



An Excellence Gateway case study

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York College: AgeNeutral

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Outline the aim

The main aim of the **AgeNeutral** project is to challenge the stereotypical views employers and employees have of older and younger workers by co-developing an age management strategy modular programme.

Modular Age Equality and Succession Planning Training Programme

Module one - 'An Introduction to Age Management Strategies'; age demographics and current legislation in UK, the business benefits for age equality and age profiling.

Proposed outline content for further modules:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Staff Development
- Succession Planning.

The challenge

- To support the embedding of age management strategies within organisations to develop 'age neutral' culture.
- To challenge the stereotypical views managers and employees have of older and younger workers.

Partnership organisations

York College (Lead Partner) – Project managed Age Neutral workbook which forms Module one. Researching, writing and developed of materials. Also Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

University of York – Consultation of content of Age Neutral workbook materials.

Severn Unival - Consultation of content of Age Neutral workbook materials, and piloting of workbook.

Petherbridge Bassra - Consultation of content of Age Neutral workbook materials, and piloting of workbook.

Realising Change - Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

Worklink - Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

Tribal Education Group - Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

Yorkshire Accord Coaching & Mentoring Scheme – Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

Blueberry Academy - Piloting of Age Neutral workbook materials.

The outputs

Resources and materials

Formalisation of an Age Management Training Programme for Senior Managers and HR Specialists - focusing on raising awareness of age diversity and management.

The programme intends to help managers to cultivate their own organisation strategies on Age Management, embed their learning into their role and cascade the learning to managers at all levels, team leaders and supervisors.

Clear advice and guidance is given on the essentials of developing awareness and understanding of effective age management strategies within their places of work.

Material Co-development

An employer material co-development group established:

- York College
- Severn Unival
- University of York

Piloting materials

An employer pilot group was established:

- York College
- Severn Unival
- Petherbridge Bassra
- Realising Change
- Worklink.
- Tribal Education Group
- Yorkshire Accord Coaching and Mentoring Scheme
- Blueberry Academy

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Evidence from piloting employers

And individuals / employees were gathered through formal evaluation and included anecdotal feedback.

Employers

The framework for employers explored where employers were starting from and the short term impact, with a further impact assessment at the end of the project to identify lessons learnt, changes to business practices.

Individuals / Employees

A detailed questionnaire for individuals was developed to sample short term impact and then again on completion to see what effect their participation in the project has had on their working practices with regard to age equality.

Piloting – York College

York College are a further and higher education provider with over 800 members of staff and 13,000 students.

One manager, two supervisors and three employees took part in the piloting session.

Piloting - Severn Unival Ltd

Severn Unival Ltd part of Severn Glocon Group plc an established International engineering company with a UK Head Office in Huddersfield with around 100 employees. Typical of engineering the culture is male orientated and the core business is the manufacture, service and repair and retrofit of valves. 45% of their employees are aged over 45 and 3% are over 65. On the shop floor 25% of employees are under 25 and 24% of employees are over 55.

Severn Unival has a number of issues relating to age management:

- Retaining and developing younger workers
- Adapting/flexibility for older workers
- Phased retirement.

Three managers, five supervisors and fifteen employees took part in the piloting session.

Piloting – Petherbridge Bassra

Petherbridge Bassra Solicitors, Bradford. The firm offers important and essential legal services to all. It has between around 60 employees.

They were interested in the Age Management strategies from two angles. As an employer committed to a strong ethos of valuing staff and having a happy and productive team, and also due to the nature of their work which includes Criminal Law. They work with a variety of people from different backgrounds, and need staffs that are able to handle a variety of challenging issues.

Six managers took part in the piloting session.

Piloting – Worklink

Worklink is part of Kirklees County Council - an organisation who has over 1000 + employees. Its remit is to provide statutory services to Kirklees residents in relation to disability, training, and placements.

Through information, advice and guidance Worklink supports members of the general public to gain employment. This includes those aged 50+ and individuals with disabilities and health conditions

The organisation operates an Equal Opportunity Policy and is committed to challenging discrimination in the workplace.

Seven managers/supervisors took part in the piloting session.

Piloting – Tribal Education Group

Tribal works to support high quality education services and are a leading provider of technology products and services to the education, training and learning markets. Tribal Education Group are a national specialist publishing hour of education materials.

They work across both the public and private sector in the UK, providing major technology and service solutions to Universities, Colleges, Healthcare Providers, Local and Central Government and Employers

One manager, Publishing Manager, did a detailed review and feedback for the programme.

Piloting – Realise Change

Realise Change – RCE Associates Limited specialise in realising organisational, operational and personal change. They have extensive business knowledge from experience working in a wide range of sectors and industries.

Realise change worked with two of their key clients to review the programme.

Three managers, Hambleton District Council – Head of HR and North Yorkshire Moors National Park – Head of HR plus the CEO of Realise Change, took part in the piloting session.

Yorkshire Accord Coaching & Mentoring Scheme

The Yorkshire Accord Coaching and Mentoring Scheme was established in 2000 and is a successful partnership between public sector organisations based in and around the York & North Yorkshire are. The partnership provides award winning and cost effective mentoring, coaching and networking opportunities for member organisations.

One manager, Yorkshire Accord Coordinator, took part in the piloting session.

Piloting – Blueberry Academy

The Blueberry Academy brings together a range of experience in supporting people with learning difficulties and disabilities to provide both personal development for individuals and organisational development.

One manager, the organisations Director, took part in the piloting session.

The impacts and outcomes

It is hoped that the outcomes from piloting will inform future development of the three further modules:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Staff Development
- Succession Planning

We hope to influence changes in attitudes and assumptions around age equality in the workforce by both employers and employees and reduce barriers in terms of organisation attitudes. Motivating and enthusing employers as to the added value age diversity can give their business. To challenge constructively and appropriately what may be commonly held assumptions/stereotypes about the differences between individuals of certain ages.

Severn Unival Ltd

The programme has raised the profile of age management issues in the business. In particular carrying out an age audit has highlighted that the organisation has a dip in the 35 to 45 age range and a realisation that they lose staff to their competitors.

This knowledge has helped to inform their employee engagement strategy and they are also looking at their reward package.

Severn Unival Ltd have a significant number of male employees who want to continue working beyond 65, and so they have had to be pro-active in putting in processes whereby everyone has a staff development review and is asked for their future career focus so that they do not discriminate against either young or older workers. The company allow all who wish to work beyond 65 and they have introduced this unilaterally so they do not discriminate between those who were issued with notice for their statutory retirement age and granted extensions to their contract and those who since April 2012 have reached 65 treating all their older employees equally. This was a management decision and one linked to our increased awareness of age issues as a result of this project.

With support the company is planning to focus on developing the following areas to help promote a cultural shift throughout the

Petherbridge Bassra

Having completed the training Petherbridge Bassra now feel they have been able to consider the stereotypes that can be formed about people based on their age.

This has led to an increased recognition of how this can impact on their personal dealings with other employees and how they can learn from those who may have more experience.

Worklink

Worklink felt that as a result of managers completing the programme and cascading to team leaders issues that would have ordinarily been 'hidden' can be shared and discussed.

"I am more confident about discussing the issue and would be happy to challenge discrimination. By taking part in the group sessions and sharing good practice I feel more equipped to champion the cause."

The support for this group is shared with team members and other stakeholders. Partnership working has been developed further to enhance the work.

Severn Unival Ltd

In the short term Severn Unival Ltd are moving to new premises and which will include training facilities. They plan to commence management development training which will include equality issues. They hope to put emphasis on coaching and mentoring of young staff by experienced workers.

They will continue to conduct age audit for information purposes but we have no plans to take positive action to address coverage of age ranges etc because they do not think it is the priority for their business.

Despite the changes in perception amongst younger workers they are still committed to employee engagement which hopefully will mean a greater retention of their apprentices during the course of their working life. In the wider context they acknowledge that with the abolition of statutory retirement that could be in excess of 50+ years.

There are also a number of significant themes arising from piloting of materials which will need addressing further over a longer period of time.

- Retention of older workers who are good performers and contribute to our business and in areas of skills shortage.
- Talent management and people resourcing in our sector and area of expertise i.e. removing barriers to older workers who have been made redundant who are experienced and have a good skill set.
- Raised awareness amongst supervisors and managers regarding not discriminating against older workers especially during the staff development review process and discussing future career aspirations.

Petherbridge Bassra

Petherbridge Bassra felt completing the programme encouraged the organisation to consider its policies and working practices not only to comply with the Law but also to provide a positive work place for all employees which in turn will produce a better workforce.

They now plan to review their policies and practices and consider using experience staff (irrespective of age) for more in-house training.

Worklink

In General terms Worklink planned to place this issue higher up on the agenda and to look at training groups in delivery of future programmes.

There was a consensus that when undertaking recruitment staff will feel more empowered to tackle any sensitive issues that would need to be dealt with in terms of protected characteristics.

There was a good variety of organisations from different sectors represented. There was a diverse group of individual both employers and employees who participated in the piloting. Diverse in terms of gender and age.

In total piloting took place with:

- 6 Senior Managers
- 16 Middle Managers
- 10 Supervisors
- 18 Employees – all levels

From across the following organisations:

Organisation	Role	Type	Sector	Size
York College	Lead Partner, Co-Developer and Piloting Organisation	Public	Education – FE and HE	Corporate
University of York	Co-Developer and Piloting Organisation	Public	Education – HE	Corporate
Severn Unival	Co-Developer and Piloting Organisation	Private	Engineering	Corporate
Worklink	Piloting Organisation	Public	Local Authority	Corporate
Petherbridge Bassra	Piloting Organisation	Private	Solicitors	SME
Tribal Education Group	Piloting Organisation	Private	Education	SME
Blueberry Academy	Piloting Organisation	Social Enterprise	Supporting disabled people	Micro
Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme	Piloting Organisation	Private with Public Sector Members	Professional Coaching and Mentoring	Micro
Realising Change	Piloting Organisation	Private	HR Consultant	Micro

Working relationship with LSIS

LSIS support for the Age Neutral project has helped York College and the Age Neutral project partners to focus in a more detailed and innovative way with employers and their employees in order to raise awareness of age management practices and encourage the development and embedding of such practices.

The project allowed York College and the project partners to work closely with a variety of organisations in order to gain their feedback on the materials and gauge what impact these would have within different organisations in different sectors. This feedback enabled the project to review and develop the resources.

The LSIS events have allowed York College to network with other projects and organisations.

Good value for money

The Age Neutral project gave the partners opportunity to prototype materials which was very useful in terms of developing, testing, and reflecting. Partners were able to share resources and past experiences and work together to co-develop new resources.

The outcome of piloting will inform future development of the three further modules.

The resources have the potential to be shared with further employers. This could initially be paper or web based.

Ultimately an online programme could be developed enabling businesses of all sizes, in all sectors and in all locations to participate.

Raising employer's awareness of age diversity and the business benefits of having a diverse workforce will ensure that the select new employees from a wide a potential pool as possible and that all workers, regardless of age, are nurtured, respected and retained.

Senior managers involvement

Commitment was sought from development partners at senior management level prior to application.

Meetings with piloting partner organisations in the main were established through either the Equality and Diversity or Human Resources personnel and initial introductions to the projects made with them. In some instances these employees had the authority to commit to the project in others the sought commitment via their senior managers prior to commencement.

Stakeholder involvement

Piloting organisations were carefully selected to ensure that they represented appropriate stakeholder representatives from across a range of sectors that would be able to test the programme resources and constructively feedback to the project, cascade internally and promote externally.

Learner involvement

A small group of managers, mainly HR or Equality and Diversity co-developed the resources and feedback through piloting was sought from Managers at all levels within their organisation.

Many managers then cascaded parts of the programme to colleagues and / or team members.

Evaluation and feedback was sought from participants at all levels within the piloting organisations. In total 50 participants; 6 Senior Managers 16 Middle Managers, 10 Supervisors, 18 Employees – all levels, took part in the programme with an additional 4 managers / trainers involved in the initial co-development and ongoing update of the programme.

Raising awareness

Following piloting ‘case studies’ about the journeys of those who piloted the materials and benefits of provision are to be developed.

The programme workbook will be available for use by all York College Work Based Learning employers and other organisations and could be made available via the York College website.

Project case studies and the programme workbook could be made more widely available via Age Neutral development partner websites.

The programme could also be promoted via; the CIPD North Yorkshire Forum to CIPD members in the region, the West Yorkshire informal solicitors network and offered to all Yorkshire Accord member organisations to cascade within their organisations.

Continuity of project, after LSIS funding

It is unlikely that further Age Neutral materials will be developed without additional funding.

The project has developing the ‘Age Neutral’ materials as a brand achieved by creating a designed front cover for the workbook. This will help in the future if we create a suite of materials that are recognisable as well as more attractive to the audience.

Did you experience any difficulties in implementing the project and how did you overcome these?

Due to the nature of the training it was difficult to engage with employers because of their priorities and other commitments they may have had.

Some of the feedback highlights this feeling ...

“It can be very difficult to find the time in a working day to consider these things when there are the normal day to day tasks to complete.

However, once I started the workbook I found it easy to move through the programme and it allowed an opportunity to consider the issues against your own workforce without feeling under pressure.”

Workbooks were made available in both electronic and hardcopy formats to allow participants to complete them at a time and place to suit them. Simple evaluation and impact assessment forms were developed to allow for ease/speed of feedback.

The lessons learned

It would have been useful to offer a face to face handover of the materials and run through what was expected of participants in detail.

Getting the organisations to pilot and to priorities time, they were given a plenty of lead time to pilot but perhaps this worked to our disadvantage as given too much time to organize delivery of the training

Sustainability – lasting legacy

The programme workbook will be available for use by all York College Work Based Learning employers and other organisations and could be made available via the York College website.

The programme could be promoted via the CIPD North Yorkshire Forum, the West Yorkshire informal solicitor's network and offered to all Yorkshire Accord member organisations to cascade within their organisations.

Demonstrating impact – evidence of short and long term impact

There has clearly been a positive influence on the organisations who piloted in terms of raising awareness of the benefits of Age Diversity and Age Management strategies. With organisations actually using the knowledge gained to review policies and practices of organisations.

“As the staff Partner I will be able to use the programme for future monitoring of staff, give consideration to any requests for flexible working, review recruitment and training for the future.”

“We will certainly review our policies and practices and consider using experienced staff (irrespective of age) for more in-house training.”

“Highlighted the need to consider the way in which the organisation promotes age management.”

It would be interesting to go back and see if these actions have taken place and if so what the impacts have been.

Interestingly consideration of age management has heightened awareness for individuals on a more personal level.

“It has made me consider my own workforce, think about future training, working patterns for the future etc”

Additional comments

It is useful at this point to mention that the materials were well received, feedback included:

“I was more than happy with the materials, they were concise but comprehensive. They provided all the information needed but didn’t over complicate the issues”.

“On a practical level I would be more comfortable talking about sensitive issues in appraisals.”

“Good example exercise, these would be very beneficial as training tools for management / HR”.

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