



Tideway

**HELPING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS BACK
INTO EMPLOYMENT**

HELPING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS BACK INTO EMPLOYMENT

According to the National Police Database, over 11 million people in the UK have a criminal record. This equates to more than 20% of the working age population. Government research has found that many former offenders find it almost impossible to get a job, with just 17% in P45 employment a year after release and more than half of employers saying they would not consider hiring someone with a criminal record. Unfortunately, this can lead to re-offending as part of a vicious circle - something which costs UK taxpayers an estimated £18 billion each year.

Tideway recognised that the scale of the project created an opportunity to tackle this issue and to show leadership within construction. Tideway set itself a target of employing one person with a conviction for every 100 employees in sustained employment ie for at least six months, embedding this within all three of its main works contracts.

Tideway and its supply chain partnered with charities such as Bounce Back and Key4Life to help recruit, and then support, those who joined the project through this route. Tideway signed up to the Ban the Box campaign in 2016 and removed any tick box from job application forms that asked about criminal convictions. In addition, Tideway staff helped to run workshops in prisons designed to grow the confidence of inmates, challenge perceptions around employment prospects post-release and teach skills needed to apply for jobs, such as interviewing and CV writing.

Tideway has also worked with and supported a number of government and business groups in this area, with membership of the Corbett Network; the Ministry Of Justice Business in The Community Group; and The Employers' Forum For Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR). We also supported the construction industry's Mind The Gap initiative, which helps to develop employment pathways for people with convictions, hosting training for our partner organisations and supply chain.

Tideway and our MWCs continue to support this commitment through volunteering opportunities with various organisations and through our support for the Hardman Trust, which works with charities to provide skills and opportunities in construction to people with convictions, as part of the legacy fund mentioned above.

Tideway's work in this area has also been externally recognised – by the EFFRR with its Award for Business working with Local Communities in 2018; by the Corbett Network with a highly commended in its 2019 awards that recognise high-quality rehabilitative opportunities for prisoners; and by Business In The Community in 2020 when it named Tideway as a Responsible Business Champion for Outstanding Employment.

More recently Tideway has worked with the Corbett Network to support three community projects which are helping people with convictions to get support when they leave prison, identify training opportunities and find and keep jobs, through a Tideway legacy Fund. You can read a case study on the fund below.

Tideway has also helped the charity Working Chance to produce and launch a comprehensive guide for employers on recruiting and supporting people with convictions, called Hiring With Conviction. You can read the guide [here](#).

Tideway's 2023 social impact report outlined the value to society of our work in this area – the project's employment of a total of 37 people with convictions delivered a value to society of £2.3 million. You can read more about on page 15 of the report.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS

ALADDIN AND A FAIRER CHANCE

As the Tideway project progressed towards the end of its main tunnelling phase, we identified an opportunity to deliver further support to people with convictions through the transfer of unused Apprenticeship Levy funds.

With a reduced ability to offer our own apprenticeships, we worked with the London Progression Collaboration (LPC) to identify organisations who could use unspent funds from the client team Apprenticeship Levy that were available for transfer under the scheme.

By transferring funds to A Fairer Chance, a London-based Community Interest Company (CIC) which works to help those with experience of the criminal justice system, we funded two apprenticeships which not only helped the apprentices but, through the work they did, indirectly helped other people with convictions into employment.

One of the apprentices, 36-year-old Aladdin Rahman from East London, says that he has found the skills that he is learning are really valuable for his role and also help him to continue on a positive life journey after his own release from prison.



He said: "I achieved well at school and did start a local authority career before things went awry. There were things happening in my family and social life that led me to making a bad decision. This resulted in a four-year sentence for possession with intent to supply.

"During my time I took advantage of all and any education opportunities. I became the education 'orderly' and trained as a 'Listener'. I met A Fairer Chance at an Employment Event in HMP Isis and when I came out, I was determined to find them."

Aladdin contacted A Fairer Chance and started working as a volunteer with them.

"I was working in retail but volunteering with A Fairer Chance for a year when an opportunity to join the team as a trainee case manager came up.

"For the first year I shadowed the CEO whilst learning the basics of case management. Then I found out about the new apprenticeship. This seemed a perfect fit."

Aladdin and his colleague Roxanne began a two-year Level 4 Employability Practitioner apprenticeship in 2021.

Aladdin added: "This qualification has enabled me to consider a wide range of approaches and tools to work with my clients, who all have at least one criminal conviction. The point of this qualification is to help me grow and eventually move into a more senior role or take on higher level responsibilities. I am gaining skills and knowledge that will enable me to work in any organisation across the welfare to work world, should I want to.

"This apprenticeship has enabled me to delve deeper into all areas relating to employment. I was very interested in Mental Health issues - the majority of people in prison have experienced these. Through the work we did in class I went on to gain a Mental Health First Aiders qualification that enables me to take a more holistic approach to my work. I really want to stay in this sector and I know this apprenticeship will stand me in good stead."



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS

CHANGING PATHS AND SIR JOE'S CAFE

One of Tideway's most significant early moves in its support for the project's commitment on people with convictions was to partner with Changing Paths, a Charitable Trust. It also proved to be one of our biggest challenges, leading to Tideway taking swift action to help more than 20 staff who faced losing their jobs when Changing Paths folded virtually overnight.

The trust supported the transition into or back to work for people with convictions and the long term unemployed, focusing especially on the construction and catering sectors. It included on the job induction and training plus supported mentoring. Sir Joe's Café opened in our Paddington offices, followed by catering operations in the project's drive sites in Fulham and Bermondsey.

However, in March 2017 the 27 [check] staff from Changing Paths working on the project received a letter telling them they would be losing their jobs in a matter of days as the organisation was closing. Tideway intervened very quickly, determined that they and the project's commitment to support them would not be abandoned. Led by Tideway General Counsel Celia Carlisle, Tideway put in place interim arrangements for all the Sir Joe's staff and then employed them directly. It also worked with its contractors to ensure the drive site staff also had alternative arrangements in place so they did not lose their jobs.



Kathryn Nethersole was Changing Paths' Commercial Manager at the time. She was also due to lose her own job and was offered a new role on Tideway. She said: "Many of the team employed on Tideway were prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL) and we really feared that several would react by simply returning to crime. Tideway were incredible, working so fast to find a solution for everyone so they turned up to the same workplace on Monday.

"No organisation has ever transitioned a vulnerable workforce of serving and ex-offenders on the scale achieved by Tideway in 2017. It really was a totally relentless push to do the right thing."

Kathryn continued to drive Tideway's ongoing work in this area, leading on our membership of the Corbett Network; the Ministry Of Justice Business in The Community Group; and The Employers' Forum For Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR). She added: "Changing Paths ended up being a catalyst for an increase in understanding – both for Tideway as client and our Main Works Contractors - of the issues around employing people with convictions."

Celia Carlisle said: "As well as supporting the group in small but important ways like with phone cards or tube passes, it was vital that everyone felt part of the organisation." This included helping project staff transition develop themselves and get new jobs, giving an opportunity for individuals to chase their dreams. One man was supported to make a move from catering into accounting, gaining a new qualification. He said: "My kids can be proud of me now - I will forever be grateful to those who believed in me and gave me this opportunity."

When the pandemic struck and with significant numbers of people working from home and with the number of staff reducing as the project moved towards completion, it was not viable for Sir Joe's café to remain open. However, Tideway looked to its biggest community investment, the Sands End Arts and Community centre in Fulham, to provide some support. We donated most of the kitchen equipment to allow the centre's new Walnut Tree café to open and two former Sir Joe's staff were employed there.





THE TIDEWAY LEGACY FUND

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS



In November 2022 Tideway launched a Legacy Fund with the Corbett Network to support three projects that provided skills and opportunities to people with convictions.

With the project approaching 75 per cent complete and with recruitment for the construction phase effectively at an end, we were closing out our employment-related commitment. We knew from our social impact report that the 37 people who had sustained jobs with the project had really benefited from the opportunity, and that their employment had generated a total value to society of £2.3 million, so we wanted to do something more over the next 12 months.

We partnered with the Corbett Network and funded three projects, one in construction and one outside the industry:

Onwards & Upwards

This charity aims to break the cycle of reoffending by training prison leavers to become bike mechanics with XO Bikes in Lewisham.

Tideway supported the training of nine people to become bike mechanics. The course gave them a positive environment and supportive culture to work in and a team to be a part of. All of them gained a Velotech bike mechanic qualification, and none have re-offended. The two courses also helped the charity to learn and refine their model.

A referral partner commented: "We have been delighted to see people we've worked with flourish on the XO Bikes programme.

They are clearly committed to those they work with and are passionate about changing people's lives."



"I was at a point in life where I had just left jail – I had spent a long time in there – and I knew nothing about anything. I learnt how to not only fix bikes, but build them too, and most importantly how to make myself useful." A successful trainee

The Hardman Trust

The Trust works with long-term prison leavers, providing tailored practical and financial support to help these individuals find belonging and move into work or training.

Through the Legacy Fund, the Trust supported six people leaving long-term prison sentences into construction-based opportunities in London area in crane driving, telehandling, site managing and 360 excavation. Each individual researched construction-based opportunities and made a plan for the work they wanted to enter on release from prison and the training they would require.



The fund also gave grants for PPE and tools, which will further enhance employment opportunities in the future.

The Trust said: "We know, from our work, that there is a difference between being released from prison after 10 years in comparison with 10 months, and tailored support is needed to ease the transition back into the community.

"Our vision is a future where everyone can achieve their potential within and beyond prison, and this project has helped us move towards this. Thank you to Tideway on behalf of the six people supported, who are now skilled and able to enter the exciting world of construction."

"This has been fantastic. I'd never have been able to afford this course without your help. Now it's done, I can get a job and support my family again. I'm ready to work as soon as I get out." Participant in the Hardman Trust scheme

Employment 4 All

This organisation supports two groups - women who are prison leavers, on probation, vulnerable or considered at risk of offending; and younger (18 to 24-year-old) men and women. They support them into sustainable work through their Moving On project and focus on getting them over some basic barriers before the steps into training and jobs.

This is because those supported face multiple barriers to employment before they even start looking for a job - as well as poverty and the risk of homelessness, they have a range of complex needs. Employment 4 All offers a wide range of support packages: food, care and personal hygiene; homeware, bedding, and cooking utensils; phone credit and electricity top ups. They also help candidates with the identification documents needed to gain bank accounts, the costs of travel for interviews and reconditioned laptops for courses.

As well as directly funding the above methods of basic support, the Tideway grant also funded interview, CV and disclosure workshops; a Dress for Success Job Surgery; one-to-one training on soft skills development; and healthy eating workshops with a professional chef. The programme supported a total of 2,000 people and because of the

number of SIM cards and data the organisation bought for those in 'digital poverty', Employment 4 All became a community partner of the Good Things Foundation National Data Bank to help vulnerable people to get connected.

Employment 4 All said that 1,400 of the 2,000 people supported in some way by the Tideway grant then gained some form of employment. The Moving On project was also shortlisted for an award in the Howard League for Penal Reform Annual Awards.

Working with the Corbett Network

The Tideway Legacy Fund was a collaboration with the Corbett Network, a coalition of charities, social enterprises and other community organisations and businesses. The network supports those in prison and after release and as well as helping them find and keep a job, members also offer mentoring, coaching, training, and on-going support.

The fund was designed so that it could be a blueprint for other organisations to use, with a robust mechanism for setting grant criteria and inviting and reviewing applications, and monitoring progress, including templates for applications, scoring and impact reports.

"Had we not had the Tideway award to enable us to help so many people in digital poverty, it is unlikely that we would have afforded to supply so many SIM Cards, to have enabled us to meet the eligibility to become a Databank." Employment 4 All