Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Pathways to Employment:

Supporting people with lived and living experience of substance use in to work

Contents

Introduction to 'Pathways to Employment: Supporting people with lived and living experience of substance use in to work'

Delivery of Scotland's **National Mission on Drugs Deaths** requires a skilled and resilient workforce. It is vital that people with lived experience of substance use form a key part of this workforce. This toolkit provides practical guidance for employers to create inclusive workplaces and support meaningful employment opportunities for people on their recovery journey. Whilst this toolkit is designed for employers in the substance use sector, it can benefit any organisation hiring individuals with lived experience of substance use.

Covering key stages of the employment journey, this toolkit addresses the barriers faced by people with lived experience and offers solutions. By adopting a localised, person-centred approach, employers can bridge employment gaps and harness the unique strengths of this underrepresented group.

This toolkit helps employers navigate the complexities of hiring and supporting people. This toolkit can help you build a skilled and resilient workforce that harnesses the transformative power of lived experience.

For clarity, and for the purposes of this document, when we hereafter refer to "people with lived experience" we mean anyone with either lived, or living, experience of substance use.

Toolkit overview and purpose

Toolkit overview and purpose

The toolkit sets out:

1. That recovery is often non-linear.
2. The value that people with lived experience can bring to the workforce.
3. The stages of the employment journey, highlighting the importance of seamless transitions.
4. The common barriers encountered by people with lived experience seeking employment.
5. Practical advice to help people overcome these barriers.

The information can be applied by any employer seeking to recruit people with lived experience.

Key fundamentals for supporting employees with lived experience

To effectively support individuals with lived experience on their employment journey, the following principles are important:

1. **Person-centred** – recognise each individual's unique strengths and experiences. Provide tailored support to address challenges and manage risks effectively.
2. **Seamless transition** – ensure smooth progression at every step, from engagement with support services to employment.
3. **Flexibility** – adapt to individual needs, support people for as long as they need. This might include time-outs or contingency plans upon returning to the workplace.
4. **Opportunity** – support people in their career choice, ensuring a range of pathways are in place.
5. **Inclusive environment** – foster an anti-discriminatory, **trauma-informed** workplace where staff feel safe, valued, and supported.

Understanding substance use and recovery

Recovery journeys vary, open communication and regular check-ins are important to support employees overcome any challenges, whilst supporting wellbeing.

The Scottish Government's **'Guiding Principles' for supporting employees with lived and living experience of problematic substance use'** set out an approach to ensure greater consistency in how people with experience are supported in the workplace.

Employees and their lived experience

Employees and their lived experience

Benefits of employing people with lived experience

People with lived experience can offer unique insights into substance use challenges, enhancing service delivery and providing hope to those engaging with services. In Scotland, people with lived experience have been instrumental in shaping and implementing substance use policies and services.

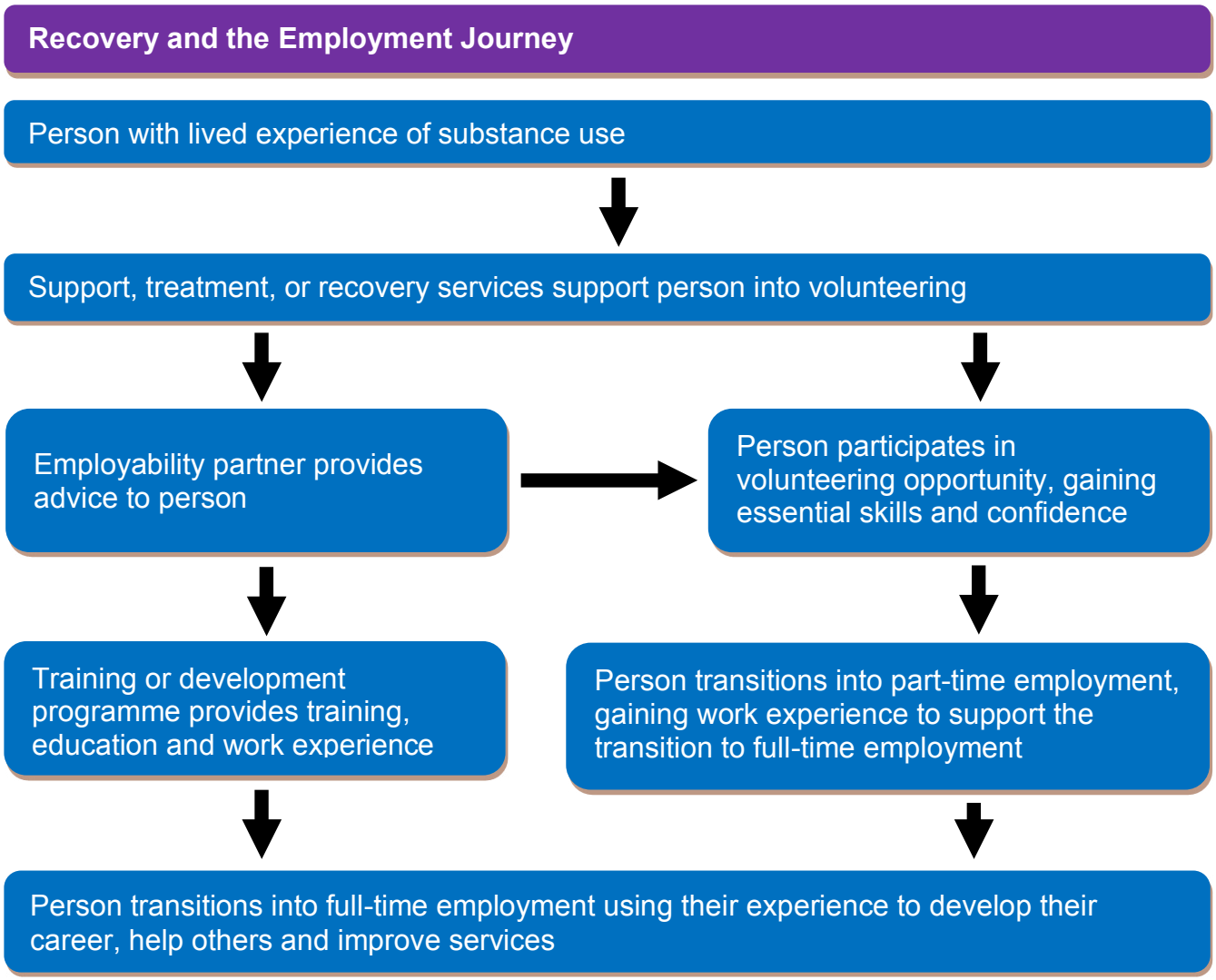
Will people want to share their lived experience?

An employee should not be required to disclose their experience if this is not expected within their role. Some people with lived experience may wish to avoid any labels relating to their substance use and may want to avoid disclosing their experience.

For any role that you are looking to recruit for, it is important to be clear about whether the prospective employee would be required to share their experience for the role.

What does a typical employment journey look like?

There is no set path into employment, many routes exist. The diagram below sets out some of the options available.



Attracting and recruiting

Attracting and recruiting

This section will help you to understand:

- How to effectively attract and recruit people with lived experience.
- That many people with lived experience may have had little or no employment history, and that the recruitment process can be intimidating.
- How to reach out to recovery, treatment and support services.
- How best to appeal to people with lived experience.
- How to facilitate an effective recruitment process.

Offering an attractive recruitment process can often be an important first step in supporting people into employment. However, employers should recognise that people may have significant gaps in their employment record or have limited experience of traditional processes. A process that seeks to understand people's strengths can bring out the best in applicants.

How to reach people with lived experience?

Traditional platforms like **LinkedIn** or **Indeed** alone are unlikely to reach a wide pool of people with lived experience. Engagement with recovery, treatment and support services can help widen your audience reach.

The **Scottish Drugs Services Directory** can help you locate a service in your area. Organisations working in this field may also be able to help raise awareness of any vacancies you are seeking to fill.

The Scottish Drug Forum's National Traineeship recruits on an annual basis. High demand for a place on this programme means that many applicants miss out and would welcome other avenues into employment. Successful trainees also generally seek permanent employment upon graduation.

Elevate Employability provide work preparation and support, as well as individual placement support and in-work support. Your organisation could consider establishing contact and becoming a partner organisation.

The recruitment process

People with lived experience may be dissuaded from the recruitment process if they feel a position is out of their reach or that they are not suited to a role. It can be beneficial for employers to consider the following:

✓ Ensure person specifications focus on a person's strengths.

✓ Build in scenarios to understand how people might respond to situations they might encounter, i.e. what would you do if someone did something you didn't agree with?

✓ Communicate expectations around the role, including whether they will be required to share their experience.

✗ While it may in some circumstances be reasonable to consider a person's recovery, try to avoid setting arbitrary timeframes around this journey.

Scottish Government's **Drugs and Alcohol Workforce Knowledge and Skills Framework** serves as a guide for commissioners and managers to ensure employees are recruited with consistent knowledge and skills. The Framework can also be used to develop job descriptions and identify induction and development activities.

The interview process

Interviews may be an intimidating experience for people with lived experience. The interview questions should seek to draw out the desired knowledge and skills for the role and recognise the unique strengths of applicants.

It is important to be aware that this may be the first time in a while that a person has applied for a job, so it is worth thinking about how you ensure the correct environment for the interview. You might consider:

✓ Utilising alternative methods, such as group exercises and open sessions prior to applications.

✓ Using strength-based applications and **interview questions**.

✓ Sending interview questions in advance, giving candidates an opportunity to prepare.

✓ Setting up the interview room in an open and welcoming manner.

✓ Allowing people to bring notes.

✓ Ensuring the candidate is aware of the type of interview they will face and offer guidance on how to prepare for such interviews.

✓ Making reasonable adjustments to support any additional support needs.

✓ Ensuring the candidate has a named contact to ask for when they arrive. Where possible it is good to detail the number of interviewers, their names and roles.

✗ Avoiding pressurised interview formats, such as strict time limits for questions.

Recovery communities and lived experience recovery organisations (LEROs)

What role can recovery communities and LEROs play in the employment process?

Recovery communities and LEROs can provide tailored employability pathways that address local need. People with lived experience can often access support for their recovery, develop their skills and access employment opportunities.

Recovery communities and LEROs often offer comprehensive support systems, which can help people prepare for employment. These support systems can help foster coping strategies, emotional stability, and resilience.

Recovery communities and LEROs can provide valuable resources, such as training and volunteering opportunities, helping people develop the necessary skills for employment. They ensure each person receives support tailored to their personal needs.

How do recovery communities and LEROs assess a person's readiness for employment?

Recovery communities and LEROs can assess a person's readiness for employment through factors such as a person's timekeeping, engagement level, and their ability to handle additional responsibilities.

Volunteering and training opportunities often provide a good opportunity to gauge a person's readiness, ensuring that they are supported at the right time with the appropriate resources and guidance.

What learning can be taken from the approach to employability of recovery communities and LEROs?

By engaging with recovery communities and LEROs, employers can enhance their workforce and build a workforce that is both skilled and resilient

The training and development provided by recovery communities and LEROs can offer many long-term benefits. Although sometimes resource intensive, this investment ensures that people are well prepared for employment, reducing the risk of setbacks and fostering a supportive environment for sustained recovery.

By collaborating with recovery communities and LEROs, employers can create tailored support systems that facilitate a smooth transition into employment, ensuring long-term success and wellbeing for people with lived experience.

The Scottish Drugs Services Directory or **Scottish Recovery Consortium** may be able to help you identify recovery communities and LEROs in your local area.

Supporting people with lived experience into employment

Supporting people with lived experience into employment

This section will help you to understand:

- How access to impartial careers, learning and employability support can enhance a person's decision making around employment choices.
- The support you might put in place to ensure employees continue their recovery journey and perform at their best.
- That while there are many common barriers facing people with lived experience, support should be person-centred.
- How the workplace culture can affect new employees and how to foster an understanding and empathetic environment.
- How a supportive and well-planned induction process can help to ensure that employees feel supported, get the best start in their new role and develop the required skills.
- The value of strong mentoring opportunities.
- The importance of creating a stigma-free environment, nurturing soft skills, providing digital support and volunteering opportunities, where possible.

Taking a person-centred approach

Applying a person-centred approach can help foster a culture in which people feel valued, motivated, and supported.

The sections below will identify some of the more commonly reported barriers and how you can support people to overcome them.

Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering can provide an excellent way for prospective employees to gradually engage with your organisation, build confidence, and develop their skills. This approach can also allow you to assess a person's suitability for your organisation.

While not all volunteering roles will lead to employment, it is important to ensure that opportunities are meaningful and can support pathways into work. To assist with setting up volunteering programmes, **Volunteer Scotland** have a range of resources and can promote your opportunities on their website. Additionally, your local **Third Sector Interface (TSI)** may offer support and help advertise roles.

Induction process

An effective induction process is key to helping new employees' transition into work. A supportive programme might include clearly setting out:

- Role expectations and performance standards.
- Organisational policies, procedures, and relevant legislation.
- Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and boundaries.
- Workplace etiquette, dress code, and introductions to team members.
- Arrangements for supervision, reflective practice, and self-care.
- IT, digital support, and financial advice.
- A directory of useful contacts within the organisation.

It can be helpful to ensure that your induction accommodates those with limited work experience, allowing them to develop an understanding of your workplace.

Workplace adjustments and flexibility

Adopting flexible practices can ease an employee's transition into work. The following list provides some adjustments that you might consider:

- **Phased Introductions** – reduced hours if necessary and gradually increase attendance.
- **Flexible Hours** – hybrid working or schedules that allow attendance at any support services necessary for recovery, such as mutual aid meetings.
- **Pay Flexibility** – different pay frequency options.
- **Reflective Practice** – spaces for employees to discuss their progress and additional support needs.
- **Buddying and Mentoring** – facilitating one-to-one support.
- **Non-Client Facing Roles** – these can allow employees to build confidence before transitioning to direct support roles.
- **Person-Centred Management** – pairing employees with supportive line managers attuned to individual needs.

Benefits of mentoring

Mentoring can significantly enhance employee development. Mentors should ideally:

- Have a strong understanding of organisational practices.
- Possess a nurturing and empathetic approach.
- Be knowledgeable about challenges faced by employees with lived experience.

Mentoring can foster a supportive environment, help employees navigate their roles and offer an alternative source for any sensitive discussions.

Workplace culture

Fostering a supportive culture is crucial, particularly for employees who may be entering their first job or facing personal challenges. It can be helpful for your organisation to:

- Encourage progress at the employee's own individual pace.
- Be mindful of adding any unnecessary pressure on an employee's personal recovery.
- Maintain regular check-ins through line managers, mentors, or buddies.
- Encourage employees to use their annual leave and offering optional check-ins during long breaks.

Challenging stigma

Employers can play a vital role in addressing stigma around substance use. As an employer it is good practice to:

✓ Challenge stigmatising language in the workplace.

✓ Promote an environment where employees feel safe sharing experiences without fear of judgment.

✓ Use non-judgmental, inclusive language when discussing substance use issues.

✗ Not to define a person based on their substance use.

For further guidance visit the **challenging drug and alcohol stigma** page on NHS Inform. You can also refer to the Scottish Government **'Guiding Principles for supporting employees with lived and living experience of problematic substance use'**.

Training and education

It is important that people with lived experience have equitable access to training. In some cases, this group may require additional or targeted training due to gaps in professional development.

Some of the following offerings may be worthy of directing your employees to:

- **Drug and Alcohol Workforce Learning Directory** – provides a range of learning opportunities for those seeking to work in this field.
- **Scotland's Mental Health First Aid courses** – provides simple steps to support people in distress.
- **Health in Mind** – offers courses on mental health training and vicarious trauma, which is important in ensuring that people are not set back through their work.
- **Scottish Wider Access Programme** – offers routes into Further and Higher Education.

Collaborating with local colleges, during quieter periods, can also provide targeted training for employees. See the next page for an example of how one Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) has benefitted from such an approach.

Further support from other services

Various resources are available to support people in finding and maintaining employment. As an employer you can benefit from awareness of these services:

- **Access to Work** – this UK Government programme provides practical advice and support for disabled people or those with long-term physical or mental health conditions.
- **Local Employability Partnerships** – employers can engage with Local Employability Partnerships to get support with filling vacancies. Employability services are delivered in all 32 Local Authority areas. You can get in touch with your local service to find out more.
- **Skills Development Scotland (SDS)** - SDS offer inclusive, impartial career services to people of all ages. Employers can refer people to SDS or promote paid and volunteering opportunities through their platforms. Contact their free helpline at **0800 917 8000** or request a callback via their QR code.

Case Study – One ADP's Employability Pathway and lessons learned

One ADP has supported people with lived experience to enter employment in the drugs and alcohol sector. This has been achieved through allowing people to progress at their own pace. This ADP has allowed people to take small, incremental steps, which have included engagement with volunteering opportunities and local education providers.

They have a structured partnership in place with a local college supporting people to become peer workers within the drugs and alcohol sector. They report that having an attractive and supportive application process has been key, resulting in a high completion rate.

The ADP had previously noticed that several candidates were being lost from their employment pathway during the transition between engaging with services and moving to volunteering roles. This identified the importance of appropriate support, particularly during such periods.

The ADP has links with some local recovery communities who support people into volunteering roles. Those undertaking these roles would typically do less than 16 hours per week to retain their entitlement to claim financial assistance.

In another key phase of their employment pathway, candidates are given the opportunity to attend college for six months to develop their experience and knowledge of the health and social care sector.

The ADP also identified the transition to participation in formal education as another juncture where many people were being lost to their employment pathway. To address this, they utilised the existence of a positive working relationship with a local college, this allowed the ADP and college to devise a creative solution, whereby courses were delivered during the summer months when attendance was lower. This arrangement has allowed candidates to engage in a less intimidating environment, building confidence, increasing retention and easing the transition to employment.

The final stage of this ADP's employability pathway would typically involve supporting people into sessional peer roles, with options to then progress to full time work with charities and the local authority.

Digital skills and equipment support

Employees can be directed to support for digital literacy through organisations funded by **Digital Lifelines Scotland**, including:

- **Citizen Literacy** – offers apps and resources for adult learners.
- **Access to Industry** – provides technology and training to enhance digital inclusion.
- **Workers Educational Association** – offers signposting to local or online learning.
- **The Marie Trust Project** – offers combined literacy and digital skills training for the homeless population.

Developing soft skills

People with lived experience may benefit from additional support to further develop their soft skills, such as self-confidence, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork needed in the workplace. Employers can support employees by:

- Creating opportunities for skill development through mentoring, induction processes, and reflective practices.
- Encouraging use of resources like **My World of Work's Meta Skills** for guidance on social intelligence, innovation, and self-management.

Further learning whilst in work

The Scottish Government's **Drug and Alcohol Workforce Learning Directory** can support employees to access training and education.

The directory complements the **Drugs and Alcohol Workforce Knowledge and Skills Framework**. Learning opportunities are provided for each of the five main themes below.

1. Delivering family-inclusive practice.
2. Tackling stigma.
3. Providing harm-reduction advice.
4. Taking a human rights-based approach.
5. Practising trauma-informed care.

Supporting basic needs in employment and recovery

Supporting basic needs in employment and recovery

This section will help you to understand:

- How to support an employees' basic needs.
- How to signpost employees to services for help with housing, healthcare, social care and financial support.
- What to consider in relation to an employee's recovery journey, how to keep them safe and on track during employment.

It is vital that your employees' basic needs are satisfied, and important that they feel supported in their recovery journey. Employers can help by signposting to resources when required.

Supporting recovery

Employees may benefit from access to healthcare, housing assistance, and welfare advice. If people encounter challenges, consider directing them to resources such as:

- **Scottish Recovery Consortium** – who list services for recovery, mental, and physical health support.
- **Scottish Drugs Services Directory** – who can help locate local support services.
- Any treatment, recovery or support groups they have already been engaging with.

Housing support

If housing becomes a concern, employers can consider signposting employees to:

- **Scottish Government Housing Guidance** – provides information on applying for social housing.
- **Simon Community Scotland** – helplines for rough sleeping in Glasgow **(0800 027 7466)** and Edinburgh **(0808 1782323)**.
- **Shelter Scotland** – provides free advice on housing rights **(0808 800 4444)**.
- **Citizens Advice** – can provide confidential advice on homelessness and benefits.

Physical and mental health support

Employers should ensure employees are aware of workplace support, such as counselling services, and direct them to:

- **GP Services** – assistance with finding and registering with a GP.
- **NHS 24** – available on **111**.
- **Breathing Space** – for information and support for mental wellbeing **(0800 83 85 87)**.
- **Samaritans** – **(116 123)** for out-of-hours mental health support.
- The **National Wellbeing Hub** and helpline **(0800 111 4191)** is available to everyone working in health, social care and social work in Scotland.
- The **Workforce Specialist Service** **(0300 0303 300)** offers a confidential mental health service. This is available to all regulated professionals working in health, social care and social work in Scotland who, due to confidentiality reasons, cannot access care or treatment through their own GP or other local services.

Social Care support

Employees requiring additional assistance, such as childcare or disability support, can be signposted to **social work and social care services**.

Financial support

Employees can apply online for benefits by visiting **Social Security Scotland** or can call **0800 182 2222** for free to apply or request a paper application form.

Face-to-face support is also available from specially trained client advisers located in every local council area across Scotland. Advisers can meet people in a community space, in the Dundee head office, or in their homes at a time and place that suits them.

Universal Credit support

It can be helpful for you, as an employer to understand how Universal Credit works.

Universal Credit is designed to support people into employment. However, payments will decrease as a person's income increases. For every £1 earned, payments reduce by 55p, with total income being comprised of any wages plus the adjusted Universal Credit payment. This may influence an employee's finances and create concern or apprehension. However, support is available to help with this.

- The **benefits calculator** can help ease concerns and illustrate how Universal Credit changes with additional income from employment.
- **Department for Work and Pensions**, and **Citizens Advice** can also help assess eligibility for benefits.

As wages increase and earnings reach a certain level then payments will gradually stop. Payments will restart automatically if wages drop within six months, after that reapplication is necessary.

Universal Credit can provide additional support for childcare, housing costs, and access to a work coach for skill development and career progression. Depending on how long a person has been claiming benefits, they may also be able to access:

- **Mortgage Interest Run-On**
- **Extended Payment of Housing Benefit**
- **Extended reductions on Council Tax**

The UK Government also have a **dedicated page** to support people who are moving from benefits to work. People can also be directed towards **Citizens Advice**, who can provide advice regarding living costs and a more holistic approach to finance and benefits.

While it's helpful for employers to understand how employment may impact an employee's financial support, they should avoid giving financial advice. Instead, this toolkit should be used to signpost employees to the appropriate resources. This helps prevent the risk of providing inaccurate information that could negatively affect the employee.

Disclosure Scotland process and previous convictions

Disclosure Scotland process and previous convictions

This section will help you to understand that:

- Disclosure Scotland want to support people into work and will help you decide if a person is suitable for a role.
- The Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme helps identify whether someone is suitable for regulated work with children and/or protected adults.
- Disclosure Scotland will consider a range of factors to determine if someone with convictions is suitable for regulated work.
- Even if a person is barred from regulated work they are not unemployable, they are just unsuitable for specific work with children and/or protected adults.

Understanding the disclosure process

Many organisations will require their employees to undergo a disclosure check before beginning work. This process can sometimes be daunting for both.

Disclosure Scotland do not want to stop people from gaining employment. They seek to support organisations during the recruitment process, ensuring convictions are not automatically regarded as a barrier to employment.

NHS Scotland's Employment Checks Policy provides a useful framework for reviewing the suitability of candidates within NHS Scotland.

Employing people with convictions

Past convictions are not automatic barriers to employment. If convictions arise during the PVG process, then it can be helpful to:

- Have open, non-stigmatising conversations.
- Consider conditional employment while awaiting PVG results.
- Use risk assessments to guide decisions.

When Disclosure Scotland checks a criminal record and an individual has a conviction which bars them from regulated work, then they will not be able to join the PVG scheme.

From **01 April 2025**, there are four types of disclosure checks, including the PVG scheme. These are detailed below, and further information is available on the **Disclosure Scotland website**.

Type	Description
Level 1	These will show **unspent** convictions and any notification requirements.
Level 2	These will show information on unspent and certain **spent** convictions and other relevant information held by the police.
Level 2 (with barred list check)	Some roles will require additional checks to show if you are barred from working with children or protected adults. For most of these roles you will need PVG scheme membership. But for certain activities, such as adopting a child, you will need a Level 2 with barred list check instead. This will replace most enhanced disclosures.
PVG scheme	The PVG scheme will be a mandatory for people in a regulated role with children or protecting adults.

Details of the previous disclosure levels up until 31 March 2025 can be found **here on the Scottish Government website**.

PVG scheme

1. What is the PVG scheme?

The PVG scheme is one type of disclosure. PVG is the highest level of disclosure available to employers that carry out Regulated Work in Scotland. **Disclosure Scotland** carries out criminal record checks and shares the results with the person and organisation. Organisations use this information to help decide if the person is right for the role.

2. Why do employees need to be on the PVG scheme?

If you are recruiting for a role that is defined as a regulated activity with children or protected adults, it is important that you check the barred status of your employees. The **Adult Support and Protection Scotland Act (2007): Code of Practice** defines an "adult at risk", or in other words a "protected adult", as someone who meets all the following three-point criteria:

a) They are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests.

b) They are at risk of harm.

c) Because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity they are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not affected.

If your organisation carries out regulated work, you can **register with Disclosure Scotland** to get PVG checks for your employees.

3. What convictions need to be disclosed to employers?

Employers can ask candidates about their convictions, but what they need to disclose depends on how the conviction is classed (see Question 5 below for definition).

Basic Disclosure (Level 1 from 01 April 2025)

- Employers can ask about any **unspent** convictions.
- They **cannot** ask about **spent** convictions - unless the job is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (some specific jobs are **listed here**).

Standard, Enhanced and PVG Disclosure (Level 2 from 01 April 2025)

- Works similarly to Level 1/Basic Disclosure, but some spent convictions must also be disclosed. For convictions that must be disclosed, you can refer to **List A** and **List B**.
- Some spent convictions are always disclosed unless a court (Sheriff) decides otherwise.

Essentially, for most jobs, only unspent convictions need to be disclosed. However, for certain roles, even spent convictions may need to be disclosed.

4. How are convictions disclosed?

Most organisations recommend using a 'letter of disclosure'. In this letter the employee may explain:

- The nature and circumstances of the convictions.
- Changes they've made since.
- Their suitability for the role.

Page 40 of the **Scotland Works for You** guidance shows examples of disclosure letters.

People may also disclose their convictions:

- On a CV.
- On a job application form.
- At an interview.
- When they are offered a job.

5. Why should I consider someone with a conviction?

People with lived experience often have previous convictions, but this does not automatically make them unsuitable for employment. Many employers, including those in health, social care, and legal fields, have successfully hired people with previous convictions. It is vital to evaluate candidates based on their skills and experience.

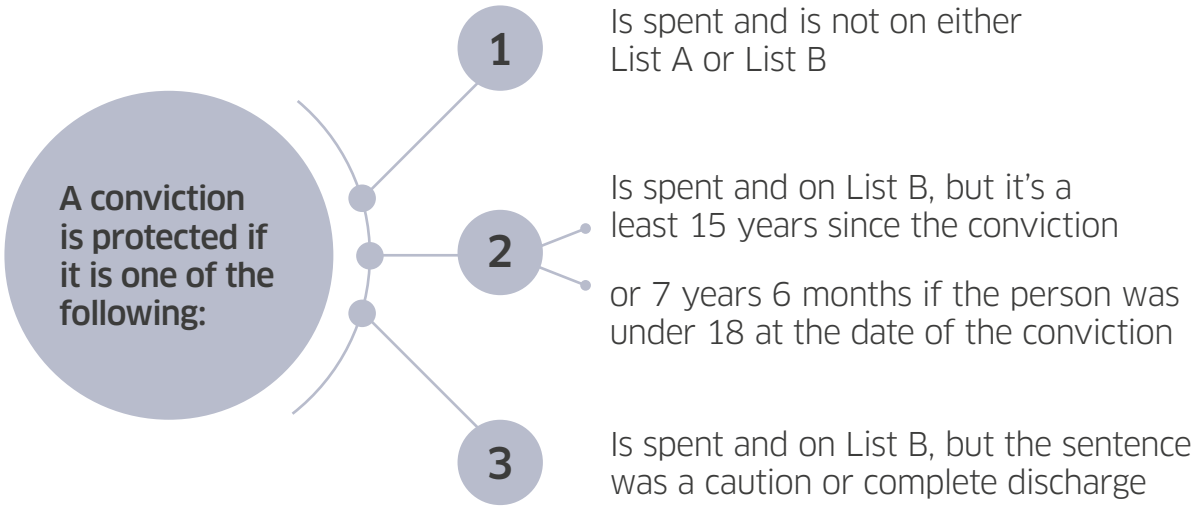
Disclosure Scotland's video highlights the benefits of hiring people with past convictions.

There are three main types of convictions that are important to understand: spent, unspent and protected, details of each are below.

a) **Spent Conviction** – once the disclosure period has passed, the conviction becomes 'spent' and is no longer shown on a basic disclosure. However, some spent convictions must be disclosed on higher level disclosures. Lists A and B below set these out.

b) **Unspent Conviction** – a conviction still within its disclosure period. These must be disclosed but do not automatically disqualify a candidate.

c) **Protected Conviction** – a spent conviction that is not disclosed on basic or higher-level disclosures.



The **List A offences** and **List B offences** can be used to check if that would apply to any potential candidates.

6. How can I discuss convictions that are flagged on a PVG?

Convictions on a PVG do not necessarily prevent employment. Employers should:

- Discuss convictions openly and understand the candidate's background.
- Use resources such as the **Scotland Works For You** guidance.

Consideration for listing

7. What does it mean if someone is "considered for listing"?

When Disclosure Scotland assesses if someone is unsuitable for regulated work, they undertake a "consideration for listing" process. Employers should support candidates during this period and reassure them about the process.

Being "considered for listing" does not mean automatic disqualification. Disclosure Scotland's assessment ensures a fair and balanced approach. If additional information is needed, candidates have 28 days to provide it, including representations, testimonies, or references.

If Disclosure Scotland receives information that might mean the person is unsuitable for regulated work, they do an assessment to decide whether to list them. This is called a "consideration for listing assessment".

8. What if they are listed as barred?

If listed as barred, a person cannot work in regulated roles with the specified vulnerable group. For example, those barred from working with children can still work with protected adults and vice versa. Employers may explore alternative roles during this time.

9. Can a person appeal against a listing decision?

Candidates can appeal listing decisions to a sheriff within three months. They remain barred from regulated work until the appeal is resolved. Further information is available on the **appeal against a listing decision page**.

10. Is there anything else I need to consider about the disclosure process?

- **Approach** – engage in non-stigmatising, person-centred conversations while balancing regulatory requirements. Employers should be supportive, open, and knowledgeable about the issues around disclosure.
- **Employment Offers** – where ever possible, seek to avoid withdrawing offers prematurely if someone is under consideration for listing. Instead, try to support candidates by adjusting roles. Employers can consider additional risk assessment to determine what level of employment, restrictions and additional supervision might be offered.
- **Emotional Impact** – recognise the stress and emotional challenges candidates may face during this process.
- **Representation Support** – assist candidates in submitting **representations** within 28 days, including organising discussions and gathering supportive statements. Further information is detailed below.

11. What representation support should I provide candidates?

Meet with candidate – have a discussion regarding their PVG, ask them to talk about their convictions and the circumstances. Seek to understand any steps they have taken to move forward with their life.

During the meeting – it is good practice to take notes of discussions and utilise these in a summary of the conversation. This would then be shared with the applicant to ensure that everything noted is an accurate representation of what they have described. A general reminder of the 28-day timeframe could be given and advised that they can seek extensions directly from Disclosure Scotland.

Statements of support - candidates can seek statements of support from those who can support their suitability. This can include support workers, social workers, and colleagues, for example. The person supplying a reference needs to know what they are doing it for.

Further support and advice

- Refer to the **Scotland Works For You Guide** for detailed advice.
- Participate in free Disclosure Scotland training webinars. You can **sign up on the Disclosure Scotland events page** or email **dsworkshop@disclosurescotland.gov.scot**.
- Explore **Volunteer Scotland's resources** for additional guidance.

Moving forward with recruitment

Moving forward with recruitment

This toolkit has set out the main considerations for organisations looking to employ people with lived experience of substance use. It draws on best practice and aims to provide ways to break down some of the most common barriers people with lived experience may encounter during the journey to employment.

As an employer, you can benefit from implementing some of the steps outlined in the toolkit:

1. Designing a recruitment process that places value on the experience of the person, while reaching and attracting the desired audience.
2. Supporting people into employment by ensuring that your organisational practices remove the most frequent barriers that people face.
3. Supporting employees' basic needs by signposting them to medical, social, housing, and financial help, when required.
4. Improving your organisation's understanding of previous convictions and Disclosure Scotland processes.

It is important to always remember the value that people with lived experience can bring to your organisation. This cohort can offer valuable insight into the background, circumstances, issues, and challenges that others in similar circumstances face, as well as how these may be addressed. People with lived experience can help bridge relationships, as well as offering hope and practical advice.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the content of this toolkit, these can be directed to **drugsandalcoholworkforce@gov.scot**.

This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83691-281-1 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, June 2025

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1540494 (06/25)

w w w . g o v . s c o t