

# REWIRE Consultation Report

## Purpose

Rewire aims to reduce re-offending and boost employment by encouraging new perspectives on life after offending. The project will also provide resources with practical advice for businesses on hiring individuals with criminal records.

The consultation will feed into the REWIRE resource to provide insights into public and business perceptions of helping people with criminal records into employment.

## Consultation Methods

### Counter Exercise

OPCC staff held face-to-face stalls with short specific questions that captured quick effective feedback. At times the public can be short of time or hesitant with completing surveys. Therefore, the interactive questions can support gathering more quantitative data using the counter-based methodology.

### Public

The proposed questions below and select the boxes on how they feel:

Very Happy 🥳   Happy 😊   Not Happy 😞   Very Unhappy 😡

1. How do you feel about people with criminal records being supported into work to stop them from re-offending?
2. Do you think that businesses employing people with a criminal record positively contribute to society?
3. Would you be comfortable buying goods or services from a business that employs people with criminal records?

Also, people were more engaged in discussing the topic when reading some stats on the display board which prompted the public to provide further feedback.

The stats that were shared were:

- 1 in every 3 people with a criminal record will re-offend in Cleveland, which is one of the highest rates in England and Wales (24.9%)
- It costs the taxpayer an average of £48,400 to detain one person in prison for twelve months.
- The Ministry of Justice estimates reoffending costs over £18 billion a year
- Over 12 million people in the UK have an unspent criminal conviction.

## **Business & organisations**

The proposed questions below and select the boxes on how they feel:

Very Happy 😄    Happy 😊    Not Happy 😞    Very Unhappy 😡

1. Do you think businesses employing people with criminal records are making a positive contribution to society?
2. Would you do business with other companies that hired people with criminal records?
3. Are you going to review and consider employing people with criminal records [following the chat with us]?
4. Does your company employ people with criminal records? Would you rate them as good at their jobs? [only to participate if the company does employ people with criminal records]

The engagement stalls in the community took place at the following locations:

- Sirens Fest, Ingleby Barwick
- Middlesbrough College – Student Wellbeing Event
- Teesside University - Wellbeing Pride
- Stockton - Eid Fusion Festival, Ropner Park
- Middlesbrough Love Local Event
- Tees Valley Business Summit

## **Online survey**

The consultation also included two online surveys for the public and businesses which were open for several weeks and promoted on:

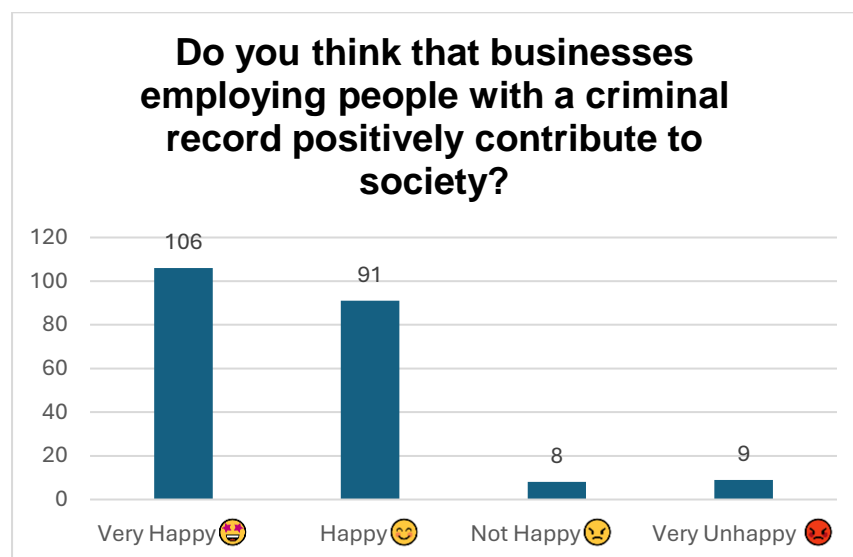
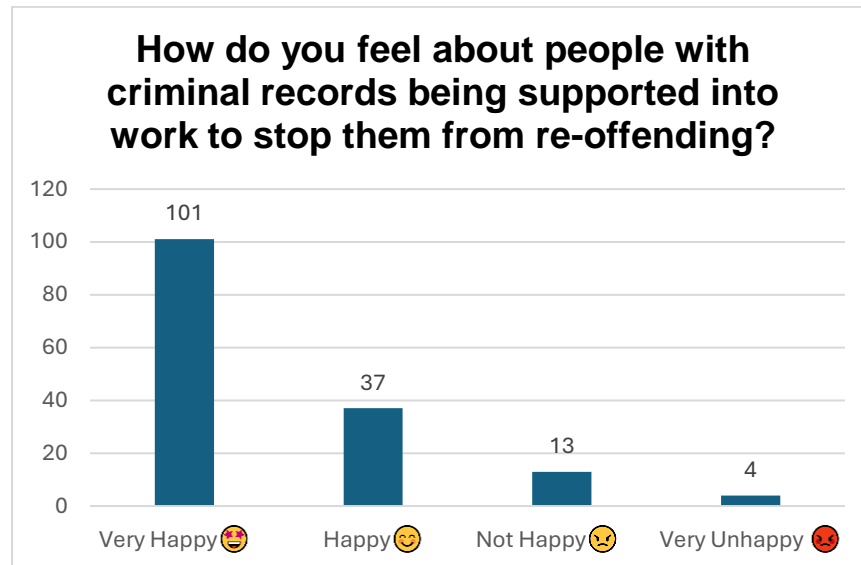
- OPCC social media
- Elected members across all four local authorities
- Voluntary Development Agencies
- Engagement with partner organisations, including:
  - Youth Advisory Group

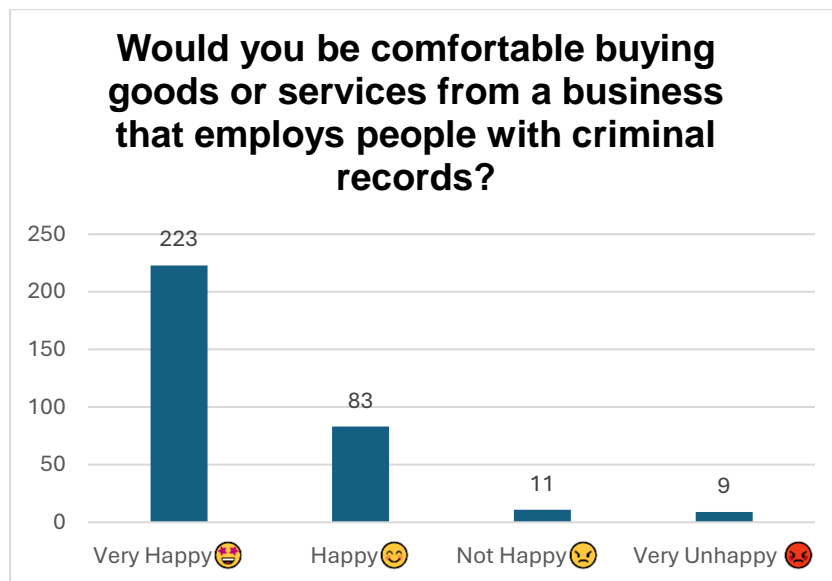
Alongside the face-to-face engagement, the public was provided a flyer with the QR code to encourage people to complete the full survey. The counter exercises reflected some of the questions within the survey.

# Consultation Findings

## Public

Interaction with people on the engagement stalls was a success with counter-exercise, as 326 people participated across Cleveland.





Further discussions did take place whilst the participant selected their choices. The majority stated it all depends on the offense that the person had committed.

The frequent statement was if people are in poverty which leads them to steal in desperation, they require a 'second chance'. Otherwise, if the person had committed a serious violent offense, I would not feel comfortable receiving goods or services from people with those convictions.

## Survey

In total 107 people participated in the survey, and 66.29% were aged 40 and over whom completed. The findings were:

- 61.18% stated they have not been a victim of crime in the past five years.
- 43.18% are very happy for people with criminal records to be supported into work to stop reoffending. Whilst 3.41% are unhappy with this statement.
- 91.95% agree that businesses that employ people with a criminal record contribute positively to society.
- 87.36% would feel comfortable buying goods or services from a business that employs people with a criminal record. However, 54.55% of people would only be comfortable purchasing services from a tradesperson such as a plumber from a business that employs people with a criminal record.
- Those who selected no, for not feeling comfortable were prompted by the reason of feeling unsafe.
- There were listed offenses that people would not feel comfortable purchasing goods or services with a criminal record are:
  - 83.54% are sex offences
  - 58.23% are violent offences
  - 56.96% are homicides
  - 53.16% are domestic abuse

- 45.45% are aware of support services that provide support for employing people with criminal records.

Other responses to the survey were:

- As a probation officer who assesses and manages risk, daily, whilst I support the opportunity for people to enter employment, the type of employment MUST be balanced against the risk from their offending behaviour and the risk of serious harm. It is not enough to say, "People who offend need employment to help them stop offending", it is far more nuanced than this.
- I'd probably be reluctant to have a former criminal work in my home, again, it would depend on the offense they'd be convicted of.
- Prefer to help people who don't break the law
- Safeguarding laws/protocols must always be paramount
- I don't trust ex-offenders in my home

## **Business**

### **Face to face counter exercise**

Interaction for the counter-exercise, with businesses and organisations was up to 24 across Cleveland during one event.

All agreed with the following statements:

- Employing people with criminal records is making a positive contribution to society.
- They would do business with other companies that hired people with criminal records.

Further feedback from businesses was given:

- They are willing to employ people with criminal records but for vetting purposes causes restrictions.
- A resource/guide will be useful to support employing people with criminal records, as some were unaware of support services.

After discussions with the team, a few businesses are going to review and consider employing people with a criminal record.

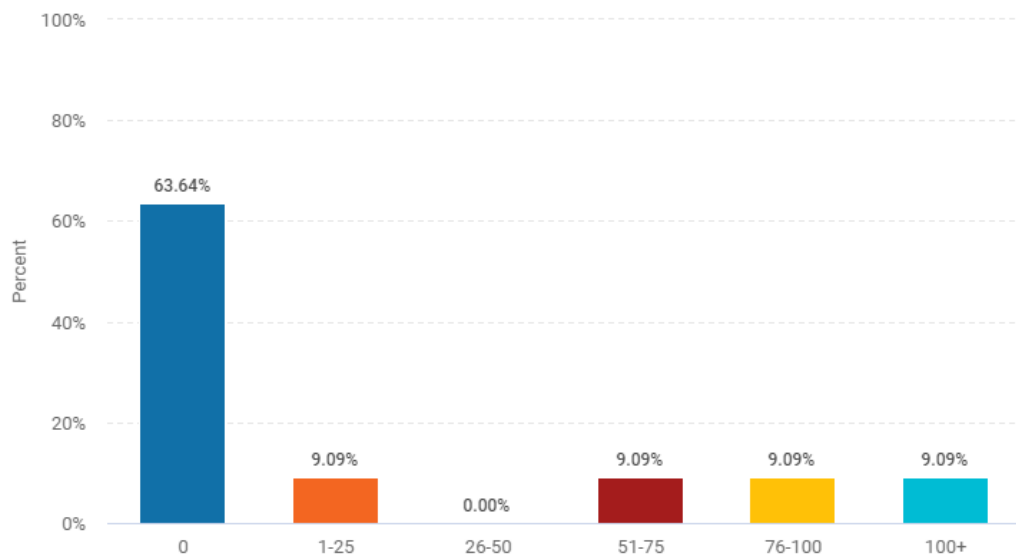
### **Survey**

25 people participated in the survey, and 80% of people were over the age of 40 who completed. 45.45% are Chief Executive/ Managing Directors/ Lead of a public sector body or voluntary sector organisation and 36.36% are business owners. The findings were:

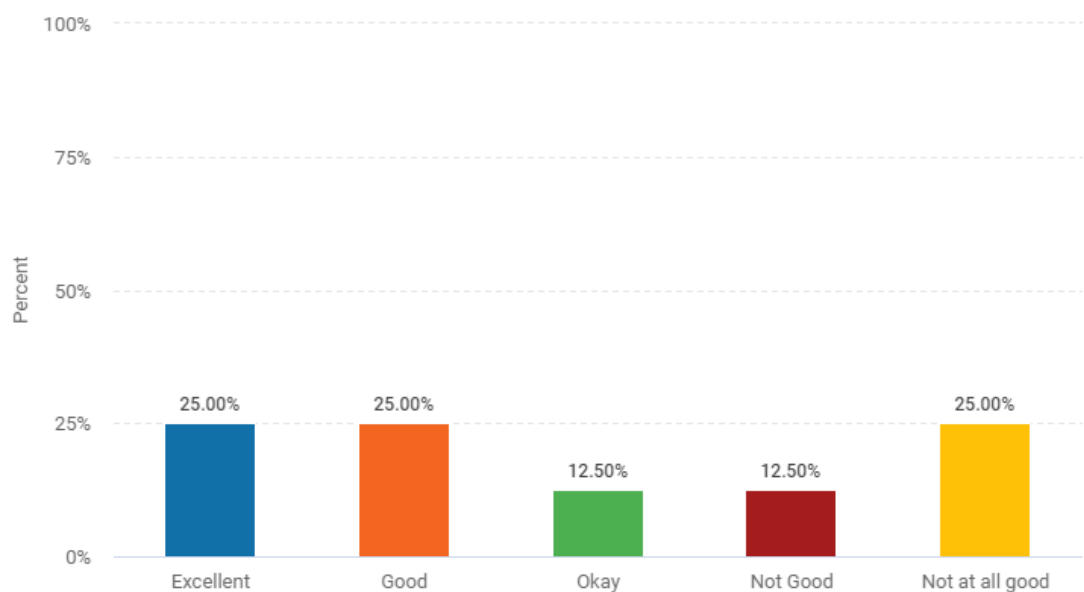
- 85.71% would employ people who have not offended in a long period of time.
- 81.82% think businesses employing people with criminal records are making a positive contribution to society.
- The concerns with employing a person with a criminal record participants selected the following statements:
  - 54.55% have concerns about challenges that may impact their employment, i.e. substance misuse
  - 45.45% have concerns about property damage and theft.
  - 36.36% have requirements for enhanced DBS
  - 36.36% have concerns about the impact on the workforce, i.e. other employers not feeling comfortable.
- 54.55% stated they do have a recruitment policy/ vetting to request for an enhanced DBS
- 90.91% of their businesses would be happy to purchase goods/services from other businesses that employ a person with a criminal record
- 45.45% are not aware of the services that support businesses/organisations in employing a person with a criminal record

- 27.26% are aware of the services that support businesses/organisations in employing a person with a criminal record such as Clean Slate, BEAM, IPS, Job Centre, Ingeous, CGL, and recover connections.

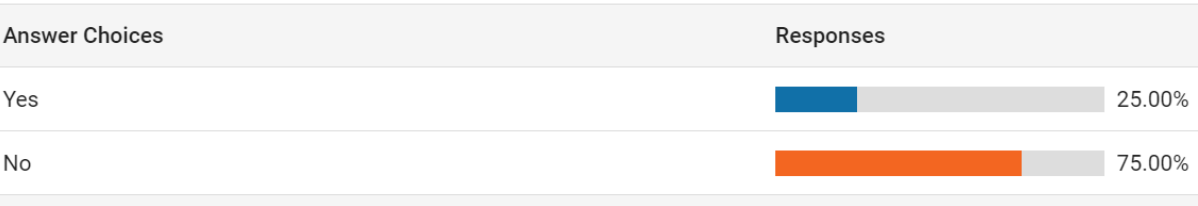
Approximately how many people does your organisation/business do you employ people with criminal records?



How would you rate the performance of people with a criminal record who works for your business/organisation?



Would you say hiring people with criminal records has helped with diverse recruitment in enhancing your reputation, and helped you to win contracts?



Feedback was provided on the information or resources that would be useful to support businesses/organisations in deciding on employing people with criminal records were:

- The person’s full history inc criminal record that’s lapsed.
- I would like a covering letter that acknowledges the crime. For me, this shows openness and honesty from the outset.
- Have systems in place that we could contact in case of any problems or potential problems.
- None, as we are the largest employer of people with convictions in the UK.
- Offence type, prison or other sentence and time since last offense



## **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)**

The YAG members are from the ages of 12 to 20 years old. A session was delivered to the group about understanding the OPCC's commissioned services to reduce re-offending within Cleveland. In particular, the groups found it surprising as they assumed it would be higher for the costs of detaining a prisoner for a year and the amount of taxpayer contributions.

In reflection on the stats provided to the YAG, they feel these are the changes that need to be in place to reduce re-offending:

- Strengthen services around mental health, drugs, and alcohol use.
- Offer support in finding employment.
- Or provide some form of community service but in a way that offers a job prospect at the end.

## **Recommendations**

The consultation identified that the majority of people agreed that employing people with a criminal record does positively contribute to society.

There was an acknowledgment that the public would not know when receiving goods or services from a business or organisation that has employed people with a criminal record.

The findings also identified that businesses would not know what support they could receive when employing people with a criminal record.

The REWIRE Resource will be a useful tool to support dispelling misconceptions and equip businesses/organisations to employ people with criminal records.

It would be beneficial to include sharing good practices from businesses and organisations that employ people with a criminal record.

Also, provide individual case studies of people who have been given the opportunity of learning new skills to be equipped for employment and prevent re-offending.