Valuing older workers
A template for a ‘Charter for Older Workers’

The Charter for Older Workers sets out a vision for an aging workforce and aims to be a catalyst for individuals and organisations to examine, review and improve their provisions and support for older workers in their workplace.

The charter may also serve as a guide and framework for all those involved in learning and development, workforce planning, staff support, and any organisational strategies with older workers in mind.

*Please note: This charter does not in any way impact on, or replace, nationally or locally negotiated union agreements or frameworks.*

## **The needs of older workers**

For older workers to remain and feel supported in the workplace, there needs to be:

* A cultural acceptance of the vital role older workers play in the workforce and productivity.
* A celebration of the older worker at both an organisational and individual worker level across all age groups.
* A learning strategy to meet the learning and development needs and aspirations of older workers. The strategies should provide early interventions such as midlife development reviews for career planning, retraining, redeployment and up-skilling for different job roles. Further, the learning strategy needs to include an awareness-raising package designed specifically for the older worker on stress and wellbeing, financial and pension planning, as well as developing the skills and knowledge of managers in their role in supporting an older workforce.
* An active, flexible working offer that recognises the needs of older workers who may need to work fewer hours, part time or fewer shift patterns whilst meeting the business needs of the organisation.
* Provision of an occupational health service that supports preventative health education and well-person services and encourages staff to take advantage of these services.
* Support for staff with fast-track early intervention services such as physiotherapy and counselling services available to all.
* Risk assessment to ensure a safe working environment that takes account of the age demographics of the workforce and age-related issues for individual staff.
* Provision of ergonomic equipment to take account of an ageing workforce and cumulative effects of physical work demands that working longer can have.
* Policies to support workers, where possible, to move into new roles or redesign current role/working patterns if age related issues are making their current role difficult.
* Easy access and referrals to further support such as occupational health.

## Partnership work between the employer and the trades unions

Trades unions have a constructive role in the development and delivery of the older worker agenda.

The Union Learning Representative can provide a unique role in supporting the delivery of midlife development reviews and can work in partnership with the employer on an older worker working group/forum.

Union Health and Safety Representatives can work in partnership with organisations to support a healthy workplace that meets the needs of older workers. We are increasingly aware that health, safety and wellbeing is more than just the absence of work-related disease or injury. There is now an emphasis on achieving physical, mental and social contentment amongst staff which may well support workers to continue to work later in life.

## The Equality Agenda and Older workers

Inclusive support needs to be open and accessible to all those who need it. It takes positive action to redress barriers for older workers so they can fully participate in the workplace.

Some groups of older workers may find it more difficult to access support.

Examples include:

* Workers on lower pay/bands working part-time or on temporary contracts.
* Women workers in general, but specifically those currently in the 50 to 56 age bracket (because of the recent changes to the State Pension Age) and those who have been away from the labour market due to having children.
* Workers from overseas who may have entered the pension and national insurance scheme later in life.
* Workers who struggle with Maths and English and ICT skills due to the level of literacy and financial resilience required for pensions awareness and career planning, much of which is online and requires good IT skills.
* Workers who are carers for children (including grandchildren) and other members of the family and adults who have to work longer due to financial burdens.

## Who are the key stake holders in this Charter?

The key stakeholders are the employer, the trades unions, all of the workforce, specifically older workers and their families. The consultation, and involvement of all of these key stake holders is essential to successfully achieve this charter.

## Managing risk

This charter sets out to signify the start of a process within an organisation which:

* recognises the aspirations of both the employer and trades unions for good employment policy and practice across the life course – by protecting the older workers of the future.
* recognises the desire to arrest any practice that results in capability, early exit or disciplinary process which can result in high numbers of older/aging workers losing their jobs.
* endorses early intervention, support and guidance for the older/aging worker so they can make informed decisions in their longer working life.

## Recruitment of older workers

Being over the age of 50 may prove a barrier to securing a job and unemployment levels in this age group are rising. Where organisations and companies have run specific, targeted recruitment using images of older workers and gaining a reputation for employing older workers, they have successfully attracted these workers and benefited from their experience, skills, customer/patient service, resilience and high levels of productivity.

This charter is signed by the following key stakeholders as a commitment to raise the profile, support and recognition of the value of older workers, celebrating their contribution within the workplace.

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| **Name of organisation** |  |
| Employer side |  |
| Name |  |
| Signature |  |
| Role |  |
| Date |  |
| Trades Unions  | On behalf of the recognised trades unions withing the above organisation |
| Name |  |
| Signature |  |
| Role |  |
| Date |  |