

Older Workers

Workforce requirements

Workplace design

Organisational design

Office/Manual

Understanding Workplace Design for Older Workers

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The Investigation

- Suitability of current workplace design for older workers in two industrial sectors (office & manual)
- The perspective of older workers & management views on employing an older workforce
- The match between older workers' capacities, abilities & expectations, and organisational requirements & strategies

Objectives

- Identify strengths & weaknesses in the suitability of current workplace design for older workers
- Identify organisational issues to be addressed
- Suggest areas for further research & technical developments that might overcome current barriers

Plan

- *Literature review*
Update of latest research & review of its relevance to the study
- *Workplace study*
Studies will take place at four organisations to explore the following aspects of workplace design:
 - i. task requirements, e.g. cognitive, physical
 - ii. psychosocial factors, e.g. social support
 - iii. individual capacity, e.g. strength
 - iv. environment, e.g. access
 - v. work organisation, e.g. training
 - vi. workplace culture, e.g. career opportunities
- *Focus groups* with workers to provide insights into perceptions at different career stages:
 - i. 40-49 years
 - ii. 50-59 years
 - iii. 60 years +
 - iv. Retired workers
- Interviews with Occupational Health & Human Resource personnel

Potential Benefits

For older workers

- Raised awareness & potential for pro-active removal of age barriers at the workplace
- Better designed workplaces & work systems
- Greater recognition of the value of older workers

For Organisations

- A better understanding of the needs of older workers & what they require at the workplace to ensure equal rights at work & opportunity for all
- Information on jobs & tasks to be redesigned, including the use of assistive technology
- Guidance for attracting/retaining older workers
- Increased knowledge of strategies, policies, support to meet their workforce requirements
- Appreciation of the advantages of an age diverse workforce

For society

Prioritise future research that will overcome age barriers, inform inclusive organisational strategies & enable the older workforce to maintain sustained levels of productivity and health into later life

Progress at December 2006

- Ethics approval granted by University of Surrey
- First pilot study conducted & data analysed
- Data gathering methods have been modified
- Organisations contacted for main study participation

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