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WORKING CHANCE

Time to rewrite the stats for women with convictions

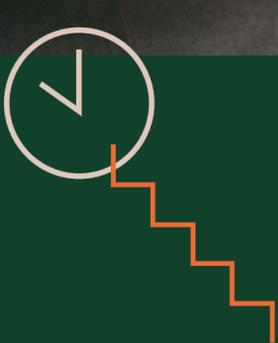
November 2021



Our new limited edition Noël Blend coffee is bringing Christmas to your cafetière (or your preferred brewing equipment). With notes of blackberry jam, hazelnut and biscuit, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the sweetest thing about our Noël Blend is the taste. Not the case. For a second year, we'll be donating £1 from each bag of Noël Blend that we sell to Working Chance, the only UK charity dedicated to supporting women with convictions to find employment. But why is this such an important area of work?

Read on to discover more.

As it stands, women are three times less likely to find work after prison than their male counterparts. How is this possible? Well, once on the outside, women often have a number of intersecting needs. These include searching for somewhere safe to live, fighting to regain custody of their children and struggling with mental health. They also face a heightened social stigma as a woman with a conviction. All these things colliding can make it impossible for them to get into the room for a job interview, let alone shine and secure the role.



Cue, Working Chance; a charity that exists to help women with convictions to believe in themselves and to shape their own future. Meaningful employment provides more than an income. It gives these women a chance to reset their lives and move beyond their prison experience. Since 2009, Working Chance has supported thousands of women in finding employment, and many more on their journeys towards financial independence.

Lizzy Jewell, from Working Chance, told us that their clients often respond to the question, "what sector or industry would you like to work in?" with "beggars can't be choosers". Working Chance wholeheartedly disagrees, instead believing that women should be given the opportunity to follow a career that they are passionate about, to find themselves in jobs they're good at, and to build a future that they can thrive in. The Working Chance employability programme is tailored to help women to do just that. They also work with employers, including Redemption Roasters, to find the right roles for the women they support, and encourage employers to think about inclusivity in their hiring practices.

At Redemption Roasters we know that hospitality can offer some of the most inclusive roles, with flexible shift patterns, widespread locations and plenty of entry level jobs. But to give people with past convictions the best chance of success, they need to be trained up with the right skills.



Claudia Colby, Barista Trainer at HMP Send

Since Redemption first began training coffee skills in prisons, we've always wanted to work in both male and female establishments. Prior to COVID-19 we approached HMP Send, a women's prison, to open a training academy inside the walls and begin the process of making our barista training accessible to women with convictions. The pandemic put this plan on pause until August this year when we launched our new barista academy, led by our Barista Trainer, Claudia.

HMP Send is a small capacity prison, able to hold up to 250 women. A lot of the women have longer sentences and are placed at Send to finish their sentences or to gain education and the skills to enable them to reintegrate back into society after years of incarceration. We run a six week course which covers two modules made up of a mixture of both practical and theoretical knowledge and skills. Practical assessments take place at the end of each module. For those that receive distinctions, we promise an interview with either ourselves or an employer partner post-release. The course has received rave reviews from the four women that have so far completed it.

One of the women who completed the course has been in and out of the system for 21 years. When Claudia met her in August she had given up on the idea of being able to have a life outside of prison. But since completing the course, she has changed her point of view and she's able to see beyond her current situation with hope for the future. She'll soon hear back from the parole board and she's excited to be able to put her barista skills to use in a job, supported by Redemption.

People have an incredible capacity to change, if given the opportunity. We can't turn back the clock for women with convictions, but both Redemption Roasters and Working Chance will continue to give them the chance to move forward.

Shop our Noël Blend