



# The Clean Sheet Guide to Supporting People with Convictions

## Introduction

There are around 10 million people in the UK with a criminal record, that's 1:6 of us! It would be highly unusual to run a Job Club and **NOT** be supporting people with convictions.

This guide will help you to understand the key issues, act as a reference point for offering the best possible support and signpost the resources on the Clean Sheet website 'Job Clubs' partner page.

Receiving a Clean Sheet lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel. We have all been given a brand new start in life because of our relationship with Jesus. Some people's mistakes are more public than others, but we believe everyone deserves a second, third, (70x7) chance.

You don't have to be an expert in the Criminal Justice System! There are plenty of resources to signpost people to the specialist help they need. What they need from you is acceptance, understanding and a sense that you really believe in them.

## FIVE STAGES

### Stage 1: Initial Referral

If the person with a conviction is being referred by Clean Sheet, you will get a call and a follow up email from our Member Liaison Manager. The person being referred will have recently been released from prison. We will give you full contact details, so that you can get in touch and encourage them to attend your Job Club.

They may seem positive about coming, but will rarely be confident about actually showing up. It can be daunting going to a Job Club for the first time – as any participant will tell you – but if you've just come out of prison, then it's a whole lot harder. So please offer that extra little bit of encouragement to come along and help them to understand what to expect when they arrive. Once they have a rough idea of what's likely to happen that may feel less anxious and more comfortable about coming along.

Make sure you book in your Initial interview as soon as possible. This will enable them to find out more about how things run and give you an opportunity to ask them any questions you might have. And be sure to call or text on the morning of the Job Club to let them know you are looking forward to welcoming them.

Please don't be surprised if, despite all of your efforts, your prospective new participant doesn't show up! There are many reasons why this may happen as they adjust to life after prison and respond to all the required elements of their licence agreement. Just persevere, within reason, and send a friendly text. Give them another chance, make sure they know they haven't let you down, and make it as easy as possible for them to keep in touch with you and plan to come next time.



## FROM PRISON TO EMPLOYMENT A 3-STEP PATHWAY

Most people with convictions will just turn up, they will **not** have been referred by Clean Sheet, and you won't necessarily know until you start asking the questions on your initial assessment form. **You can still access all the resources** and encourage them to become a Clean Sheet Member. They just need to email [members@cleansheet.org.uk](mailto:members@cleansheet.org.uk) with their name and the name of your Job Club. That's it! They can then follow the same five stages as someone referred to you by Clean Sheet.

### Initial Interview and Risk Assessment

We will not reveal details of someone's criminal record. At the initial interview with you there is a question that asks, "Is there anything that you worry might prevent you from finding work?". One of the options to tick is criminal convictions. If they answer 'yes', this will be your cue to probe further.

- Most people serve their sentence in two parts. About half of the sentence is served in prison and half out 'on licence' in the community.
- Some people may serve even less than half of their sentence in prison, if they are eligible to wear an electronic 'tag' on release. This tag restricts activity by requiring people to be near a monitoring device during certain times – a curfew. The devices are located in their accommodation.
- During the 'out on licence' part of the sentence there may be restrictions which will impact that type of job they can apply for. Although usually the person supervising them will be very pleased to talk about how their licence arrangements can be adapted to accommodate a job that, for example, involves shift work.

If you aren't sure you're getting the full picture and are worried for any reason, you can ask them for details of the appropriate person to contact. This will either be their Supervisor who will work for a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), if they had a short sentence, or their Probation Officer from The Probation Service, or the local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team if they had a longer sentence, over 12 months.

### Stage 2: Their Criminal Record

You need to establish the reality of their criminal record and help them to be sure about when their convictions become 'spent' under the terms of The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. All convictions with sentences under four years become 'spent' - treated as though they never happened - after a certain rehabilitation period.

If they know their criminal record, click [HERE](#) for a quick guide to help them figure out whether their convictions are spent or use the on-line calculator <http://www.disclosurecalculator.org.uk/>

If they aren't very sure about their criminal record, encourage them to apply for a print out of everything on the Police National Computer (PNC). Any individual can request a copy of their Police PNC record through a 'Subject Access Request' by completing a form at their local police station – also available online. It costs about £10.

If there is any doubt, or you need help, you can encourage **them** to contact our partners at Unlock.  
Call: 01634 247350 (Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm) Text: 078 2411 3848 Email: [advice@unlock.org.uk](mailto:advice@unlock.org.uk)



### Stage 3: Disclosure: Presenting past mistakes in the best possible way

Encourage them not to try to hide or gloss over their record, but they should not write or talk about it too much! They should stress that they are applying for the job because they think they'll be good at it and have the right skills and make this the main focus of their application or interview.

A change in circumstances is a good way to show they've moved on, so encourage them to mention if they've settled into family life or have other responsibilities that would mean they would have too much to lose to re-offend.

Above all, they should show that they have learnt from their mistakes and they are now a different person. See the brilliant video 'Tell, Don't Tell' [HERE](#). This video shows the advantages of disclosing an 'unspent' conviction in a positive way. Remember, if the conviction is 'spent' it does not need to be disclosed – legally it never happened! However, there may be advantages to telling the new employer once a job offer has been made, in case anything ever comes out about it. The person you're supporting needs to be able to make an informed choice.

Please help them to practice telling their story until it is concise, clear, coherent, honest and straightforward.

Offering evidence why it couldn't happen again and demonstrating how they've moved on is crucial.

All employers want is reassurance about the only four questions they really have:

- ✓ Do I like you?
- ✓ Will you fit in?
- ✓ Will you stay?
- ✓ Can you do the job?

### Stage 4: The Clean Sheet Membership Module

When you think the participant is ready for a life-style that includes work, you can recommend they complete the Clean Sheet Membership Module. This is an on-line quiz, designed to be a guided conversation with you, to answer any questions they may have about what they can expect when they start work. Don't worry, the answers come up before you advance to the next screen!

Although we make no guarantees to our employers about behaviour or performance, successful completion of the Membership Module signals to our employers that they may be ready for a life-style that includes work.

The Clean Sheet Membership Quiz is available [HERE](#)

If you are supporting someone with a conviction who has NOT been referred to you by Clean Sheet and you want them to take the membership quiz, they just need to email [members@cleansheet.org.uk](mailto:members@cleansheet.org.uk) with their name and the name of your Job Club.



### **Stage 5: The Clean Sheet Employer Directory**

Once someone has successfully completed the Membership Module they are invited to contact us by sending an email to [members@cleansheet.org.uk](mailto:members@cleansheet.org.uk). We will then send them their membership certificate and upgrade their user profile on our website so they can access the Employer Directory. This contains links to the recruitment pages of employers who are committed to actively considering applications from people with convictions.

You will need to support them in making job applications in the usual way, however, Clean Sheet Members know they can disclose any un-spent convictions in the knowledge that this will not exclude them from the application process. It is entirely their own decision to tell employers they are a Clean Sheet Member.

### **Guiding Principles**

#### **A positive identity**

We refer to people with a criminal record as 'people with convictions'. This is to help them shake off negative tags like ex-offender, former prisoner and ex-con. They need to embrace a positive identity and that starts with what we call them. People with Convictions face being stereotyped. They are often treated with huge suspicion arising from prejudice and blind judgmentalism. Without being naïve, we would encourage you to see the person, not the crime, looking for the qualities, skills and experience that are attractive to employers.

#### **An integrated programme**

We do not believe in a separate Job Club programme for people with convictions. They reintegrate and thrive when participating alongside everyone else. Unless they come to you as a Clean Sheet referral, you may not even know that people have convictions. Like everything else you do at your Job Club, it's all about serving, listening and nurturing someone who has lost hope – like the Jobseekers whom you already support, week by week, with such dedication.

#### **Dignity and Respect**

As with all of your participants, you will find that people with convictions respond best when they are treated with dignity and respect. This sometimes means you need to see beyond their initial presenting behaviour. It takes courage to walk into a Job Club and fear can sometimes bring out the worst in us!

#### **Cross-Referral**

As with all your participants you may encounter multiple barriers to work. You may find it helpful to make warm introductions to programmes like the CAP Debt Centre, CAP Money Course, CAP Release or CAP Life Skills, or similar programmes run by neighbouring churches.

**Thank you for all you do to help people find a job. We really appreciate the support you offer to people with convictions and we look forward to celebrating with you when they are offered a job.**