

Inclusive recruitment: How GXO supports people with experience of the Criminal Justice System into employment



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GXO, a major logistics company operating across the UK, designed a programme that opens up access to work for people with experience of the criminal justice system. Developed in response to post-pandemic labour shortages, the initiative has since evolved into a long-term commitment to inclusive recruitment, social value and building a workforce reflective of the communities GXO serves.

The programme brings together partnership working, ring-fenced opportunities and structured support. It has delivered clear benefits to individuals, GXO teams and the wider community. GXO now plans to strengthen and expand this work.



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This case study draws on insights from an interview with a senior member of staff at GXO, who has been closely involved in the development of the organisation's inclusive recruitment practices.

Starting points and motivations

The programme was created in 2021, at a time when the logistics sector was experiencing significant pressure. Demand for online shopping rose sharply during the pandemic, creating large numbers of vacancies and a need for GXO to quickly expand its workforce. As the company explored new pools of talent, it recognised the significant untapped potential of people in prison. With around 88,000 men and 7,000 women in custody, this group represented a sizeable population who often struggle to secure employment on release.

This need for new staff aligned with GXO's early commitment to building a culture of belonging. As a company offering many entry-level roles, GXO saw itself as having both an opportunity and a responsibility to welcome people whose career paths had not been straightforward. GXO highlights the company's ability to train people quickly while prioritising skills such as teamwork, reliability and commitment.

What the programme involved

The first step involved outreach to Spring Hill open prison. A visit was arranged, which strengthened GXO's confidence in developing the programme. The enthusiasm of the prison's employment lead was instrumental in shaping the early approach.

GXO advertised vacancies in the prison, with staff screening out applicants with 'no-go offences' agreed by GXO's directors. Eight candidates were interviewed inside the prison, and three were hired. Those on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) travelled to GXO during the day and returned to prison in the evening, while others joined on release.

Employment is only one part of a broader ecosystem of support, but it is a crucial component. The interview highlighted that successful rehabilitation relies on multiple organisations, with GXO's role focused on employment. A strong emphasis was placed on treating participants in the same way as any other employee: 'If we ostracise them or treat them differently, that doesn't support their rehabilitation. We want to include them and make them feel like they belong'.

To avoid stigma, only three people—the HR lead, site manager and line manager—are aware of a new starter's background unless the individual chooses to disclose it. Many choose not to disclose, integrating seamlessly into their teams.

Others are open about their history and have experienced strong support from colleagues.

A consistent theme throughout the programme has been the strong work ethic and loyalty shown by participants. Managers frequently report that these employees 'want to prove themselves' and often demonstrate higher retention than agency workers. As the programme expanded, GXO began ring-fencing roles across different sites, with numbers varying depending on client requirements and operational capacity.

Partnerships and outreach

Partnerships have been central to the programme's success. GXO works closely with [New Futures Network](#) (HMPPS), [Tempus Novo](#), [Goodwill Solutions](#), and other specialist organisations to help identify candidates, prepare disclosure information, and coordinate interviews.

GXO's collaboration with prisons has strengthened over time. Processes such as risk assessments, ROTL coordination and communication with prison governors have become smoother as relationships deepened. The company's willingness to visit prisons, meet candidates and understand daily realities has helped build trust and challenge misconceptions.



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Internal development

Insights from the programme have led GXO to refine internal processes, enabling sites to participate confidently and consistently. One of the most practical developments was the creation of clear documentation to guide site managers through each stage, making it easier for sites to engage with the programme.

The programme has also broadened employees' understanding of the criminal justice system. Hearing colleagues with lived experience talk about the impact of work has been particularly powerful and has encouraged more sites to take part.

Unexpectedly, the programme has also had a positive effect on staff morale. One example

described during the interview highlighted how the programme gave an HR manager a renewed sense of purpose. GXO believes similar experiences are occurring elsewhere as teams see the difference their support can make. The initiative has also prompted reflection on team culture. Some warehouse employees have personal or community connections to the criminal justice system, meaning colleagues often respond with empathy and encouragement. This shared understanding has helped embed the programme within GXO's wider commitment to belonging.

Rethinking the recruitment journey

While GXO aims to treat candidates from prison in the same way as other applicants, specific adaptations have been necessary. For those on ROTL, interviews are conducted inside prison rather than at GXO sites. The interview format mirrors the standard process but includes a reflective question about the individual's journey, helping interviewers assess their readiness to move forward.

The recruitment journey is also shaped by the need to maintain client confidence. Some clients, particularly those handling high-value products, are more cautious about participating. Early conversations with sites and clients ensure everyone understands what is possible within operational and contractual limits.

Constraints

Several challenges have emerged as the programme has developed. One early issue involved the interaction between electronic curfew tags and warehouse shift patterns. Some participants moving from prison to probation supervision were required to remain at home between 7pm and 7am, which clashed with GXO's 6am start times. Initially, probation teams were reluctant to adjust tag schedules. GXO resolved this through national-level discussions, but the issue highlighted how administrative processes can unintentionally restrict access to work. There have also been a very small number of instances in which individuals on ROTL left prison for work but did not arrive on site. This had happened only 'once or twice out of hundreds', underlining the importance of robust communication and coordination between prisons and employers. Despite these challenges, the programme's overall impact has been really positive.

More than 300 people have now joined GXO through this route, demonstrating that the benefits far outweigh the challenges.



The programme has already made a strong impact, supporting stable employment, stronger teams, and reduced reoffending.



Looking ahead

GXO plans to continue expanding the programme, building on strong evidence of its value for individuals, the business and the wider community. The company also hopes to see broader system-level changes that would support inclusive recruitment, including:

- Government incentives such as tax or National Insurance breaks for employers.
- Improved training and preparation inside prisons.
- Wider employer participation, particularly among organisations unsure how to begin.

GXO's advice to other employers is simple: 'Just start'. They emphasise that entry-level roles are key, and every prison has an employment lead ready to support organisations willing to open their doors.

The programme has already had a significant impact, supporting individuals into stable work, strengthening GXO teams, and contributing to reduced reoffending. For GXO, this is not only a recruitment initiative but part of a wider commitment to creating opportunities and supporting communities across the UK.

Get in touch

Belen is part of the cross-sector, collaborative team working on the '[Good Work and Better Business](#)' work package of the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP). Contact [Belen](#) to find out more about this case study.

Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP)

YPIP is a regional partnership working on new and better ways of sharing knowledge and making decisions to improve local lives and places in Yorkshire.



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