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**Toolkit**

# BECOMING AN
# AGE FRIENDLY
# EMPLOYER

## November 2020



## A guide to help employers start
## taking action on age

# Becoming an

# AGE FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

## A guide to help employers start taking action on age

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# WHY TAKE ACTION ON AGE?

**Today there are five generations in the UK workforce working side by side.** There are people in work aged from 16 to 70 and over, including 3.8 million 16 to 24-year-olds. 10.6 million working age people are over 50 – equivalent to one third of the workforce[1]. The UK population is ageing and by the mid-2030s half the adult population will be over 50[2]. Drawing on the economic contribution of this demographic, as both employees and consumers, will be essential.

**COVID-19 has had a disproportionate economic impact on the youngest and oldest employees[3].** There has been an understandable focus on the needs of the youngest to avoid a lifetime scarring effect. But the impacts on the older workforce must be recognised too if we are to retain valuable skills and avoid a generation facing poverty in retirement. The challenge is to build back responsibly and create workplaces where age does not limit an employee's success.

**Age is an amplifier of disadvantage.** COVID-19 has had a differentiated impact on people of different ages and ethnicities, with greater health impacts on older people and black, Asian and ethnic minority communities. New research has found that black, Asian and ethnic minority people over 50 are facing the highest levels of disadvantage in society[4]. The pay gap is widest for older women. Health issues are the major driver of early exit from the labour market. And caring for others threatens the worklife balance of people at key stages of their lives and drives many out of work[5].

**Multigenerational workplaces are efficient and benefit from the combined talents of different generations.** As businesses both respond to the impact of recession and seek to build back responsibly, the needs and contribution of employees of all ages and stages in life is a business-critical issue[6]. This will build intergenerational fairness and contribute to a successful bottom line. Multigenerational workforces reflect the full diversity of the customer base, and there is growing evidence that companies with more age-diverse workforces are more innovative[7], with positive impacts on performance[8].

The priority now is to ensure that, as businesses adjust to the current economic uncertainty, certain generations and groups are not disadvantaged over others. This guide will help you to take action to create an age-friendly workplace, with an effective multi-generational workforce and an inclusive workplace culture where all employees can thrive.

Additional support can be provided by our Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Employment and Skills teams. Members can speak to their Relationship Manager for more information, and you can also visit the BITC website.

**AGE DIVERSITY** allows for the unique contributions of people across all ages and stages of life.

**AGE INCLUSION** is underpinned by behaviours and social norms that ensure people feel included.

# THE BUSINESS CASE

Age diversity and inclusion enable businesses to:

- **Create a skilled multigenerational workforce** where older and younger workers learn skills and knowledge from each other, and employees of all ages have equal opportunities to learn and develop.

- **Reduce turnover costs and plug skills gaps** by retaining staff across the generations and recruiting from across the labour market. It can cost up to £30,000 to hire and train up a new employee[9].

- **Retain knowledge and experience** by helping more over 50s work for longer. They have developed skills, sector and organisational knowledge, and personal networks that are valuable to a business.

- **Increase team productivity** through increased age diversity and inclusion. Employees at different stages of their careers have various perspectives which can be useful for business success.

- **Improve customer service and product development** by reflecting your customer base in your workforce. As well as employees, you have clients, consumers, and customers in all generations.

- **Improve your brand** as an age-inclusive, diverse, and adaptable business. Successful businesses attract talent and clients from across our ageing and increasingly multigenerational population.

# THE AGE FRIENDLY EMPLOYER FRAMEWORK

The Age Friendly Employer Framework, by Business in the Community (BITC), draws on five evidenced-based areas for action:

1. **Flexible work:** make sure all workers know the options available and how to find out more.
2. **Health and wellbeing:** ensure that all employees have the health support they need and know how to access it.
3. **Career development:** encourage career development at all ages in your workforce.
4. **Inclusive Recruitment:** make sure recruitment policies and procedures do not discriminate against older or younger candidates.
5. **Age-inclusive culture:** support the development of an age-inclusive culture across all levels in your business.

BITC is calling on employers to use this framework to take action on age in their workplaces and create inclusive workplace cultures.

Employers should start by identifying those areas which are important to them and to their employees. This will guide what actions are appropriate to take first.

This assessment of materiality can be made using the BITC Look, Listen, Act approach which 'wraps around' the five areas for action.
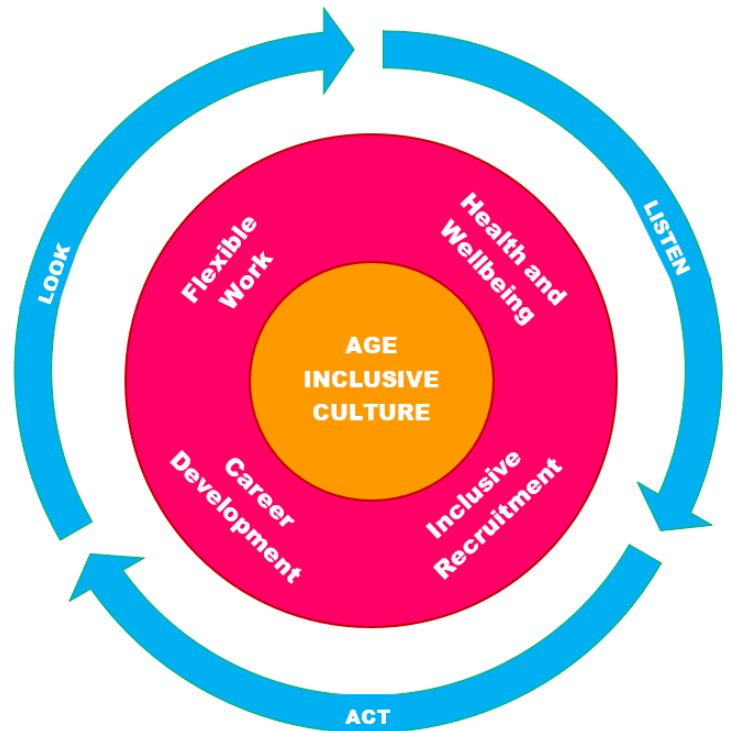
To do this you will:

- **Look at your data** – analyse the age profile of your workforce. BITC has a 'Getting started on age' toolkit which can help you to do this.

- **Listen to your employees** – get people talking about age in your business and listen to what they say. You might ask questions via a survey, focus groups, or lunch & learns etc.

- **Take action on age in your business** – agree on an action plan across the five action areas of the framework, as identified by your analysis and listening process. You can work on more than one area at once or repeat the process. Set metrics to measure your success, assess the impact, and shape future actions.

*More detail on the Look, Listen, Act process is presented on the following page.*

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# LOOK, LISTEN, ACT APPROACH

To decide how to take action on age, use BITC's Look, Listen, Act approach.

## 1 LOOK

### Employers need to look at their data

- What is the age range and structure of your workforce?

- How age diverse are the different areas and teams within your business?

- How many older workers apply for jobs in your business and how many are recruited?

- Your data can tell you how age diverse and inclusive you are, and whether any age bias is seeping into management and business processes and decisions.

## 2 LISTEN

### Be sure to listen to your employees

- What are the wants and needs of your employees of different ages?

- How do perspectives vary in each generation?

- Learnings from your employees will help you understand what they are experiencing and how age-inclusive your organisation is.

- A group event is particularly effective in gathering opinions. BITC can support you to organise and review focus groups.

## 3 ACT

### Act on what you have learnt

- Use the insights gained to design and implement an age diversity and inclusion strategy.

- Possible actions might include designing new policies; bias-proofing management processes; senior management endorsement and support for line managers; and developing new programmes for employee support.

- It is also important to start a conversation on age among employees and managers.

- Develop effective metrics to allow you to measure and track performance and impact.

# AREAS FOR ACTION

At BITC member **FSCS** all jobs can be carried out flexibly - at home, in condensed hours, or with flexible start and leave times. As part of a broader **Making the Most of Mid-life programme**, which includes career support, FSCS have driven employee engagement and built a workforce with ages ranging from 22 to 69.

BITC's Age Friendly Employer Challenge is based on five evidenced-based areas for action.

## Flexible work

### Make sure all workers know the options available and how to find out more

Flexible working helps workers of all ages and stages of their careers, supporting employees to balance work with caring (see our 'Supporting carers in the workplace' toolkit) and personal health needs, and help with a phased retirement[10]. Employers who offer good quality flexible working have better levels of staff engagement. However, only 15% of job adverts offer flexible working options[11]. Remember, all employees with six months' service have a statutory right to request flexible working.

Flexible working actions include:

- Offer flexible working at recruitment and make it available from day one in the job.

- Widen the range of flexible working options available – formal and informal.

Remember that people's needs may change over time.

- Help people navigate the system. Signpost to internal and external information on flexible working policies and procedures.

- Share stories of people working flexibly in your business. Include examples from senior management as role models.

- Help managers manage flexibly. Provide training about flexible working both at recruitment and when line managing employees, and ensure that managers have access to up to date policies and procedures.

- Ensure you have an inclusive approach to remote working. BITC's toolkit on taking an inclusive approach to remote working can help.

The **carers policy** at BITC Age Leadership Team member **Aviva** includes flexible working, carer's leave and passports, a carers network, and information about flexible working – including how it can support balancing work with caring responsibilities. Line managers are trained and receive continuing support on how to best help their employees.

## Health and wellbeing

### Ensure that all employees have the health support they need and know how to access it

Supporting health and wellbeing is essential for employees of all ages. Health is the

biggest driver for people leaving work before they are ready to retire[12]. BITC's Mental Health at Work report has highlighted the significant issues faced by younger people[13]. Health conditions need to be supported and

> BITC NI Age at Work participant **Queen's University Belfast** has worked with its own researchers and academics to develop a **menopause programme** utilising the expertise of its own staff. This has successfully enhanced staff wellbeing and had a positive impact on brand reputation as an employer of choice.

often relatively small adjustments can make it possible for people to continue working effectively, as in the case of menopause[14]. Employers have a statutory duty of care to their employees, and employees with a disabling condition are protected by law.

Actions to support health and wellbeing include:

- Provide effective support for all health and wellbeing conditions. Both physical and mental health are important for the wellbeing and productivity of your employees.

- Support people through later-life transitions, such as caring for family members, developing a health condition, or bereavement.

- Create an open and supportive culture around managing health at work. Make sure people are confident to report a health condition without fearing negative consequences for their career.

- Provide full, equal, and early access to support including small, simple changes, and make sure that support is sustained over time.

- Use the BITC Wellbeing Workwell Model to support the wellbeing of your employees.

## Career development

### *Encourage career development at all ages in your workforce*

Employees of all ages need open and fair access to training and development opportunities. Employers need to invest in and develop the skills of employees of all ages, building engagement and retention, and boosting the productivity of your business. Thinking ahead and planning is important for both younger and older workers. Remember that, at 50, employees may still have up to 20 years or more at work so investing in career development and support remains essential across the course of their working lives.

Actions to support career development include:

- Ensure that development, training and progression are available equally to employees of all ages.

- Provide career guidance at mid-life and beyond, including retirement plans. Help people take stock, manage transitions, and plan holistically for the future.

- Use mid-life MOTs to help people plan and have conversations about their current job. BITC's 'The Mid-life MOT: Getting Started' toolkit and Guide for HR managers will help you.

- Tackle age bias that seeps into management processes such as redundancy and performance ratings.

- Empower and educate line managers to be age-inclusive.

- BITC's Essential Skills resources will help you support the development of all ages in your workforce.

> **Aviva** had a 94% take-up rate for their **mid-life MOT** pilot covering wealth, work, and well-being for staff aged 45 to 60. A third of participants worried that age was a barrier to their careers, but after the programme confidence in the future and engagement increased. Aviva are now rolling out the programme across the business.

## Recruitment

### *Make sure recruitment policies and procedures do not discriminate against older or younger candidates*

Age bias can be embedded in recruitment processes, often unintentionally. In a study by Anglia Ruskin University, younger applicants were found to be up to four and a half times more likely than older applicants to be invited for interview[15]. With over a third of the current workforce over the age of 50 and a quarter of people seeking to return to work after retiring[16], it is essential that employers get their recruitment processes right if they are to avoid restricting the talent pool they access.

For younger people, the disruption to education caused by COVID-19 means that

entering a contracting labour market will be the greater challenge. A focus on skills, behaviours and competencies, rather than

> BITC member **Coop** developed an **inclusive recruitment campaign** for their Funeralcare business to increase reach when they faced a shortfall in recruitment. A focus on transferable skills allowed them to target both people retired from the forces and police plus younger people, via targeted advertising and social media. 450 new colleagues have joined the business and turnover has fallen from 22% to 1.4%.

academic qualifications, will be important to support this group and prevent the risk of long-term unemployment[17]. Work placements, such as the Kickstart scheme for younger people, are an effective tool to support disadvantaged groups into work. BITC's toolkit 'Quality work placements in the new normal' shares best practice on supporting both younger and older workers, and other disadvantaged groups, back into work.

Age-inclusive recruitment actions include:

- Conduct age-positive recruitment campaigns.

- Minimise age bias in recruitment processes.

- Ensure the language and imagery in job adverts and recruitment campaigns are age diverse and inclusive.

- Remove upper age limits in graduate schemes, apprenticeships and traineeships and offer alternative career paths internally.

- Develop returner or re-entry programmes.

- Value transferrable skills and experience in the recruitment process.

- Ensure recruitment training includes information on how to be age-inclusive.

- BITC's 'responsible recruitment' factsheet can help you think about how to make your recruitment processes more inclusive.

## Age-inclusive culture

### Support the development of an age-inclusive culture across all levels in your business

At BITC, our vision is to create workplaces where age does not limit an employee's success and businesses can realise the massive benefits of a multigenerational workforce, leveraging the valuable skills and talents of employees of all ages. Workplaces that are fully inclusive, in terms of gender, race and age, make better business decisions in up to nine cases out of ten[18]. Promoting an age-inclusive culture is now business critical to achieve an engaged and productive workforce. All employees need to feel confident that they are included and belong in their workplaces, and that they can thrive.

Actions to promote an age-inclusive culture include:

- Appoint age champions and/or senior sponsors in your business who are responsible for promoting age conversations and the development of an age-inclusive culture.

- Encourage interaction and networking among staff of all ages. Consider setting up a generations network. BITC's

'employee network' factsheet can help you.

- Monitor and share workforce data by age. BITC can help you to do this – contact the age campaign.

- Equip line managers with the knowledge and skills to manage age-friendly practices and build age inclusive teams.

- BITC's Everyday Inclusion resources can help you to understand how to create an inclusive environment in your workplace.

BITC Leadership Team member the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** have developed a holistic approach to being an **age-friendly employer**. Age-friendly actions include development of multi-generational teams, career conversations, flexible working arrangements, wellbeing support and 'time to talk'. A quarter of DWP staff work flexibly to help with caring or health needs. Mid-life MOTs help staff plan their futures and recruitment strategies are age-friendly. This approach won the DWP BITC's Responsible Business Award for the most age-friendly team in 2019.

# SUPPORT AVAILABLE FROM BITC

BITC provides support to its members and partners across a wide range of diversity and inclusion topics including age, and offers online resources, regular updates, advisory

support, training, webinars and other events. For members, your relationship manager or adviser can help you find support. You can also find resources on the BITC website and non-members can find information on how to join us. You can contact the age campaign at info@bitc.org.uk.

Links to BITC online resources have been embedded in the sections of this guide.

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