting prison leavers into work is a formula that works. It reduces the chance of reoffending – cutting crime and making the public safer.

It's a true win-win, allowing us to boost public protection and save the taxpayer money, while providing the reliable staff businesses need to drive the British economy.

In a survey, 90 per cent of employers who have taken on ex-offenders say they are "motivated, reliable, good at their job and trustworthy".

Employment Advisory Boards are chaired by business experts from companies such as performance car manufacturer Lotus, construction firm Murphy Group and business services provider Sodexo. They work with prisons to ensure they understand what employers want so offenders have the right skills and links to job opportunities on release.

This ensures training programmes and prison workshops are geared to local employment needs and that offenders can access a vibrant business network as they prepare for release.

The Deputy Prime Minister visited HMP Wandsworth this week to meet the prison's deputy governor, Mia Motter, business leaders and prisoners benefitting from the unique initiative.

The prison's employment board launched last May, and is chaired by Rosie Brown, chief executive of awarding-winning, ready-meal company, COOK. The board is supported by business experts from international real estate and investment group LendLease and prisoner employment charity StandOut.

The board was the brainchild of James Timpson, chief executive of the Timpson Group. HMP Wandsworth launched its Employment Advisory Board in June, 2021 and since then, 98 prisoners have worked with the service, 76 have received job offers and 33 are successfully in a job.

Rosie Brown, chair of HMP Wandsworth's Employment Advisory Board and co-chief executive officer of COOK, said:

I am proud to work for a company that has a long track record of supporting prison leavers into employment and I know from personnel experience that some of our best and most loyal employees have criminal records – that's not an obstacle to succeeding in life.

Bringing our expertise to HMP Wandsworth has been an excellent experience and I am delighted that Employment Advisory Boards are being rolled out to 91 prisons across the country.

As part of the Prisons White Paper published last December, the Government has committed to investing £200 million per year by 2023 on reducing reoffending, including on prison leaver employment schemes. Initiatives to be funded include the roll out of prison employment leads to all resettlement prisons who will work closely with the specialist employment team in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the [New Futures Network](#).

## Notes to editors

- The [Prisons White Paper](#) was published in December 2021 as part of the Government's strategy for reducing reoffending by increasing employment rates among ex-offenders.
- [Employment reduces](#) the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points.
- An [employer survey](#) revealed that employers believe the ex-offenders they employ are "motivated, reliable, good at their job and trustworthy".
- [New Futures Network](#) already supports more than 400 businesses to work with prisons and probation staff to match serving and former prisoners with jobs.