

YCG builds Diversity and Inclusion into its Employer Charter

Your Consultation Group (YCG) is seeking to help employers meet their Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) aspirations.

Under current legislation, employment frameworks require employers to avoid acting in a discriminatory way regarding the nine protected characteristics.

Most socially responsible employers have looked at their social responsibilities far more broadly and are setting employment frameworks that seek to avoid wider discrimination or bias both in their selection of candidates and retention policies. An example might be the 'ban the box' campaign.

YCG has been collaborating with employers to strengthen their employment frameworks to enhance Diversity and Inclusivity within their organisations by targeting those who have been convicted of offences and who would not normally be selected for employment due to a criminal conviction.

Sadly, some employers either never contemplate the considerable talent pool that is available or, having considered the subject and decided they are willing to employ serving prisoners and prison leavers, often do not know how to go about the process. Sometimes, bias against certain categories of offence or suitability for senior roles within an organisation distorts their employment framework.

Risk assessments can play a significant role in the decision-making process when considering this large talent pool, as does concerns about employee acceptance. Establishing employer confidence in the robustness of resettlement planning processes and support in the community is key to an employer's willingness to engage. Once confidence is established, then employers can benefit from the considerable talents and expertise that those with lived experience can bring at any level within the employer organisation.

Vince James B.E.M. AIRO, Head of Human Resources at YCG, IMB member, and Employment Advisory Board member commented: "I worked from the bottom up at Network Rail, starting as a cleaner. More recently I was Lead Industrial Relations Consultant and involved in a substantial rewrite of Network Rail's Employer Framework. Having worked extensively with prisons over the last 10 years, heading up the Rail Track Initiative, I recognise that equality of opportunity is everything and that employers need to look beyond conventional paradigms in their selection processes. This includes executive selection, and I am delighted that some of our socially responsible employers are advertising executive roles on our Careers Platform.

"I am pleased that our sponsoring employers are receptive to this message, and some had already started this journey in relation to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in executive selection as well as in relation to general hires. It is important we raise the bar.



Vince James: "It is important we raise the bar."

"Some of our sponsoring employers had not appreciated the depth of talent available for selection within the prison population and had no idea how to go about identifying individual serving prisoners who would be suitable to serve in an executive capacity within their organisations. I am pleased to say we are correcting that.

"Adopting YCG Careers Service not only allows them

to identify suitable candidates for advertised roles with their organisations, but it also allows serving prisoners across the entire prison estate to see what opportunities may be open to them while on licence or on release. It also allows employers to reach out to the 600,000 individuals with unspent convictions who are in the community who feel unsupported and marginalised."



Raff Esposito: "We pride ourselves on being a thought leader in this space."

Director for Social Impact, Raff Esposito commented: "We pride ourselves on being a thought leader in this space, and this initiative really raises the bar in terms of what opportunities can be unlocked. The EDI training we provide to our sponsoring employers provides a thorough understanding of race, protected characteristics, and gender equality, and assimilating those who have unspent convictions.

"We stress the importance to our clients in understanding and supporting marginalised groups. Prisoners and prison leavers represent some of the hardest to reach, and furthest away from the employment market, and many also face discrimination because of their protected characteristics.

"By providing opportunities and increasing an understanding of these issues we can help with the task of reintegrating prisoners into their communities and reducing rates of reoffending."