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Job Searching with A History of Drugs and Crime

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Abstract: This article explores the experiences and aspirations of offenders with histories of substance misuse in job searching. The analysis is based upon qualitative data from a localised study of 27 men and two women who were undertaking community-based court orders in Scotland. Their perspectives on job searching, job-readiness and aspirations for sustained employment including the role of self-employment are presented. The article concludes that with adequate support, greater tolerance and flexibility by employers and job searchers could contribute to reducing the vicious cycle of suspicion and dishonesty. Policy action needs to be sustained and possibly augmented to include enterprise training.

International definitions of rehabilitation include the therapeutic potential of employment as an asset in the process of restoring function and reintegration into society (International Labour Office 1981; United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs 1982; Shahandeh 1985). Work has been argued to offer drug users a sense of responsibility, personal value, independence, security, dignity, and a stake in society (Phillips and South 1992). The refocusing of welfare around paid work, known as the New Deal, by the New Labour governments has contributed to the creation of employability initiatives, aimed at drug users, to transform the 'passive' welfare of being a social security benefit recipient into the 'active' welfare of being a wage earner and taxpayer. Since 1997, there has been a steady move to considering education, training and employment as being part of treatment programmes for recovering drug users in the United Kingdom.

Enterprising treatment services can play an important role in the raft of drug-related criminal justice initiatives in the United Kingdom (South *et al.* 2001). In Scotland, there are three broad categories of support: treatment and rehabilitation services, specialist employability programmes and mainstream education and training and employment services. General treatment and rehabilitation services largely focus on what are called 'soft' skills such as CV writing, letters of application and preparing for interviews. Specialist employability programmes are frequently based on an individual's strengths, skills and interests. They aim to help the client pursue more concrete 'hard' skills for the labour market, such as learning towards a recognised qualification in landscape gardening, plumbing, catering. Training and employment services that work with clients to find

placements and work opportunities are a third element of employment support for drug users.

This article explores the experiences and aspirations of offenders with histories of substance misuse in job searching. While there is a significant literature on the attitudes and barriers (individual and structural) to the employment of drug users (Effective Interventions Unit 2001; Klee, McLean and Yavorsky 2002; Effective Interventions Unit 2003), the employment of ex-offenders (for example, Soothill 1974; Crow *et al.* 1989; Downes 1995; Gill 1997) and the role of employment in the recovery from dependent drug use (for example, McIntosh and McKeganey 2001, 2002; Effective Interventions Unit 2003) and the relationship between unemployment and crime (for example, Raphael and Winter-Ember 1999, 2001; Papps and Winkelmann 2000), limited research attention has been given to the complexity of job searching by ex-offenders with substance misuse problems, despite its centrality to policy action to improve social inclusion.

This article aims to address the above research gap. It considers three questions that relate to the experiences of offenders with histories of substance misuse in relation to job searching, their aspirations of future work and self-employment. The literature on job-readiness and its position in current labour market policy, the experiences of ex-offenders and drug users in seeking employment and the implications of drug use as a relapsing condition on job searching will be considered first. Following a brief outline of the research methodology, the study findings on the experiences and aspirations of a small sample of offenders with histories of substance misuse in job searching will be presented before concluding remarks.

Job-readiness

Job-readiness is a central component within the wider context of employability (Hillage and Pollard 1998). Policy initiatives with increased provision such as the New Futures Fund projects and Progress2Work aim to help individuals to become 'job-ready' to meet this demand suggested by research with employers (Effective Interventions Unit 2003). Randall and Brown (1999) have suggested a job-readiness index that measures improvement on a variety of dimensions that could include basic skills (such as literacy and numeracy) and social behaviour (such as punctuality and attendance). A review in Scotland suggested that the majority of drug users who had gone through active project-based support would go through three interim stages to gain experience or qualifications (Effective Interventions Unit 2001). The three stages were: (i) those with multiple problems for whom employment is not a short term or medium possibility; (ii) those who are not job-ready at present but have potential to become so with further support, and (iii) those who are or nearly job-ready. The work of Johnson and Burden (2003) has increased our understanding of what employers mean by employability and the value they place on different employability attributes. Key attributes cover not only skills and work

experience, but also attitudes and motivation that are relevant to the concept of job-readiness.

Employment of Ex-offenders and Substance Misusers

A survey of young multiply disadvantaged New Deal entrants (Lakey, Barnes and Parry 2001) confirmed that care leavers, ex-offenders, those with drug problems and those who had been homeless face barriers to employment. Ex-offenders may constitute up to one-third of the working population (Home Office 1995), forming a significant group in the labour market. Ex-offenders are multiply disadvantaged (Fletcher, Woodhill and Herrington 1998; Fletcher *et al.* 2001). They face a myriad of barriers to employment including 'employer discrimination; poor basic skills and a lack of qualifications; a lack of recent work experience; low self-esteem, behavioural and health problems; problems of poverty and debt; and insecure housing' (Fletcher 2001, p.873). Across all ethnic groups, having a criminal record is a major disadvantage in getting work (Fletcher, Woodhill and Herrington 1998). Gender comparisons have generally suggested that there are more similarities than differences in the employment of ex-offenders. Fewer than one-fifth of women on release from prison have paid employment to enter (Dempster 2004) and caring responsibilities, transport and availability of part-time work are important gendered differentials in job searching with a criminal record.

Irrespective of ethnicity or gender, opiate users have been found to be more likely to be unemployed than non-drug users (MacDonald and Pudney 2000). The Drug Outcome Research in Scotland (DORIS) study showed that out of 559 drug users: 4% had a job; 13% were in legal paid employment in the last six months; 8% attended training or education courses in the last six months; 58% had any formal qualifications and 21% had seen anyone about employment, training or education in the last six months (Kemp and Neale 2005). Klee, McLean and Yavorsky (2002) reported that three-quarters of the problem drug users in their study faced 'a double disadvantage in getting work because of their criminal records' (p.19). According to education, training and employment professionals, the conditions that made problem drug users unemployable were poor mental health, lack of motivation and chaotic lifestyles, lack of work experience, employer's attitudes, inability to adapt to a structured environment and poor social skills (Klee, McLean and Yavorsky 2002).

With the exception of the research of Klee and colleagues, there are few qualitative studies on job searching in ex-offenders with substance misuse problems, despite the importance of their voices to informing policy and practice. This article complements earlier research by directly seeking the perspectives of offenders who are not formally in contact with employment services. The following questions are addressed in the analysis below: What are the experiences of offenders with histories of substance misuse in job searching? Do they consider themselves to be 'job-ready'? What do they aspire to do in the world of work? What role does self-employment play in their experiences and aspirations?

Methodology and Study Group

This article reports on qualitative data collected from group interviews with 27 men and two women, aged 18 to 45 years, who were undertaking either a supervised attendance order or a community service order in June to August 2001.¹

Participants for the study were purposively recruited through criminal justice social work professionals in two local authority areas in Scotland. Following agreement of the Head of Criminal Justice Social Work, identified criminal justice workers were contacted with the aim of accessing suitable participants who had current or recent substance misuse issues and were undertaking a community-based court order, to take part in group interviews.

Drawing upon the 'naturally occurring activities' within the structure of community-based court orders, eight group interviews with between two and five individuals were conducted. This approach is well established in field research with drug users (Rawlings 2004). The interviewer used a topic guide and the group interviews were between one and two hours in duration. Each group interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The extracts presented in this article have been edited for accessibility to a wider readership. Informed consent from the participants was negotiated in three key areas (Mason 2002, p.81): participation in the interview and the right to withdraw their consent; using the data generated from the interview and allowing the researcher to interpret and analyse the data. Due to anonymity, it was not possible in this study to recontact individuals to share interpretations of the data or reproductions of their words.

The background details of the contributors to each of the group interviews are shown in *Table 1*. In terms of ethnicity, all were white UK, which reflects the general population of the research site. Four participants were on supervised attendance orders and 25 participants were completing community service orders. Only two women were available to take part in the group interviews which is partially explained by their under-representation among offenders on community service orders (McIvor 1998).

All of the participants described themselves as having either current or past substance misuse problems. The following sections present the analysis of five themes – work experiences, job searching, job-readiness, aspirations and self-employment – that emerged from the group interviews which were coded and analysed using a constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.3).

Work Experiences

Most of the research participants had once had a job that allowed them to do the 'ordinary' things in life: 'A nine to five job. Five days a week, a mortgage and all that, I had both of that' (P4.2). Klee, McLean and Yavorsky (2002) found that 'over a third said they had lost a job through

TABLE 1
Characteristics of 29 Participants in Group Interviews

Group ID	Gender	Order	Substance misuse	Treatment
P1.1	M	SAO	Alcohol	Psychiatrist
P1.2	F	SAO	Heroin	Methadone, GP
P2.1	M	CS	Polydrug+alcohol	–
P2.2	M	CS	Alcohol	Abstinence
P2.3	M	CS	Methadone	Methadone, counselling
P2.4	M	CS	Crack+cannabis	Self-detox
P3.1	M	CS	Alcohol	Controlled drinking
P3.2	M	CS	Alcohol	Controlled drinking
P3.3	M	CS	Polydrug+alcohol	GP
P3.4	M	CS	Ecstasy+cannabis	GP
P4.1	F	CS	Heroin	–
P4.2	M	CS	Heroin	Methadone, GP
P4.3	M	CS	Polydrug+alcohol	–
P4.4	M	CS	Alcohol	Counselling
P5.1	M	CS	Cannabis	–
P5.2	M	CS	Alcohol	GP
P5.3	M	CS	Painkillers	Methadone/diazepam, GP
P5.4	M	CS	Cocaine	Valium, GP
P5.5	M	CS	Heroin	–
P6.1	M	SAO	Alcohol	Abstinence
P6.2	M	SAO	Alcohol	Abstinence
P7.1	M	CS	Heroin	Abstinence
P7.2	M	CS	Alcohol	Alcoholics Anonymous
P7.3	M	CS	Alcohol+painkillers	GP
P7.4	M	CS	Heroin	Methadone, counselling
P8.1	M	CS	Alcohol+solvents	GP
P8.2	M	CS	Cannabis	Antidepressants, GP
P8.3	M	CS	Alcohol	Abstinence
P8.4	M	CS	Alcohol	Abstinence

drugs, mostly a result of the effects on performance such as lack of concentration but also poor timekeeping and absenteeism' (p.20). The present study had similar findings: 'I had a full-time job and got the sack because of drugs' (P4.3).

The pressures of work were believed to have contributed to relapse in some instances:

I started the drink because I was doing shifts, four days on, four day off and then four night shifts . . . I couldn't sleep during the day so I was drinking half bottle . . . to get to sleep and it escalated . . . right so at a point I was on a bottle a day . . . I mean I was still working but I was making good money . . . so a bottle a day, it wasn't expensive . . . when it came to the weekend, I was going out and getting full of Ecstasy . . . and then the weekend turned into full weeks. I was going into work full of Ecstasy, every single day of the week . . . I got made redundant. (P3.4)

Job Searching

Having a criminal record and being/having been a substance misuser were felt to be difficult hurdles to overcome. This was allegedly reinforced by welfare professionals: 'I got told from a new deal officer if you've got previous convictions that'll hold you back trying to get a job' (P5.4). The emphasis from large employers on truthworthiness presented a challenge to the participants despite their credentials for a position in their organisation. The impact of conviction and addiction on employers' attitudes was pronounced in the participants' views on job searching: 'If you're a junkie and I know any employer wouldn't want to know you . . . as soon as you admit you're a criminal, you're not getting a job' (P3.3):

The minute people know that you have been a heroin user, they automatically think you have got an IQ in single figures, you're a thief or something, you're basically treated like scum. The attitudes of some people is sickening . . . not every user is a thief or from a deprived background. (P1.2)

This echoes the views of the research participants in Klee, McLean and Yavorsky (2002) who 'believed that their criminal record would make it difficult to get a job and nearly half of those who had filled in forms when applying tended not to declare this' (p.20). In the present study, participants admitted to not disclosing their criminal records or having delayed a disclosure. Such strategic practices were felt to balance their belief that local employers had exclusionary practices against offenders:

You wouldn't want to say that to an employer because they wouldn't hire you . . . well I had a situation like that last week, I did my community service first, because I had the job interview . . . I never phoned right enough, came back in here and they told me I needed to get proof, and I phoned up to get proof and he said no we'll no take you on because you're doing community service. (P3.2)

As other authors have found (for example, Gill 1997), ex-offenders tend to interpret difficulties in securing employment as a product of employers' prejudice rather than holding a belief that there were better qualified candidates seeking the same position. Only a few of the offenders in the study had attained formal educational qualifications and could call upon them as a resource in seeking employment. Most participants possessed a subtle blend of short courses in vocational training and some work experience.

Brown *et al.* (2001) report that there are fewer than average applications for low-paid and low-skills vacancies, in spite of persistent unemployment. Currently in Scotland demand for employees is relatively buoyant in lower-skills occupations (Futureskills Scotland 2003). Men and women in the present study concurred that the jobs that they were most likely to secure immediately following completion of sentences and in recovery from substance misuse, may involve monotonous work at a low pay. The participants viewed themselves and people like them as having limited employability. While all participants thought that finding employment was important in the long term, low paid manual jobs were seen as an unacceptable reintegration into the formal economy. For example, one

participant was adamant that he would rather remain unemployed than work on a factory line:

I'd like to work but I want a decent job, I'm not working in a factory, doin' the same things . . . but my mates, I hate doing nothing. I mean they're just standing there . . . the same thing. No it's not my job. (P2.1)

Job-readiness

Specialist employability schemes aimed at ex-drug users (Effective Interventions Unit 2001) accentuate that such persons may not be 'job-ready'. This view was exceptional in the present study as one participant who spoke in these terms expressed:

I can't see it in the foreseeable future but hopefully well I'm only 31 now, I've still got a good bit of my life to go, you know what I mean . . . Couldn't work with that, I just know I'm not ready to work. (P4.3)

Several participants talked about the job-readiness of substance misusers in general, often in derogatory terms: 'Most of us . . . are a bit lazy. You always want a job when you've no got one but see when you've got one, you don't want one' (P2.1). 'Unemployment, the majority of junkies will not get up unless they've got a fix in the morning, to go to and they're not going to get up and not have a fix and go to work' (P4.1).

Most of the participants could be considered in the job-ready category of those who are or are nearly job-ready. In general they regarded themselves as searching for an interesting job that was 'worth getting up for' (P5.5) providing a comfortable legitimate income. Confirming the findings of McIntosh and McKeganey (2001, 2002) and Klee, McLean and Yavorsky (2002), a significant proportion of the participants shared the view that the structure of employment would aid them in recovery from drugs.

Aspirations

All the research participants were aware of the perceived lack of trust from employers surrounding them, and how they are perceived negatively, particularly in connection with their drug use. Strikingly, the present study found no 'poverty of aspiration' (Macrae and Maguire 2000) in the participants' accounts of making transitions to work and employment. While structure and income were incentives to job seeking, a criminal record and being a recover/ed/ing user was commonly perceived as challenging to getting the 'right' job. It cannot be denied that level of income from employment – 'a decent wage at the end of the week' – was an important concern. But having the 'right' job was also important for self-esteem and the respect of others including family and friends in the local community. These factors contributed to personal selectivity over employment opportunities.

Initiatives to support and strengthen their job searching were valued by men and women:

While you're in there (residential drug rehab) they could maybe try and get you a job when you get out, to keep you occupied. That would be a help . . . I'm talking about, give a guy a job, where he's making a wage . . . he's getting the benefits there that he deserved that. (P3.2)

If you have an employer that's willing to take ex-criminals . . . we're no bad boys but . . . if they're willing to take people and give them a chance at rehab but you would need to make sure that employer was willing to take them in the first place. (P3.4)

This lends some support to the notion that offenders with histories of substance misuse could fit the conceptualisation of the 'marginalised worker model' (Warhurst and Thompson 1998) where marginalised workers are exploited and sidelined by restructuring organisations. This offers a partial explanation. Interestingly, the desire to use their entrepreneurial skills, gained through their offending and substance misuses histories positioned them within the conceptualisation of the 'portfolio model' of self-employment where expectations of work evolve from a growing interest in a better work-life balance (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Cohen and Mallon 1999). Within this conceptualisation, many commentators have accepted the idea of 'free agency' as liberating the desire for a shift from alienating bureaucratic control of organisations towards independence, and task and time sovereignty of self-employment (McGregor and Sproull 1992; Bridges 1994; Knell 2000). A significant pool of the participants aspired to self-employment to ensure their autonomy, independence and sovereignty over their time and tasks.

Self-employment

Ex-offenders and substance misusers are part of the 'hard core' of the unemployed population who have exceptional difficulties and a myriad of barriers to overcome (South *et al.* 2001; Klee, McLean and Yavorsky 2002). Drawing upon the employability framework of Hillage and Pollard (1998), the participants in the present study expressed challenges in job searching in each of the elements. These included employability assets impaired by not having formal qualifications and local employer concerns about honesty relating to their criminal and substance misusing backgrounds. In the area of presentation, training in these 'softer skills' was desired: 'More jobs, retraining going for interviews. How to fill in applications, you know because you're out of that when you've got a habit' (P4.1). The sale or deployment of these skills was felt by the participants to be limited by a range of practical, environmental and economic constraints. These included local availability of low-paid low-skilled employment and not being able to secure the 'right' job. In the wider context, or the interaction of personal circumstances and the labour market, the participants advocated the education of the general public and employers about substance misuse as a chronic relapsing condition reinforcing the belief that frequently prejudice was one of the biggest barriers to getting and keeping in 'the world of work'.

The *Moving on Update: Employability and Employment for Recovering Drug Users* report (Effective Interventions Unit 2003), outlined the barriers to employment as follows. Individual barriers may include social problems, a criminal record, lack of school and work-related qualifications, low self-esteem, lack of motivation and mental and physical health problems. Many individuals may also face institutional barriers. These include supervised prescribing of methadone, benefit rules, informal economic activity, legislative change about disclosure and provision of employability services. There can also be sizeable barriers within the labour market such as employers' attitudes, standard recruitment practices, lack of knowledge of the current demands of the local labour market and lack of suitable jobs (Effective Interventions Unit 2003, pp.11-12).

Barriers to employment identified by participants were shaped by their experiences and were shapers of their aspirations. According to McIntosh and McKeganey (2001) the recovering drug user has to not only 'perceive an alternative lifestyle as being desirable they also have to see it as being achievable as well' (p.58). In the present study, many of the participants sought to tackle the individual barriers, institutional barriers and barriers within the labour market by becoming self-employed. The path from their current circumstances to self-employment was perceived confidently as a short, relatively easy one. In her study of female ex-offenders, Dempster (2004) reported that money for setting up and surviving were the main barriers to self-employment. In the present study, participants stressed the importance of the sustainability of employment:

We used to have a guy worked with us . . . where he lived . . . everybody still classed him as a junkie but the guy had never had any for seven years. He'd settled, he had a few taxis on the road. He'd started working for himself and he became completely clean and that was always there and he still got downgraded as a junkie . . . he ended up with four motors and he's doing great and he's still doing great. (P5.5)

Participants reported that their family connections, especially their siblings, and their friends, could aid them in becoming self-employed. Family and friends were confirmed as potential guarantors for money and in the securing of work experience from others in their chosen area. As one participant expressed: 'I was lucky, my brother, my mum and my dad all run their own businesses so it was just basically a phone call and there is a job there but not everybody is like that' (P8.3).

Several of the participants had pursued, with success, self-employment. Self-employment as a taxi-driver was felt by one offender to offer him autonomy, time and task sovereignty:

I work for myself, self-employed. I can get work through the day, I can go out and work at night, I can get work through the night. So I know at any time I can jump in my motor and go to work . . . any time I want and I know I can go out and make money. (P5.2)

While self-employment has been overlooked in previous studies of the employability of drug users, recent qualitative work with female ex-offenders identified the following advantages: "being your own boss",

“able to reap the benefits of your own hard work”, “doing a job I really enjoy”, “supporting my family and securing their future” and “not being judged on my past” (Dempster 2004, p.13). Embracing the notion of ‘free agency’ and enterprise can contribute to the employability of someone with histories of drugs and crime to enable their sustainable economic future.

Conclusions

Men and women job searching with a history of drugs and crime face a myriad of individual, institutional and labour market barriers to securing and sustaining paid work within an organisation. The findings of this study could be seen to confirm this, certainly from a perspective that considers employability in terms of employability assets, presentation, deployment and context factors (Hillage and Pollard 1998). In Scotland, policy makers have sought to address the employability of drug users (many of whom will have a criminal record) in two main ways. Mainstream support through initiatives to encourage unemployed people to increase their skills, prepare for work and job search in education, training and employment services including Jobcentre Plus New Deal, Enterprise Network Training Programmes, Careers Scotland, Further and Higher Education Institutions and Community education is available to drug users. Specialist employability programmes for offenders such as APEX and for drug users such as New Futures Fund projects, Progress2work, Beattie Inclusiveness pilots provide alternative support. Supported employment, intermediate labour market and SIP projects aim to increase skills, increase confidence and improve employability (Effective Interventions Unit 2003).

Based on the accounts of the 29 participants in this study, employment was of importance in their recovery from drugs (and by inference crime). Most participants perceived themselves to be ‘job-ready’ – a central component of ‘employability’. In terms of human capital, most had worked previously, held vocational qualifications, were currently undertaking unpaid work for their court orders and aspired to work in the future. While a minority would appreciate the development of their ‘soft’ skills, most felt that their employability was limited by employer discrimination. Initiatives to build the presentation and deployment elements of their employability have been advocated by policy makers and have notable merits. In concert with other social groups, many forms of manual work that are higher in availability and typically low paid did not meet the needs of this group.

As a response to perceived discriminatory practices by employers, participants reported strategies of delaying a disclosure of their criminal record or denying its existence to prospective employers. In the absence of corroborating data, it cannot be confirmed whether such practices were widespread within the local area, were notable for this group of unemployed persons or indeed did occur. With this caveat in mind, the accounts of the participants need to be considered and should not be dismissed as idiosyncratic. The men and women interviewed had common and unique experiences of balancing their criminal and substance misuse

histories and their aspirations for work and employment. Further multi-site research is needed to build on this exploratory study with a strengthened methodology, that can make comparisons by gender, age and ethnicity.

Within aspirations to future work, self-employment emerged as being especially meaningful to the participants. The reported experiences of the participants suggest that they seek self-employment partially because they are marginalised workers being overlooked by organisations and partially due to their desire for 'free agency'. While the participants' views differed in personal details, it may be the case that self-employment was acceptable on economic and symbolic grounds as it offered autonomy and sovereignty over tasks and time as well as integration within the community supported by family and friends. This echoes the main explanations for the entry of minority ethnic groups and immigrant workers into self-employment (Clark and Drinkwater 1998). Survey evidence from Metcalf, Modood and Virdee (1996) has suggested that entry into self-employment is a rational response of minority groups to the predicament of labour market discrimination in the form of the low-paid jobs.

The findings from the present study have important implications for policy makers, employers and job searchers. For policy makers, considerable progress has been made in employment policy relating to drug (and by inference alcohol) misusers in recent years. In Scotland, the introduction of the triad of treatment and rehabilitation services, specialist employability programmes and mainstream education, training and employment services has raised the level of flexible and tolerant support to drug users. To some extent, the role that self-employment can play in the sustained re-employment of drug users into enterprise in Scotland has been overlooked while vocational training as drug counsellors is a notable example of building human capital with linkage from past exceptional life experiences to future work opportunities. There may be value in local policy makers and service providers considering bespoke enterprise training for substance misusers as a disadvantaged group. Such an approach could be justified only in the absence of continuous improvements in partnerships between employers and government to work together to improve the pay and conditions of employment of people with a criminal record.

The present findings suggest that some employers may hold negative views of drug users and those with a criminal record whose historical dishonesty does not match their current expectations of trustworthiness as an attribute of an individual's employability. Policy measures aimed at decreasing the perceived risk for employers, such as State-guaranteed insurance, could play a part in addressing this issue. Employers may continue to struggle to attract and retain staff unless they can convince this largely untapped pool of 'job-ready' workers that manual jobs are sustainable and the 'right' jobs by offering job variety and progression to higher wage levels.

For individuals searching for work, the potential discriminatory practices of employers are not a petty matter. Job seekers who feel obliged

to be dishonest about their criminal record in an attempt to balance the recruitment process to be fair and just compared to others, are likely to increase the prevalence of these underlying assumptions about trustworthiness in local employers. The indicative work record of this group, as demonstrated in this study, includes a blend of vocational qualifications, paid and unpaid work experiences, 'job-readiness' and an aspiration for a sustained working pattern. Greater tolerance and flexibility by employers and job searchers could contribute to reducing the vicious cycle of suspicion and dishonesty.

This study found that life experiences including substance misuse and a criminal record apparently bar employment in desirable and acceptable work, perceived as important to support the process of rehabilitation. This concurs with previous research studies in the field. Interestingly, analysis in this study identified that self-employment may be an available, acceptable and feasible option for a significant proportion of individuals with this legacy. There is a clear need for further more detailed research on the role of self-employment in the recovery of substance misusers with criminal records and its wider implications for specialist employability services, employers and job seekers.

Note

1 Supervised attendance orders require offenders to undertake between ten and 100 hours of structured and constructive activities as an alternative to prison for fine default (see Levy and McIvor 2001). A community service order is an alternative to prison requiring the offender to carry out unpaid work for benefit to the community for between 80 and 240 hours in summary proceedings and 300 hours in solemn proceedings (at the time of the study).

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