



CONSULTATION ON REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS, St George's House Windsor, December 2018

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OF OFFENDERS IN BERKSHIRE AND THAMES VALLEY

Hosted by the High Sheriff of Berkshire, Graham Barker, a diverse group of experts gathered at Windsor Castle on 4th and 5th of December to discuss national strategy and local potential for supporting the rehabilitation of offenders, and in particular to find ways of helping ex-offenders into employment.

This broad group of academics, employers, policy makers and charities worked over the two days to come up with specific proposals that could improve policy, and local implementation. Below is a summary of their ideas as they relate specifically to Berkshire:

Identify Local Champions to Promote Employment of Ex-offenders – The interest of the High Sheriff creates an opportunity to bring together a few local champions and enablers of this agenda (for example - employers, Job Centre Plus (JCP), the County Council, the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)) to promote the benefits of employing ex-offenders.

Create a Single Point of Contact for Employers – This group should create a service that reaches out to employers to persuade them to see the potential of ex-offenders, provides a clearing house that matches this group to available vacancies, and helps them prepare for successful entry into the workforce.

Consider Ways of Bringing Employers and Ex-Offenders Together – The service referred to above should look at ways of linking ex-offenders to vacancies, such as organising 'job fairs' aimed at ex-offenders in the local JCP and CRC offices, and in the prisons that release in to the county, giving them the opportunity to meet with employers and demonstrate their appetite and readiness to work.

Corporate Social Responsibility – Large employers should be encouraged to support the development of ex-offender potential by offering the expertise of their staff on a pro-bono basis to support vocational training and job readiness schemes, thereby appealing in a practical way to corporate social responsibility.

Major Project Opportunities – Specific use should be made of the opportunities afforded by the Heathrow Third Runway Development Project, and the major Slough Redevelopment Project, where significant numbers of new employees will be needed. The main employers in these projects should be approached to establish pathways into their projects for ex-offenders.

Accommodation Provision – Recognising that it is difficult to sustain employment while living in unsafe or unsuitable accommodation, the local housing authorities, CRC and PCC should look at a more ambitious approach to providing decent accommodation for ex-offenders. One specific idea was find private investors as partners to create clusters of supported housing for offenders being supported into employment.