

Recruitment of Ex-offenders

The Matthew Project believes that people with criminal records should not be excluded from employment per se. It does, however, have the responsibility to minimise the risks to its service users and to the organisation. The Matthew Project works with vulnerable people and requires all paid employees and volunteers to be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

As an organisation using the DBS to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust the Matthew Project complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

- The Matthew Project is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- The written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process. It is available for download from the Opportunities page on our website or can be sent by email or post on request.
- We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- The Matthew Project has carried out a risk assessment for the organisation that has indicated that the need for DBS checks for all positions. For a minority of positions, where there is only limited direct service user contact, a Standard check will be carried out. For all other positions an Enhanced check will be required. All application forms contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- We ask all applicants to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within the Matthew Project and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- Due to the nature of the work of the Matthew Project it means that it is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 that allows convictions to be 'spent'. Therefore this allows the Matthew Project to ask questions about your entire criminal record.
- We ensure that all those in the Matthew Project who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences.
- At the time a candidate is invited to interview they will be, in a separate discussion, asked about any offences that are considered relevant. We ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of these offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- We make every subject of a DBS Disclosure aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.
- The applicant will not commence employment until the DBS Disclosure has been received and no concerns have been identified.
- In exceptional circumstances and only with the Chief Executive Officer's authorisation, employment may start prior to this but such workers will have no independent face-to-face work with service users. Such circumstances may include where there is a recent DBS Disclosure that has been completed and produced.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences. An employee's contract may cease if they commit a crime during their employment with the Matthew Project.

Procedure for Handling Disclosure of Criminal Records

Information that applicants provide to the Matthew Project regarding their criminal records must be handled sensitively and appropriately. We have asked applicants to send in such information by separate confidential cover.

Any such information/envelopes are handled by HR Services personnel only, in the first instance, and are not read but a copy is made and sent with the application forms in a sealed separate envelope to the lead shortlister.

After the final shortlist has been agreed any candidate who is either selected for interview or is a reserve candidate will have their confidential disclosure reviewed. It must not be opened prior to that stage. If the disclosures are of significant concern it may be decided at that stage that the candidate will be removed from the shortlist. Examples of disclosures that would fall into this category include:

- Drugs offences within the last two years
- Violent offences within the last two years
- Offences against children or vulnerable adults

If there are other offences that are of less concern either due to their nature or their age then the candidate can proceed to interview. Following interview if the panel select a candidate to offer a position that has a criminal record the offer must not be made until proper assessment of their convictions has been carried out.

Prior to an offer of employment they will have a separate discussion about their record by the HR Services Manager. Providing the responses are satisfactory and it is deemed that the candidate does not present a risk to the service or service users the offer of employment can proceed as normal. When the DBS check is returned it will be checked against what has been disclosed to ensure that there is no conflict. If there is a material difference between what was disclosed by the individual and what is contained in the DBS check then the conditional offer of employment may be withdrawn or further discussion needed.