



Role Briefing: Employment and Talent Lead

Location	London SE13 (Lewisham) based
Salary	£34,000 - £39,000 dependent on experience
Start Date	As soon as possible
Job type	Full time, fixed term (maternity cover) – on-site in person
Reports to	Director of Impact, Strategy, and Development

INTRODUCING ONWARDS & UPWARDS

Onwards and Upwards (O&U) is a charity created to directly tackle the cycle of reoffending driven by the barriers to unemployment faced; our purpose is clear, and our plan is simple. We will break the cycle of reoffending by starting sustainable businesses which train and employ ex-offenders. These must be organisations that people are proud to work for, provide personal and professional development, that operate in high demand sectors, and that showcase the talents and potential of ex-offenders as employees to businesses and society at large.

Our plan in the long-term is to launch, test, and grow a range of businesses that all follow this model – of training, supporting and employing ex-offenders in positive environments that are part of a community, with aspirational brands, and with full support for people to grow and move on with their lives.

Our first commercial venture is XO Bikes – where we train people to become qualified bike mechanics and then aim to find them meaningful jobs in the cycling sector and beyond. Our second venture is in development.

We have been training mechanics for two years and have supported people into employment in the cycling sector, into roles in other sectors ranging from hospitality to construction and have now reached the point where we want to develop and formalise this function. It is a magnificent opportunity to build an effective process at the heart of our mission, and as such we are thrilled to have created a new role to own and lead this work.

THE ROLE

The Talent & Employment Lead is key to helping our trainees move into meaningful, long-term work. They do this by offering personalised support, building strong relationships with employers, and delivering engaging sessions. This maternity cover role is all about keeping that momentum going—making sure trainees feel supported, opportunities keep flowing, and partnerships stay strong.

This role sits within a small, agile team, where everyone contributes beyond their core responsibilities. As such, it carries significant involvement in the wider programme, with opportunities to shape, improve, and expand how we support prison leavers into employment. We are a charity that actively embraces improvement and development—so part of this role is to identify ways we can do better and take the lead in making those improvements happen.



Excitingly, while based within XO Bikes, this role will also span our second venture, XO Barbers, supporting employment across both projects. It's a unique opportunity to be part of something growing and innovative from the inside.

We're looking for someone who's a confident facilitator, experienced in coaching, and great at building relationships—with a good sense of the bigger picture.

There are three main functions, all of which are vital in achieving the positive outcomes for individuals we support – sustained meaningful employment. The three **key responsibilities** are as follows:

1. Trainee Support

- Weekly 1:1s during the training course (seven weeks course, 6 times a year)
Provide structured weekly check-ins to support trainees' progress, confidence, and engagement.
- Caseload management (XO onwards)
Conduct regular 1:1s and informal check-ins with trainees who have completed training in the last 12 months to monitor progress, troubleshoot barriers, and offer guidance.
- Practical employment support
- Assist with CV writing and refinement
- Provide tailored guidance on disclosure letters
- Conduct mock interviews and offer constructive feedback
- Interview coordination
Facilitate the logistics and preparation for employer interviews, ensuring trainees feel confident and ready.

2. Employer Engagement

- Outreach and relationship building
Proactively connect with new employers to explore partnership opportunities.
- Ongoing engagement with partners
Maintain regular contact with existing employer partners to update on trainee progress, employment outcomes, and upcoming opportunities.
- Work experience day coordination
Plan and deliver meaningful 'work experience days' that reflect real workplace environments and expectations.
- Employer participation in programme milestones
Extend invitations and coordinate employer involvement in graduation events ensuring strong employer presence to celebrate trainee success and build connections
- Interview facilitation
Work closely with employer partners to schedule and facilitate interviews for live job opportunities.

3. Session Facilitation

- *Thursday Masterclasses*: Deliver weekly coaching sessions focused on developing core employability and life skills, including communication, goal setting, teamwork, positivity, and professionalism.
- *Wednesday Wellbeing Sessions*: Group-based sessions that prioritise mental health, self-awareness, and personal development—all aimed at supporting sustainable employment outcomes.



THE PERSON

We are looking for someone who shares our belief that individuals who commit crimes should be given the opportunity to build themselves a positive and productive life atop the foundations of secure employment. The cycle of reoffending is an enormous issue, but one we can start to solve.

Our hope is to find an energetic, organised, and positive team player, similarly comfortable working independently. It is a very varied role and one that needs calm focus as well as spontaneity and initiative – things change fast here, and this allows us to progress towards our mission rapidly.

Success in this role will depend on a combination of organisation, structure, and rigour, alongside confidence and comfort in generating and building new relationships. Initiative and dynamism much sought after, together with a genuine delight found in working with a wide range of people.

Most importantly, we want someone who cares as much as we do about why we exist – the people we aim to help. Bikes are an end to a means, and that means is giving people ready to turn away from crime the platform on which to launch a successful and rewarding career.

We are looking for someone with at least a few years of relevant experience ideally spanning more than one of the three functions above. There will always be support and help available, but this role will own responsibility for the design and delivery of this function.

The role would be ideal for someone with an understanding of the challenges faced within the prison system and the difficulties faced after release. We are looking for:

Essential skills

- Personable, approachable, and confident engaging with both trainees and external partners
- Delivery of employability sessions to a range of people at different distances from employment
- Comfortable developing and adapting content and sessions as needed
- Programme design and development through continuous improvement – monitoring, reporting, review
- Structured and able to manage multiple priorities with a clear overview of the programme
- Empathy and a supportive approach even when the road is long
- Employer engagement and relationship building and management – we must be reliable, honest, and responsive to support organisations through cultural change
- Generating opportunities and leads through networking – to grow our network of employers
- Strong admin and IT skills to effectively manage the recruitment process and monitor our efficacy
- High levels of professionalism and energy in all interactions with trainees and employers
- High motivation and pro-active initiative, able to adapt quickly when priorities change
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Desirable skills

- Experience working within a recruitment function
- Experience of working with diverse communities
- Experienced in coaching or mentoring prison leavers and/or job seekers



How to apply

If you would like an informal conversation before applying, have any specific questions, or would like the chance to come and visit us in person please do contact Will at will@onwardsandupwards.uk

To then apply please send an up-to-date CV and one page cover letter to Maria at maria@onwardsandupwards.uk. We will be reviewing applications as they come in so do please register your interest with us as soon as possible.

All applicants need to have the right to work in the UK and be able to provide two references.

We believe we'll work better if our employees come from different backgrounds and if we create an environment of inclusion and belonging for them.