



AGE
IRRELEVANCE

Rewriting the script of our age

How HR Can Lead a Culture
of Longevity and Inclusion



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We stand at a critical demographic crossroads

Laura Todd

Responsible Business & Impact Senior Vice President, Cielo

As people live and work longer, we must fundamentally rethink how we approach careers, skills, and organisational design. The traditional “educate, work, retire” model no longer fits the reality of modern life.

The opportunity is enormous. The UK economy could gain over £88 billion simply by matching the employment rate of those aged 50–64 with their younger counterparts. But this is not just about economics, it’s also about unlocking the full potential of human capability across all generations.

As Responsible Business & Impact Senior Vice President at Cielo, I’ve seen first-hand how organisations that embrace age diversity and longevity planning achieve a clear competitive advantage. This is not about extending working lives for the sake of it; it’s about creating multi-generational workplaces that harness the depth of experience, creativity, and innovation that come from truly inclusive workforces.

This Age Irrelevance report is both timely and essential. It presents a compelling case for change and offers practical guidance to leaders at every level. For HR professionals, it’s a call to action to reframe workforce planning as a strategic lever for sustainability. For CEOs and boards, it demonstrates how longevity strategies can strengthen business resilience and growth. And for policymakers, it highlights the powerful intersection between demographics, economic prosperity, and social progress.

The evidence is clear, we must move beyond awareness to structural transformation, redesigning systems that support lifelong employability, continuous learning, and intergenerational collaboration. As artificial intelligence and automation reshape the nature of work, the need to align technological and demographic change has never been more urgent.

The time for incremental action has passed. We have the insights, evidence, and opportunity to act now, to create workplaces that celebrate longevity and leverage it as a force for innovation and growth.

This report provides both the vision and the practical framework to help make that future a reality.



The Problem to be Solved: The impact of a transformational demographic shift

We have the most diverse age demographic in history: a growing older population, longer life expectancy, and five generations in the workforce coupled with falling birth rates. This shift is creating mounting pressure on work, learning, finances, health and housing.

If ...

We support intergenerational knowledge transfer, remove structural and cultural barriers to later-life employment by redesigning work, updating HR practices, promoting lifelong learning, investing in health, rethinking later life finance and shifting societal narratives for all age groups...

Then ...

More people will be able and motivated to remain economically active for longer, leading to increased tax contributions and reduced reliance on welfare and pensions, resulting in higher workforce participation, and a stronger, more age-diverse economy.

Because ...

Healthy, skilled, and supported older workers are an economic asset - not a cost. Unlocking their potential is essential to sustaining growth, funding public services, and building a future-fit society that works across generations.

But ...

HR practices can operate in a silo-based 20th century model of educate, work, retire. Workforce planning often stops at midlife, learning and development skews towards the young and performance systems rarely account for the realities of longer careers. Until HR rewrites the script for the 100-year life and we understand intergenerational working we will continue to under-value the talent of a growing demographic.



Redesigning Work for the 100-Year Life

By Andrew J Scott

In my book, *The Longevity Imperative*, I discuss a roadmap for creating a longevity society that adapts to gains in life expectancy by ensuring that life isn't just longer but also healthy, engaged and productive for longer. Given an ageing population, there are few things more important to us, individually and collectively. Yet right now very few businesses recognise the importance of creating an evergreen economy either through innovative products or through managing the age structure of their workforce.

The UK is facing a demographic transformation. Fertility rates are declining, leading to smaller cohorts of younger workers. Life expectancy is rising and the state pension age increasing which is producing more older workers. But it isn't enough just to say that people must work for longer. To remain economically resilient, socially inclusive, and globally competitive, the UK must urgently adapt to the realities of longer working lives and recognise that the traditional career model of "educate, work, retire" is no longer fit for purpose.

This shift in the age structure and lengthening of working lives requires fundamental changes in career paths and how firms think of the age structure of their workforce. How can firms attract younger workers? How many of their existing workforce are about to leave and take with them key internal knowledge and experience? How can firms create 'age-friendly' jobs that support older workers?

How can they redesign promotion paths to ensure intergenerational opportunities? How can firms unlock innovation through exploiting age diversity? The workforce is changing and so

too will individual career paths and firms' HR practices.

The Opportunity

Older workers are an untapped asset. [Back in 2014](#)ⁱ the ILC estimated that if the employment rate of people aged 50–64 matched that of those aged 35–49, it would add over £88 billion to the UK economy. [In 2023](#)ⁱⁱ the ONS reported that nearly 10% of people aged between 50 and the State Pension age left work involuntarily. 1.65 million people between 50-69 were not in work due to a combination of redundancy, ill-health or early retirement. [This year](#)ⁱⁱⁱ the ILC have noted that economic inactivity among older workers varies sharply, even between similar places, suggesting major growth potential. If all areas matched the best in their peer group, output from 50-64-year-olds could rise by 19% (£109bn). With over one-third of the workforce soon to be over 50, inclusion isn't just a moral imperative - it's a business survival strategy.

Beyond compliance with age discrimination law, HR professionals have a unique opportunity to lead structural change. This means recognising longevity as a fundamental business driver, not an HR side issue.

Call to Action

This challenge paper calls on HR and business leaders to go beyond audits and awareness campaigns.

- Use workforce age data to anticipate skills gaps and prevent knowledge loss
- Promote flexible transition models for older workers - from full-time roles to mentoring, midlife reskilling, or partial retirement
- Rebuild learning and development systems to support lifelong learning and mid-career reinvention
- Design health and wellbeing benefits tailored to older workers' realities
- Shift organisational culture to value multi-generational teams, age diverse leadership, and non-linear careers
- Treat inclusion as structural - embedding age into workforce planning, leadership pipelines, and succession strategies

This is not about tweaking retirement ages or retrofitting existing systems. It is about redesigning work to reflect the realities of longer, squiggly careers and changing economic participation.

In Summary

- The 100-year life is here.
- The economy cannot afford to waste the potential of people over 50.
- HR is the lever for change.
- Having a longevity strategy that understands all age groups is the new business imperative.



As Baroness Sally Greengross said:

“It’s time to stop padding out the third act. It’s time to rewrite the script”



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The best way to predict the future is to get out there and shape it - and that’s exactly what the Age Irrelevance campaign is doing. HR has a pivotal role in creating inclusive, age-diverse workplaces that value experience as much as innovation. As we rethink the future of work, embracing longer, multi-stage careers isn’t just a social imperative - it’s a business one. Age inclusion must be at the heart of our people strategies if we are to build fairer, more resilient organisations fit for the future.”

Peter Cheese

Chief Executive, CIPD, Age Irrelevance Ambassador



**In 2025, the UK faces a tipping point.
As our population benefits from increased
longevity, we are witnessing a necessity for
working lives to extend.**

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) warned “people must work for longer to avoid a UK economic slowdown”.

Yet, how employers react to a person’s age in the workplace is crucial to ensuring that older people can remain economically active.

Among the 38 countries that feature in the [OECD report on well-being and inequality](#)^{iv} Britain has one of the highest rates of “job strain” among older workers, behind only Latvia. In Britain, 15% of workers aged 55 to 64 suffer job strain, which means the stress and demands of their role outweigh the aspects that motivate them or help them cope. This makes these workers less willing to remain in the labour market throughout their 60s. The report also highlights that Britain is among the OECD countries with most to gain from keeping older people in the workforce.

In response to the evidence presented in the 2025 UK Parliamentary report, [The Rights of Older People](#)^v and the OECD report, Age Irrelevance challenges HR leaders to go beyond compliance and audits and look to be part of the UK’s economic solution.

Human Resources professionals are uniquely positioned to change the age narrative, through values and tangible workplace policies and practices.

Our provocation to HR professionals: rise to the creative challenge to design the future of work. Don't wait for the compliance-led response to more regulatory requirements in the future.

Age Irrelevance is issuing a call to action for HR professionals to create and publish longevity strategies that understand their organisation’s demographics. To listen to the motivations and needs of older workers and offer innovative solutions and benefits that help people live healthier and more financially stable lives, especially in later life. This is also about knowledge transfer and effective intergenerational teams and workforce planning. Longevity planning is now a business imperative.



Current employment landscape



How HR can lead longevity planning



Our 11-point plan

Demographic Dividend Report

1 How detailed is your demographic understanding?

Create a demographic dividend report which starts to forecast the risk and opportunity of demographic change and how it may impact not only your organisation, but ALL your stakeholders.

- Do you know where your knowledge drain is?
- Are there any age disparities in employee feedback surveys?

Business Risk Register

2 How aware are the Board, NEDs and executive leadership of demographic data - both UK trends and in the organisation?

Share and explain the demographic dividend report. Include it in the risk register and strategic plan. Establish a NED responsible for maintaining Board awareness and helping drive change as well as recognising risk.

- Do you know who owns the business risk register?
- Do you have an executive lead for demographic impact?

Work and reward

3 How are workplace roles and reward evolving to meet fractional reward expectations?

Really understand how fractional / hybrid / remote work is impacting and look at creating new work patterns both to attract young talent and retain experience. Consider how to structure and reward for longevity – a person's desire to work and social connection can drive reward.

- Are hiring managers aware of age-related bias?
- Do you offer returner pathways and midlife career changes?



Intergenerational Teams

4 How much intelligence do you have on intergenerational connections?

It is vital that organisations design-in how age difference drives knowledge transfer.

- Do you create teams with age differences that reflect customers and stakeholders?
- Do you support teams to explore the value in different ideas and opinions?

Health and Wellbeing

5 How much age difference awareness goes into employee assistance programmes?

A 65 year-old person will have different health support needs from a 20-year-old.

- Do you ensure listening groups are included in EAP design and procurement?
- Do your EAP schemes look at age related wellness approaches – especially eldercare?

Repurpose of work – Understanding Motivations

6 How do you help people transition to next phases – including retirement?

Design in planning conversations with finance advice to support next phase planning – ensuring corporate knowledge is not lost. A key factor is for HR to really understand people's motivations to work and stay in work.

- Is the pathway to support a transition to new work patterns available to older workers?
- Are there flexible intergenerational solutions and appropriate employee assistance programmes?

Longevity listening groups

7 Can you listen and hear feedback on all aspects of age?

Create listening forums to hear how intergenerational teams are working / listening to young people/ midlifers and older workers

- Do you understand what different ages and phases need from work?
- Does your employee feedback mechanism enable age related data to be analysed?



Personal learning

8 Do your training programmes and language reflect life stages and purpose?

This is more than development for promotion - it is also for personal reward and engagement.

- Do you ensure you remove assumptions about age and age requirements ?
- Do you enable older workers to access training that traditionally may have been aimed at younger people?

Awareness understanding and bias

9 How embedded is inclusive leadership?

Cascade down awareness – share knowledge and empower your age listening groups – colleague mediation can help with tension areas.

- Is the Board aware of the age demographic risk and opportunity?
- Is the Board aware of age-related barriers?

Retirement

10 How well can you support transition – is this connected to reasonable adjustments and phased reduction of hours?

Set up conversations and help with gradual changes and support from wellbeing to financial.

- Do you consider knowledge transfer, enabling change from manual work to teacher?
- Do you offer age related secondments and volunteering opportunities?

AI – bias audit

11 Do you have a technical lead responsible for AI bias Audit?

AI is driving efficiency and saving costs, but the age of algorithmic accountability is here. Now is the time to audit, adapt, and ensure that **Age Irrelevance** is designed in - not coded out.

Longevity Planning must include how recruitment algorithms risk building bias by design

Artificial intelligence is changing recruitment, and it will become increasingly prevalent. While AI promises efficiency, objectivity, and fairness, it can just as easily embed age bias by design — not through overt discrimination, but through the data and logic it is trained on.

If we are not vigilant, the AI we trust to make hiring fairer may quietly learn to exclude.

The Invisible Code of Age

AI recruitment tools are trained on data - CVs, applications, employee records, and hiring outcomes. From this information, algorithms learn to predict who will be a “good fit.” But buried in that data are powerful age markers:

- **Career length:** 25 years of experience signals an older worker, even without a date of birth.
- **Qualification type or institution:** O-levels, polytechnics, or long-defunct degree titles instantly timestamp a generation.
- **Job titles and language style:** Words like “seasoned,” “veteran,” or “experienced” can be read as euphemisms for age.
- **Technology references:** Listing early software versions or legacy systems can flag a candidate’s career era.
- **Employment gaps:** Older workers re-entering the workforce after caregiving or early retirement are penalised by models that equate linearity with ambition.

In other words, AI doesn’t need your date of birth to know how old you are. The algorithm infers it - and then learns from patterns of historical exclusion.



Types of Age Bias in AI Recruitment

1	2	3	4	5
Historical Bias	Proxy Bias	Design Bias	Usage Bias	Omission Bias
If past hiring decisions favoured younger candidates, AI will “learn” that younger applicants are better fits. The bias is inherited directly from the data.	The system doesn’t use age explicitly, but other variables (career length, education, job title) act as proxies for age. The outcome is the same - older candidates are filtered out.	Bias can enter through the way the model is built - for instance, weighting “recency of experience” or “digital fluency” as positive predictors, without recognising their age correlations.	Even unbiased algorithms can be used in biased ways. Recruiters may “tune” systems to prefer “culture fit,” “energy,” or “digital native” attributes - all code words for youth.	When training data under-represents mid- or late-career applicants, the algorithm simply doesn’t know how to recognise or value them.

Why this matters

The age bias in AI isn’t just an HR issue - it’s an economic and ethical risk.

- The UK faces a [workforce participation crisis](#)^{xv}: 26.1% of people aged 50-64 are currently economically inactive.
- The [ILC](#)^{xvi} estimates that closing the geographic older worker participation gap could add £109 billion to the UK economy.
- Yet if AI systematically screens out experienced applicants, organisations are digitally hard-coding a demographic shortage.

The irony is that we are building “smart” systems that make our workforce less resilient, less diverse, and less future-ready.

Every organisation using AI in recruitment - whether through LinkedIn filters, ATS screening, or bespoke models - should complete a structured **bias audit** at least annually. Here's how ...

1 Data Mapping

List all data fields used in the recruitment algorithm - direct (e.g. age, D.O.B.) and indirect (e.g. experience years, education dates).

Ask: if any field acts as an age proxy?

2 Pattern Analysis

Run test applications across age profiles (e.g. simulated 25, 45, and 60-year-old applicants). Measure shortlisting rates, score distributions, and keyword triggers.

Ask: Are older profiles systematically downgraded?

3 Language and Design Review

Audit job descriptions and screening criteria. Remove coded language ("energetic," "young team," "graduate role") and assess whether "recency" is unfairly weighted.

Ask: Does the language signal exclusion?

4 Algorithmic Explainability

Interrogate your vendor.

- What features drive the model's recommendations?
- How are fairness thresholds defined?
- Has the tool been tested across age cohorts?

Ask: Can they explain, not just defend, their AI?

5 Oversight and Governance

Assign Board-level accountability - ideally to a Diversity & Inclusion Champion or Ethics Committee.

Include AI bias within your ESG or People Risk reporting.

Ask: Who owns algorithmic fairness in our business?

True innovation isn't about removing humans from hiring - it's about teaching machines to reflect human values.

We can - and must - design AI that recognises:

- Experience as value, not cost.
- Non-linear careers as a strength.
- Continuous learning as a lifelong investment, not an age-specific one.

That means training models on balanced data, embedding age-inclusive metrics (e.g. adaptability, mentorship potential), and ensuring that human judgment remains the final gatekeeper.

An algorithm is only as fair as its teachers

We created AI to reduce bias, not replicate it. But fairness doesn't happen by accident - it must be engineered.



The question for every leader is simple:

Is our recruitment technology building the workforce of the future - or repeating the mistakes of the past, faster?

The age of algorithmic accountability is here.

Now is the time to audit, adapt, and ensure that Age Irrelevance is designed in - not coded out.



Age discrimination is unique because it touches everyone's life at some point. At BT, I had the privilege of working with many colleagues who chose to work into their 60s and beyond. Our recruitment campaigns welcomed older workers and many colleagues, including many that joined us as apprentices, built careers spanning decades and all of life's stages. This was only possible because BT recognised that business success came from a combination of the skills, experience, commitment, innovation and commercial sense as well as a wealth of different perspectives and personal interactions that our mixed age teams brought to every area and level of our business."

Caroline Waters OBE

Former Director of People and Policy, BT Group
Age Irrelevance Ambassador

In the new era of longevity, it's time to evolve work patterns again.

The demographics of the UK are changing significantly. According to the [ONS life expectancy calculator](#) a quarter of today's 18-year-olds are likely to [live to 95-98](#) ^{xvii} years old. By 2047, a projected 17.3% of new-born boys and 24.7% of girls will live to at least [100 years old](#) ^{xviii}

The past mantra of “educate, work, retire” is gone. The expectation of a job for life, with a career steadily climbing up the corporate ladder has gone. The traditional concept of working for 8 hours, 5 days a week is now, and will remain, much more fluid. The expectation of a final salary pension scheme has gone. The traditional binary decision of work or retirement at state pension age and onwards is blurring to become a transition between full- time work and portfolio income.

It's now time for the next evolution. Not tweaking an outdated past system to fit a new future but challenging HR to bring in new approaches.

Baroness Sally Greengross painted a picture of how we need to reimagine this new era of longevity. She said ...

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Imagine you are in a play, and it's two weeks before opening curtain. The producer suddenly announces that the cast now have an extra 20 minutes they must be on stage. Would you pad out the third act ... or **do you re-write the script and have an exciting new approach?**”

We can see how successive governments are padding out the final act. Extending working lives and postponing the age at which workers can draw their state pension as they explore how to finance the extra 20 years that we expect people to live. And yet this approach is too often frustrated by barriers in the workplace that can make it challenging for older workers to remain in their current role or indeed find a new role.

We have always evolved work patterns...

In 1926, Henry Ford implemented a 40-hour work week for his employees at Ford Motor Company, transitioning from a 48-hour week, to improve worker well-being and boost productivity and consumerism. The shorter working week allowed employees more time for leisure and personal activities, which in turn, Ford believed, would lead them to spend more money, stimulating the economy. Additionally, Ford found that the reduced work hours didn't negatively impact overall production output, and the company could maintain or even improve efficiency. The post World War II economic boom solidified the "educate, work, retire" model, with increased access to education and opportunities for a long career.

The latter part of the 20th century saw debates about retirement age and the financial sustainability of retirement systems. The default retirement age was abolished in the UK in 2011, reflecting a shift towards individual choice when to retire.

But in 2025 there is a new dimension - we need to join the dots between work, health, housing, learning and finance to fully capitalise on the demographic dividend - and employers and their HR leaders need to be in the vanguard.

There is also a changing value set in younger generations preparing for their working lives. 18-year-olds now have a very different view of what a 50-year career might look like with a much more fluid approach to how work will be a fractional part of their reward structure.

HR should be engaging their younger cohort of employees in the question – do you expect to work for 50 years? And if so, what does that pattern look like?

A UK wide demographic with nation specific challenges



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Wales has long led the way with the creation of the Older People's Commissioner - a vital role that champions the rights and potential of older citizens. But with lower average pension incomes, a significant rural population, and persistent barriers to accessing healthcare, there is an urgent need for government policy to go further. We must fully recognise the demographic dividend of longer lives and respond with bold, age-inclusive strategies across employment, health, and community infrastructure. By doing so, Wales can transform the narrative around ageing - from cost to contribution - and build a society where older people are empowered to thrive, not just survive.”

Julian John

CEO Delsion Age Irrelevance Ambassador - Wales



Scotland has such hugely different communities. We are a significantly more rural society, many living in remote and island communities with challenges of travelling to distant services or simply doing the shopping. We have some of the most underserved communities in the UK - while others enjoy great affluence. Life chances and life expectancy are equally varied. The Fairer Scotland Older People's Framework sets out a vision for dignity, respect and inclusion in later life. It recognises that Scotland's ageing population is a call to action - it's not a crisis. We need older people to flourish and - where they choose - to contribute even more than they currently do. Age-inclusive policies must respond to local needs and build on our strengths - from our inner cities to our remotest island communities. Across Scotland, the demographic dividend is ours to realise - if we choose to invest in it.”

Amanda Britain

Age Irrelevance Ambassador - Scotland



Northern Ireland is heading for the sharpest rise in the UK's old-age dependency ratio - meaning fewer working-age people supporting a rapidly growing older population. This isn't just a demographic challenge; it's a policy wake-up call. Without urgent investment in age-inclusive employment, health services, and community infrastructure, we risk placing unsustainable pressure on families, carers, and public finances. Now is the time to act - we have to think of longer lives as an opportunity, not a crisis - but that opportunity will rapidly be lost if we don't act.”

Rick Hill MBE

Age Irrelevance Ambassador - Northern Ireland

The Economic Case for Age Inclusion



Ageism is not simply unjust - it's economically reckless. The [UK loses £9 billion annually in GDP](#) ^{xxix} from the underemployment of older workers. It has been estimated that if the employment rate of people aged 50 to 64 years matched that of those aged 35 to 49 years, it would add more than 5% to the UK's gross domestic product - that is [over £88 billion](#). ^{xx}

Multi-generational teams can provide a range of experience and perception, helping companies design and promote themselves in a way that will appeal positively to consumers and potential investors. With [58% of the UK public believing advertising can significantly shape society's perceptions of older people](#) ^{xxi} there's also a clear opportunity for advertisers to lead a cultural change in how ageing is portrayed.

With [11% of boys and 18% of girls born in 2023 projected to live to 100 years+](#) ^{xxii}, it's also time for organisations to consider their changing consumer market - recent research has highlighted that many people feel the industry has been slow to adapt, with advertisers still lagging behind the public's shifting attitudes towards ageing. A recent [Advertising Standards Association report](#) ^{xxiii} found that 44% of UK adults believe that older people are either under-represented or not represented at all in advertisements, particularly in categories like fashion, beauty, technology and household goods. People of all ages said they want to see more authentic and realistic portrayals of older people.



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The UK is living longer - but age inclusive culture hasn't caught up. Our workforce is ageing, state pension ages are rising, and yet many organisations still operate on a 20th-century model: educate, work, retire. This outdated framework is fuelling economic risk, talent loss, and entrenched ageism. The cost of underusing older workers is staggering - billions in lost GDP, skills gaps, and rising inactivity among over-50s. But this isn't just a policy failure. It's a missed business opportunity. HR leadership must disrupt the current employment model and drive age inclusion.”

Charlotte Sweeney OBE

Founder Charlotte Sweeney Associates, Age Irrelevance Ambassador

Ageism Audit versus Longevity Planning



In February 2025, the UK Government's Women and Equalities Committee stated: "Ageism is widespread and culturally embedded in the UK." ^{xxiv} Despite legal protections under the Equality Act, age remains the silent outlier in workplace inclusion. While race, gender, and disability are now included in structured reporting and governance as a matter of course, age is often absent from dashboards, DEI strategies, and leadership conversations.

Between 2019 and 2024, Age Discrimination (ageism) claims at UK Employment Tribunals have resulted in relatively few wins each year - ^{xxv} typically around 11 successful claims annually - with 12 claimant victories in the most recent reporting year (2023/24).

Overt ageism is rare, but systemic and implicit bias persist. The risk can lie in unspoken, and therefore unchallenged, views: hiring managers who view over-50s as 'less adaptable' or 'overqualified'; experienced teams who are seen as 'stale' and ripe for renewal; career development that is routinely targeted at younger employees; the word "retirement" being used as a default endpoint, not a transition.



Age inclusion is one of the great equality challenges of our time - too often overlooked yet deeply embedded in the way we think about work, retirement, and human potential. As Equality Minister, I saw first-hand how structural discrimination can limit lives and weaken society. My dear friend Sally Greengross dedicated her life to changing that narrative, and I see that same spirit in the Age Irrelevance campaign. It is time to stop viewing older people as a cost and start recognising them as the asset they truly are. We must build a future of work that values every generation, not just in principle, but in practice."

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Hodge of Barking DBE PC
Age Irrelevance Ambassador

What Might a “Reasonable Steps” Duty Look Like?



The Women and Equalities Committee has encouraged the consideration of amending the Equality Act to bring in a ‘reasonable steps’ duty on employers in relation to age discrimination.

Legal compliance is, of course, mandatory but HR must go beyond this and lead with intention, insight, and innovation.

The UK Government has not yet issued a formal, standardised definition of “reasonable steps” specifically in the context of age audits. However, we can infer what those might look like based on parallels in law, policy, and practice - particularly from the Equality Act 2010, existing guidance for other protected characteristics, and broader DEI audit expectations.

Typically, the ‘go to’ step is **Data Collection and Monitoring**. Audit age distribution across departments, roles, grades, recruitment, promotion, training, and exits. Analyse any disparities e.g. disproportionately low representation of over-50s in development opportunities. Track age-related complaints or grievances.

The next step would be implementation of a process that includes **Policy Reviews** to ensure HR policies and practices (recruitment, retirement, redundancy) are not age-biased. Remove or justify age caps in training access or progression criteria. Align performance management frameworks with inclusive language e.g. no “energy” or “digital native” biases.

An increased focus would also be likely to see a call for more **Training and Awareness**. Provide training to managers and recruiters on unconscious bias, including age stereotypes. Include age inclusion explicitly in broader EDI training and policies. Ensure inclusive recruitment and promotion practices.

Use age-neutral language in job descriptions. Implement diverse shortlisting practices to ensure candidates of different ages are considered. Stop asking for date of birth or graduation year unless legally necessary.

Employee Voice. Use **surveys and focus groups** to understand age-related workplace experiences. Include age-diverse voices in decision-making and employee resource groups.

Transparent **Progression and Development**. Monitor access to learning and career progression across age groups. Challenge assumptions that older workers don’t want to train, lead, or adapt.

Support for Later-Life Working. Offer flexible work, midlife MOTs, and retirement planning support. Design jobs and career pathways that accommodate longer working lives and changing needs.

At Age Irrelevance we are concerned that age audits alone risk becoming a data gathering exercise which fail to impact and change decision making.

We believe that if HR takes the lead with a clear longevity plan, it will be able to show the business benefit of the demographic dividend, be proactive and be able to evidence its approach for compliance with any future age legislation.

That is why we have shared this approach on HOW to design and deliver a longevity plan ...

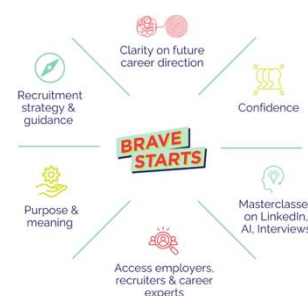


Success stories

Age Irrelevance Changemakers are making a difference



Brave Starts CIC is a non-profit organisation providing support for employees to plan and consider their future career options as they age. Bravestarts provides peer-to-peer based group coaching alongside practical tools and psychological insight aimed at giving people the skills they need to self-advocate and craft longer term and more sustainable futures for themselves. They also lean on employers and workforce influencers to adapt to the needs of an ageing workforce. Through this dual approach, empowering individuals and reshaping organisational practice, Brave Starts is playing a pivotal role in transforming the future of age-inclusive work.



Challenge

Helping people figure out what to do next – in a society not built for the longer lives we are now leading.

Getting organisations to consider, plan and prepare more effectively for the needs of a population who want (and need) to stay working for longer.

Intervention

Delivering small group-based coaching workshops focused on preparing participants for the future of work and helping them to identify purpose, skills, and next career steps.

Advocating employer-side change through workshops, focus groups, and guidance on flexible working, phased retirement, and secondments.

Outcomes

Participants report increased clarity, confidence, and practical direction, helping them re-enter the job market or transition roles.

Employers show stronger engagement - 80% are willing to invest over £50 per employee in 50+ support.

Brave Starts' influence informs broader age-inclusion strategies and policy conversations in the UK.



By combining data-led insight, practical guidance, and dynamic collaboration, ProAge is reshaping employment practices to better include older workers. Its efforts not only elevate older peoples' workforce participation but also deliver organisational benefits through improved retention, diversity, and business agility.

Challenge

3.5 million people aged 50 to 64 are economically inactive in this country. Closing the employment gap between old and young would boost the UK economy by £9 billion pounds.

Intervention

Supports employers to assess age inclusion through tailored audits, identifying gaps and designing practical interventions including employee resource groups to support multigenerational working.

Delivers training to understand the impact of ageism in the workplace, challenge stereotypes, and build more inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

Partnered with Lancaster University to explore how flexible working arrangements can attract and retain older workers.

Conducted a joint survey with Brave Starts on how employers are preparing for an ageing workforce, and ran workshops to help employers design practical interventions to attract and retain older workers.

Outcomes

Partnering with leading employers: ProAge is working with nine national and multinational employers to advance age inclusion, valuing the contribution of older workers, adapting workplace practices, and building stronger multigenerational teams.

Raising awareness: Contributed to the World Bank Conference on Social Protection and Supporting Systems for an Ageing World, exploring how lifelong learning, job design, and employer action can enable longer working lives.

Hosted an event at the Royal Society for Arts on The Cost of Workplace Ageism.

Driving engagement: Over 800 people attended ProAge's training and events in 2024. LinkedIn campaigns generated more than 26,000 impressions in the past 12 months, helping shift perceptions of older workers and promote age-inclusive practices across a wider audience.



Next-Up reshapes later-stage working life - challenging outdated assumptions about ageing and helping employers unlock the full value of a multigenerational workforce. Through practical support and structured guidance, helping people aged 50+ gain clarity, confidence, and direction, while enabling organisations to make smarter decisions around retention, reskilling, and succession.

Challenge

Many people in their 50s and 60s - especially those in long-term or demanding roles - feel stuck or quietly disengaged at work, despite wanting to keep progressing. It's often not a lack of ambition, but a loss of momentum. Without space to reflect or tools to plan, they stay in roles that no longer fit. Employers need to offer more than reduced-working pattern options or later-life financial planning tools - they need to help the 50+ workforce reset and thrive.

Intervention

Next-Up offers a portfolio of mid-late-stage career enablement services, including:

- Workshops and peer forums for those at a crossroads.
- 1:1 advisory and coaching pathways to support individuals exploring next steps.
- Personal planning tools and digital content to map these realistically.
- Coaching for those exploring consultancy, mentoring, portfolio work, volunteering, or stepping back.
- ThriveNext – a digital platform that helps employees explore what's next with confidence, and gives employers insight into engagement, risk, and planning needs.

Outcomes

Stronger retention: Over 70% of participants report renewed enthusiasm and clearer direction after participating in their programmes.

Better succession planning: Organisations uncover internal talent, reduce knowledge loss, and manage transitions earlier.

Cost efficiencies: Career reinvention reduces attrition, boosts engagement and helps close workforce purpose gaps - while improving workforce planning scores and retention KPIs.

Culture change: Later-career support shows how organisations value experience, positioning longevity strategy as central to social value, ESG metrics, sustainability goals and long-term workforce health.



From Compliance to Cultural Shift – A New Age of Work

The demographic evidence is clear - the UK stands at a demographic crossroads. A 100-year life is no longer a distant scenario but a present-day planning necessity. Yet, while our life expectancy stretches, our working culture and HR frameworks remain locked in 20th-century paradigms. The “educate, work, retire” model is obsolete - unable to accommodate the social, economic, and personal realities of modern ageing.

Longevity planning must be at the forefront of HR practices. Retaining and empowering older workers is not just a matter of fairness - it's an economic imperative. Failing to fully utilise the skills, experience, and contribution of people over 50 costs the UK billions in lost productivity, increased welfare dependency and missed opportunities for intergenerational innovation.

This paper clearly demonstrates that legal compliance alone will be insufficient to meet the challenge. “Reasonable steps” must evolve into structural change. HR professionals have a unique opportunity - and responsibility - to lead this transformation. By embedding longevity strategies that are as rigorous, intentional, and integrated as any DEI or talent initiative, HR can ensure organisations are equipped to thrive in an age-diverse future.

We are calling for a bold shift: from performative inclusion to robust, systemic longevity planning. From seeing older workers as a cost to valuing them as a competitive advantage. From isolated age audits to interlinked, data-driven planning across health, skills, workforce, and retirement transitions.

The next evolution in work is not just about staying in employment longer - it's about working differently, planning smarter, and leading with insight. HR is the architect of that future.

Now is the time to rewrite the script. Not to pad out the final act - but to craft a new one altogether. Longevity planning is now a business imperative.



AGE IRRELEVANCE

Age Irrelevance is a strategic consultancy and advocacy campaign redefining how society, businesses, and governments respond to the realities of longer lives and changing demographics. We're a not for profit, social enterprise that inspires organisations to unlock the economic and social value of longevity through practical, evidence-based solutions. To achieve this, we offer Longevity Strategy Consulting. Working with businesses to design longevity strategies, support multi-stage careers, and prepare for 100-year life dynamics across employment, leadership, and consumer engagement. We partner on thought leadership and research, producing white papers, frameworks, and briefings that shape boardroom agendas and inform national strategy.



Kay Allen
Campaign Director



Fiona Lennox
Strategy Director

Want to Lead the Change?

Collaborate with Age Irrelevance and share your learnings.
Contact us and find out about becoming a Changemaker – you can be the spark of change.

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Ritika Wadhwa
Caroline Waters
Emma Webster

Changemakers and Allies

5 Percent Club
55 redefined
Bean Research
Brandpie
Brave Starts
Greengross Family
Hassell Inclusion
Inspired villages
Intergenerational England
Marrons
Moving Ahead
Next-Up
Oaktree Court
Phoenix Insights
ProAge
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Socialudo
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