

10 things to know about criminal records

- *This is a short summary of the key things people with convictions should know about criminal records.*
- *It can be downloaded from hub.unlock.org.uk/top10, where there are links to more details on each area.*
- *If you've got any questions, you can email us at advice@unlock.org.uk, call our helpline on 01634 247350, or contact us in other ways (hub.unlock.org.uk/contact).*

1. Understand your criminal record

Although convictions and cautions stay on the Police National Computer until you reach 100 years old (they are not deleted before then), they don't always have to be disclosed. Many people don't know the details of their record and it's important to get this right before disclosing to employers. Usually, this means applying for a copy of your police record (it costs £10 and is known as a 'Subject Access Request'). Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/record.

2. Work out if or when your record becomes 'spent'

For most jobs (and insurance) you don't need to disclose your criminal record once it's 'spent'. This is because of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Most convictions will become spent at some point. We have a tool that can help work this out (disclosurecalculator.org.uk) or visit hub.unlock.org.uk/roa for guidance.

Some jobs involve standard or enhanced DBS checks. For these, you'll normally need to disclose spent convictions and cautions as well, unless they are now filtered by the DBS. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/filtering.

3. If an employer asks, know if you need to tell them

You only have to disclose your record to an employer if they ask you. Many employers ask at some point and if your convictions are unspent, you legally need to disclose them. If they ask you and you don't disclose, they could later revoke the job offer or you could be dismissed. You could even face a further conviction. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/disclosing. There are 3 main levels of criminal record check and which one is done by the employer depends on the job role. Make sure you know what level of check an employer is doing and only disclose what you legally need to. Spent convictions are not disclosed on basic checks. Filtered cautions/convictions are not disclosed on standard or enhanced checks. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/checks.

4. Prepare to disclose when you're applying for jobs

If an employer wants to know about criminal records, they will normally ask you to disclose in a certain way; this might be at interview or after they've made a conditional offer. Some employers ask on their application form. Where possible, we suggest that you disclose your record face-to-face; this tends to be most effective. Prepare a self-disclosure statement; this should help. Address any concerns you think they may have but stay positive and don't concentrate solely on the negatives of a conviction. For more guidance, visit hub.unlock.org.uk/disclosing. The 'Ban the Box' campaign encourages employers not to ask about criminal records on application forms but instead leave it until later in the process. See who's signed up by visiting unlock.org.uk/banthebox.

5. There are lots of good employers out there

Many organisations employ people with convictions. Proactive employers often sign up to initiatives such as the Employers Forum for Reducing Reoffending (EFFRR) and Ban the Box. 'Good' employers will deal with criminal records on a case-by-case basis. We regularly hear from people working in a wide-range of careers; from construction, restaurants and hotels, to solicitors, accountants and the NHS. There are personal stories on the-record.org.uk or visit hub.unlock.org.uk/gettingwork for useful links.

6. You'll need insurance for a car or self-employment

Most mainstream insurers discriminate against people with unspent convictions, even if the convictions are not relevant. There are some big motor insurers that only take into account motoring convictions, and we have a list of these if you've not got motoring convictions. If you're looking to be self-employed or want house insurance, you'll find mainstream insurers simply won't give you a quote. There are several insurance brokers however who should be able to assist you. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/insurance for lists of insurance companies.

7. Holidays abroad depend on the country

If you're on licence you will normally need to get permission to travel outside the UK, but this is often given. Otherwise, there's rarely anything stopping you from travelling abroad and you should be able to travel freely within the EU. Travelling to specific countries like America and Australia will usually require you to apply for a visa due to their specific process. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/travel for specific countries and their arrangements.

8. Colleges and Universities are not a bar

Colleges and Universities will often ask you to disclose your criminal record as part of the application process, and especially for areas like nursing and teaching. It depends on what course you're going for as to what you'll need to disclose, and they should have a clear process that sets out how they will deal with your disclosure. Visit hub.unlock.org.uk/education for more details.

9. Deal with details reported online

Some people struggle because their case was reported in the media and/or is available online. This is often referred to as the 'google effect' and means that employers and colleagues can find about your criminal record from the internet. If this is a problem for you, you might want to consider changing your name (visit hub.unlock.org.uk/name). Once your conviction is spent, you can apply to the website and search engine (e.g. Google) to request that the search results are removed (visit hub.unlock.org.uk/online).

10. Don't let your record put you off!

It's important not to let any of this put you off from doing whatever it is you want to do. There are lots of areas of life which can potentially be affected by your criminal record - becoming a trustee of a charity, going on game shows, claiming victim compensation. The key is to make sure that you know where you stand and be confident in explaining the circumstances. Often those that do well are the ones that haven't let their criminal record get the better of them.