

# Employment Needs of Older Workers

## What is Equal?

The Equal Programme is a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative which operates across all of the European Union. The Programme aims to develop and test new ways of challenging discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.

Equal has acted as a learning platform, developing innovative ways of tackling existing labour market problems. It has presented evidence based outcomes which could be adopted by policy makers and delivery agents at local, regional, national and European levels.

The partnership approach in Equal is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), consisting of organisations with common interests and different expertise, working collaboratively to deliver shared aims and objectives.

[www.equal.ecotec.co.uk](http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk)

[www.equal-works.com](http://www.equal-works.com)

[www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk)



Equal Development Partnerships (DPs) addressing disadvantage and discrimination faced by older workers and the impact of changing demographics, are now well placed to provide a wealth of evidence-based outcomes and expertise.

## Key Messages

### IAG and welfare to work

- It is vital to recognise the effectiveness of intensive one-to-one personal support, advice and guidance for both the recruitment and retention of older workers
- The multiple barriers and overlapping disadvantages faced by the majority of unemployed over-45s are not sufficiently catered for with a one size fits all approach
- There is a real need for projects designed specifically for older clients to build motivation and confidence
- Delivery of services should not be motivated only by budget restrictions and needs of older workers should be designed into procurement processes
- Early intervention is an important factor for older people who lose their jobs
- Volunteering should be better promoted
- Targets and funding should take account of success in improving people's employability rather than just achieving job outcomes

### Lifelong learning and skills

Age Concern and NIACE have set out the case for investing in older people's skills, reporting that the 2010 Public Service Agreement targets for basic skills and Level 2 skills will not be met unless more action is taken to raise the skills of people over 40.

- Reduce barriers to participation by older people in education and training, by providing

locally accessible courses and community involvement to ensure learning opportunities reflect the needs of learners

- Flexibility within funding for lifelong learning for older people by, for example, not requiring qualifications to be at Level 2 or 3 to qualify for funding. DPs identified the importance of introductory courses and those developed specifically for over-50s
- Introduction of a duty to promote age equality, requiring age-proofing of funding, curriculum, marketing and delivery of courses
- Real need for simple and effective accreditation of prior experience and learning

### **Health and older workers**

With 60% of over-50s who want to work having a limiting health condition and close to half of Incapacity Benefits claimants being aged over 50 it is essential that health is placed at the heart of age management.

- Government's strategy for healthy workplaces should specifically take into account the needs of older workers
- Importance of occupational health. DPs working in Great Britain have learnt considerably from Finnish DPs and their experience of occupational health, where older workers have been helped to stay in work through changes to job and lifestyle

### **Employers**

Since the implementation of the age legislation in 2006, employers have been required to revise their recruitment and retention policies and update their equality policies to include age. Equal DPs have worked with employers across different regions and amongst different workplace settings to develop new tried and tested approaches.

- Needs of employers must be considered when designing training programmes and courses
- Flexible working is still an issue and requires more than part-time employment and early retirement options
- Whilst employers are recruiting older workers, quality of work remains an issue, with the need for action on job retention including a focus on low-income work
- Support for employers to move beyond legislative compliance to consider progressive age positive practices
- 'Peer to peer' learning and use of action learning sets was identified as a particularly successful approach to working with employers –they value the experience and views of other employers linking with age legislation
- Key role of intermediaries in working with employers
- Addressing the needs of and up-skilling older workers is essential for increasing the future competitiveness and productivity of business