

# Embracing Age Inclusivity in the Workplace



## Key points

### Getting recruitment right is essential

- Need to get policies which reflect a positive outlook
- Use shared learning to compare methods
- What does the organisation look like to an employee
- What is the offer?

### Develop an effective flexible working policy

- Offer a range of flexible working options
- Allow for a combination which can change as required
- Develop a passport system which can address different needs and issues
- Support employees whose work role limits hybrid or remote working
- Base any agreed working pattern on trust - effective support and delivery is the goal

### Training and support

- Ensure that good management support is in place
- Training and increasing awareness is essential for everyone
- Change the workplace culture to recognise the diversity of the workforce
- Use the lived experience of the workforce to inform policy review

# Summary of what was discussed.

## Speakers.

UK workforce has changed since the pandemic.

ONS figures show that 3.5 M workers aged 50 – 64 have left the workforce.

For many re-entering the workforce will depend on conditions.

58% would consider returning if flexible working was available.

Flexible working offers vary – many organisations will offer part time and hybrid working depending on operational need.

Useful for organisations to sign up to schemes such as Greater Manchester Charter and Ageing Better's Age Friendly Employer Pledge

- Chance to reflect on practice and review policies
- Learn from others and share good practice
- Demonstrate that a diverse workforce is valued

Important to review policies with input from those with relevant lived experience.

An effective suite of workforce support policies can be beneficial for organisations making funding bids or tendering for contracts. An effective and supported workforce may require extra costs (Carers leave, awareness training, menopause support etc) but it will be more productive.

Relationships with managers and colleagues are essential to creating an age friendly workplace. To achieve this awareness training and culture change may be required.

Age is an intersectional characteristic which can lead to discrimination for all ages in different ways.

## **Discussions**

### **Theme 1: Designing all age flexible working policies which are equitable.**

- All staff to be made aware of what is available
- A range of flexible working options should aim to meet need
- This may mean a combination of arrangements or work patterns over a period.
- Ideal should be for a flexible working passport to record arrangements, needs and support which can be updated as circumstances change
- Agreement between both parties on how to monitor output – trust is key to a successful arrangement.
- If the majority of staff are hybrid working there will be a need to monitor well-being, built in opportunities to share learning, in office days etc
- Recognition that hybrid/ remote working can be difficult for new starters with limited chance to build working relationships and learn

### **Theme 2: Understanding why flexible working can be needed and the positive impacts.**

- 50 can be seen as a threshold age though there is no one size fits all - different needs across the board.
- May be differences due to gender etc.
- Health can be an issue for people over 50 – this may impact the employee or a member of their household.
- Some people may work better earlier or later depending on their individual situation (Medication etc)
- Menopause needs to be recognised and addressed depending on impact.
- Access needs – commute can be difficult/ office may not be ideal.
- Office space may be reduced if less staff are in office space.
- Employees feel more informed and valued.
- Boost to morale leading to better performance.
- Restructuring task/ roles – hand over and mentoring opportunities.
- Publicising flexible working to all staff.

### **Theme 3: Identifying new barriers as flexible working changes.**

- Evolution of hybrid working – new skills required for managing online meetings, remote working.
  - Some organisations have moved to home-working during COVID – releasing a lot of office space, moved people to home working contracts and now most are hybrid – caring responsibilities, partners, appointments, better work life balance.
  - Concerns around productivity, people not forming relationships
  - Daily check-ins during Covid – support still needs need to be in place
  - Addressing challenges and cultural perceptions around presenteeism
  - Work-life balance is more of an issue for employees
  - Different Flexible hours at Southway – 7 hours anytime between 7am and 7pm
  - Guidance from government is lacking
- Increased isolation for problem solving with colleague
  - Check in after 10am
  - Work Well Passport
  - Regular catch ups
- Social interactions change – lose opportunities to build working relationships
  - Confidence and career development – see good and bad behaviours – experiences – less formal interactions
  - Developing relationships for future work
  - Illness – people need to stay at home
  - Senior Leadership Team in office more – hierarchy develops leading to pressure to not miss out on career development

Balance between work and home has changed – skewed boundaries at times – pattern can become fragmented within a working day

Important to stay connected

Make sure it works for organisation and employee – trust is important for both sides of any arrangement

Network – ethnically diverse – helps to maintain relationships

#### **Theme 4: What makes an employer Age Friendly?**

- Needs a genuine positive attitude.
- Some practices can seem age friendly but may be restrictive – ideal is for any individual arrangements to be person centred.
- Recognise everyone is different – need to foster a culture recognising differences in a diverse workforce.
- Recruitment policy is crucial – reviewing existing protocols and policies can lead to ‘tearing up and starting again’. Identifying barriers and removing from job descriptions, advertising and interview processes can lead to change but will take time.
- Some organisations may focus on younger workers.
- Feeling valued may change with age – AF employer needs to respond to individuals.
- Huge variation in how people feel valued.
- Key is to listen and act on what is said. Use the experience of workforce to inform policies and protocols