



# 'Spotlight on...' equality, diversity and inclusion

## **"Through the Gates" – Farrans supporting the Ban the Box campaign**

'Ban the Box' aims to give people with convictions a fairer chance at securing employment, by encouraging companies to ask the conviction question at a later point in the application process. This reduced the risk of unfair discrimination and overlooking talent.

'Ban the Box' is a national campaign led by Business in the Community, which was hugely successful when it was rolled out in England, opening up over one million job roles in UK businesses for people with convictions. The campaign is now moving into Northern Ireland and Northstone (NI) Ltd is the primary sponsor (Farrans Construction is part of the Northstone Group of companies).

Farrans Construction worked in partnership with social justice charity, Extern and delivered a bespoke "Through the Gate" programme, tailored to those caught within the justice system. They secured work placements that could potentially lead to employment.

Farrans Construction has facilitated a work trial for one inmate while serving the final weeks of his sentence. Farrans worked with the warden and education staff at HMP Maghaberry and NIACRO, a voluntary organisation with a mission to reduce crime through work placements.

Farrans worked closely with the partner organisations for some time to plan and implement a supported work trial for an inmate in the 8 weeks running up to his release. Farrans met with an inmate on three occasions in HMP before first meeting at the workplace. Then Farrans began a work trial for one day a week for an 8-week period.

A transport plan was developed by Farrans and NIACRO to transport the inmate from HMP to site every day. The work trial was successfully completed and a guarantee of paid employment was given on his release date. Upon release Farrans construction worked with NIACRO to appeal to housing authorities to place the inmate in a local hostel to allow him to access work opportunity.

Farrans Construction has been a key contributor in the successful rehabilitation of one inmate on Farrans Construction project, saving the Northern Ireland economy approximately £60,000 in the cost of re-offending. The work trial has been hugely successful and Farrans has shown its willingness to offer opportunities to those with complex needs and who find it harder to enter the workplace.

Farrans Construction have been invited to showcase this work trial process at NI Civil Service Live, showing a true rehabilitation process - bridging the gap between leaving an institutionalised prison and transferring into a new work environment.

*Diane Quinn, HMP Maghaberry said:*

*"As you can imagine, this is a very difficult time in their lives and self-esteem can be at an all-time low. The opportunity offered goes a long way to helping them plan a positive and working future on release."*

## Case Study: Farrans



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## Why are we doing it?

- To address the skills shortage - the industry needs 51,000 new recruits each year to meet current pipeline requirements.
- Our parent company, CRH plc, has set D&I targets, and our initiative to support ex-offenders is part of our response to this leadership challenge.
- To help reduce social inequality – to increase opportunities for people with convictions to compete for jobs.



## Benefits to the organisation

Business benefits - increasing the diversity of the talent pool and reducing the unnecessary exclusion of talented individuals from roles.

Farrans has won a CCS innovation for our work with ex-offenders and encouragement of 'fair chance' recruitment practices. We are the first contractor in the UK to have arranged this for an offender prior to a release.

In England, we sit on the Infrastructure Employment Forum - a group of construction companies and charities who have joined forces to help people with criminal convictions into employment. This group links with the London Community Rehabilitation Company and the Department of Work and Pension. We work together to engage various hard to reach groups to maximise employment and skills opportunities and, in doing so, to deliver maximum social value on major projects such as Crossrail and HS2 for clients and communities.

## Benefits to the individual

When employers can look at the skills, experience and ability of an applicant, before asking about criminal convictions, this gives applicants a more equal chance of being recruited, rather than being immediately disadvantaged by their criminal record, by being "sifted out" during a shortlisting process.

Our Fair Employment practices give candidates who disclose a criminal conviction a full opportunity to explain the situation. The circumstances of the conviction are then fairly assessed against their relevance to, and risk within, the role before a decision is made.