

Work for tomorrow

Can innovation support work in an ageing world?



Productivity
Finance and wealth
Work
Employment
International
Welfare
Community
Retirement

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Executive summary

Never before have Finance Ministers been as worried about ageing as now. Skills shortages driven by demographic change have hit all sectors of the economy. As workforces are ageing and workers of all ages are calling for a better offer, there is a need for innovation.

In 2020, the International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) launched Work for tomorrow, supported by the Innovation Resource Center for HR (IRC4HR), to identify the key challenges and innovations responding to an ageing workforce.

The programme engaged policymakers, employers and HR experts across the world around the need to adapt the workplace to an ageing workforce before opening an international innovations competition to submissions in 2021 across four key areas:

- Maintaining good health
- Building knowledge, skills, and competence
- Addressing discrimination and supporting diversity
- Adapting the workplace

More than 60 individuals and organisations from across 17 countries came forward to submit their innovations – from schemes to support staff wellbeing to intergenerational skills exchanges, from tools to empower people around their health to innovative ways of tackling ageism in the workplace.

The programme showed that there is a lot of great innovation out there grappling with the question of how we can design the workplace of the future.

Some organisations, small and large, are true trailblazers doing great work responding to the needs of an ageing workforce. However, for too many, adapting to an ageing workforce is at best an afterthought. There is still a long way to go.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced employers and governments across the world to rethink and adapt quickly to change often long-engrained ways of working. But lasting change needs to extend beyond the pandemic. We need innovation and an honest evaluation of what fulfilling and meaningful work looks like.

It's about making sure that we create good and rewarding work, that we support people to gain and develop the right skills they need, that we work to ensure age isn't a barrier to opportunity and that people feel supported to continue to work even if they have a health condition or caring responsibilities.

Employers can't pass the buck on this. Lots of solutions in this space are simple, they're about thinking of the person at the heart and keeping conversations open.

We must continue to share best practice and engage all employers in this discussion. Let's use the momentum of the pandemic to keep exploring, to keep the conversation going and to listen to people about how we can make work **work for tomorrow**.

Author: Lily Parsey

The world of work is changing

We have all witnessed our working lives shifting during the COVID-19 pandemic; with increased remote working, sick days, staff shortages and greater need for retraining as some industries shrunk or closed down. But the world of work, and how we work, has been shifting for a long time, and will continue to evolve over decades to come.

Employers and governments who fail to respond to these changes are missing a trick.

We are leading longer and changing working lives

- Across the G20, one in three workers is already aged 50 or over and in the next 20 years, this is set to increase to two in five workers.¹
- In the United States, for the first time since 1948, employees old enough to retire outnumber teenagers in the workforce.²
- And in places like South Korea, change is unfolding very rapidly. Until recently a relatively young country, three in five Korean employees will be aged 50+ by 2035.³ **How will the workplace of the future cater for them?**

Across the world, skills shortages driven by demographic change are hitting all sectors of the economy.

- The UK could be seeing a skills shortage of 2.6 million workers – twice the workforce of the NHS – by 2030 if trends continue.⁴
- In Japan, the workforce is expected to shrink by 20% by 2040, if employers fail to attract and retain more workers.⁵

Particularly sectors such as long-term care and healthcare, which will need to grow over decades to come, are struggling to recruit in countries across the world.⁶

¹<https://ilcuk.org.uk/healthequalswealth/>

²<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/an-aging-workforce-isnt-a-burden-its-an-opportunity/>

³<https://ilcuk.org.uk/health-equals-wealth-maximising-the-longevity-dividend-in-south-korea/>

⁴<https://ilcuk.org.uk/plugging-the-gap/>

⁵<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/japan-s-workforce-will-shrink-20-by-2040/>

⁶<https://www.projecthope.org/the-global-health-worker-shortage-10-numbers-to-note/04/2022/>

But ageing workforces needn't spell fiscal disaster or result in labour shortages. Indeed, attracting people of all ages may well be the driver of post-pandemic economic growth. We know that multigenerational teams work better and that as we're living longer, we're continuing to contribute to the economy in important ways:

- In 2014, workers aged 50 and over earned every third dollar in the G20 economy. By 2035, older workers are projected to generate nearly 40% of all earnings across the G20.
- In 2015, spending by older households in the G20 averaged 22% of GDP, amounting to almost USD 10 trillion, more than the combined GDP of Japan, Australia, Canada and Brazil.
- The average unpaid contributions of older people across the EU and Turkey could be worth as much as 1.4% of GDP. That's more than these countries spend on defence.

There is a big opportunity in supporting these longer and changing working lives – for governments and businesses alike. But it won't happen without action and innovation.

We need to innovate

Employers need to step up to the mark. Workers across the world are demanding a better offer: Better pay, better working conditions, more fulfilling jobs and greater flexibility.⁷ From supporting people to go and return from parental or grandparental leave, to supporting part-time education or juggling caring responsibilities alongside work, flexibility is no longer for the few but the many.

And people are demanding better work. While we know that good work is good for our physical and mental health, so can bad work be bad for our health.⁸ And it's not just about manual work. A low sense of purpose, poor working conditions including long stretches of sedentary work, can also be damaging to our health.

- Research has shown that Australian workers spend approximately 76 percent of their time at work sitting.⁹

⁷<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jan/04/great-resignation-quitting-us-unemployment-economy>

⁸http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1256/inequality-briefing-2-good-work-for-all_sept2016_english.pdf

⁹<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/sedentary-work>

- In Singapore, approximately 80% of the nation's workforce is in professional occupations, presumably engaging in high levels of sedentary work.¹⁰

One of the driving factors of the so-termed Great Resignation is not just people quitting their current jobs, but fewer people "unretiring", who would have previously rejoined the labour force following some time out, but haven't found the roles or working arrangements they want.¹¹

There is also a growing mismatch between the skills we have and the skills the economy needs, with changes in the way we work outpacing training and reskilling:

- Over the last two decades, we have gone from less than 7% of the world being online, to more than half the global population having access to the internet.¹²
- In South Korea, the government aims to expand the robotics production industry to \$6bn by 2022¹³ – the country already has one of the highest numbers of industrial robots per thousand workers in manufacturing across the G20 at 20.14 per 1000.¹⁴
- In the US, the average employee has 12 jobs in their career.¹⁵
- In the UK, almost half (49%) of employees are either over- or underskilled for their current jobs.¹⁶

But education and training opportunities aren't keeping up.

And in all of this, we need to address the elephant in the room: age discrimination. We know that during the pandemic, the youngest and oldest workers were hardest hit by redundancies or furlough schemes. And older workers, especially, struggled to return to work following unemployment. UK Labour Force Survey data shows that around 300,000 more workers aged between 50 and 65 are now "economically inactive" than before the pandemic.¹⁷

¹⁰<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4847225/>

¹¹<https://www.kansascityfed.org/research/economic-bulletin/what-has-driven-the-recent-increase-in-retirements/>

¹²<https://ourworldindata/internet>

¹³<http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=20497>

¹⁴https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w24421/w24421.pdf

¹⁵<https://www.zippia.com/advice/average-number-jobs-in-lifetime/>

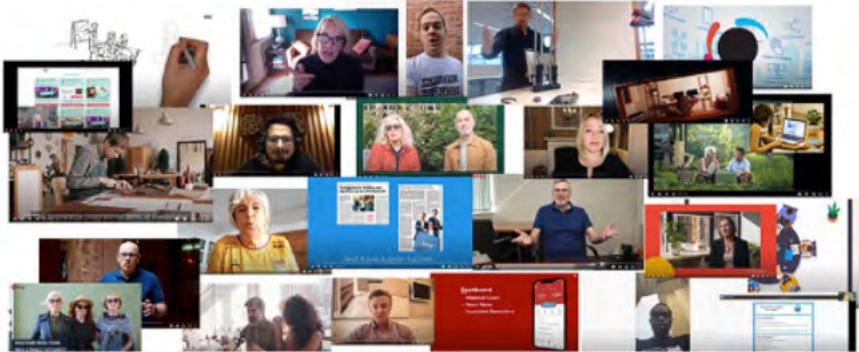
¹⁶<https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/031018-skills-mismatch>

¹⁷<https://theconversation.com/over-50s-are-resigning-en-masse-new-research-explains-who-and-why-181895>

As we all live longer, we simply can't afford to keep standing by. We must fundamentally rethink the way we work, learn and live and adapt to the reality of these complex longer and changing working lives.

Successful workplaces of the future will therefore need to:

- Harness the value of older workers,
- Attract and foster the skills of workers of all ages,
- Provide adequate support for workers as they move through mid-life.



Snapshots from application videos.

Work for tomorrow

To engage employers and governments around these themes and highlight examples of good practice, ILC, with the support of IRC4HR, launched Work for tomorrow, an international competition to identify and award the most promising innovations responding to an ageing workforce.

Through the programme, we engaged policymakers, employers and HR experts across the world around the need to adapt the workplace to an ageing workforce, and identify examples of best practice that could serve as lessons for employers, big and small, around the world.

We held a series of international virtual events, videos and blogs to bring together thought leaders, policymakers and innovators to think about opportunities for change. We ran a consultation on the key challenges resulting from longer working lives and assembled an expert judging panel from across the world that helped us shape the process and criteria for the competition.

“It was invaluable to see how people are thinking of work and ageing in different parts of the world, and it was invaluable to get to meet and discuss with the fellow judges.”

Member of the judging panel

Work for tomorrow opened for submissions in May 2021, seeking input from individuals and organisations across the world with bright ideas to:



Maintain good health in the workplace



Build knowledge, skills, and competence



Address discrimination and support diversity



Adapt the workplace for flexibility

More than 60 individuals and organisations from across 17 countries submitted their innovations – from schemes to support staff wellbeing to intergenerational skills exchanges, from tools to empower people around their health to innovative ways of tackling ageism in the workplace.

"It helped me think about our offering and how this comes across to others who aren't 'involved' either as coaches or members... You've helped us articulate what we do for different audiences which was really useful."

A solution submitter

Alongside the judges' votes, we ran a people's choice award, receiving more than 9,000 votes from industry experts, advocacy organisations and members of the public. The shortlist, announced by the UK Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP, pitched their solutions in public pitching sessions and the final five shared their solutions at the awards ceremony at the Catalyst in Newcastle in March 2022.

"It was a joy and honour to participate."

Emily Clay, Please Ignore Us

The final winner of Work for tomorrow was Labora Tech, a Brazil-based start-up that brings a skill-based approach to recruitment, helping older workers be matched to jobs that suit them and reskill if necessary.

A second "community award" was awarded to Brave Starts, a platform that helps adults in the UK to try out, start new careers and network and learn with others.

"I can't tell you how fabulous it was having Mims Davies read out our name last week. It's a small thing that makes a huge difference... It is hard work and we do feel we're fighting an uphill battle occasionally, so moments like this really are the times that galvanise and make us feel we're on the right track."

Lucy Standing, Brave Starts

Throughout the programme, the competition and innovations received coverage in national and trade outlets. More than 9,000 people watched the innovators' pitches and total visits to the programme website exceeded 16,000.

"Well done on pulling this competition together. You and your team have done a fantastic job!"

Mehbs Remtulla, What's NeXT?!

But we know that we need to go further to reach employers who are not yet active in this area, and to continue to share best practice.

In this short paper, we take a look at the learnings from the competition, and what more needs to happen to make work truly **work for tomorrow**.



UK Minister of State for Employment Mims Davies announces shortlist at Future of Ageing conference.

Competition timeline

2020

- August** Programme launch
- December** Launch of “Challenge report” and consultation
- Session at annual “Future of Ageing” conference

2021

- February** First meeting of international judging panel to refine scope of the competition
- May** Launch of Work for tomorrow competition
- June** Challenge workshops
- August** Competition drop-ins
- October** Close of competition
- December** Announcement of shortlist and people’s choice award

2022

- February 2022** Announcement of finalists
- March 2022** Final awards ceremony at the Catalyst, Newcastle announcing the winners of the competition



The judges

Helping us determine the scope of the competition and selecting the worthiest winners was our international judging panel. Spanning three continents and bringing together vast areas of expertise, they were crucial to the success of the programme.



Anthony Ariganello
President and CEO - Chartered Professionals of Human Resources (CPHR) of BC, and the Yukon, and CPHR Canada



Sheila Callaham
Executive Director and Board Chair - Age Equity Alliance



Rachele Focardi
Expert and Public Speaker on Future of Work



Fanny Krivoy
Founder & Creative Director - Analogous



George MacGinnis
Challenge Director, Healthy Ageing - UK Research and Innovation



Bob Morton
President - World Federation of People Management Associations



Nic Palmarini
Director -
National
Innovation
Centre for
Ageing



Mehbs Remtulla
Founder
and CEO
- What's
neXT!?



Shruti Singh
Ageing and
Employment
Policies Lead
- OECD



David Sinclair
Chief
Executive
- ILC-UK



Jodi Starkman
Executive
Director -
Innovation
Resource
Center for
Human
Resources
(IRC4HR)



Dr Kelly Tremblay
Neuroscientist
and Audiologist



Caroline Waters OBE
Deputy Chair
- Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

"We were a diverse group of judges, bringing a broad range of perspectives, and that made for lively discussions when it came to assessments. Personally, I learned a lot from the process and thank my colleagues for offering their wisdom."

George MacGinnis, UKRI

The challenges



In short: Challenge one - Maintaining good health

Maintaining good health is key for people to remain economically active. Yet too many of us find ourselves in poor physical or mental health. In fact, some workplaces contribute to poor health.

- Across **Europe**, over one-third of those aged over 16 have a long standing illness or health problem.
- In **India**, around 30% of the working age population between 15 and 64 years of age have at least one condition that makes them vulnerable.¹⁸
- In the **UK**, about a million people aged 50-64 are forced out of the workforce early, mainly due to poor health or caring responsibilities.¹⁹
- In 2014, one in five **Australian** employees reported that they had taken time off work due to feeling mentally unwell.²⁰ 79% of British workers in 2020 reported commonly experiencing work-related stress. Yet one in five UK employees report their workplace has nothing in place to deal with stress.²¹
- Across Europe, poor working conditions result in 300,000 work-related deaths and economic losses of 4% of GDP.²²

¹⁸<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/chronic-illnesses-may-put-young-indians-at-higher-risk-of-covid-19-study/story-3OMRxHwDlDpPfRTGM2bUsJ.html>

¹⁹<https://ilcuk.org.uk/the-missing-million/>

²⁰<https://www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/bl1270-report---tns-the-state-of-mental-health-in-australian-workplaces-hr.pdf?sfvrsn=8>

²¹<https://www.perkbox.com/uk/resources/library/2020-workplace-stress-survey>

²²<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/occupational-health>



In short: Challenge two - Building knowledge, skills, and competence

In many countries, there is a mismatch between the skills a population holds and labour market needs. A better use of talent across all ages could offer significant economic and social return for companies and governments.

- Around one-quarter of adults in 33 **OECD** countries have no or only limited experience with computers or lack confidence in their ability to use computers, while nearly half of adults have low proficiency in problem-solving in technology-rich environments.²³
- On average, literacy and numeracy skills peak around 30, while proficiency in problem-solving in technology-rich environments peaks at around 25.²⁴
- Around one-quarter of workers report a mismatch between their skills and those needed for their jobs, with over-skilling about 2.5 times as common as under-skilling.²⁵
- Better use of talent could increase productivity by up to 10%.²⁶

In Russia, there are educational centres, referred to as 'third age schools,' where older people can learn new subjects and skills e.g. computer or language courses, which also offer opportunities to develop creatively.²⁷

²³https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Skills_Matter_Further_Results_from_the_Survey_of_Adult_Skills.pdf

²⁴https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Skills_Matter_Further_Results_from_the_Survey_of_Adult_Skills.pdf

²⁵<http://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/The-future-of-productivity-policy-note-July-2015.pdf>

²⁶<http://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/The-future-of-productivity-policy-note-July-2015.pdf>

²⁷https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-21515-6_9



In short: Challenge three - Addressing discrimination and supporting diversity

Employers can benefit from encouraging diversity in thought and problem-solving, bringing ideas from different groups together effectively. But discrimination is still common across the world.

- Inclusive companies are 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders.²⁸
- An **Australian** study found that employers' support for diversity and inclusion was related to an 83% improvement in employees' ability to innovate.²⁹
- One company study found that the return on investment for diversity awareness training was 163% in the first year.³⁰

The Japanese government has invested heavily in 'silver human resource centres', which deliver support and advice to jobseekers over 60. Japan's jobcentres act as brokers, developing profiles of their clients' skills and experience, and matching them with what businesses need.³¹

²⁸<https://www.talentlyft.com/en/blog/article/244/top-10-benefits-of-diversity-in-the-workplace-infographic-included>

²⁹<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-au-hc-diversity-inclusion-soup-0513.pdf>

³⁰https://www.hr.com/en/app/blog/2006/05/reduce-turnover-through-diversity-management_enorpl64.html

³¹<https://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/retirement-ageing-workforce-japan-jobs>



In short: Challenge four - Adapting the workplace

Patterns of work continue to change and evolve, and this is true for workers of all ages. The demand for flexibility is growing.

- Around one in six **US** workers provide unpaid care, 70% of whom suffer work-related difficulties due to combining their roles.³²
- Only around a third of **European** employees have control over their work schedule.³³
- In the **US**, 32% of employers report offering flexible work schedules, but only 24% of their workers are aware these are offered.³⁴
- In the pre-COVID era, only around 20% of employees in **Europe** worked from home on a regular or occasional basis.³⁵
- Only 20% of **US** employers offer a formal phased retirement programme, while 47% of employees hope to make a phased transition.³⁶

In Hungary parental allowances and parental leave can be transferred to a grandparent if the parents agree and if the child is looked after in the grandparent's home.³⁷

³²<https://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-statistics-work-and-caregiving>

³³<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf>

³⁴https://www.transamericacenter.org/docs/default-source/retirement-survey-of-employers/tcrs2018_sr_employer-retirement-research.pdf

³⁵<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf>

³⁶https://www.transamericacenter.org/docs/default-source/retirement-survey-of-employers/tcrs2018_sr_employer-retirement-research.pdf

³⁷[https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/bl/global/social-welfare/pdfs/non-secure/g/r/a/grandparenting-in-europe-summary.pdf](https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~/media/bl/global/social-welfare/pdfs/non-secure/g/r/a/grandparenting-in-europe-summary.pdf)

The solutions

We had a strong response to our call for innovations, with organisations and individuals from 17 countries sending in their applications. From smaller to larger organisations and individuals, there are some great ideas out there.

In focus: Work for tomorrow winner

Labora Tech, a Brazilian job-matching and reskilling platform for older workers

The logo for Labora, featuring the word "labora" in a lowercase, rounded, orange-red font.

The Work for tomorrow prize was awarded to Labora Tech. Based in Sao Paulo, Labora Tech is seeking to revolutionise recruitment by reducing bias and supporting career changes and flexibility at work.

People aged 50 and over in Brazil already accounted for one in five workers (20% of the workforce) in 2017, which could rise to 30% by 2035.³⁸

Labora Tech is an end-to-end HR technology that helps include older workers, by delivering large-scale recruitment drives for companies based on people's soft and hard skills, matching people to jobs based on these skills, and providing the training, reskilling and mentoring environment to help people thrive in new roles.

The judging panel selected Labora Tech due to the service it provides to reduce bias at recruitment stage for companies that partner with them but also the opportunity to change minds and opinions on older workers across the board.

Labora already has a community of more than 20,000 adults engaged in the platform and is seeking to expand its business in Brazil and across the world to encourage more employers to "retire the CV" and take a skills-based approach to recruitment to reduce bias and improve outcomes.

³⁸<https://ilcuk.org.uk/health-equals-wealth-maximising-the-longevity-dividend-in-brazil/>

“I am delighted and honoured to win this competition. The competition has shown the quality and power of initiatives all over the world. I am sure we can contribute a lot to codesign the future of work.”

Sérgio Serapiao, Co-Founder and CEO of Labora Tech Community award

Community award

Brave Starts CIC, a UK platform to help people start or try out a new career



The judging panel also awarded a second “Community Award” to Brave Starts, a community-based platform that helps adults in the UK to try out and start new careers.

Praised by the judges for its simplicity and potential to start a social movement, Brave Starts offers a programme to help people who are unsure about starting a new career understand what they want and what they might need to get there, link up with professionals already in that area, and build the right skills to make the leap.

“This has been the best news we’ve had this year.”

Lucy Standing, Founder of Brave Starts People’s choice award

People choice award

Startup School for Seniors, a remote learning course to help people start a new business



Startup School for Seniors won the Work for tomorrow people’s choice award and was among the finalists for the competition.

Startup School for Seniors offers innovative two- or eight-week remote learning programmes to help people of all ages refine their vision and learn the skills to start their own business.

“We have seen 170 people graduate from the programme, with over a third making money before the eight-week programme is over.”

Suzanne Noble, Co-Founder, Startup School for Seniors

Meet the shortlist

55/Redefined, a UK organisation that runs a membership platform for older workers, an over-50s job board, as well as initiatives such as age unconscious bias training for employers.

Ageing Workforce Ready, an Australian programme to support wellbeing and mental health at work. Partnering with public transport companies, the programme is testing initiatives that organisations from any industry can use to engage and support older workers.

Empowerment Passport, an online tool developed in the UK to help people identify and feel empowered around the adaptations and adjustments that could help them succeed at work.

Layertech Labs, a Philippine programme helping women in rural settings to learn digital skills and stay in work.

Maturious, an Australian platform that maps and verifies the Job DNA of older workers by capturing and assessing their acquired skills over their working careers. This is used to match people to jobs based on skills and to avoid bias.

Please Ignore Us, an American podcast to highlight the value of older workers through storytelling and to match these workers to job opportunities.

Renaissance Academy, an Irish membership-based lifelong learning academy to support education across the lifecourse.

Tradecraft Tools Limited, a British mobile app to support older entrepreneurs to start and run their own business.

Find out more about the shortlist and winners on our programme page: <https://ilcuk.org.uk/work-for-tomorrow>



Key learnings

The programme showed that there is a lot of great innovation out there grappling with the question of how we design the workplace of the future. From high- to low-tech solutions, the strongest are those that truly think of real people at the core and fit well into existing systems.

That also means that there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to an ageing workforce. On the contrary, we will have to continue to innovate and work with people to co-design and adapt what work means for them and how that translates into good design of work and workplaces.

Just as emerging technologies continually reshape not just the types of jobs we do, but how we do them, so too, demographic change will continually evolve our ways of working. And we must continue to innovate in this area. The conversation hasn't ended here. Nor should it.

Through the programme, we engaged leading employers and policymakers across the world. Some organisations, large and small, are true trailblazers doing great work to future-proof their organisations.

But while the benefits of initiatives, such as mid-life career reviews and holistic planning for future skills needs, are well documented, a big proportion of employers still aren't engaged. For many, the impact of demographic change on their workforce and ways of working is at best an afterthought.

And while we received lots of applications, there were few from big businesses, or employers in general. Many came from start-ups or individuals wanting to change working practices in other organisations or supporting individuals outside the formal workplace, rather than organisations themselves driving change in this area.

Indeed, a shocking number of organisations don't even collect data on the age profile of their employees.³⁹ **How can we start a real conversation on longer working lives when we don't even understand our workforces?**

Some companies we spoke to include ageing as one of the, often lesser-explored, aspects of diversity and inclusion. But while ageism

³⁹<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172965/firms-collecting-personal-data/>

is an important issue to address, we know that the impact of longer working lives extends far beyond this.

Longer working lives impact us all regardless of age, from the time we start working to when we might take up caring responsibilities for children, parents, friends or partners or when we need support adapting work to a health condition or think about phased retirement.

We need a whole-system approach to ageing. And employers have a key role to play. **But how do we build that urgency that gets everyone to roll up their sleeves?**

The COVID-19 pandemic built some of that urgency to change the status quo. Across industries, there was a seismic shift, often in a matter of days and weeks, to adapt to a "new normal" with many companies dabbling in remote working and other forms of flexibility for the first time.

While advocacy for flexible and remote work, e.g. for parents or carers, has been going on for decades without too much progress, the global pandemic radically forced employers to rethink. "Can't"s had to be turned into "how"s.

And employers around the world saw that remote working could work. Indeed, workforce productivity soared by 5% during the pandemic – contrary to fears that not seeing employees face-to-face could lead to disengagement.

The pandemic has also taught us to become better at accepting that people have a life outside of work. While in 2017, a BBC news interview that was interrupted by a correspondent's children in the background made headlines,⁴⁰ cats strolling across desks during calls have become the norm. And that has extended to personalising working schedules and locations to people's needs.

The rapid shifts during the pandemic showed us that we can do things differently. But we need to keep up that momentum and translate a greater focus on people at the core to other areas too. The job isn't done yet. **While the pandemic has fast-tracked change in terms of rethinking remote work, that isn't the only area in which we need innovation.**

⁴⁰<https://www.theguardian.com/media/video/2017/mar/10/bbc-correspondent-interrupted-by-his-children-live-on-air-video>

The changes needed to adapt to population ageing, emerging technologies and changing economies predate the pandemic, and will continue to reshape the working conditions, as well as the kinds of skills we need for our labour market.

Following the pandemic, we have seen labour shortages hit all sectors and countries. Recruitment and retention difficulties show that employers haven't got it right yet and that workers are calling for a better offer.^{41,42}

“I'm not sure employers are responding to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing workforce. Ageism is still huge, and even with labour shortages, attracting and retaining older workers doesn't seem to be climbing the priority list.”

Rachael Palmer, Programme Lead, Ageing Workforce Ready

Older people still face significant barriers in recruitment. Two solutions in our final five (Labora Tech and Maturious) look at addressing this. The success of these two initiatives highlights the need for employers to rethink recruitment and really think about what skills, rather than what experience, is needed for a given role.

Indeed, Labora Tech and Maturious take a skills-based approach to hiring, focussing on what people can do, as opposed to what they have done in the past, what kinds of hard and soft skills an individual brings to the job. Testing the skills that are integral to a job, rather than just looking at CVs and similar experience leads to better outcomes in hiring.

“In a world where there simply aren't enough workers, we need to focus less on what people have done, what schools they went to and their age and qualifications [and more on what they can do].”

David Sinclair, Chief Executive, ILC

But it appears many organisations don't know where to start. And small organisations, in particular, worry about not having the resource to change things.

The reality is some change can be simple. Many of the changes that help attract and retain talent throughout people's longer working

⁴¹<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1743068/majority-employers-struggling-recruit-retain-staff-poll-finds>

⁴²<https://brendamarreroopr.com/top-hiring-challenges-for-2022-why-its-so-hard-to-fill-jobs-right-now/>

lives, are not rocket science. And we don't need to reinvent the wheel, there are already lots of great ideas out there, as highlighted by the competition.

So, we need to share best practice that's easily accessible and actionable for large and small employers alike. We need to show that some change can be simple - that it's about opening the conversation with people and being prepared to adapt work practices based on that feedback.

And we need to continue to engage employers who aren't on board yet to show that now is the time to act and to give them the tools to do this.

"It has been a real honour to be a judge for the Work for tomorrow competition... It has made me much more hopeful about the future to know that there are many creative minds at play who are working relentlessly to come up with solutions that will enable intergenerational collaboration."

Rachele Focardi, member of the judging panel



Delegates networking following awards ceremony

Getting started as an employer

Get the conversation started

- Collect data on the age profile of your employees: Without data, it's hard to understand the needs of the organisation or employees
- Introduce a mid-life career review for a systematic approach to review health, finances and welfare and any adjustments an individual or an organisation might be able to make. There are lots of useful materials out there to start this conversation.⁴³
- Ensure line managers speak to their direct reports about their needs (in informal catch-ups or reviews). People know best what they want or need, or what is getting in the way. Incentivise managers to have these conversations.



Maintain good health in the workplace

- Use tools, such as occupational health guides in your country or Empowerment Passport – a solution from the Work for tomorrow shortlist - to help people identify the adaptations that might help them perform best in their jobs without adding stigma.
- Actively promote physical and mental health at work: It's not just about adjusting work practices to existing health needs but supporting good health across the life course:
 - Support healthy workplaces. This might mean more breaks or less strenuous work for manual labour work, while it could mean more activity for sedentary office jobs, or options for standing desks, walking meetings etc.
 - Provide education around maintaining good physical and mental health, such as good nutrition, smoking cessation and the value of exercise.
 - Support preventative health through, for example, the provision of health screening or workplace vaccination or workplace benefits, such as free or discounted gym memberships, cycling schemes, or in-house exercise programmes.

⁴³<https://ilcuk.org.uk/building-the-case-for-mid-life-career-interventions-a-literature-review-informed-by-the-experience-of-aviva-uk/>



Build knowledge, skills, and competence

- Ensure everyone, regardless of age, has access to training opportunities.
- Monitor uptake of training by age to see if there is something about communication or the types of learning offered that are not working for employees of all ages.
- Facilitate formal or informal learning sessions to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer within your organisation.
- Allow opportunities for career breaks, sabbaticals, and secondments. to support learning and career progression for individuals, and increase retention of staff and organisational knowledge. Work for tomorrow Community award winner Brave Starts is a great place for individuals to connect and find formal or informal learning opportunities.



Address discrimination and support diversity

- Run unconscious (age) bias training with your team, alongside other forms of diversity training. There is lots of evidence that this leads to better hiring, better outcomes and ultimately better performance.
- Support diverse voices to be heard: This includes communication across managerial hierarchies, empowering employees of all ages and backgrounds to not only express their ideas but employ new strategies.
- Make sure language in recruitment is inclusive. Trial blind recruitment (there are lots of great platforms out there)⁴⁴ and focus on skills and capabilities rather than CVs (featured by the talent-matching algorithms of Work for tomorrow finalists Labora Tech and maturious).

⁴⁴<https://toggl.com/blog/blind-recruitment-tools>



Adapt the workplace for flexibility

- If the job allows it, ensure employees have flexible working conditions by default, from moving to part-time work to splitting work between an office and the home. This will attract a broader base of potential employees, including those with lots of experience who may not have previously felt able to apply due to caring responsibilities or health needs.
- Foster a phased approach to retirement: Smoothing the transition from work to retirement isn't just attractive to employees. A phased transition can enable greater focus on succession planning and knowledge transfer, while stimulating employee engagement as a result of feeling more supported as they enter this new stage in their life.

What happens next

We know our work isn't done yet. We need to continue engaging employers and innovators across the world to future-proof work for an ageing society.

We want to:

- Build on the learnings from the competition
- Help innovators grow and connect
- Support employers to better respond to an ageing workforce, including those not currently engaged

We want to build lasting impact.

If you want to get involved in next steps, please get in touch: LilyParsey@ilcuk.org.uk.



Winners and finalists on stage and joining remotely for final Work for tomorrow awards ceremony.

About the ILC

The International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) is the UK's specialist think tank on the impact of longevity on society. The ILC was established in 1997, as one of the founder members of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, an international network on longevity.

We have unrivalled expertise in demographic change, ageing and longevity. We use this expertise to highlight the impact of ageing on society, working with experts, policy makers and practitioners to provoke conversations and pioneer solutions for a society where everyone can thrive, regardless of age.



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