



# AGE DIVERSITY AT WORK

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BUSINESS

**AGE POSITIVE**  
www.agepositive.gov.uk

## Further information

**Age Positive** - [www.agepositive.gov.uk](http://www.agepositive.gov.uk)

**Acas** - [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)  
or telephone the Acas Helpline  
on 0845 7474747

**Be Ready** - for a free Newsletter and Personnel  
Organiser with hard facts and top tips to help  
your business prepare for age legislation,  
telephone 0845 715 2000  
email [apg@isky.co.uk](mailto:apg@isky.co.uk) or go to  
[www.agepositive.gov.uk/agepartnershipgroup](http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/agepartnershipgroup)

From the Department for Work and Pensions

Ref: AGEWORK 06





# Recruitment

## Advertising

Remove age limits from job adverts, so no-one is discouraged from applying because of their age.

Use language and pictures to appeal to wide age groups.

Avoid phrases like 'applicants should be 25-35 years of age', 'young graduates', 'mature person' - they are discriminatory.

Publicise your vacancies in ways most likely to attract people of a variety of ages - consider national and local newspapers, free papers, internet, jobcentres, community and business networks.

Be aware that older people increasingly make up a bigger proportion of the population. Ignoring this will reduce your choice of potential candidates.

## Introduction

This handy guide is to help employers think about what they can do to remove age discrimination from employment practices - to make decisions that do not discriminate against someone because of their age.

It's time to bring ageism to an end - to stamp out misguided attitudes that people are past it after 50 or incapable of doing a responsible job when they are young.

Being positive about age is about building an effective workforce of different ages. Businesses of all sizes are reporting the benefits of employing an age-diverse workforce - **higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, increased motivation, greater flexibility and a wider pool of skills.**

"If we don't employ a good mix of staff of all ages, we are not going to get the customers through the door."

HBOS



## Experience and qualifications

Avoid specifying a minimum length of experience such as 10 years, as this disadvantages younger workers. The quality and relevance of experience is important - not the number of years.

Avoid phrases like 'only people with GCSEs need apply'. That would rule out many older people who left school before GCSEs were introduced, even though they may have the necessary skills.

## Application forms

Remove date of birth and put it on a separate monitoring form that interviewers don't see.

## Monitoring

Check how effective your recruitment process is. Count the number of candidates of different age groups who applied; were short-listed; interviewed; appointed.

## Graduate and specialist recruitment

If you have special recruitment programmes for graduates or managers, make them open to all ages.

## Recruitment agencies

If you use a recruitment agency, check that they don't exclude people because of their age.



# Selection

Focus on skills, not on stereotypes.

For example, a manager can potentially be a younger or older person.

Make sure you're not making assumptions about the capability or medical fitness of someone based purely on their age.

If the staff responsible for selecting and interviewing candidates are not trained in equal opportunities, they may be discriminating unwittingly and leave you open for prosecution.

## Interviewing

Use people of different ages on the interview panel, to reduce the possibility of bias towards one age group.

Ask job-related questions and be careful not to base decisions on prejudice and stereotypes.

Use selection criteria to mark candidates against. This can help with decision-making and record the fairness of the process.

## Monitoring

Check the number of candidates of different age groups who applied, were short-listed, were interviewed and were appointed.

**"We're a growing company and we need the balance provided by people of all ages."**

Rachel's Organic Dairy



# Promotion

Avoid having a minimum or maximum cut-off age for promotion.

Make your promotion opportunities open to all employees. Let your staff know that age is not a barrier and that they will not be regarded as 'too young' or 'too old'.

Promote on the basis of performance that you can measure and potential that is demonstrated - rather than on age or length of service.



**“Our customer base is very broad and we want to reflect that in our staff ages too.”**

JD Wetherspoon



# Training & development

Make sure training is open to all, for example not overlooking an older person, thinking they may not be interested in career development. Training can be worthwhile for all ages of employees - they could be working with you longer than assumed.

## **Awareness of individual learning styles**

A worker who has been away from formal learning for a few years might take a bit longer to adjust to training and may need some reassurance. Someone used to a formal learning environment might take a bit longer to adjust to on-the-job training.

Ask employees who have benefited from training to be role models to inspire others.

# Redundancy

Beware of losing the skills your business needs. If you target older workers when selecting for redundancy, you may discover later that vital skills and company knowledge are lost.

Base your redundancy decisions on job-related criteria and the needs of your business - don't use age as a factor.

Consider alternatives to redundancy - like part-time working, natural wastage, redeployment to other parts of the company, job-sharing, career breaks.

## Voluntary redundancy

Be aware that asking for volunteers might have a less demoralising effect on the workforce - but it could leave you with an imbalance in the remaining skills and experience in the company.

**"The age-diversity of our employees provides the wide variety of skills we need to deliver high quality services."**

Falkirk Council



## Last in - first out

'Last in - first out' is not necessarily the best approach, as the 'last in' could be crucial to your business.

Be careful not to lose the balance of skills and experience that comes from employing a workforce of various ages.

**"It has always been our policy that if someone is good enough to do the job it doesn't matter what their age is."**

Alleverd Springs





# Retirement

From October 2006, compulsory retirement below age 65 is unlawful - you would need to justify any enforced retirements below that age.

You don't have to set a compulsory retirement age - it isn't required by law. In fact, compulsory retirement could mean you lose skilled people and affect your business productivity. Why train new staff or pay higher rates for agency workers, when an existing employee, who knows your business, could do the job.

## Flexible retirement

Flexible retirement can be a useful way of preparing employees to handle the change between full-time work and full retirement.

There are alternatives to stopping work altogether - for example reduced hours, job-sharing, part-time working.

See if employees who have retired are seeking employment again. This could involve short-term contracts, re-employment as an advisor, temporary cover during holidays, sickness absence or busy periods.

Being flexible about retirement can mean reducing capacity without losing valuable workers and their expertise.

## Mentoring

As older workers get near to retirement, involve them in mentoring other staff to pass on skills and experience.

## Performance

Use performance standards - they don't have to be complex but they are essential when dealing with poor performers. Don't use retirement as an easy alternative for poor performance - it is not cost effective.

**"The wide spectrum of ages in our workforce brings together different skills and outlooks."**

Beacon Foods

