

**Read about Career Matters' experiences with the new  
Level 3 Peer Worker Apprenticeship Standard.**

## **CAREER MATTERS - DBS PROCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Career Matters is a social enterprise which exists to improve access to career development opportunities for all and to create positive and meaningful employment pathways. Working in partnership with health and justice services, health services, education, employers and voluntary, community, social enterprise sectors.

As a social enterprise, we have a particular focus on lived experience communities, including children who are in local authority care, young people and adults who have left care and individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The communities we support face the cliff edge of care and we seek to create a support system to connect them into futures with hope and opportunity.

Our lived experienced specialist team work with employers to create inspirational opportunities for our communities and to design new ways of working to attract an untapped pool of talent from the communities we support. Our partnerships focus on developing the future workforce skills of people with lived experience, enabling effective talent recruitment, development of industry competences and increased uptake into career pathways (including Apprenticeships Entry Level – Level 7).

[www.career-matters.org](http://www.career-matters.org)

## **LIVED EXPERIENCE CHARTER**

NHS England, Health & Justice, Inclusive Workforce Programme commissioned Career Matters to lead on the co-production design and development of the Lived Experience Charter\*. During 2021, a pilot with 6 sites took place and were successfully awarded the Lived Experience Charter. Career Matters has been recommissioned to roll the Lived Experience Charter across 24 sites across England during 2022/23.

[\\*Health and Justice Lived Experience Charter awards event, hosted by Career Matters | NHS England Events.](#)

<https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

The Lived Experience Charter has been designed and developed to improve the open and inclusive recruitment of people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and the local authority care system into careers within Health & Justice commissioned services and some wider NHS organisations.

This Lived Experience Charter is an award that providers of NHS England Health & Justice commissioned services will be able to apply to complete and receive. Having Lived Experience Charter 'status' will demonstrate that organisations have quality standards, good practices and a commitment to improving the inclusive recruitment and retention practices of people with lived experience (PwLE) of the criminal justice system and the local authority care system.

The Lived Experience Charter sits within the Health & Justice Inclusive Workforce Programme, which is a response to the NHS People Plan. The aim of this programme is 'To improve the recruitment and retention of a larger, more diverse, inclusive and representative workforce for all Health & Justice services and programmes.' The Peer Support Apprenticeship is recommended to all Lived Experience Charter applicants' sites as a stepping stone into employment and progression pathways for people with lived experience.

[\\*Health and Justice Lived Experience Charter awards event, hosted by Career Matters | NHS England Events.](#)

## CASE STUDY



A common theme and challenge throughout the recruitment of people with lived experience is the DBS process. Our training in the Lived Experience Charter supports organisations to review the process and support provided during DBS checks.

Sameer Iqbal, the Health and Justice Lead at Career Matters, has personal lived experience of the criminal justice system and has provided his own experience of the DBS processes and how he was supported through the process by an organisation.

This case study has been produced to support organisations who are seeking to improve recruitment of people with lived experience of criminal justice. The case study explains the process individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice go through and the organisations recruiting and supporting them to complete enhanced DBS checks.

This case study will give you an insight of how to overcome barriers with the support of Human Resources and Senior Leadership and how to manage risk and the overall benefits for services and service users.

This case study gives organisations insight into how to commence discussions with HR by demonstrating the benefits of recruitment of people with lived experience of criminal justice.

### THIRD SECTOR JOB ROLE

The process for the DBS can be a daunting experience for people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. The requirement is in place for enhanced DBS checks for roles in health and/or health and justice services. Any role working with vulnerable children, young people or adults requires an enhanced DBS check.

My first DBS process was not too difficult as I was employed through the third sector and they had robust practices in place to recruit individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice system. They had already completed the necessary work with their Human Resources Department (HR), strategic leads and operational managers by demonstrating the benefits to service delivery and the impact on service user engagement.

Due to my role being a paid peer mentor, it was an essential criterion to have had contact with the criminal justice system. So even though I felt overwhelmed with the process, I was reassured knowing that having lived experience of the criminal justice system was a pre requisite for my role and therefore, they would expect conviction information to return on my enhanced DBS check.

The organisation stated that they valued my lived experience as I had to share my convictions verbally with the employer before my DBS came back from processing. It was explained to me that what I have disclosed matched the DBS certificate and that there was no reason for concern. I had to provide a bank statement, proof of address and passport to verify my identity.

I feel the process the employer followed validated me, reassured me and gave me hope that I can work in the criminal justice system and make a difference to others like me, despite having a historic criminal record.

The process that was followed by the employer showed that the organisation value the lived experience workforce. They had all the mechanisms in place to recruit safely and in a trauma informed way. They managed risk accordingly dependant on the job role and the DBS certificate information.

Before my DBS came through, I was not able to complete clinical visits on my own and I was supported by staff who had been DBS cleared. I feel that was important to have extra measures in place for my safety and making sure I was protected through the process.

Due to the length of my convictions, it took two months for my DBS to come through and I was in post while I was waiting.

## NHS JOB ROLE

When I moved to a new role in the NHS my DBS took two months to come through but I was one of the first for the Liaison and Diversion (L&D) in Birmingham to go through the process with the NHS.

Due to my role having a lived experience component and having the relevant qualifications to apply for the role, I still had to go through the DBS process.

I was the first individual employed with lived experience and they had to get the buy-in from HR, as well as senior leadership that they were looking to recruit an individual for a prison pathway with lived experience to support user engagement, which was important to improve service delivery.

I had to submit my DBS by providing ID, bank statement, proof of address and passport.

Once my DBS came through and L&D Birmingham was alerted that I have convictions on my DBS, I was then asked to provide a supporting statement related to my convictions and explain the context around them. I provided the evidence that I had rehabilitated myself due to my previous lifestyle choices and produced references to demonstrate that I have not been involved in the criminal justice system for over ten years. I also conveyed what I had been doing to progress my life in the meantime.

The NHS Birmingham L&D then set up a Board meeting with senior leadership in the Trust to discuss if I was a suitable candidate for the post and went through my supporting evidence and criminal convictions and looked at how I had rehabilitated myself. I did not have to attend the Board meeting and I was later notified that I had been successful in getting through the DBS process.

Through this process I was anxious, scared, had low self-esteem and felt shame due to my past life experience. I felt I was exposed and would be seen as a criminal, however, I was reassured through the process and given support by management.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Human Resource Support.
- Internal System for Fair Recruitment.
- Risk Management.
- Supportive Environment.
- Positive Work Culture.
- Inclusive Workforce Objectives.
- Policy Related to Criminal Justice Lived Experience Workforce.

### Career Matters Contact

Please send any enquiries about this article and case study to Sameer Iqbal – [sameer.iqbal@career-matters.org](mailto:sameer.iqbal@career-matters.org)

Please register and attend our Award Event taking place on the 29th March 2023 - [Health and Justice Lived Experience Charter awards event, hosted by Career Matters | NHS England Events](#)



[Click here to learn more about the Level 3 Peer Worker Apprenticeship](#)