

# Fair Chance Business Alliance and Employer Charter

## Executive Summary & Position Paper

The UK is being held back by an unparalleled workforce shortage. Businesses large and small are struggling to source, select and retain employees. Thousands of employers can't fill their vacancies, constraining business, progress and economic growth.

Meanwhile, thanks to historic biases in recruitment, hundreds of thousands of people with criminal records are struggling to *find* jobs. This makes no sense – especially when there's an obvious solution.

### Fair Chance Employment.

We want every UK organisation, large and small, to employ and progress the best people for their jobs, including those with criminal records, an overlooked talent pool with enormous potential. The Fair Chance Business Alliance has been founded by employers, for employers, to make Fair Chance employment possible, practical, safe and **normal**.

We're inspired by the success of the USA's [Second Chance Business Coalition](#), now led by over 46 major progressive corporations. In the UK, we're also employer-led and independent of government, but we're tailoring *our* model to bring major businesses together with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

As the **Fair Chance Business Alliance**, we've drawn on early employer feedback as well as the success of models like *Disability Confident* to develop a business-funded, tiered quality standard. The **Fair Chance Employers Charter** is founded on this core pledge:

*“As informed employers, we are committed to providing people with criminal records a fair chance to participate and progress in the UK economy and contribute to society.”*

Our mission is to promote the benefits of fair chance employment and provide employers with practical resources to recruit and progress individuals with criminal records. We will also challenge and change public perceptions; people should not be forever defined by their worst mistakes.

Our new Employment Charter is a three-tier quality standard that takes employers step by step from being Fair Chance Aware to Believers to Champions, explaining how to become inclusive places for people with criminal records to work and progress. We'll back this up with a suite of resources, developed in partnership with businesses and experts, to support members at each stage.

In time, we'll match these with resources to help people with criminal records back into employability and work, too. The Alliance will help them unlock their potential and grow into

and beyond economic self-sufficiency, reducing crime, stabilising families and strengthening communities.

Employers will wear their Charter mark proudly, identifying themselves to candidates as safe places to apply, and to their customers as community-minded businesses. And the scheme will fully complement other initiatives – mostly prison-facing – that have developed in the last few years.

**Since starting in March** as a non-profit, limited company, we've attracted founding signatories from construction, retail, hospitality, IT, media, recruitment and SME sectors; established our online presence and partnered with leading third sector organisations like *Business In The Community*. Their wealth of experience has shaped the first draft of the Charter (through our dedicated Working Party); we'll launch it to stakeholders to pilot in October.

Our purpose is to align businesses at scale and pace in one unified Alliance, deploying the Charter and its resources to vastly increase the number of Fair Chance employers. Together we'll show how business can be a force for good, create millions of new Fair Chance vacancies, and establish a groundbreaking new model for inclusion.


Neil Wood, MBA: *Chief Operating Officer*  
**Fair Chance Business Alliance**

## Our 8 'Umbrella' Standards

From Bronze (Aware) to Gold (Champion)

- Grow a well-informed and inclusive staff culture.
- Follow relevant legislation sensitively and in full.
- Inform and guide candidates clearly on how you'll take account of their history (if relevant).
- Only ask if you need to, and no sooner than you have to.
- Train staff in managing disclosure and evaluating risk fairly, allowing for context and relevance.
- Explore supportive and proactive options for recruitment and onboarding.
- Employ, retain and promote people with criminal records.
- Grow into being a leader in your sector.

# The Fair Chance Charter (One-page DRAFT)

	Bronze / Aware	Silver / Believer	Gold / Champion
	<p>It's legal to discriminate against people with unspent convictions on their records. But often this discrimination is excessive, costing appropriately qualified candidates the chance of a meaningful role, and employers a skilled and committed employee. What's more, misunderstandings about the law, business responsibilities and public perceptions mean employers often discriminate far beyond what is lawful, which affects up to eight million people of working age in the UK.</p> <p>A Fair Chance isn't a guarantee of a job. Fair Chance employers aren't a soft touch. But they have taken the trouble to learn about the experience of people with criminal records and to understand the opportunities that giving such candidates a Fair Chance presents to them as an employer and to the communities they work in and sell to. Fair Chance employers welcome people with criminal records into their workforces whenever appropriate and support their progress into long-term, productive careers.</p>		
<p><b>Summary for employers</b></p>	<p>To achieve the Bronze award, employers will demonstrate they have begun their journey towards Fair Chance readiness by implementing key policies and practices and planning for the reception of people with criminal records into their workforce. They will have started to align their team with this mission and publicise their Bronze membership but will mostly still be working <i>towards</i> actively welcoming people with criminal records into their teams.</p>	<p>To achieve the Silver award, employers will be able to show that they and their teams are prepared and ready to welcome candidates with criminal records and give them a Fair Chance of employment. They will be well versed and up to date on the law (including DBS checks) as it applies to their own organisation, how to conduct thoughtful and balanced safeguarding and risk management, and how not to collect or record any more criminal record information than is necessary, any sooner than is necessary. They flag any exceptions to candidates pre-application.</p>	<p>To achieve the Gold award, employers can show that they are not just welcoming but proactive. They seek opportunities to attract people with criminal records into their workforce through relevant partnerships, dedicated programmes and thoughtful onboarding support. They always assess a candidate's skill-based suitability for a role before considering risk and are well trained and experienced in evaluating difficult disclosures. Gold employers set the public example to which other alliance members aspire; they are the leaders of the Fair Chance movement.</p>
<p><b>Setup</b></p> <p><b>Our seven standard categories:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture, Policy and Practice</li> <li>● Managing Disclosure and Risk</li> <li>● Understanding the Law</li> <li>● Candidate Sourcing</li> <li>● After the Interview</li> <li>● Prison-specific (Workshops, TTG and ROTL)</li> <li>● Membership/Leadership</li> </ul>	<p><b>In addition to the core items, Bronze employers are required to meet two* standards (Silver or Gold) from higher tiers, including at least one from the Disclosure and Risk section. (*TBC)</b></p> <p><b>Bronze employers are generally expected to progress to Silver within 6-18 months; Bronze membership lapses after two years pending reapplication and additional support.</b></p> <p><b>Required standards on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture, Policy and Practice</li> <li>● Understanding the Law</li> <li>● Membership</li> </ul> <p>+ Two options from Silver/Gold inc. one from Disclosure and Risk</p>	<p><b>Silver employers must meet all of the Bronze standards, all the Silver standards and three* standards selected from the Gold tier.</b></p> <p><b>Employers may apply for Silver membership at any time they are ready, and apply for renewal every two* years. (*TBC)</b></p> <p><b>Required standards on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture, Policy and Practice</li> <li>● Managing Disclosure and Risk</li> <li>● Understanding the Law</li> <li>● Candidate Sourcing</li> <li>● After the Interview</li> <li>● Leadership</li> </ul> <p>+ Three* options from Gold (required or options)</p>	<p><b>Gold employers meet all the required standards at Bronze, Silver and Gold, and choose from a selection of more specialised standards. Optional tasks are 'scored' for degree of challenge and scaled for different employer sizes. Employers may apply for Gold membership once they have achieved Silver and met the Gold standards; renewal every 3 years.</b></p> <p><b>Required standards on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture, Policy and Practice</li> <li>● Managing Disclosure and Risk</li> <li>● Candidate Sourcing</li> <li>● After the Interview</li> <li>● Leadership</li> </ul> <p>+ TBC options chosen from all seven categories, including 'Prison-specific'</p>