

Having a criminal conviction

The duty to disclose convictions

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) provides that after a certain period of time (depending upon the length of your sentence) the conviction becomes 'spent' and there is no need to disclose it to a potential employer, insurance company, landlord, credit company. For example, a fine becomes spent after 5 years regardless of the amount. There is however a very large category of people for whom convictions can never be spent, including people working in the following professions: doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives, lawyers, opticians, teachers, police officers and people working with children and vulnerable people.

Applying for a Travel Visa

There are potential difficulties in getting travel visas and entering certain countries for those with convictions. It is also difficult to know what is the best way to proceed, as the anecdotal information that we have is mixed. Australia and New Zealand have questions on their visa application forms requiring disclosure of convictions. We don't know what happens if you disclose your convictions, but we are aware that it is possible to obtain visas without disclosing convictions and then enter the country without any problem. The USA now requires you to attend for an interview at the Embassy if you have convictions. We know of people who have not declared convictions and have obtained visas and entered the country. We know of others who have been deported at the point of entry, after failing to disclose their 'activist' convictions. Any requirement to disclose convictions includes spent convictions unless the country has an Act equivalent to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Getting Insurance

It can be hard to get household, business and other types of insurance if you have convictions. But it's not impossible, you may just have to shop around a bit more. There is a question on most insurance proposal forms asking about convictions, as with employers there is a duty to disclose your convictions unless they are 'spent'. Failure to disclose a conviction, which the insurer later finds out about, could invalidate your insurance policy.