

Fair Chance Business Alliance and Employer Charter

Executive Summary & Position Paper (Summer 2024)

The UK is being held back by an unparalleled productivity crisis. Businesses large and small are struggling to plug workforce gaps as well as select and retain the right talent. 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 often furthest from the workforce. 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).

At the **Fair Chance Business Alliance (FCBA)**, we've drawn on employer feedback as well as the success of models like *Disability Confident* to develop an employer-funded, tiered quality standard. The **Fair Chance Employment Charter** is founded on a simple, 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 (a UK first) is a three-tier quality standard that takes employers from being Fair Chance *Adopter* to Fair Chance *Champions*, explaining how to become truly inclusive places for people with criminal records to work and progress. We're also currently working with employers and sector experts to develop a suite of resources and training.

Employers will wear their Charter mark proudly, identifying themselves to candidates as **great** places to apply, and to their customers as community-minded businesses. This approach will fully complement and amplify other social justice initiatives, including those directly prison-facing, that have developed in the last few years.

As a purpose-led, not-for-profit company, we've attracted founding members and signatories from construction, retail, hospitality, IT, media, recruitment and SME sectors; established our online presence; and aligned with leading third sector organisations like [Unlock](#), [Clinks](#) and [Business In The Community](#), so we can remove barriers together.









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 an innovative model for **intentional inclusion**.

Keith Jones
Chair, Strategic Advisory Board, FCBA.

The Fair Chance Employer Journey

From Bronze (Adopter) to Gold (Champion)



-  Grow / embed / adopt a well-informed and inclusive staff culture.
-  Follow relevant legislation fully and increasingly sensitively.
-  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 optimal recruitment and onboarding.
-  Employ, retain and promote people with criminal records.
-  Grow into being a leader and advocate in your sector.



Fair Chance Fundamentals:

It's legal to discriminate against people with unspent convictions on their records. But too often this discrimination is 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.

A Fair Chance isn't a guarantee of a job.

FCBA members have grasped the opportunity to learn more about the experiences of people with criminal records. They've come to understand the value that Fair Chance candidates offer them as an employer and to the communities they are rooted in. FCBA members **welcome** people with criminal records into their workforces and support their progression onto productive careers – because they value equity, are socially responsible and because it makes *business sense*.

Employment Charter Overview:

	Summary for Employers	Setup		
<p>Bronze Adopter</p> 	<p>Bronze (ADOPTER) employers can show they have begun their Fair Chance journey towards Silver by implementing key policies and practices that will support recruiting and progression of people with criminal records.</p> <p>They will have started to align their team with this mission and publicise their Bronze membership, all while they work towards actively welcoming people with criminal records into their organisations.</p>	<p>Bronze members meet all the required standards below and have Board level (or similar) support for Fair Chance Employment. Bronze employers have up to 18 months* to progress to Silver.</p> <p><i>*Membership lapses after 2 years pending reapplication (support will be provided).</i></p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fair Chance Culture. > Policy and Procedures. > Board Level (or similar) support includes designating a Responsible person and planning for legal compliance. > Awareness of Disclosure and Risk. > FCBA Membership. 		
<p>Silver Believer</p> 	<p>Silver (BELIEVER) employers are prepared and ready to welcome candidates with criminal records, truly giving them a Fair Chance.</p> <p>They are up to date on the law (including criminal record checks and data protection) as it applies to their organisation, on how to conduct thoughtful and balanced safeguarding alongside risk management, and how not to collect or record any more sensitive information than necessary, any sooner than needed. They flag any offence category exceptions to candidates' pre-application.</p>	<p>Silver members will have met all Bronze standards as well as the additional Silver standards outlined below. Employers may apply for Silver membership at any time they are ready, and for renewal every two years.</p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Policy and Procedures. > Fair Chance Practices (inc. legal compliance). > Fair Chance Culture. 		
<p>Gold Champion</p> 	<p>Gold (CHAMPION) employers are proactive in attracting and progressing people with criminal records through relevant partnerships, dedicated programmes and thoughtful recruitment, onboarding and career pathways.</p> <p>They always appropriately assess a candidate's potential and suitability before considering risk, being well versed in evaluating different types of disclosures. Gold employers are the leaders of the Fair Chance movement.</p>	<p>Gold members meet all the required standards at Bronze, Silver and Gold. They may apply for Gold membership once they have achieved Silver and met the Gold standards; renewal is required every three years.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fair Chance Culture. > Policy & Procedures. > Fair Chance Practices. > FCBA Leadership. </td> <td> <p>Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mentoring & Education. > Building Partnerships. > Sponsorship. </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fair Chance Culture. > Policy & Procedures. > Fair Chance Practices. > FCBA Leadership. 	<p>Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Mentoring & Education. > Building Partnerships. > Sponsorship.
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