

Evaluation of Ageing Better's Age-friendly Employer Pledge

Final report

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Institute for Employment Studies

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Executive summary

The Age-friendly Employer Pledge was launched by the Centre for Ageing Better in 2022 to help employers improve the recruitment, retention and development of people in their 50s and 60s. The Pledge focuses on five areas (culture, recruitment, flexible working, career development, and health support) and provides a simple, low-burden commitment supported by practical tools, guidance and a national employer network. To understand how the Pledge is being implemented, and its early impact on employers and older workers, Ageing Better commissioned an independent, mixed-methods evaluation led by the Institute for Employment Studies, in partnership with IFF Research and the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS).

The evaluation explored:

- why employers join the Pledge;
- the activities they undertake;
- the factors that support or hinder progress; and
- how age-inclusive practice is beginning to affect older workers' experiences.

It draws on a survey of 78 Pledge Leads, in-depth interviews with 21 Leads, focus groups and interviews with 45 HR specialists, managers and older workers, and feedback from national stakeholders.

Why employers sign the Pledge

Employers join the Pledge for a combination of external and internal reasons. Public commitment is a major driver: 80% wanted to make a visible statement that they are age-friendly, and 79% saw a strong fit with organisational values. Sixty per cent wanted to signal age-inclusion to existing staff, and almost half hoped to learn how to strengthen their approach. Recruitment and retention challenges also play a role, especially the need to attract experienced candidates or respond to early-retirement trends.

Awareness of the Pledge is primarily generated through Ageing Better's own communications, with peer-to-peer recommendations providing an important secondary route. Traditional business media play a negligible role. Employers tend to arrive with an existing interest in age-inclusion, rather than approaching the Pledge from a standing start.

What employers do after signing

Across the five Pledge areas (culture, recruitment, flexible working, career development, and health support), the greatest activity is concentrated in recruitment and health support, followed by age-friendly culture and flexible working. Career development is the least developed area. Employers overwhelmingly focus first on visible, practical, low-cost actions that can be integrated into existing systems. Employers also described a range of less tangible but highly valued benefits of the Pledge, such as reinforcing internal commitment to age inclusion, providing a unifying framework for disparate activities, and strengthening accountability for progressing age-friendly practice.

Creating an age-friendly culture

Many employers embed age within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategies, analyse their workforce data by age and make age-friendly aims explicit in internal messaging. The Pledge strongly influences public commitments to cultural change, internal communications, and efforts to challenge age stereotypes.

Hiring age-positively

Recruitment is a major focus. Most employers already use structured interviews and diverse panels, but the Pledge drives more intentional age-inclusive messaging, removing age-biased language, updating imagery, adding age-inclusive diversity statements, and refreshing application processes to minimise age cues. These changes help employers reach older applicants more effectively.

Being flexible about flexible working

Flexible working was widely established following the pandemic, but the Pledge prompts more targeted attention to older workers' needs. This includes promoting flexibility to workers aged 50 and over, enabling flexibility across life/career stages, and, for some, introducing grandparents' leave. For many older workers, flexible working is the single biggest enabler of staying in work.

Encouraging career development at all ages

Career development is the least actioned Pledge area. Although CPD is usually available to all, few employers offer later-career-specific support such as mid-life career reviews, targeted guidance or structured succession planning. The Pledge nudges employers toward these more age-specific conversations and practices, but confidence and capacity to act remain variable.

Ensuring everyone has the health support they need

Health support is widely embedded and strongly valued by older workers. Routine wellbeing practices: open discussions, reasonable adjustments, menopause support and

health-related policies are common. The Pledge most strongly influences emerging practices such as age-linked health MOTs (routine check-ups offered at key age milestones) and structured health conversations (for example about return to work following absence or reasonable adjustments).

What enables or limits success

Implementation is shaped by a combination of organisational, structural and relational factors. The Pledge has the greatest impact where organisations already have mature HR and EDI systems, strong leadership commitment, and supportive workplace cultures.

Key enablers

- Trusted guidance and expertise from Ageing Better and the Pledge Team.
- Light-touch support such as newsletters and accessible online guidance, which see the highest engagement.
- Effective internal roles, especially HR, recruitment and EDI specialists, alongside line managers who shape day-to-day experiences.
- Employee networks and insights from the frontline, which help test ideas and maintain momentum.
- Peer learning and external specialists, which supplement internal capacity.

Key barriers

- Resource constraints, especially in smaller organisations, limiting capacity for specialised or time-intensive actions.
- Line-manager confidence gaps, particularly around age-related conversations, retirement, career development and health.
- Limited digital access or literacy for some older workers.
- Role and sector constraints, particularly where physical presence or shift work limits flexibility.
- Lack of detailed age-related workforce data, preventing employers from diagnosing needs or measuring progress effectively.

What older workers experience

Older workers generally report strongly positive experiences within Pledge organisations. Many feel valued, listened to and included, with good intergenerational relationships. Visible age-inclusion, such as public commitments, updated language, and supportive managers, gives them greater confidence to raise concerns, challenge inappropriate behaviour and discuss age-related needs openly.

Flexible working and phased retirement emerge as the most important supports for continued participation in work. Career development is experienced as available, but uptake is influenced by self-perception and expectations around retirement. Health support is widely viewed as inclusive, non-stigmatising and accessible.

These experiences reflect employers already motivated to engage with age-friendly practice; they should not be assumed to represent all older workers across the Pledge network.

Strategic added value

Stakeholders view the Pledge as a practical, credible framework that:

- elevates the profile of age within EDI;
- helps organisations embed age-inclusion into mainstream practice;
- aligns employer behaviour with national priorities on later-life work;
- encourages more strategic use of data;
- supports knowledge sharing between sectors, and
- prepares employers for future workforce challenges, including technological change.

The Pledge was seen as strengthening, organising or validating activity that many employers were already attempting to take forward, without imposing burdensome bureaucracy.

Overall conclusions

The Age-friendly Employer Pledge is helping participating organisations make tangible progress towards age-inclusive practice. Its greatest influence is on visible, confidence-building, easy-to-implement actions: public commitments, age-inclusive messaging, and targeted recruitment improvements. It helps employers formalise and extend existing commitments, start new conversations, and integrate age more fully into organisational thinking.

More generally the evidence also highlights the less tangible but highly valued benefits the Pledge brings. These include reinforcing internal messages about the importance of age inclusion, signalling externally that age inclusion is a core priority, helping hold organisations accountable for progress, and providing a unifying framework that brings together activities which may otherwise feel disparate. Although these gains are harder to quantify, employers often view them as just as important as concrete, practice-level changes.

The Pledge is less influential where actions require specialist expertise, structural change or significant resource, such as later-career development pathways or advanced health support. Nevertheless, the Pledge still encouraged employers to make further progress in these areas, even where overall activity remained limited. More generally, it provides a

clear framework and accessible guidance that employers can adapt from different starting points, offering strategic added value across a diverse employer base.

The evaluation highlights the importance of supporting line managers, strengthening age-related data capability, expanding practical tools, and ensuring that smaller employers have access to scalable, low-burden resources.

Overall, the Pledge is beginning to shape more age-inclusive workplaces and is well positioned to support longer-term cultural and systemic change as employers continue to deepen their practice.

Lessons for future evaluation design and employer research

Our experience of working with employers on the Employer Pledge evaluation has highlighted lessons for how future evaluation approaches can be designed:

- **Use proportionate, low-burden tools:** Evaluation should align with the Pledge's simple design. Employers should not be expected to provide detailed tracking or new data beyond existing systems.
- **Combine factual and reflective questions:** Blending questions focussed on “what was done” and “what is planned” with reflection on the influence of the Pledge allows nuanced insight into impact. Asking about changes in awareness and confidence can allow early detection of important cultural shifts.
- **Build flexibility into data collection:** Employers differ in capacity, data systems and staff continuity. Evaluation should allow partial responses and alternative formats.
- **Acknowledge limits of age-related metrics:** Age-specific data is often inconsistent or unavailable, especially for smaller employers, meaning that evaluations can only report perceived benefits rather than verified impact.
- **Include employee perspectives:** Staff awareness of the Pledge is often limited, but employee feedback is essential to assess lived experience and equity across age groups.
- **Engage non-signatory organisations:** Future research could explore barriers to signing and reasons for non-participation to improve reach and representativeness.

These lessons also apply to future Pledge design decisions, particularly balancing simplicity with evidence and realistic employer expectations, based on the practical constraints employers face.

Implications for future development of the Pledge

The evaluation indicates that there are clear opportunities for Ageing Better to further develop and extend the Pledge so it continues to meet employers' needs while maintaining its low-burden design:

- Strengthen how the Pledge positions age within EDI.
 - Reinforce age as a core EDI issue, not an optional add-on with countering ageism an explicit aim.
 - Maintain the Pledge's visibility and practicality within a crowded EDI landscape, distinguishing it from schemes that risk being used as 'badges'.
 - Support employers to embed age inclusion into strategy and everyday practice to reinforce continuity of the Pledge's influence.
 - Provide clearer internal communication tools to increase staff awareness of their employer's commitment to age inclusion and build Pledge visibility.

- Enhance practical tools and next-step guidance.
 - Develop a maturity model to help employers benchmark progress and identify realistic next steps.
 - Expand templates and action-planning resources that help employers shift from commitment to implementation.
 - Offer light-touch diagnostic tools to help organisations prioritise actions where age-related data is weak.

- Support employers with future workforce challenges.
 - Provide guidance on digital change and digital confidence gaps (highlighted by stakeholders as future-critical).
 - Support organisations to plan for longer working lives and workforce ageing, e.g. through provision of guidance that steers managers through conversations about these issues sensitively.
 - Promote intergenerational working and recognition of complementary strengths of different age cohorts.

- Strengthen peer learning and storytelling.
 - Increase sharing of case studies and practical examples, reflecting employer interest in accessing relatable stories that illustrate age-inclusive practice.
 - Facilitate learning between large and small employers, as a means of transferring good practice into settings with fewer resources.
 - Use storytelling to sustain engagement and public understanding of age inclusion.

- Improve system coherence and brokering external connections.
 - Strengthen alignment with national policy initiatives (e.g. 50+ Champions, Mid-life MOTs).

- Broker links to specialist organisations for health, finance and skills, enabling employers to access credible advice and sources of training on issues beyond Ageing Better's remit.
 - Position the Pledge within wider labour-market objectives such as **reducing economic inactivity among older people**.
- Help employers build evidence and evaluate progress.
- Provide clearer guidance to employers on collecting age-related data in areas where tracking is limited.
 - Encourage sharing anonymised insights to strengthen the evidence base and inform national-level thinking.
 - Support employers to establish proportionate, low-burden approaches to monitoring reflecting the Pledge's low-bureaucracy ethos while improving reporting consistency.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This chapter introduces the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, outlining its purpose, origins and key commitments. It provides essential context for understanding why the Pledge was developed, how it is intended to support employers to improve age-inclusion, and the broader mission of the Centre for Ageing Better. The chapter also sets out the aims and scope of the independent evaluation, including the questions it seeks to address and how the findings are organised in the remainder of the report. Together, these provide the foundation for how findings are presented throughout the report.

1.1.1 Why the Pledge was created

The Centre for Ageing Better's mission is to build a more age-friendly society by challenging negative narratives, promoting realistic and positive representations of ageing, and encouraging organisations to reduce age bias in their language, imagery and practice.

Responding to and recognising ageism begins with a conversation, yet it remains an issue that is still too rarely talked about. The workplace is an important context for this, and employers need to recognise the importance and value of older workers.

In line with their aim of supporting employers to recognise the value of older workers and improve work for people in their 50s and 60s, Ageing Better launched the Age-Friendly Employer Pledge in November 2022 to help employers engage with the subject matter and provide practical support. The Pledge draws on Ageing Better's own commissioned research and the practical insights of leading employers consulted through its business leadership group.

1.1.2 What the Pledge is

Above all, the Pledge provides a simple, low burden entry point for employers to begin engaging with age inclusion. By pledging, employers commit to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s and taking the necessary action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce. In signing the Pledge, employers commit to:

- identifying a senior sponsor for age inclusion in their workforce and publicly state their commitment to the Pledge; and
- ensuring that age is specifically named within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies;

- Taking action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers aged 50 and over from one of the following areas:
 - Create an age-friendly culture.
 - Hire age-positively.
 - Be flexible about flexible working.
 - Encourage career development at all ages.
 - Ensure everyone has the health support they need.

The Centre for Ageing Better's Age-friendly Employer Pledge is supported by a five-point action framework identifying practical steps employers can take to improve recruitment, retention and development of people in their 50s and 60s.

Ageing Better have developed and continue to develop a range of employer-facing resources enabling employers to act in all five areas. This includes a Culture Toolkit, a set of practical resources to help organisations understand, assess and improve their internal culture so that employees of all ages feel valued, included and supported. It sits within the Pledge resources and is designed to translate the "age-friendly culture" commitment into concrete workplace actions.

In addition to signing the Pledge, employers become part of a network with access to additional support provided by Ageing Better. This includes the delivery of online webinars, monthly newsletter and the development of a series of guides, toolkits and FAQs to assist employers to take action on their journey towards becoming an age-friendly employer.

1.2 Approach to the evaluation of the Employer Pledge

Ageing Better's monitoring data provides an overview of pledged organisations and their reported activities, but does not capture the depth or complexity of employers' journeys after signing. To generate a fuller evidence base on implementation and early outcomes for older workers, an independent evaluation was commissioned.

1.2.1 Evaluation aims

The evaluation of the Employer Pledge was led by the Institute for Employment Studies working in partnership with teams at IFF Research and the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby. The evaluation had three main aims:

1. To document and understand the implementation of the Pledge, so that Ageing Better can develop and improve it (as well as better understand their role in its implementation).
2. To explore the emerging impact of the Pledge on employers and their workforces, to help illustrate the value that it adds to Ageing Better's trustees, potential future funders and other stakeholders.
3. To set the foundation for a potential longer-term evaluation of the Pledge.

1.2.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation was structured around a set of specific research questions, which are outlined below.

1. How are employers finding out about the Pledge? What is their journey from finding out to signing?
2. How is the Pledge being implemented within organisations that have signed?
 - a. What topics within the five Pledge areas are employers interested in and why?
 - b. What are the barriers and challenges to implementation?
 - c. What role has the Pledge played in supporting implementation of age-friendly practice in Pledge organisations?
 - d. What are the key enabling factors for successful implementation of the Pledge in an organisation?
 - e. What are the key staff roles/teams (e.g. senior management, HR etc.) involved in the Pledge within employers?
3. How effectively does the Pledge support organisations who have signed to adopt age-friendly practice?
 - f. What impact is the Pledge having on employer behaviour?
 - i. What impact is it having on staff behaviour at different levels of seniority?
 - ii. What age-friendly activities are employers doing?
 - g. What impact is the Pledge having on older workers?
 - i. On recruitment, retention and development opportunities?
4. What evidence is there of Strategic Added Value arising from the Pledge?

Prior to the main evaluation phase, Ageing Better specified that a scoping phase should take place, principally to establish the appetite among pledged employers for involvement in evaluation activities. This also provided an opportunity for the evaluation team to familiarise themselves with pledging organisations and explore a proportionate approach to data collection to avoid over-burdening employers.

1.3 Structure of this report

The next chapter provides an overview of the evaluation methodology (with more technical detail included in the Appendix).

Presentation of the evaluation's findings have been structured around the main evaluation questions, and in a logical order that approximates the Theory of Change, as shown in Table 1.1. Each remaining chapter's focus is summarised below:

- Chapter 2 - Methodology: Describes the mixed-methods approach, including the survey, interviews, focus groups and analytical framework.
- Chapter 3 - Why employers sign the Pledge: Examines awareness, motivations, sign-up decisions and early expectations of Pledge employers.

- Chapter 4 - What employers do after signing: Presents evidence on implemented activities across the five Pledge areas and the influence of the Pledge on employer behaviour.
- Chapter 5 - What determines successful implementation: Explores enablers, barriers, internal roles, resource constraints and organisational conditions shaping progress.
- Chapter 6 - Impacts on older workers: Reports how older workers experience culture, recruitment, flexibility, development and health support within Pledge organisations.
- Chapter 7 - Strategic added value: Assesses the wider system-level influence of the Pledge on employer practice, policy narratives and sector learning.
- Chapter 8 - Conclusions and implications: Synthesises findings across the evaluation and identifies implications for developing and strengthening the Pledge.

Table 1.1 Evaluation questions addressed in the report

Evaluation Questions		Report chapter				
		3	4	5	6	7
How is the Pledge being implemented within organisations that have signed?	How employers find out & journey to signing	✓				
	Topics employers are interested in and why	✓				
	Barriers and challenges to implementation			✓		
	Role of Pledge in supporting implementation		✓	✓		
	Factors key to successful implementation			✓		
How effectively does the Pledge support organisations who have signed to adopt age-friendly practice?	Key staff roles/teams involved			✓		
	Impact on staff behaviour at different levels of seniority		✓		✓	
	Age-friendly activities employers are doing		✓			
	Impact on recruitment/retention/dev't opps				✓	
	Evidence of Strategic Added Value arising from the Pledge					✓

Source: IES, 2026

2 Methodology

This chapter sets out the methodological elements underpinning the evaluation. It provides an overview of the research design, the scoping work undertaken, the approach to recruitment and data collection across all strands, and the analytical methods used. Further technical information is provided in the appendices, including sampling details, survey questions and discussion guides.

2.1 Scoping activities

The scoping phase laid the foundation for the main evaluation and served three purposes:

1. to establish employer appetite for participation;
2. to agree proportionate data-collection methods; and
3. to develop the evaluation's Theory of Change.

2.1.1 Theory of change

A Theory of Change (ToC) workshop was held in April 2024 to inform evaluation design. Participants from the Pledge Team and the wider Ageing Better team mapped expected inputs, activities, outputs and short-term outcomes of the Employer Pledge (see Appendix 2). The workshop clarified which early indicators of progress were realistically observable within the evaluation timeframe and helped shape the evaluation framework used throughout the study.

2.1.2 Secondary analysis of monitoring data from Pledge employers

A secondary analysis of Pledge monitoring data was conducted to understand how employers reported engaging with the Pledge at the point of scoping. This provided an early view of activity underway and helped refine the survey response options so they reflected the types of actions employers were likely to report. The monitoring questions themselves were reviewed to support future improvements to response categories and data consistency. Further exploratory analysis of six-month Pledge monitoring data (Appendices 4 & 5) informed the evaluation design.

2.1.3 Early approaches to Pledge employers

A coordinated "One Team" approach between the evaluation team and the Pledge Team was used to secure employers' in-principle agreement to take part. Employers were first informed through the Pledge newsletter and routine six-month check-ins. A tiered design allowed organisations to participate at either a "higher" or "lower" level depending on their capacity.

An Evaluation Pack outlining expectations was shared with all interested employers, followed by one-to-one online meetings using a standardised script to ensure consistent communication. These conversations enabled Leads to choose their level of involvement and formed the basis for subsequent recruitment into survey, interview and focus-group activity.

Table 2.1 Evaluation elements and involvement of the employer sample

Sample	Evaluation elements	Aims	Employers (N)
All Pledge employers responding to survey invitation	Survey for Pledge Leads	Explore engagement with the Employer Pledge and age-friendly activities in place	78
Pledge employers volunteering for 'lower level' involvement	In depth interviews with Pledge Lead (21 in total)	Understand reasons for signing, progress to date, barriers and enablers to success	8
Pledge employers volunteering for 'higher level' involvement	As above +in depth interviews with Pledge Lead and additional fieldwork with HR specialists, managers and/or older workers	As above + understand involvement in implementing age-friendly activities	13

Source: IES, 2026

2.2 Main evaluation phase

The main evaluation used a mixed-methods design, combining survey data, qualitative interviews, focus groups and secondary analysis. The evaluation framework (see Appendix 1) linked the ToC to the data-collection tools and shaped the analytical structure for integrating evidence across strands.

2.2.1 Interviews with Pledge Leads

Following the scoping stage, Leads who had agreed to be contacted were approached directly by the evaluation team. Twenty-one Leads took part. Interviews were conducted online, lasted 45–60 minutes, and followed a discussion guide developed collaboratively with the Pledge Team. Interviews explored organisational context, motivations for signing, progress to date and emerging impacts. All interviews were recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim.

Table 2.2 Senior Pledge Lead sample

	Public		Private		Charity	
	SME	L	SME	L	SME	L
Leads participating in initial informal discussions (N=39)	0	9	7	8	12	3
Leads participating in first interview (N=25)	0	5	5	6	8	1
Leads participating in closing interview/written response (N=26*)	0	5	4	7	7	3

*All who involved in initial informal discussions to contribute

Source: IES. 2026

2.2.2 Employer survey

Data collection

The online survey of Pledge Leads was administered using SNAP Surveys; (the full questionnaire is included in Appendix 7). The survey was open from March to June 2025, with reminder emails to encourage completion. All Pledge members were invited to participate. (The survey information sheet is provided in Appendix 8).

In total, 78 responses were received (including 11 partial responses). Respondents were encouraged to consult colleagues where helpful for accuracy. A full breakdown of respondent characteristics is provided in Appendix 9.

The survey included mainly multiple-choice questions with some open-text items and covered all themes set out in the evaluation framework.

Table 2.3 Employer sample

	Public			Private			Charity		
	S	M	L	S	M	L	S	M	L
Complete (N=67)	3	1	11	11	12	5	13	5	6
Partials (N=11)	0	0	3	2	1	3	1	0	1

Source: IES. 2026

Survey analysis

Survey data were downloaded and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were produced for all closed-question responses, with findings presented in tables and charts. Open-text responses were coded thematically and used illustratively.

Subgroup analysis was carried out where subgroup sizes were 5 or more. Analyses were conducted by:

- sector (public, private, charity);
- organisation size (small, medium, large); and
- workforce age profile (majority under 50 / majority 50 and over).

Chi-square tests were applied where appropriate, and subgroup findings are reported only where numbers supported reliable interpretation. “Don’t know” and missing responses were excluded from percentage bases.

2.2.3 Interviews and focus groups with HR specialists, managers and older employees

Recruitment and data collection

Employers who opted into “higher-level” participation were asked to nominate colleagues for this stage. Three participant groups were sought to provide organisational, managerial and employee perspectives:

- Specialist professionals, including:
 - colleagues with HR duties relevant to age inclusion, e.g., EDI, recruitment, onboarding, training, staff development, staff wellbeing; and
 - colleagues with a remit relevant to age inclusion, e.g. marketing, advertising, PR, delivery of ESG objectives, staff retention, campaign leads.
- Managers, specifically:
 - line managers of older workers: people who can compare experiences of managing workers of different ages; and
 - operational managers able to speak about being age-inclusive specific to particular business areas, roles or work environments.
- Older workers (workers aged 50 and over).

Thirteen employers took part, yielding interviews or focus groups with 45 participants. Sessions were held online, lasted 30-45 minutes and were recorded with consent. Groups were kept separate by role to ensure comparability of experience. Discussion guides were tailored to each group.

‘Table 2.4 Employer participation in ‘higher involvement’ fieldwork element

	Sample size participating in this element (number of individuals (N =45))	Number of employers involved (N =13)
Specialists	19	10
Managers	12	7
OWs	14	8

Source: IES. 2026

Interview and focus group analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach structured around the evaluation questions. A coding framework combining deductive and inductive coding was developed across the consortium. Coding was carried out primarily by researchers at iCeGS and IFF Research using Excel. All transcripts were fully coded.

A moderation meeting was held to ensure consistency of interpretation. Data were coded by respondent type to support structured comparison, though no formal cross-group comparative analysis was undertaken. Stakeholder interviews were analysed separately given their distinct purpose.

Qualitative findings were integrated with survey analysis to contextualise statistical patterns, explain mechanisms and interpret variations. Survey results, in turn, informed deeper probing in interviews. Direct quotations are used throughout the report to illustrate findings.

2.2.4 Interviews with stakeholders

This component gathered national stakeholders' perspectives on the Pledge's strategic positioning and broader policy relevance. The Pledge Team provided definitions of Strategic Added Value (SAV) to guide design.

Stakeholders were identified from a list supplied by the Pledge Team and invited to participate in short online interviews. Interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and explored perceptions of the Pledge's wider contribution, opportunities and barriers in the current landscape. The discussion guide is provided in Appendix 14.

2.3 Study strengths and limitations

The evaluation benefited from a strong mix of employers across sectors and organisational sizes, allowing the study to capture a broad range of experiences and practices. The inclusion of both Leads and employees provided valuable qualitative insights into how age-friendly activities are understood and experienced within organisations, offering depth that would not have been accessible through survey data alone. This breadth of participation also means the findings reflect diverse organisational contexts, supporting the credibility and relevance of emerging themes.

At the same time, several factors constrain how far the findings can be generalised. Participation is likely to have been shaped by self-selection bias, with organisations already motivated to prioritise age inclusion more willing to take part, and Leads tending to report more positive impacts due to social desirability bias. Employee perspectives, while insightful, were limited to those with the time and motivation to join focus groups, restricting representation of the wider workforce. The study was also limited to organisations that had already signed the Pledge, meaning little is known about the barriers to signing or reasons for non-participation. Finally, the absence of an employee survey prevented the collection of direct, organisation-wide workforce perspectives, limiting the evaluation's ability to assess impact at scale.

Several positive experiences could not be confidently attributed to the Pledge because many employers were not systematically tracking age-related indicators (e.g., recruitment conversion by age, development uptake, age-specific retention). Smaller organisations, in particular, reported limited capacity to monitor these outcomes. As a result, while qualitative accounts are valuable, causal claims about the impact of the Pledge are constrained and made cautiously in the absence of hard organisational data. The findings must therefore be interpreted as perceived benefits rather than verified impact.

3 Why do employers sign the Pledge?

This chapter explores how employers find out about the Pledge, their journey to signing, and, of most interest, their reasons for signing. It covers areas of the Pledge that employers choose to commit to on signing, including the reasons for their choices and what they hope to achieve.

Key Messages

- Employers generally arrive at the Pledge already positively inclined toward age-inclusion, making engagement straightforward, as the fit with their organisational values is already high.
- Awareness of the Pledge is driven chiefly by Ageing Better's own communications, especially newsletters, with peer referral acting as an important secondary channel.
- Public signalling matters: many employers view the Pledge as a visible commitment that enhances reputation, strengthens recruitment messaging and reassures existing staff.
- Internal motivations are equally influential, with Leads wanting practical guidance, clearer direction on age inclusion and opportunities to learn from peers.
- Recruitment and retention challenges play a key role in motivating employers to engage older workers.
- Employers see the five Pledge areas as interconnected; but culture change, flexible working and recruitment tend to be the most immediately actionable entry points.
- Interest in career development and health support is present but less consistently prioritised, often reflecting organisational constraints, the age and composition of their workforce, and HR capacity.

3.1.1 How did Leads first hear about the Employer Pledge?

Survey findings show the effectiveness of Ageing Better's activities to connect with employers. The most common route through which Leads learned about the Pledge was via Ageing Better's marketing (41%, Figure 3.1) often through newsletters where Pledge updates routinely appear. Interviews reinforced this picture, with many Leads reporting that pre-existing contact with Ageing Better helped bring the Pledge to their attention.

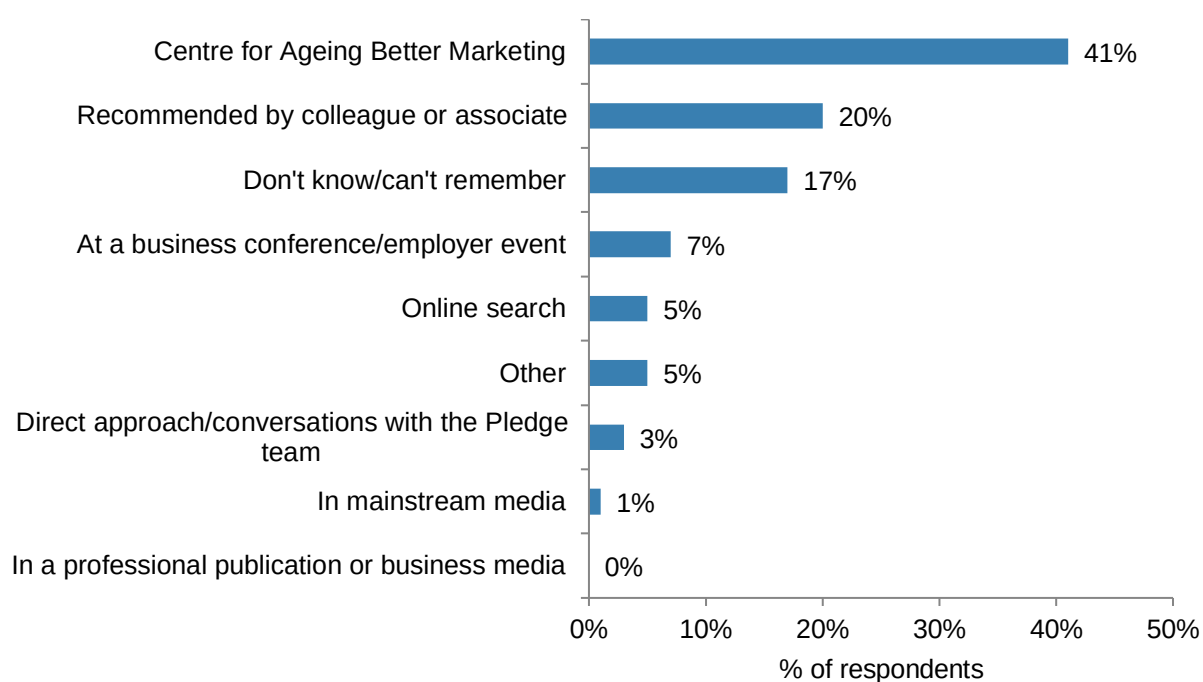
A smaller proportion (20%) first encountered the Pledge through colleagues or associates, including other branches of the same organisation or internal senior champions. Peer-led awareness was especially prominent in the public sector. Interviews provided further examples of this; for instance, one Lead heard about the Pledge via a contact at a gender-inclusion webinar in the leisure sector. This indicates that peer-to-peer referral plays an important secondary role.

Only a minority of Leads (5%) discovered the Pledge via online searches or through LinkedIn/other social media platforms (e.g. Facebook). In an example of this, a Lead

working for a small equal opportunities charity, encountered it while searching for generic resources on later-life MOTs (routine check-ups offered at key age milestones).

Notably, survey responses showed that none of the Leads first learned about the Pledge through professional publications or business media, and only 1% encountered it via mainstream media. Therefore business-facing media have not been a significant route for raising awareness of the Pledge. This is likely to reflect both the Pledge team's communications strategy and limited targeting of these channels to date.

Figure 3.1 Where Lead survey respondents first heard about the Employer Pledge



Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

3.1.2 Age inclusion as a priority

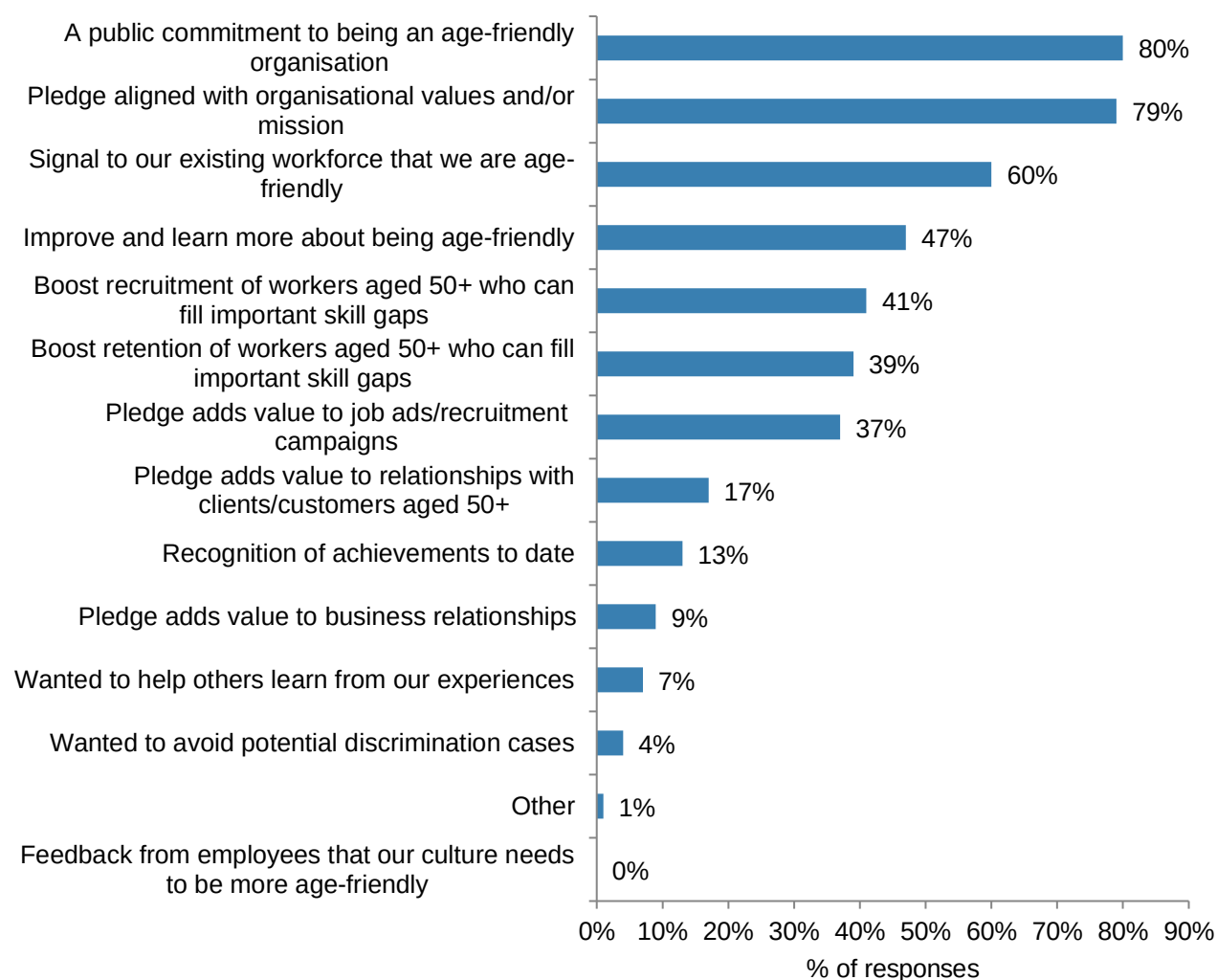
For the majority of employers surveyed, age-inclusion was considered as important as other protected characteristics. Of the Leads who responded to the survey, 84% viewed age as an equal priority to other EDI areas. It was not clear whether this high prioritisation was in place before joining the initiative or had resulted from engagement with it. A small proportion (7%) prioritised other EDI areas more highly, such as the inclusion of younger workers, ethnicity, gender, disability and sexuality. In contrast, 5% said they prioritised age inclusion above other areas like disability and sexuality. The remaining 4% preferred not to say. Public sector and large employers were slightly more likely than other employer types to consider age a lower priority, possibly reflecting the wider range of inclusion issues and stakeholder expectations they are required to respond to.

This pattern indicates that most employers already see age as a mainstream part of their EDI agenda, an important context when interpreting motivations for signing. However where employers are balancing a wider range of EDI commitments, it may be harder for age-inclusion messages to cut through.

3.1.3 Motivations for signing the Pledge

Survey responses on motivations for signing are shown in Figure 3.2. Respondents could select up to five options they considered the most important motivators. These comprise a mix of external and internal-facing organisational drivers.

Figure 3.2 Motivations to sign the Pledge by Lead survey respondents



**Note that participants could select up to five options*

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

Signalling age-friendliness

The top three motivators for signing up to the Pledge were:

- 'making a visible public commitment to being age-friendly' (80%);
- 'aligning with organisational values and/or mission' (79%); and
- 'signalling to our existing workforce that we are age-friendly' (60%).

These results suggest that employers aren't just signing the Pledge as a formality, but because they want to show that being age-friendly genuinely matters to them, both publicly (in a competitive recruitment market) and to their own staff. The most frequently cited reason was consistent across sectors. Interview participants reflected that making a public age-friendly commitment positioned them as good employers to work for or to do business with.

Interview data highlighted the importance of external signalling. Many Leads saw the Pledge as a visible 'badge' or quality mark, comparable to Disability Confident, that communicated their commitment to age-inclusion to prospective employees, clients and communities. Leads within mission-driven organisations, particularly those with a focus on older populations, felt it was particularly important to signal their organisational values externally.

I do think it is important for our image to show that we are behind a Pledge like this because it does add weight to what we do. And like I say, given the nature of our charity [supporting older people], it's even more important.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (b)

We use it as a proud badge of honour, and it gives us an opportunity to start a conversation because it's obvious ... that's a real benefit to us. Because we're an [age-related] organisation, it opens doors.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (c)

These observations from Leads are noteworthy, as the Pledge team has not always observed widespread badge use (nor public statements of commitment via press or social media statements). Clearly for some employers, the Pledge functions as a useful external signal of age inclusion, even if this behaviour is not yet consistent across the wider network.

Internal motivations

Where there was a match with existing organisational values, the Pledge served to reinforce and build on work already underway. Many Leads described joining the Pledge to strengthen existing practice, seek guidance or structure, or gain inspiration from other employers. Some wanted clearer direction on emerging areas of age inclusion, particularly in career development or flexible working.

A lot of it was something we were doing [already], so it's having that recognition.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sports and leisure employer

Among interviewees there was widespread agreement that supporting their older workers was 'the right thing to do'. This view may have been reinforced by the fact that some Leads were themselves in the age group most likely to benefit. Subgroup analysis showed a higher selection of this motivator among larger employers and those in the public sector. This pattern is likely driven by the representation of local authorities in both groups; interviews with LA employers support this interpretation.

Just under half of survey respondents (47%) wanted to **‘improve and learn more about being age-friendly’**. Interviews echoed this, with Leads describing how they signed the Pledge to strengthen age-related EDI practices, particularly where age had been identified as an area for development. They viewed the Pledge as a practical tool for shaping organisational goals and enhancing support for employees.

Recruitment

One in ten survey respondents (41%) signed up to the Pledge to **‘boost recruitment of workers aged 50 and over’**. Comparisons between groups showed that this was a more common motivator for employers with a lower proportion of older employees, compared with those where over half of the workforce was aged 50 and over. This motivation was also more prevalent among private sector organisations than in the charity or public sectors, although this may reflect the skills sought in sector-specific roles or work types or features of the staff profiles of private sector employers in the sample. This could be an area for further investigation to inform future engagement activities.

Interview evidence also indicated that post-pandemic recruitment pressures prompted some Leads to sign the Pledge. Employers described wanting to reach older workers who could bring valuable skills and experience, a concern that was particularly acute in health and social care. One Lead, for example, reported signing the Pledge after facing sustained difficulties recruiting staff.

The expectation that the Pledge would **‘add value to job adverts and recruitment campaigns’** was selected by 37% of respondents. In interviews, Leads described how the Pledge provided inspiration for more creative recruitment approaches, particularly those designed to appeal to older workers, strengthening their recruitment campaigns to help them reach candidates who could fulfil specific skills gaps. For example, a Lead at a small health and social care organisation outlined plans to integrate age-inclusive practices in their upcoming recruitment activities:

We foresee needing to recruit this year and want to make sure our recruitment process and activities are age-friendly. It also aligns with the priorities fed back by members of our team who are over 50.

Senior Pledge Lead, small health and social care employer (a)

Leads from larger organisations saw inclusive recruitment as a vital step towards building a workforce that reflected their local community, customers and service users.

Our service users would love to see themselves reflected in our workforce for a start, whether that be age, gender, religion, or identity, and I think it's important for us to acknowledge that.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (b)

Retention and business planning

‘Boosting retention of older employees’ was selected as a motivator to sign the Pledge by 39% of Lead survey respondents. Some interviewees noted early-retirement plans

among staff, intensifying concern about skills shortages. Other Leads remarked that retaining experienced staff strengthens organisational skills and knowledge, which are commonly associated with older workers, furthering competitive advantage:

It's not going to be long before our 35 to 40-year-olds are going to be moving into that old worker demographic. What can we start doing to set them up for success and retain them?

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (c)

I think there is a world of experience that comes with age. We have people who've come from all different walks of life and careers, and it's wonderful to be able to use those skills and all that experience in what we do.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (b)

On the other hand, many Leads demonstrated recognition of another implication of the UK's ageing population: that many employees would wish (or need) to work longer than before. They viewed the Pledge as a valuable source of guidance on best practice to support those individuals and ensure they felt valued.

These reflections underline the recognition among Pledge employers of the growing importance of preparing for longer working lives and creating environments where later career employees can continue to thrive.

Learning and sharing ideas

'Wanting to improve and learn how to be age-friendly' was selected by 47% of survey respondents as a reason for signing up to the Pledge. In interviews, Leads described seeking inspiration for age-inclusive initiatives they had not yet considered, as well as guidance on what to do after taking initial steps. Some viewed the Pledge as a way to understand themselves better as employers, highlighting what was working well and where improvements were needed. At a small equal opportunities charity, the Lead also hoped to learn how to involve younger staff, showing that motivations for joining the Pledge were not solely focused on older workers.

Consistent with this, in interviews, Leads expressed a strong interest in sharing ideas with and learning from other Pledge employers. They valued opportunities to hear what had worked well elsewhere and to explore activities they had not previously considered. Being part of the Pledge gave them a space to test ideas with peers and receive feedback or guidance when needed:

I've always felt we were doing the right thing, but I wanted to see [what others were doing] in case I was missing something.

Senior Pledge Lead, small education and training employer

Less common motivations

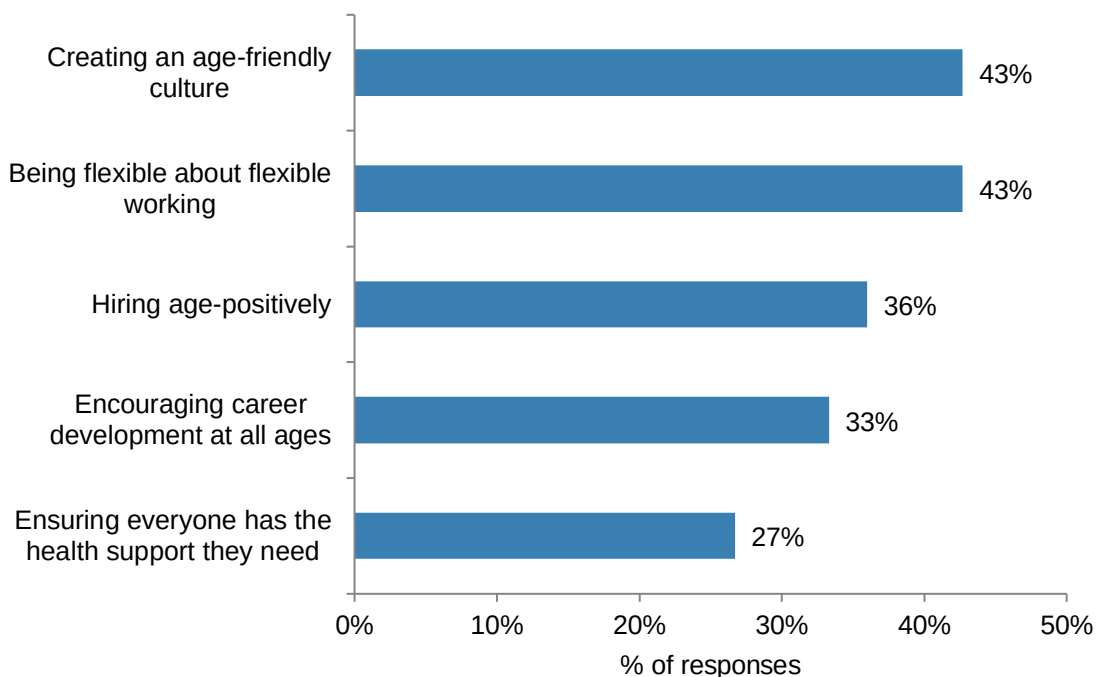
Other possible survey responses received relatively little support. Notably, **'feedback from employees...'** and **'avoiding potential discrimination cases'** were selected by 4%

and 0% of respondents, respectively, suggesting that compliance-driven or problem-driven motivations were not major factors in signing up. This may reflect a degree of sample bias: organisations already performing well on age-inclusion, or those with stronger employee relations, may be more likely to engage with the Pledge, while employers where older workers feel poorly treated may be less inclined to participate.

3.1.4 Areas of commitment and interest

Figure 3.3 illustrates the Pledge areas survey respondents said they were committed to taking action on, with ‘creating an age-friendly culture’ and ‘being flexible about flexible working’ as the areas where there was the most declared commitment (both at 43%). ‘Hiring age-positively’ (36%) and ‘supporting career development at all ages (33%)’ were prioritised by around a third, whilst “ensuring everyone has the health support they need” was the least common area to commit to (27%).

Figure 3.3 Areas of the Pledge that Lead survey respondents have committed to take or plan to take action



**Note that participants could select more than one option*

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

In interviews, several Leads observed that all elements of the Pledge matter, noting that the themes are highly interconnected. For example, being proactive about flexible working can support efforts to recruit older workers and create an age-friendly culture, whilst achieving an age-friendly working culture can create the conditions for older workers to develop their careers. A Lead, from a local government organisation, felt that all aspects of the Pledge were equally important and relevant to their organisation, with each principle helping to bring the Pledge to life in practice.

They're all equally important. I'm going to be really unhelpful because they are. We can't necessarily have a hierarchy in that respect... I think having the Pledge has helped us to talk openly about age, where previously we wouldn't.

Senior Pledge Lead, local government (b)

Because interviews explored the Lead's current position and the survey specifically addressed choices made at sign-up, changes in perceived importance may have emerged between Pledge and the views expressed at the time of the interview. In particular, the connection between the different areas likely becomes clearer to Leads once delivery is underway. The next chapter addresses an apparent disparity between the intended area of focus and where actions actually took place.

3.1.5 Creating an age-friendly culture

On the whole, Leads viewed culture change as central to all other areas of the Pledge, and as the area where visible progress could most readily be made. This likely explains why it was a popular focus among Lead survey respondents (43%).

Leads emphasised the importance of age-inclusive language as a way to visibly acknowledge the experience of older workers and to build wider awareness of age inclusion. They noted that as wider culture evolves and the acceptability of terminology shifts, staff will need ongoing reminders about appropriate language, emphasising the importance of continuous learning.

We have an age-inclusion network, and the Age-friendly Pledge helps guide some of the activity they do. We also believe that in order to implement positive changes, you need to start with a culture of awareness and understanding.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (b)

Some employers noted behaviours or attitudes that made workplace culture a particular concern, especially around how age is spoken about and understood. One Lead described the importance of challenging age-related language in the same way as other forms of inappropriate behaviour.

We want younger staff to appreciate the experience of older workers and think about language like 'can't teach an old dog new tricks' in the same way they'd think about racist or homophobic language.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (a)

Some employers recognised that they had further to go than others in developing an age-friendly culture, depending on the demographics within their workforce and existing age-inclusive practices. Others felt their culture was already age-inclusive but were interested in progressing beyond existing practices:

We have a wide range of ages in our workplace, and we feel that [our culture] is already a strength - but one we can build on.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (f)

Overall, there was marked variation between organisations, with some seeking to enhance already strong practice and others recognising that their current approach fell well short of where it needed to be.

3.1.6 Being flexible about flexible working

Many Leads and other employer stakeholders interviewed reported a growing demand for flexible working among both current staff and job applicants, echoing the survey finding that 43% of Leads viewed this as a priority area. These requests commonly related to caring responsibilities or health conditions, with employees needing flexibility for appointments or changes to working patterns. Leads in SMEs, in particular, described being attuned to these pressures and willing to accommodate a wide range of circumstances.

Having flexible working policies in place to provide options for older workers who may be at a time in their life when they may not want to or can't work full-time. They may want to have a phased retirement, or they may have additional caring responsibilities or health issues that impact their ability to work full-time or to work a traditional working pattern.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (b)

People understand if you've got small children, but when you get older, you have elderly parents, or it's a different set of care and responsibilities. And we take care to make sure people know that's supported if they have caring responsibilities as an older person.

Senior Pledge Lead, small campaigning charity

Employers recognised that enhancing or introducing flexible working options could strengthen appeal at the recruitment stage as well as help retain older workers. A few Leads (typically in larger organisations) raised concerns about the impact of generous pension schemes, which can incentivise early retirement and make recruitment more challenging.

The Lead from a local government organisation noted that their local government pension scheme tends to encourage early retirement, often around age 55. Similarly, the Lead at a large financial organisation anticipated that a substantial proportion of staff could leave within the next five years due to the design of their pension scheme, raising concerns about a 'big loss of knowledge' and increasing the urgency to strengthen age-friendly policies that encourage employees to stay. They felt that flexible working solutions would need to play a major role in this.

Many Leads framed flexible working as a clear draw for recruiting and retaining older workers, yet few referenced the recent legal reforms or forthcoming changes that make flexible working a compliance issue as well as good practice. A reasonable interpretation is that many Pledge employers had already embedded people-friendly, flexible practices before (and independent of) the 2024 legal changes, so they experienced the reforms as formalising what they were already doing rather than driving change.

3.1.7 Hiring age-positively

Improving recruitment was the third most common priority at sign-up (36%). Employers saw recruitment as a straightforward entry point to becoming age-friendly. When Leads were interviewed, two main aims emerged, one centring on demand for skills and the other on achieving diversity, although these were not necessarily exclusive of one another.

It was felt that tactical recruitment would help target candidates to fill vacancies where experience or specific skills are in short supply. This could mean attracting older professionals with established expertise or reaching candidates (of any age) with particular capabilities. Local authorities in particular reported targeting older applicants to fill vacancies across a range of professional roles.

This allows us to access a bigger talent pool with more experienced professionals, which subsequently brings more knowledge and/or industry-specific skills.

Senior Pledge Lead, local government (a)

Many employers aimed to keep a balanced age profile as part of their wider inclusion goals. Here the emphasis was on making recruitment processes welcoming to older applicants, using age-inclusive language and channels, and deliberately shaping multigenerational teams so that experience and fresh perspectives sit side by side. Those distinct aims can reinforce each other in practice, and in conversation Leads often treated them as closely linked.

3.1.8 Encouraging career development at all ages

A third of employers (33%) chose development as a Pledge priority area. Among interviewees who had pledged in this area, many emphasised the importance of creating clearer career pathways, especially as people work for longer and retire later. For example, the Lead at a small transport organisation signed the Pledge because they wanted to formalise career development for all of their employees.

It is very important to us that our employees have the right skills to do their jobs, regardless of their age, so [signing the Pledge is] an opportunity to make this a more formal part of our employee engagement plan.

Senior Pledge Lead, small transport charity

Some Leads noted that older workers are less likely to take up voluntary career development opportunities, which are more often accessed by junior staff. In one example a Lead spoke of plans to introduce more structured development processes and to reassure experienced staff that their expertise is valued just as highly as formal qualifications. As with flexible working, Leads also felt that visibly committing to career development could support the recruitment and retention of older workers.

Sometimes older workers feel they have done all their development, so we want them to realise that their [further] development and what they want to learn is

important to us. We want them to feel valued and know they are worth us investing in.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (c)

A Lead at a large financial organisation wanted to learn how to engage their employees later in their working lives more successfully, noting that career drop-in sessions were poorly attended by older employees.

So whilst we don't hide any adverts or make it impossible for people to develop their career, we do tend to find there's a huge lack of engagement from older people. They're in the mindset of, well, I've only got five years left. They're retired, so I'm going to stick to what I know.

Senior Pledge Lead, large financial employer (a)

The need to address all age cohorts was particularly important to some employers, who voiced concern about the impact of upcoming retirements and wanted guidance on succession planning, where it would be necessary to consider younger candidates. There was a wish to manage this in a way that does not signal to older workers that they are waiting for (or encouraging them) to retire.

A notable aspect of some comments made about this area was the consideration of strategic workforce planning over the longer term, rather than concentration solely on the day-to-day needs of existing employees.

3.1.9 Ensuring everyone has the health support they need

One in four employers said they had pledged to improve access to health support (27%). Among Leads who had been drawn to this aspect of the Pledge, there was concern about staff retiring early due to ill health.

Health support is extremely important in the retention of older workers and shows that we value their contribution and want to make the workplace as supportive as possible.

Senior Pledge Lead, local government (c)

There was widespread awareness of the health implications of an ageing population and, consequently the workforce. Whilst recognising health support is important for all ages, they felt it was important to acknowledge some employees' health needs may change or become more complex with time.

It is important that we acknowledge that as we get older, we may need additional support. To enable our teams to work at their best, we need to offer health support for them.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health charity (a)

It was clear that organisations were starting from very different places in this area. Many expressed a genuine desire to 'do all we can', while also recognising the limits of what employers can realistically influence. There was also an acknowledgement that meeting

some employee health needs would require specialist clinical support beyond the remit of workplace provision.

The variation in organisational starting points was particularly acute for this area, with provision ranging from demonstrating appropriate duty of care to offering extensive, well-established employee benefits packages. Because of the evaluation design, it was not possible to determine whether employers who selected this area were starting from different levels of provision compared with those who did not prioritise it.

3.2 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter show that employers sign the Pledge for a combination of external and internal reasons, with the Pledge most powerfully reinforcing intentions already present within organisations. For many, the Pledge serves as a visible public commitment that aligns closely with their organisational values, strengthens their reputation, and signals age inclusion to both prospective and existing staff. At the same time, the Pledge provides a practical entry point for employers seeking clearer direction, structure and inspiration to develop or deepen their approach to age inclusive practice.

Employers' motivations reflect a mix of practical workforce needs, such as addressing recruitment and retention challenges, filling skills gaps, and supporting longer working lives, as well as cultural drivers, including a desire to modernise workplace attitudes, challenge stereotypes, and enhance intergenerational working. Organisations tend to prioritise areas they perceive as readily actionable, notably culture change, flexible working and age-inclusive recruitment, while development and health-related commitments are often shaped by access to resources, organisational context and existing systems.

Variation in motivations is influenced by sector, size and workforce profile, yet across these contexts a consistent pattern emerges: employers rarely start from scratch when first engaging with the Pledge. Instead, the Pledge helps formalise and build upon existing commitments, offering external validation, tools and a framework that builds confidence and momentum. Where activity is less developed, the Pledge highlights areas for future focus, shapes thinking and starts conversations about what age-friendly practice can look like.

These motivations set the foundation for understanding how organisations subsequently implement the Pledge, which is explored in the following chapter.

4 What age-friendly activities have employers implemented?

This chapter explores how employers are putting Pledge-related commitments into practice, highlighting where the Pledge has had the greatest tangible influence on organisational behaviour. It synthesises survey evidence with rich insights from interviews and focus groups with Pledge leads, HR specialists and managers to show how age-friendly activities are implemented on the ground and supported by staff.

The survey data analysed and presented in this chapter helps distinguish actions that are directly shaped by the Pledge from those already underway before signing. This provides essential insight into the scale of employer activity - where existing employer priorities (planned or actioned) are and the practical realities of delivery, as well as the mechanisms through which the Pledge adds value and is shaping behaviour.

Additional case studies illustrating these experiences are provided in Appendix 6.

Key Messages:

- Overall, the Pledge strengthens internal signalling and organisational confidence, creating space for employers to take action.
- The most action has been taken/planned under Pledge areas of 'Hiring age-positively' and 'Ensuring everyone has health support'. The least action is reported under 'Encouraging career development at all ages'.
- The Pledge's influence is strongest in nudging intentional, visible, age-specific actions, especially in recruitment practice, flexible working, encouraging health conversations.
- Alongside age-specific actions, employers described strengthening routine and broad-based HR practices to support inclusion (such as more standardised approaches to interviewing and selection), rather than specialist or resource-intensive interventions (such as dedicated manager training on age inclusion).
- Manager capability is a recurring enabling factor: line managers shape everyday experiences but frequently need clearer guidance on age-related conversations across culture, health and career development.
- Differences in organisational size and resources shape implementation, with smaller employers able to demonstrate flexibility but facing capacity constraints, and larger organisations more able to embed structured or comprehensive initiatives.

The chapter is structured around each of the 5 Pledge areas. Each section first discusses the most commonly planned or actioned activities by employers under the Pledge area, followed by a discussion on activities most commonly influenced by the Pledge. The section concludes by presenting statistical differences in employer characteristics where relevant, information on the least common or other activities, and their implications.

4.1 Creating an age-friendly culture

This section examines how employers are building age-friendly cultures, highlighting the activities most widely adopted across organisations and the areas where the Pledge has had the strongest influence on shaping cultural change. Across organisations that responded to the research, the Pledge appears to serve as a catalyst by most strongly shaping highly visible cultural actions such as making public commitments, strengthening internal messaging, and promoting multigenerational working teams.

Table 4.1 shows the activities most commonly reported as actioned or planned by employers who responded to the survey items on creating an age-friendly culture. It also shows the number of organisations which stated this activity was directly influenced by the Pledge.

Table 4.1 Age-friendly culture activities and the influence of the Pledge

Activity (N)	% taken action	% planning action	Total taken/ planning action	Pledge influence
Analysing your workforce data by age (73)	80%	15%	95% (69)	60% (41)
Including age explicitly in your EDI strategy (70)	77%	9%	86% (60)	57% (34)
Making your aim to be an age-friendly culture explicit in your internal comms and/or business documents (67)	69%	16%	85% (57)	88% (50)
Putting systems in place for listening to the experiences of your older employees (67)	69%	16%	85% (57)	60% (34)
Making your commitment to cultural change public (69)	64%	16%	80% (55)	89% (49)
Promoting the benefits of multigenerational teams (64)	64%	16%	80% (51)	84% (43)
Challenging stereotypes about older workers in organisational communications (66)	58%	15%	73% (48)	71% (34)
Supporting line managers to feel confident managing direct reports older than them (67)	45%	18%	63% (42)	69% (29)
Increasing our recruitment focus to hiring more older workers (68)	44%	13%	57% (39)	67% (26)
Establishing midlife or older age resource groups, e.g. 'Age-inclusion Forums' (64)	22%	16%	38% (24)	71% (17)

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

4.1.1 Most common age-friendly culture activities

Across Pledge employers who responded, the most commonly actioned or planned activities centred on building visible, organisation-wide commitment to age inclusion and strengthening the cultural foundations for age-friendly practice. Activities that were

actioned or planned by 80% or more employers on the survey are reported here as the most common.

Almost all employers taking the survey (95%) reported that **'analysing workforce data by age'** was the single most frequently undertaken or planned activity. This reflects a widespread desire to understand age patterns within the organisation and monitor diversity and representation. Large organisations, in particular, noted that analysing recruitment and training data by age was already routine practice. Several specialists in larger organisations noted during interviews that monitoring recruitment (including apprentice intake) and training data by age was already a well-established practice.

Another widely implemented activity was **'Including age explicitly in EDI strategies'** reported by 86% of respondents, with 77% having already actioned on this and 9% planning to do so. For example, a large social care organisation had embedded age into their strategy, alongside other protected characteristics. Others mentioned planning to take action with a people experience specialist at a large financial organisation noting that their upcoming EDI strategy update would prioritise age. As an indication of the wider ripples this activity was causing, an older worker at a local government organisation was aware that age was included in the EDI strategy and noted that this visibility helped them feel recognised and valued.

85% of survey respondents mentioned activity on **'making the aim to be an age-friendly culture explicit in internal communications or business documents'**. A learning and development specialist at a local government organisation noted that naming an age-friendly aim helps maintain organisational accountability.

I think that having something that is a clear descriptor of what you're aiming for and actually says the words makes a big difference, because it's something that can hold the Council accountable, but also because the Council is making sure that it is vocal in other areas, such as LGBTQI+ rights and sexual harassment and all those areas that are really important. [Age] should be there as well.

Learning and development specialist, local government (b)

Communication was important to employees, and **'putting systems in place to listen to older workers' experiences'** was a common age-friendly culture/planned activity shared by respondents (85%). Interviews revealed examples of how organisations created spaces for employees to share experiences. For example, at a small age-related charity, the staff working in marketing and communications described using quarterly all-staff meetings to report progress on age-friendly activities and to encourage staff engagement in the presence of senior leaders. At a large leisure not-for-profit organisation, an HR specialist emphasised the importance of fostering open conversations about age by ensuring line managers were equipped to support staff appropriately:

It's having those difficult conversations as well. It's making sure that our line managers are guided and mentored. So for those difficult conversations or taboo subjects... the menopause is probably one prime example there. You know that people feel that they're able to come and have a conversation with their line manager.

HR specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

A slightly lower percentage of respondents (80%) selected **‘making their commitment to cultural change public’** and **‘promoting the benefits of a multigenerational team’**. As improving age-friendly culture is a key motivator for employers when signing, as noted in the previous chapter, it is, therefore, surprising that only 69% had taken action on this, and 16% were yet to do so. An interviewee from the finance sector highlighted the external and internal-facing benefits of this public commitment for both recruitment and retention:

I think it's great that we're able to demonstrate that we're age-friendly with the Pledge. I think that definitely helps attract employees into our company, but also provides some level of comfort to our existing employees that we are age-friendly.

Senior Pledge Lead, large financial employer (b)

Similarly, employee interviews and focus groups were typically positive on multigenerational working, noting that people of different ages bring different perspectives, skills and knowledge. A manager at a large public administration organisation offered a personal perspective on an age-diverse team working well together.

In my team, the youngest member of the team is probably about 24, and the oldest member is about 64. Some of those are the same grade, and they all get on really well, all have very positive things to say, very collaborative. They're not concerned about what each other's grades are. They pull together as a team. And the more experienced people coach people who are new to the organisation.

Manager, large public administration employer

Collectively, these activities show that employers view an age-friendly culture as something achieved through clear signalling, evidence-based understanding, and active listening that strengthens relationships across generations. This picture of where employers are already most active, sets the context for examining which of these culture-focused activities have been most directly shaped by the Pledge.

4.1.2 Activities most influenced by the Pledge

Among the most common activities, **‘making the aim to be an age-friendly culture explicit in internal communications or business documents’** and **‘making your commitment to cultural change public’** were highly influenced by the Pledge, with 88% and 89% of actioning employers respectively indicating this. One interviewee who signalled the value of the Pledge was a Lead in a large education organisation. She reported that the marketing team had showcased the Pledge accreditation in employer branding and shared older workers' experiences on social media promoting the benefits of the scheme.

Following this, **‘promoting the benefits of a multi-generational team’** as the next activity most highly influenced by the Pledge (84% of actioning employers). Interestingly, despite recognising the advantages of having teams with a diverse age profile, Pledge

Leads requested more training resources from the Pledge Team to equip and support line managers in managing multi-generational teams. This was corroborated during interviews with managers who expressed uncertainty about how best to engage such teams. Describing the challenge, one manager at a large healthcare social enterprise and himself an older worker, cautioned against making assumptions about people's capabilities based solely on age:

As a manager, I'm also very aware that within my team, I've got real age gaps, different varieties of people, abilities and ages. We just have to be careful that we don't discriminate and that we just let them try whatever they want to do.

Manager, large health and social care employer (a)

Another manager at a local government organisation said they would welcome more support to help ensure intergenerational working is effective, suggesting a potential area for future guidance from Ageing Better.

'Challenging stereotypes about older workers in organisational communications' was another activity commonly influenced by the Pledge, with 71% of employers who actioned it reporting being influenced by the Pledge. A Lead from a medium-sized health and social care organisation described how this worked in practice, explaining that managers actively encouraged staff to identify any ageist stereotypes or language.

Staff have been actively encouraged by line management to call out ageism as much as they would sexism or racism, for example. Phrases like 'teach an old dog new tricks' in particular have been clamped down on and eradicated from the corporate vocabulary.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (a)

Another Lead at a small equal opportunities charity illustrated this in practice, explaining that they actively promote positive images of older people by routinely drawing on Ageing Better's image library.

We're always very mindful of the images that we're using to portray people, and we will portray people in later life, but we also try to do it in a positive way, so it's not always the person sitting next to a carer or something like that. You're ageing in your life, but you're not necessarily sort of being pigeonholed into a particular role as an older person. So I think that's really important that a lot of the reports that we do, and the adverts, and social media, etc, all have a positive age message.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (e)

Interestingly, though actioned by fewer employers, **'establishing midlife or older age resource groups'** like age inclusion forums was highly influenced by the Pledge (for 71% of actioning employers). This indicates that the Pledge plays a key role in prompting employers to pay greater attention to older workers and to create more open, visible channels for their voices and experiences.

Additionally, though less strongly influenced as a proportion of actioning employers, nearly 30 or more employers indicated that the following activities were shaped by the

Pledge: **‘including age explicitly in your EDI strategy’, ‘putting systems in place for listening to the experiences of your older employees, ‘challenging stereotypes about older workers in organisational communications’, and ‘supporting line managers to feel confident managing direct reports older than them’.**

On support for line managers, one manager from a large public administration organisation reported receiving a handbook on managing older workers. However, the interviewee felt that direct experience of this would provide more useful learning.

Employers also described the Pledge's influence on **‘increasing our recruitment focus on hiring more older workers’** as a means of promoting an age-friendly culture. A Lead at a large private security company noted that the Pledge had encouraged them to shift from an age-neutral approach in their recruitment practices to one that is more deliberately age-friendly. Section 4.2 discusses at length specific areas of hiring age-positively undertaken by employers and the role of the Pledge.

Finally, interview data revealed another age-friendly activity in this category, not included in the survey items. **‘Recognising long service of employees’** was identified as an important factor in signalling appreciation of experienced staff (and potentially encouraging retention). An HR specialist working in a large sport and leisure organisation explained how this was operationalised.

We've just introduced long service recognition certificates. So after 10 years of service with the company, you get a certificate and a voucher, [after] 20 years, we do the same. We wanted some sort of recognition, and we put it in our newsletter.

HR specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

These patterns point to where the Pledge is having the greatest cultural impact and where further support may be needed, which the next section unpacks.

4.1.3 What this means

Overall, the pattern of activity suggests that employers tend to build an age-friendly culture through actions that are high-visibility, communicative, and culturally symbolic, rather than those requiring significant resource investment or specialist expertise. The activities most widely adopted were: embedding age in EDI strategies, analysing workforce data, making age-friendly aims explicit in internal communications, creating forums for listening to older workers, promoting multigenerational teams, and challenging stereotypes. This points to employers prioritising steps that make age inclusion visible, credible, and easy to discuss across their organisations.

Comparative analysis was undertaken to explore whether survey responses varied by organisation type (Appendix 15). Public-sector organisations were statistically less likely than other employers to have taken action (or be planning action) in relation to activities like reporting challenging stereotypes about older workers in organisational communications, making their aim to be an age-friendly culture explicit in internal communications or business documents, and putting systems in place to listen to older employees' experiences. This pattern may reflect a longer-standing tradition within the

public sector of employing and supporting older workers, with greater periods of tenure helping to normalise age-diverse environments. In contrast, higher levels of activity or planning in other types of organisations may indicate a greater need to make progress, suggesting that these employers are using the Pledge to formalise or strengthen practices that the public sector may already have more embedded.

The actions taken on creating an age-friendly culture help to normalise age as a meaningful dimension of inclusion and create shared expectations around language, behaviour, and representation. At the same time, the strength of Pledge influence on cultural signalling activities indicates that the Pledge acts as a catalyst: it gives employers confidence, guidance and a framework for action to articulate commitments publicly and reinforce them internally. This picture suggests that most organisations start by strengthening the cultural basics, which then helps them to explore more involved age-friendly changes over time.

Several practical lessons emerge for employers seeking to embed an age-friendly culture. Public commitments to age inclusion appear to be one of the simplest and most effective levers for change. Explicitly referencing age-friendly aims in internal documents and communications helps normalise age as a core inclusion issue and positions it alongside other protected characteristics. While multigenerational working is widely viewed as a strength, managers need more support to work confidently with mixed-age teams and avoid age-based assumptions. Efforts to challenge stereotypes require consistent reinforcement from managers. When this happens, staff can feel encouraged to call out ageist language and use more positive, representative imagery. Resource-intensive activities, such as establishing age-related forums or offering specialist training, remain out of reach for smaller employers, which highlights the need for scalable, practical support that can be adapted to different organisational contexts.

Summary of Findings:

Most common activities implemented for creating an age-friendly culture

- Analysing workforce data by age is near-universal, helping employers understand age patterns and representation.
- Embedding age in EDI strategies is widely established and increasingly visible across organisations helping give it equal weight alongside other protected characteristics.
- Explicit internal communication of age-friendly aims and creating channels to listen to older workers are widely adopted helping normalise age inclusion.

Activities in creating an age-friendly culture most influenced by the Pledge

- Public commitments and cultural signalling are most strongly driven by the Pledge; employers value its impact on recruitment, retention and organisational accountability.
- Promoting multigenerational teams and challenging age stereotypes were significantly shaped by Pledge guidance and resources.
- Creating age-related resource groups and reviewing recruitment messaging were also catalysed by the Pledge.

Key Takeaways

- Employers typically start with high-visibility, low-cost cultural actions before moving to deeper changes.
- Managers need more support and guidance to confidently lead mixed-age teams and avoid age-based assumptions.
- Clear signalling on age inclusion empowers older workers to speak up and strengthens organisational culture.
- More resource-intensive activities (e.g., resource groups/forums, specialist training) are harder for smaller employers to implement, indicating a need for practical, scalable support.

4.2 Hiring age-positively

This section examines the age-inclusive recruitment practices employers most commonly undertake, and the specific areas where the Pledge has directly shaped how organisations design and present their hiring processes. The data indicates that while some routine recruitment practices are already widely embedded across employers, the Pledge plays a strong role in prompting intentional shifts, particularly around language, imagery and reducing age bias in recruitment processes.

Table 4.2 shows the activities most commonly reported as actioned or planned by employers who responded to the survey items on age-inclusive recruitment. It also shows the number of organisations which stated an activity they were actioning or planning was directly influenced by the Pledge.

Table 4.2 Age-inclusive recruitment activities

Activity (N)	% taken action	% planning action	Total taken/ planning action	Pledge influence
Ensuring that interview panels have multiple people on them (66)	89%	2%	91% (60)	25% (15)
Committing to using predefined questions and scoring mechanisms in interviews (67)	88%	2%	90% (60)	28% (17)
Using specific, age-neutral language in job adverts (69)	87%	6%	93% (64)	59% (37)
Writing job adverts that appeal to all ages (69)	87%	4%	91% (63)	56% (35)
Removing language and imagery that deters older workers from job adverts (68)	84%	3%	87% (59)	69% (40)
Ensuring that interview panels are as diverse and inclusive as possible (67)	84%	5%	89% (59)	31% (18)
Removing any non-essential details on application forms that might indicate someone's age (66)	76%	8%	84% (55)	44% (24)
Not insisting on applicants holding qualifications that may have come into existence after they left full-time education (68)	71%	10%	81% (55)	44% (24)

Training our hiring managers on inclusive recruitment (66)	70%	14%	84% (55)	44% (24)
Refreshing interview processes to reduce age cues and minimise age bias (67)	69%	10%	79% (53)	60% (32)
Refreshing application processes to reduce age cues and minimise age bias (67)	67%	10%	77% (52)	67% (34)
Updating recruitment tools to include a diverse range of employees and age-friendly imagery (65)	65%	11%	76% (49)	59% (29)
Updating career pages to include a diverse range of employees and age-friendly imagery (66)	61%	9%	70% (46)	61% (28)
Including a diversity statement in job adverts that emphasises age-inclusivity (69)	58%	15%	73% (50)	65% (32)
Allowing applicants to list their previous roles in terms of the number of years of experience, rather than the dates of that experience, on a CV (65)	51%	14%	65% (42)	49% (20)

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

4.2.1 Most common hiring age-positively activities

An extremely high proportion of Pledge Leads surveyed (90% or more) reported that the most common recruitment activities they have actioned or were planning to hire age-positively included **‘using specific, age-neutral language in job adverts’**, **‘writing job adverts that appeal to all ages’**, **‘ensuring that interview panels have multiple people on them’**, and being **‘committed to using predefined questions and scoring mechanisms in interviews’**.

These practices appear to be already well established in organisations, targeted toward diversity and inclusion more broadly rather than specifically age inclusion, with interviews with Leads suggesting existing momentum independent of Pledge influence. That said, the Lead at a medium-sized private healthcare organisation did mention that their recruitment processes have recently been modernised to utilise structured interview frameworks now, which they believed would support fairer assessment across age groups and reduce unintended bias against age.

Recruitment specialists who were interviewed discussed the diversity of interview panels as a means to promote diversity in general, and having multiple perspectives inform the hiring decision rather than representing specific candidate profiles:

Try to make your panel as diverse as possible. So it's not necessarily about representing in terms of the candidates that are there, but it is about making sure there's different perspectives, but also that not one person makes the decision, that it is the panel that makes that decision together...rather than the person who shouts the loudest gets their score to go through, so just making sure that all voices are heard.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

Another widely implemented activity was **‘removing language and imagery from job adverts that deters older applicants’**. This was actioned or planned by 87% of survey respondents. This activity was also significantly influenced by the Pledge, as will be discussed in the next section. Several employers reported making improvements to job advertisements, with one employer from a sports and leisure organisation explaining the rationale of addressing the language used in recruitment materials as follows:

For me, it's just making sure that our advert wording is accurate and doesn't put anything in there that would [deter] anybody applying to this particular age group. It's things like "we are looking for a fun, vibrant employee". That's the thing we don't want because to me that actually attracts or is looking more like a younger person... It's just [about] making sure that we tailor that written content correctly.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

Other activities actioned or planned by 84% of Lead respondents in the survey were **‘removing any non-essential details on application forms that might indicate someone’s age’**, and **‘training our hiring managers on inclusive recruitment’**. This suggests an emphasis on tackling ageist bias and attitudes that may seep into the shortlisting or interviewing process. During interviews, an employee in local government shared that date of birth or qualification years were removed from application materials to mitigate any age bias.

We don't have the age identifiers any longer in our recruitment processes. So you don't get that filtering by too young, too old as part of that subconscious process that sometimes can occur.

Older worker, local government (b)

Similarly, a people specialist at a large sports and leisure organisation shared removing unnecessary age-related details during recruitment:

We would only ask for age-specific information when it comes to the onboarding process. But otherwise it's not really for the shortlisting manager. We don't believe that, if I'm honest with you, it's a bit discriminatory. So, we think it's only fair not to ask.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

An HR specialist at a large public administration organisation also noted that training for all employees involved in assessments or interviews had been introduced specifically to minimise age bias, though this activity did not appear to be directly influenced by the Pledge.

A further 81% of surveyed employers shared that they were **‘not insisting on applicants holding qualifications that may have come into existence after they left full-time education’**, which again highlights efforts underway in organisations to tackle areas that may disadvantage older workers and exclude them from the hiring process without a fair chance.

Overall, the evidence on the most common age-inclusive hiring activities shows that employers are prioritising practical steps to reduce age bias in hiring by refreshing job adverts to be age-neutral, moderating language and imagery, removing age-revealing information and cues from applications, and introducing fairer, more consistent interview processes. While many of these practices were already established rather than a result of the Pledge, they collectively signal a stronger commitment to strengthening age-inclusive recruitment and making it more accessible and equitable for older workers. The next section discussed the extent of the Pledge's influence on these and other recruitment activities.

4.2.2 Activities most influenced by the Pledge

Recruitment activities where the Pledge tends to have the most influence are all linked to making recruitment more visibly age-inclusive by removing age cues and presenting the organisation in a way that signals fairness, openness, and inclusivity to older applicants. Activities focused on making job adverts and application processes more age-friendly tended to be more strongly influenced by the Pledge. For instance, **'removing language and imagery from job adverts that deters older applicants'** was the most common recruitment activity that employers indicated was influenced directly by the Pledge (69% of actioning employers). Employers in a variety of sectors had used Ageing Better imagery in their recruitment materials, especially in job adverts and on their websites. For example, HR professionals in a large organisation in the healthcare sector had rewritten job descriptions to remove age-biased language, and an employer in the sport and leisure sector had updated imagery in job adverts and its website to be more age-inclusive. This points to guidance from Ageing Better playing a role in influencing how employers adapt their recruitment practices.

In the further education sector, the use of Pledge resources enhanced a campaign providing opportunities for older tradespeople to move into second careers as educators, recognising that physical demands can limit their ability to continue in their original trade roles, and emphasising that their skills and experience are valuable.

[We make it] clear to recruits that we actively look for people who have had other careers and are looking for a new challenge. This works really well when looking for teachers in vocational areas. This may not have been clear from our advertising prior to joining Ageing Better.

Senior Pledge Lead, large education employer

Recruitment staff at a local government organisation, recognising the importance of language, used an app to check for terms that could result in age bias:

So never using language apart from when we're looking specifically at graduate positions and things, but making sure the language is jargon-free, it's inclusive.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

Linked to this, **'including (or planning to include) a diversity statement in job adverts that emphasises age-inclusivity'** was another activity that actioning employers (65%)

attributed to the Pledge. In interviews, employers mentioned incorporating references to being an age-friendly employer into their recruitment content or using the Employer Pledge logo on recruitment documents. The Lead at a small equal opportunities charity reported that since signing the Pledge, they place age at the top of the protected characteristics they prioritise.

‘Using specific, age-neutral language in job adverts’ and **‘updating career pages to include a diverse range of employees and age-friendly imagery’** were other actions that had followed from signing the Pledge, with 59% and 61% of actioning employers respectively attributing its influence on their thinking. At a large health and social care organisation, the recruitment manager noted using Pledge imagery when celebrating the International Day of Older Workers. Other examples of Pledge resources being instrumental in promoting age-inclusivity through imagery include using images of older workers in promotional banners and on company web pages related to recruitment.

Apart from modifying public facing activities like job advertisements and careers website, employers also noted the influence of the Pledge on **‘refreshing application processes to reduce age cues and minimise age bias’**, **‘refreshing interview processes to reduce age cues and minimise age bias’**, and **‘updating recruitment tools to include a diverse range of employees and age-friendly imagery’** (67%, 60%, and 59% of actioning employers respectively). These findings suggest that while diverse panels and structured interviewing practices were already well-established and not shaped by the Pledge, signing the Pledge did prompt employers to review other parts of their recruitment processes through an age-inclusive lens. For instance, employers took actions like involving older workers at recruitment days to speak directly with applicants, developing case studies for careers events, and featuring older employees in videos.

The Lead at a large local government organisation, where half of its workforce is aged 50 and over, offered useful insight into how their recruitment practices are more age-inclusive. The organisation operates in an area where the population of older people is 15-20% higher compared to the national average. The Lead described how they ensure being **accessible and attractive to older workers** when running in-person recruitment events. Since they specifically want to attract older workers, they choose a location for their careers fair which has easy access and strong local transport links to be considerate of who engages and to support early-stage recruitment. The Lead also noted that, given the location’s unique demographics, there are opportunities for individuals who wish to continue working later in life or **return to work after retirement**:

If people are coming here for a better work-life balance, because they want to work here, because it's a beautiful place to live, and a lot of older people come here to retire, a lot of them are still active. So they want to work. And why not work for us?

Senior Pledge Lead, local government (e)

Other reported age-friendly recruitment activities not covered by the survey but attributed to Pledge influence were **offering support before interviews** to ease candidate concerns and provide guidance and potential reasonable adjustments. Employers felt this was particularly important for older applicants, who may be less familiar with online

applications or virtual interviews, and wanted to make the process as accessible as possible.

Have those conversations with people and the fear that some people have been in the organisation for such a long time, and not needed to interview. So just making sure people feel comfortable with those skills or thinking about actually what can I do? What can I use these skills for, whether that's elsewhere in the organisation or elsewhere externally.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

4.2.3 What this means

Across the hiring and recruitment activities, a consistent pattern emerges: the activities most widely actioned or planned, often reported by 80–90% of employers, were those already embedded within standard recruitment practice, such as writing job adverts to appeal to all ages, convening multiple-person interview panels, applying predefined scoring mechanisms, and removing date-based age cues from application forms. These practices reflect existing compliance norms, established fairness processes, or mature EDI infrastructure already in place before employers signed the Pledge. This could explain why Pledge influence is somewhat low in these areas.

By contrast, the activities most strongly influenced by the Pledge cluster around actions that relate to how the organisation presents itself to applicants. The Pledge supports employers to shift the visibility, framing, and better signal age inclusion. These activities include removing age-biased language and imagery from adverts, adding diversity statements that emphasise age inclusion, updating career pages and recruitment tools with age-diverse imagery, and refreshing interview and application processes to minimise age cues. This suggests the Pledge is particularly effective at raising awareness of subtle, often overlooked forms of age bias and prompting organisations to make visible, confidence-building changes they would not ordinarily prioritise. The Pledge functions as a catalyst, encouraging employers to take steps they may not have prioritised on their own. Ageing Better's resources, particularly the image library, language guidance, templates and examples, help sharpen organisational intent and visible commitment. These practical, ready-to-use resources are a key mechanism of Pledge influence, and providing more tools of this kind could amplify impact beyond guidance. The Pledge also encouraged employers to revisit recruitment practices such as early-stage candidate experience, pre-interview support, or removing subtle age cues. Employers mentioned being influenced by the Pledge to reach older workers more proactively, including in targeted recruitment campaigns through recruitment days designed around accessibility for older applicants, and featuring older employees in case studies. This signals a shift toward active inclusion in designing recruitment to reach older workers intentionally.

The absence of subgroup differences between employers indicates that factors like size and sector do not strongly influence the adoption of age-inclusive hiring practices. This may suggest that organisations are drawing on wider EDI standards, with the Pledge adding value chiefly by enhancing visible commitment and practical guidance rather than driving new actions.

Summary of Findings:**Most common activities implemented on hiring age-positively**

- Age-neutral job adverts and wording that appeals to all ages were widely adopted.
- Structured, fair interview processes through multi-person panels and predefined scoring seem to be already routine practice.
- Removing age cues from applications processes (for example, dates, unnecessary qualification timelines) and training managers on inclusive recruitment are also common.

Activities in hiring age-positively most influenced by the Pledge

- Removing age-biased language and imagery in adverts is the strongest Pledge-driven shift.
- Age-inclusive signalling through diversity statements, age-friendly imagery, use of Pledge logo on the website are widely prompted by Pledge guidance.
- Refreshing application/interview processes to minimise subtle age cues was notably catalysed by the Pledge.

Key takeaways / lessons

- Employers most often implement changes that are easy to operationalise, such as updating imagery and removing age-biased language, drawing directly on Pledge guidance and resources (imagery, language guidance, templates).
- Implementation relies heavily on HR capacity and expertise, with larger organisations more able to rewrite job descriptions, redesign processes or test for bias than smaller employers.
- Employers make more intentional efforts to reach older applicants when this is driven by immediate workforce needs. Targeted activities can include adapting recruitment campaigns to be more welcoming of older workers and providing supportive pre-interview guidance.

4.3 Being flexible about flexible working

This section examines how employers are implementing flexible working and the extent to which the Pledge has shaped these approaches. Many employers reported that flexible working arrangements were already in place before signing the Pledge, largely due to changes introduced during the pandemic. However, the Pledge appears to have helped employers think more expansively and scale up their efforts in this area.

Table 4.3 shows the activities most commonly reported as actioned or planned by employers who responded to the survey items on age-inclusive flexible working activities. It also shows the number of organisations which stated an activity they were actioning or planning, was directly influenced by the Pledge.

Table 4.3 Age-inclusive flexible working activities

Activity (N)	% taken action	% planning action	Total taken/ planning action	Pledge influence
Offering part-time working opportunities where possible (69)	94%	1%	95% (66)	25% (16)

Increasing opportunities to ask for flexible working across the career lifecycle (67)	79%	2%	81% (54)	51% (27)
Supporting line managers to better understand and manage flexible working options (68)	78%	4%	82% (56)	35% (19)
Implementing a carer's leave policy (68)	71%	4%	75% (51)	20% (10)
Offering recruitment packages which are explicit about flexible working (68)	69%	3%	72% (49)	38% (18)
Advertising the right to request flexible working from day one in job adverts (68)	52%	7%	59% (40)	31% (12)
Actively promoting flexible working to workers in their 50s and 60s (66)	50%	9%	59% (39)	61% (23)
Implementing a grandparents' leave policy (67)	5%	19%	24% (16)	63% (10)

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

4.3.1 Most common flexible working activities

Reported levels of activity were high in **'offering part-time working opportunities'** with 94% of employers responding to the survey saying they had already taken action on this. This can be clearly linked to the legislative requirements for employers to offer flexible working, which has been made a Day 1 requirement recently.

Relatedly, action was already taken by a majority of respondents on **'increasing opportunities to request flexible working across the career lifecycle'**; and **'supporting line managers to better understand and manage flexible working options'** (81% and 82% respectively had actioned or were planning action). These are critical in order to successfully implement the flexible working mandate in anticipation of recent and forthcoming changes to flexible working legislation.

Line managers noted their effective implementation depended on having access to the right support. Input from HR was seen as helping managers navigate operational constraints, ensure consistency, and make fair decisions, particularly in organisations where infrastructure or role design posed challenges.

The truth of the matter is that HR is a guidance and support. We, the managers, ultimately will decipher whether there are operational challenges with a flexible working request. HR will oversee the process, make sure it's fair and consistently applied, more so than anything else. And if there is a decline, it has to be for business reasons.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

Furthermore, two-thirds of employers (72-75%) also reported **'implementing a carers leave policy'** and **'offering recruitment packages which are explicit about flexible working'**, indicating efforts to reflect flexible working across organisational policies and processes. In interviews with HR specialists, it was common for them to express

frustration that managers often underestimated the extent to which roles could be made flexible, reflecting a broader lack of flexible thinking.

It's not assumed that a role could be flexible, but in most situations it can. So it's almost really making that clear on adverts because my worry is people wouldn't apply unless they felt clear.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

Lastly, nearly 60% of respondents said they were **'advertising the right to request flexible working from day one in their job adverts'**.

4.3.2 Activities most influenced by the Pledge

The areas where the Pledge had the most direct influence in shaping flexible working policies and practices was in encouraging organisations to **'Implement a grandparents' leave policy'**. Of the small number of 16 employers many of whom planned to implement this policy, 63% reported this plan was a result of the Pledge. An older worker at a large public administration organisation reported that they had changed their working pattern to allow staff to care for grandchildren and felt supported to do so.

The policy was mentioned across employers from a variety of sectors and industries in interviews, highlighting the widespread adoption. This policy was seen as part of a family-friendly approach by some employers, for example it was introduced alongside a new compassionate leave policy at a large public sector organisation.

There's been further guidance around time off for carers and caring responsibilities, and I think that's an influence of the Pledge.

Learning and development specialist, local government (b)

Notably, this policy action does not feature in the Pledge guidance which suggests that the Pledge has the potential to catalyse wider ripples of change in organisational practice by stimulating employers to reflect on and improve their age-inclusion practices.

Another sizeable number of employers who were **'actively promoting flexible working to workers in their 50s and 60s'** reported being nudged to do so by the Pledge (61% of those actioning this attributed it to the Pledge).

Interview findings show that organisations operationalised flexible working in different ways depending on their size, resources and workforce needs. In smaller charities, arrangements were typically informal and tailored to individual circumstances, for example, offering flexibility for health or caring responsibilities that could change over time. At a small age-related charity, flexible working was also used to support staff wellbeing and provide paid time off to care for others. In contrast, a large financial employer took a more structured approach, with HR sharing case studies of older workers who work flexibly to encourage wider uptake. For several organisations, work to promote flexible working was ongoing.

Flexible working has continued to be normalised as it's an area we already have established, but we are also constantly reviewing this through role design and

manager guidance, supporting employees at different life and career stages or career development.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (a)

Half of those employers '**increasing opportunities to request flexible working across the career lifecycle**' were encouraged to do so by the Pledge. During interviews, employees frequently referred to both flexible retirement options and flexible arrangements at entry, indicating that flexibility was available at multiple points in the employment lifecycle.

My colleagues have done a lot of work in terms of actually making it easier for people to request [flexible working],

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

More generally, employees also reported **a wide range of flexible working options** being available to them. At a large sports and leisure employer, staff could draw on varied forms of flexibility, including adaptable working hours, rota adjustments and career breaks, suggesting that a range of options were available to those who needed them. At a large education organisation, flexibility was also built into the contract design: a combined zero-hours and fixed-term arrangement, described as 'variable hours', that enabled staff to set their availability in line with their work–life balance needs.

4.3.3 What this means

Overall, the data show that while many flexible working practices are already in place, the Pledge has encouraged employers to think more intentionally about how flexibility supports older workers and promote it more actively. Flexible working is already deeply embedded across many Pledge employers, largely shaped by pre-existing legislative changes and the legacy of pandemic-driven adaptations. As a result, the Pledge does not typically introduce flexible working from scratch; instead, it tends to *extend* or *refine* what employers already have in place.

Subgroup analysis was undertaken to explore whether survey responses varied by organisation size (Appendix 15). This showed that micro or small organisations were statistically more likely than other organisations to have taken action (or be planning action) in relation to '**Actively promoting flexible working to workers in their 50s and 60s**'. This could likely reflect the nature of smaller organisations where a personalised approach supporting older workers was feasible and/or felt appropriate.

Therefore the Pledge's influence is most visible in helping employers take more intentional, age-specific actions, such as promoting flexibility directly to older workers, offering lifecycle-based flexibility, or adopting family-friendly approaches like grandparents' leave. Importantly, the Pledge appears to act as a nudge or catalyst, prompting employers to revisit assumptions about which roles can be flexible and to align flexible working more closely with older workers' needs. Smaller organisations in particular are more likely to take Pledge-influenced action, perhaps because personalised or informal flexibility is easier to operationalise in these settings.

Summary of Findings

Most common activities implemented on being flexible about flexible working

- Part-time working options are near-universal and widely embedded across employers.
- Support for line managers to better understand and handle flexible working requests especially across the lifecycle are already standard practice.
- Carers' leave and flexibility-explicit recruitment packages are commonly offered and integrated into wider HR policies.

Activities on being flexible about flexible working most influenced by the Pledge

- Implementing Grandparents' leave policies showed the strongest Pledge influence among the few employers who had taken action on this.
- Targeted promotion of flexible working to workers in their 50s and 60s was significantly shaped by the Pledge.
- Expanding flexibility across the career lifecycle (including retirement and entry routes) was nudged forward by the Pledge.

Key Takeaways

- Employers already had flexible working in place post-pandemic, especially scaling of part-time options, so the Pledge mainly encouraged them to extend or formalise existing arrangements.
- The Pledge encourages more intentional, age-specific flexibility, especially valuable for older workers' helping organisations better support later-career staff
- Flexible working across the entire employment lifecycle (onboarding, mid-career, retirement) is most effective and widely valued by older workers.
- Smaller organisations are often most responsive to Pledge influence because personalised flexibility is easier to operationalise; HR specialists at large employers noted that managers frequently underestimated how flexible roles could be due to rigid job design or staffing options.

4.4 Encouraging career development at all ages

This section presents the findings on age-inclusive career development, summarising the activities employers most commonly undertake and the areas where the Pledge has had the greatest influence. Compared with the other Pledge areas, employers reported noticeably lower levels of activity in age-inclusive career development as evidenced by a lower percentage of respondents reporting they have taken or were planning actions in this area. Where introduced, most actions were still in early stages or limited in scale. The evidence suggests that investing in the career development of older workers still remains an area of aspiration, with low levels of reported action. Nevertheless, the Pledge has been instrumental in and has further potential to encourage an age-specific lens and attention to this area.

Table 4.4 shows the activities most commonly reported as actioned or planned by employers who responded to the survey items on career development at all ages. It also shows the number of organisations which stated an activity they were actioning or planning was directly influenced by the Pledge.

Table 4.4 Age-friendly career development activities

Activity (N)	% taken action	% planning action	Total taken/ planning action	Pledge influence
Taking targeted action to ensure equitable take-up of training opportunities (66)	55%	12%	67% (44)	51% (22)
Offering age-inclusive CPD opportunities (66)	52%	11%	63% (41)	39% (16)
Providing opportunities for internal mobility to older workers (66)	46%	6%	52% (34)	41% (13)
Tracking training data for older workers (66)	42%	11%	53% (35)	52% (17)
Tracking appraisal documentation for older workers (67)	42%	10%	52% (35)	51% (18)
Providing opportunities for retirement planning to older workers (65)	39%	12%	51% (33)	55% (17)
Considering job re-design, in terms of schedule, location or job content for older workers (66)	39%	9%	48% (32)	41% (12)
Providing retirement planning guidance to older workers (66)	32%	11%	43% (28)	48% (13)
Facilitating mentoring opportunities for older workers (65)	26%	17%	43% (28)	59% (16)
Providing career guidance to older workers at mid-life and beyond (66)	23%	20%	43% (28)	68% (19)
Facilitating group knowledge exchange opportunities (66)	23%	11%	34% (22)	55% (12)
Monitoring targeted offers of training to older workers (64)	20%	9%	29% (19)	61% (11)
Providing mid-life career reviews to older workers (65)	14%	17%	31% (20)	68% (13)
Providing training for managers which explicitly addresses CPD retention for older workers (65)	11%	12%	23% (15)	87% (13)
Providing 'end of career' training (66)	9%	11%	20% (13)	58% (7)

Source: *Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025*

4.4.1 Most common career development activities

The most commonly reported actioned or planned career development activities were **'taking targeted action to ensure equitable take-up of training opportunities'** (67%) and **'offering age-inclusive CPD opportunities'** (63%). Interviews with Leads noted that career development activities were described as 'available to all', regardless of age, by employers and employees alike. An older worker at a large health and social care organisation explained:

When experiences come up, for example, NVQs, we make sure it's clear that it's on offer to everybody, not just a certain age range. That anybody they feel that they can commit.

Older worker, large health and social care employer (a)

Comparative analysis also shows that taking targeted action to ensure equitable take-up of training opportunities tended associated with employer age profile being more likely in organisations with 0-50% older workers. This means that employers with fewer older workers were more likely to take targeted action to ensure older workers had equitable access to training, suggesting that under-representation may prompt more deliberate efforts to support older workers' development.

Only 50% of respondents to the relevant survey items on career development for all ages reported that they were **'tracking training data for older workers'** and **'tracking appraisal documentation for older workers'**, reported by 53% and 52% of respondents, respectively. Examples of methods to encourage take-up of training opportunities included regular line manager reviews of development plans at a local government organisation, opportunities being shared on the 'people portal' website pages at a large financial employer, and informal conversations with older workers about the future at a small community services charity.

It is noteworthy that comparative subgroup analysis found that 'tracking appraisal documentation for older workers' was more likely to occur in private sector organisations and more likely to be present in medium-sized organisations. Typically, line managers were heavily involved in this action, either by sharing or approving opportunities. A learning and development specialist at a local government organisation highlighted the need for there to be variety in the delivery methods to improve accessibility of training opportunities, i.e. having some in-person and others online.

'Providing opportunities for retirement planning to older workers' was reported as actioned or in planning by 51% of respondents and more likely to be offered by large organisations. Specialists from a variety of organisations reported that they were considering or implementing retirement planning. While expressing a desire to take action, one manager at a local government organisation requested further support in how to start conversations around retirement planning, as they didn't feel sufficiently confident. Comparative analysis for subgroups showed that providing retirement planning guidance to older workers was less likely in private sector organisations and more likely in large organisations.

'Considering job re-design, in terms of schedule, location or job content to older workers' was also reported as actioned or planned by close to half the survey respondents. At a large sports and leisure organisation, a programme had been established that offered employees a two-week placement in another role, giving them first-hand insight into potential alternative positions within the organisation. Another organisation, a large health charity, supported employees to make sideways career moves so that skills and experience could be retained. However, such opportunities were not available to all employers, with some limited by organisational size or structure.

These findings show that career development for older workers remains patchy across organisations, underscoring where employers may need greater confidence, resources, capacity and tools to translate aspiration into action. Building on this, the following section examines which career development activities were most directly influenced by the Pledge.

4.4.2 Activities most influenced by the Pledge

Though introduced by only 15 employers, **‘providing training for managers which explicitly addresses CPD retention for older workers’** was reported by 87% (13 of these 15 actioning employers) to have been highly influenced by the Pledge.

The next set of activities with the highest Pledge influence were reported to be **‘providing career guidance to older workers at mid-life and beyond’** and **‘providing mid-life career reviews to older workers’** (both at 68% of actioning employers). Interview evidence offers examples of how this guidance was being put into practice. At a large social care organisation, career pathways had been developed to give employees a clear view of progression routes. At a medium-sized health and social care organisation, the Lead described introducing ‘career sustainability’ discussions, covering later-career development, retention and planned transitions. In addition, some employers were facilitating ‘staying interviews’ with long-serving staff to support retention and identify future development needs.

Staying rather than leaving interviews. As part of celebrating that, but also wanting to understand why people wanted to stay, and give their entire career to one organisation.

Learning specialist, local government (b)

While a majority of Leads said mid-life career reviews were not being currently offered in their organisations, many considered them to be a good idea and were interested in receiving support to implement them. However, one older worker noted that mid-life career reviews could be interpreted as a signal that the organisation saw them as approaching retirement, highlighting the importance of sensitive framing and caution in making assumptions as to when an employee planned to retire.

Between 55% and 61% of actioning employers credited the Pledge for influencing them to **‘monitor targeted offers of training to older workers’**, **‘facilitating mentoring opportunities for older workers’**, **‘providing ‘end of career’ training’**, and **‘facilitating group knowledge exchange opportunities’**. All these were found to be much more likely to be offered by private sector organisations in comparative subgroup analysis. This pattern suggests that the Pledge is prompting employers to think more deliberately about later-career development by encouraging activities that recognise the distinct needs and contributions of older workers. It also indicates that these age-specific practices, such as mentoring, targeted training and end-of-career support, are still emerging practices rather than routine, and are being catalysed largely because of the Pledge.

A less common activity that had only moderate Pledge influence was **‘providing opportunities for internal mobility to older workers’**. One large local government

organisation had an 'internal first' policy, in which vacancies were advertised internally before being opened externally, ensuring existing staff – including older workers – had priority access to new opportunities. In other organisations, internal mobility was constrained by size or structure, limiting the availability of roles for staff to progress into. Some interviewees also referred to informal succession planning, where senior staff identified individuals who might be suitable for future roles, though these opportunities were rare in practice. One older worker at a large public administration organisation described being encouraged by their line manager or performance coach to consider a potential progression opportunity they would not have identified themselves, illustrating a more personalised approach to supporting internal mobility.

Apprenticeships were discussed in interviews, with some positive experiences shared and employee interest shared by employers. They described how apprenticeships were encouraged for all age groups and were good opportunities to develop. At a large private security organisation, they were described as 'lifelong learning' opportunities to avoid deterring older workers from participating.

Two other employers, a large healthcare charity and a local government organisation, described how they had developed case studies of people aged 50 and over undertaking apprenticeships internally to highlight the opportunities for older workers. At the local government organisation, these case studies were circulated at internal and external events to promote the opportunities.

Apprenticeships were more likely to be mentioned by larger organisations, especially local authorities. A recruitment specialist at a local government organisation described their efforts to delink apprenticeships from age and encourage older workers to consider them:

It's made really clear that apprenticeships are for all ages. There's a lot of promotion that my team have done around that as well, talking to people who have done apprenticeships and what they've gained from it and then sharing that. We produced a video with colleagues of different generations talking about the different ways that learning and development supported them throughout their careers, so sharing those stories openly.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

The findings presented in this section indicate that the Pledge is helping employers broaden their approach to later-career development in ways that were not previously routine; the following section explores the implications of this.

4.4.3 What this means

The findings regarding employer implementation of career development activities suggests that this area is less developed than other Pledge areas, with most organisations only beginning to put activities in place. Many of the more common actions, such as offering CPD to all staff or taking steps to ensure equitable access to training, are all-staff, general workforce practices rather than age-specific approaches. This suggests that, while employers recognise the importance of developing their older workforce, they

have not yet embedded structured or systematic later-career development across their organisations.

In contrast, the activities most strongly influenced by the Pledge, such as mid-life career guidance, career reviews, mentoring, and end-of-career support, are those that require employers to actively consider the distinct needs, transitions and contributions of workers aged 50 and over. The Lead at a large financial employer described career development as their most aspirational focus area within the Pledge illustrating how the Pledge has encouraged employers to think differently about career development. This Lead noted that they would not have given career development of older workers significant attention if it had not been for signing up to the Pledge which had prompted them to explore new ways of supporting older workers' development and progression.

Subgroup differences indicate that larger and private-sector employers tend to adopt a wider range of later-career development practices, while smaller organisations implement fewer, reflecting differences in staffing, capacity and resources (see Appendix 15). This variation suggests that organisations with greater resources, specialist capacity, or workforce profile are more likely to offer tailored career support for older workers, but this is still emerging rather than routine practice. This also suggests that smaller employers may require further support and resourcing to implement these types of changes effectively.

Together, these patterns suggest that employers may need greater confidence, practical tools and clearer frameworks to implement later-career development effectively and at scale. Support is especially needed to help employers start sensitive conversations (for example, around retirement planning), design age-inclusive progression routes, and offer structured guidance during mid- and late-career stages. These gaps highlight a strong opportunity for the Pledge to continue shaping and strengthening practice in an area where aspiration is high, but implementation remains uneven.

Summary of Findings

Most common activities implemented on encouraging career development for all

- Targeted action to ensure equitable access to training was the most common action, with employers focusing on ensuring older workers can take up development opportunities.
- Age-inclusive CPD offers were widely available but generally framed as “for all staff” rather than age-specific.
- Retirement planning and job redesign were emerging but still limited, with actions varying by organisational size and capability.

Activities on career development for all most commonly attributed to the Pledge were:

- Manager training on CPD retention for older workers was the most strongly influenced activity across all survey items.
- Mid-life career guidance and career reviews were next most shaped by the Pledge, prompting employers to consider later-career transitions more deliberately.
- Mentoring, targeted training, knowledge exchange and end-of-career support were also catalysed by the Pledge, though still offered by relatively few employers.

Key Takeaways

- Career development for older workers is less developed than other Pledge areas and often remains early-stage or patchy; where organisations offered apprenticeships, this was a promising route for older workers.
- Employers need confidence, tools and clear frameworks to support conversations and design age-inclusive progression routes. Leads expressed interest but were concerned how to frame efforts sensitively to avoid signalling retirement.
- Larger organisations tend to offer more age-specific development options, while smaller employers may require additional support and resourcing.
- Retirement planning support was valued but not widely available, with managers requesting clearer guidance on how to initiate conversations without making assumptions about employees' intentions or exit timelines.

4.5 Ensuring everyone has the health support they need

This section presents the findings on age-inclusive health support, summarising the activities employers most commonly undertake and the areas where the Pledge has had the greatest influence. Overall, activity and plans in this area were reported at relatively high levels, with more than 80% employers stating they had actioned or were planning action on almost all items surveyed in this section. Conversely, the reported Pledge influence was much lower compared to those in other Pledge areas. This may indicate that many employers were already undertaking work in this area before signing up.. However, high reported activity does not necessarily mean these approaches are being used effectively, so there is likely still scope for improvement and support through the Pledge.

Table 4.5 shows the activities most commonly reported as actioned or planned by employers who responded to the survey items on ensuring everyone has the health support they need. It also shows the number of organisations which stated an activity they were actioning or planning was directly influenced by the Pledge.

Table 4.5 Age-friendly health support activities

Activity (N)	% taken action	% planning action	Total taken/ planning action	Pledge influence
Making clear to staff that managing health conditions is a normal part of working life, and that requests for support will not be stigmatised (66)	91%	2%	93% (61)	31% (19)
Making health and wellbeing part of regular conversations with staff of all ages (67)	90%	3%	93% (62)	23% (14)
Developing absence and return to work policies (67)	88%	5%	93% (62)	10% (6)

Making sure you have clear and visible policies and processes for supporting older workers with health conditions or disabilities (67)	81%	6%	87% (58)	31% (18)
Fostering open conversations about menopause in the workplace (67)	81%	10%	91% (61)	30% (18)
Supporting staff and line managers to have early and sustained conversations about health in the workplace (66)	79%	6%	85% (56)	32% (18)
Establishing a menopause policy (67)	79%	6%	85% (57)	27% (15)
Making menopause support part of your staff offer (65)	74%	6%	80% (52)	23% (12)
Providing staff training on menopause (66)	71%	14%	85% (56)	24% (13)
Offering training to line managers on reasonable adjustments and the health support they can offer (65)	68%	12%	80% (52)	28% (14)
Offering a health 'MOT' or health check-up linked with reaching an age milestone (65)	17%	11%	28% (18)	50% (9)

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

4.5.1 Most common health support activities

Very high activity levels were reported by employers on **'making clear to staff that managing health conditions is a normal part of working life and that requests for support will not be stigmatised'**, **'making health and wellbeing part of regular conversations with staff of all ages'**, and **'developing absence and return to work policies'** (all at 93% having actioned or planning action). This was closely followed by action on **'fostering open conversations about menopause in the workplace'** (91%). This pattern suggests that employers are making efforts to normalise health-related conversations and support, particularly around general health, wellbeing, and menopause. The high extent to which these have already been actioned by employers suggests that these wellbeing practices are now widely embedded across organisations.

There was a high level of awareness among employers that, as employees age, they are likely to have increased or different health concerns. Employers wanted to ensure that support was in place and conversations about needs could be facilitated. Reasonable adjustments were common, as was flexibility. A Lead gave examples of what they do in their organisation:

We continue to promote open conversations around wellbeing and mental health. [We] have allowed flexibility for appointments, recovery and encourage early disclosure and supportive adjustments.

Senior Pledge Lead, small community charity

In a similar vein, **'supporting staff and line managers to have early and sustained conversations about health in the workplace'**, **'establishing a menopause policy'**,

and **‘providing staff training on menopause’** were being actioned by 85% of surveyed employers.

Several interviewees described providing menopause-related training as part of their broader health support offer. A local government organisation delivers menopause training and “lunch and learn” sessions linked to its menopause policy. These sessions are open to anyone interested in learning about menopause and how best to support colleagues experiencing it. A large healthcare charity reported launching a menopause awareness module for all staff last year, and another large health charity similarly ensured that all staff receive menopause training, with additional support and adjustments offered where needed. The Lead at a local government organisation shared that though their health-related training had traditionally focused on menopause, staff were increasingly discussing earlier reproductive health changes, including perimenopause. As a result, the organisation was moving towards framing this as broader women’s health training rather than tying it to a single life stage.

Furthermore, 87% of Leads reported **‘making sure they had clear policies to support older workers with health conditions or disabilities’**. However, organisations may still need to do more to ensure staff are aware of and able to access them, as employee interviews could not determine the extent of their awareness or effectiveness. This also underscores the importance of **‘offering training to line managers on reasonable adjustments and the health support’** which only 68% of surveyed employers had actioned, and 12% were planning.

Interviews indicated that discussions about health needs were usually initiated by employees themselves, who approached their line manager or HR for support. Several participants highlighted the need for additional training or guidance to help managers facilitate these conversations effectively. For instance, a manager at a large public administration organisation said they would welcome further support and upskilling to better understand how health issues can affect work:

I think we could have better awareness of things. For example, how certain women's health issues impact women in the workplace. I think that the awareness of the age-related things impacting a person's presence in the workplace, I think we're very good at menopause, but I think that other things we're not as good at, something like dementia or Alzheimer's. I'd struggle to even tell you what health conditions are impacting older people in the workplace.

Manager, large public administration employer

4.5.2 Activities most influenced by the Pledge

‘Offering a health ‘MOT’ (a routine check-up offered at a key age milestone) or health check-up linked with reaching an age milestone’ was the highest reported activity that was influenced by the Pledge. Of the 18 employers who actioned this, half (50%) reported being influenced by the Pledge. In interviews, a Lead from a large sport and leisure organisation described a mid-life MOT due to launch later this year, covering topics including career development and transitions, health and financial wellbeing and planning. The fact that health MOTs are one of the *least common* activities overall (only

28% employers have actioned this), yet are the *most strongly influenced* by the Pledge among those who adopted them, suggests this is an emerging, more specialised area where employers rely more heavily on Pledge guidance to take action.

A more widely implemented activity with high Pledge influence was **‘supporting staff and line managers to have early and sustained conversations about health in the workplace’** (32% of actioning employers). Older workers shared a variety of activities that helped staff understand what health support was available to them. An older worker at a large healthcare organisation mentioned how supportive HR were and how they would refer employees to occupational health services as and when needed. Other older workers described how reasonable adjustments were available and tailored to their needs. This was mirrored by employers who were proud of what they had achieved in supporting the health needs of their staff:

It's probably one of the areas that they're best in - understanding and appreciating health conditions related to age and how they respond to them.

Manager, large public administration employer

One of our people priorities is our employee well-being... whether it stops smoking or health checks, it's supporting those members of staff and managers to give them the guidance at difficult times.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

There were also examples of managers requesting more general health-related training to better support their teams. While HR and other resources were helpful, some managers wanted clearer guidance on which health issues they should be checking on with older workers, indicating demand for more practical, manager-focused training in this area.

You want to do the best, and you'd like some expert to do this for you, but no experts are around, so you have to become the expert.

Manager, large security company

Normalising **conversations around health support for older workers and making policies and processes clearly visible to support older workers with health conditions and disabilities** were activities with a higher likelihood of being influenced by the Pledge. Although reported by only one third of actioning employers (31%), these still accounted for up to 20 employers, which is an encouraging number in raw terms.

A small equal opportunities charity, which provides health coaching as part of its business services, also made this available to its employees. One employee who utilised this support found it helped them return to work more quickly, whilst feeling supported. Other organisations hosted cancer awareness workshops and provided support for their employees.

‘Fostering open conversation around menopause in the workplace’ and **‘making menopause support part of your staff offer’** were the other activities influenced by the Pledge for up to 30% of employers. Interviews highlighted a range of approaches to supporting employees experiencing menopause. Some organisations had designated

menopause champions or advocates, while others offered buddy systems or facilitated menopause support groups. These initiatives were often underpinned by a menopause policy, which helped formalise and legitimise the support available. The Lead at a large sport and leisure organisation described the menopause-related support they provide, alongside comparable health support for men:

We continue to champion menopause, and this year we partnered with My Menopause Centre to provide employees with paid-for GP appointments with a menopause specialist. We also ran a session on men's health checks.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (b)

The Lead at a large financial organisation seemed pleasantly surprised at the success of the menopause group.

The menopause group, for example, I didn't think we would have as many people join as we have had. I thought it would be about 5 to 10, and in the first session, we had 42 people. So a lot more successful than I ever could have imagined. From that, we've then been able to get a bigger budget allocated to it because it's not just 10 people, it's 40 to 50 on a twice-a-year basis attending a half-day session.

Senior Pledge Lead, large financial employer (a)

Another insightful interview finding was that **flexible working** was widely viewed as a key mechanism for supporting employees' health needs. It enabled individuals to adjust their hours to accommodate symptoms or fluctuating conditions and to take time off for medical appointments. This flexibility was particularly valued by those managing long-term or variable health issues. An older worker at a health and social care organisation described how flexible working had contributed to their positive experience of the organisation:

I'm very happy to work there now, especially with the support I've had over the last few years. And I like the people I work with. I like what we represent, and I like the way they've helped me. So it makes me very pleased to work there.

Older worker, medium health and social care employer (c)

4.5.3 What this means

This suggests that while broad wellbeing practices are already firmly embedded across most organisations, more specialised activities, such as health MOTs, are far less common and are introduced largely when the Pledge provides a clear prompt or framework. In effect, the Pledge appears to encourage employers to stretch beyond routine wellbeing support and adopt more targeted, age-specific approaches they may not have pursued independently

The findings discussed on what activities employers implement to ensure everyone has the health support they need suggest that while broad-based wellbeing practices are already well embedded across most organisations, the depth and consistency of support varies considerably. This is more so when it comes to age-specific or more specialist health interventions. Employers appear confident in delivering routine, low-cost activities such as normalising conversations about health, reassuring staff that support requests

are not stigmatised, embedding health and wellbeing in regular line management discussions, and maintaining clear absence and return-to-work processes. These approaches align closely with existing HR practices and require limited specialist expertise, which helps explain why they are so widely adopted.

In contrast, specialised interventions such as age-linked health MOTs remain far less common, with only 28% of employers (18 in number) indicating they have implemented or plan to adopt these. The low uptake of such specialist activities reflects both financial and capacity constraints faced by many employers, as these interventions require expertise that can be costly. In contrast, activities that can be delivered by line managers or HR teams are more feasible and therefore more widely implemented.

The Pledge appears to function as an important catalyst for extending practice beyond generic wellbeing, encouraging organisations to consider the specific health needs associated with later working life. Its most visible influence is in areas where employers lack established norms or confidence, such as age-linked health checks, structured health conversations, and menopause-related support. Although the overall proportion of employers influenced by the Pledge is lower than in other Pledge areas, the strength of influence within smaller, more specialised activities, notably health MOTs and structured health conversations, suggests that the Pledge helps employers move into areas they may not have pursued independently. The Pledge thus provides legitimacy and a new impetus for emerging practices that address age-related health conditions and needs more explicitly.

Subgroup analysis (Appendix 15) showed clear differences by organisation size, with small employers statistically less likely than medium or large organisations to have taken (or to be planning) key health-related actions. In particular, smaller organisations were less likely to offer line managers training on reasonable adjustments and the health support available, less likely to provide staff training on menopause, and less likely to include menopause support as part of their wider employee offer. This pattern likely reflects the financial constraints faced by smaller employers, many of whom reported having limited or no spare budget to invest in these types of health support activities.

The findings point to several implications for how health-related support is taken forward in practice. Line managers remain central to this process, often acting as the first point of contact when staff disclose health concerns, yet many reported feeling less confident supporting issues beyond menopause. This suggests that organisations may benefit from clearer, practical guidance on how to navigate these conversations. Flexible working also continues to play an important role in enabling employees to manage fluctuating or long-term conditions and was frequently highlighted by older workers as a key mechanism supporting their ability to remain in work. Furthermore, smaller organisations often face resource constraints that limit their capacity to invest in training or specialist provision, indicating that scalable, low-burden tools may be particularly useful in these settings. Overall, the evidence suggests that while foundational wellbeing practices are well established, the Pledge has helped some employers broaden and deepen their approach, encouraging more intentional and age-responsive forms of health support.

Summary of Findings

Most common activities implemented on ensuring everyone has the health support they need:

- Normalising health-related conversations and reassuring staff that support requests are not stigmatised were actioned by over 90% of employers.
- Embedding wellbeing in routine practice like regular manager - employee discussions, clear absence/return-to-work policies, and menopause support appear to be widely established.
- Policies for supporting older workers with health conditions were common, though awareness and consistent use varied across organisations.

Activities on ensuring everyone has the health support they need most influenced by the Pledge

- Health MOTs and check-ups linked to age milestones showed the strongest Pledge influence, despite being one of the least common activities.
- Early and sustained health conversations to normalise support for health conditions during the working life; these were prompted by the Pledge including tailored guidance for managers
- Menopause-related support (policies, training, champions, support groups) to foster open conversations have notable Pledge influence, even where wider wellbeing work already exists.

Key Takeaways

- Routine wellbeing practices are widely embedded, but specialist or resource-intensive activities (such as mid-life or age-linked health MOTs) remain rare due to cost and specialist capacity limits.
- Line managers often lack confidence in discussing health needs, signalling a need for practical, issue-specific guidance and training.
- Employers more commonly adopted low-cost, manager-led approaches, such as normalising health conversations, signposting support, and reassuring staff about disclosure.
- Smaller organisations struggled to provide health-related training or menopause support due to limited financial capacity, with several unable to fund training or external expertise.
- Activity was often motivated by individual champions (e.g., HR leads, wellbeing officers), meaning progress depended on specific roles rather than consistent organisational systems.

4.6 Conclusion

Across the chapter, the key message is that the Pledge most strongly catalyses *practical, visible and easy-to-implement shifts* such as public commitments to age inclusion, clearer references to age in EDI strategies, age-inclusive language and imagery, refreshed recruitment practices and expanded flexible working options. These actions are readily adopted because they align with existing HR and EDI processes and require relatively few resources. In contrast, deeper or more technical interventions, like developing career pathways, delivering manager training or introducing health MOTs, remain less common because they demand greater confidence, specialist skills or resourcing. This distinction helps explain why survey responses often show stronger activity in areas where

employers already had initiatives in place before signing, with the Pledge helping them go further in ways that are immediately operationalisable.

Findings on what activities employers implement most commonly suggest that the most action has been taken, or is being planned, under the areas of recruitment and providing health support. Efforts are also underway toward creating an age-friendly culture and expanding flexible working opportunities aligned to existing HR and EDI processes, but encouraging career development for all emerges as the least actioned area of the Pledge.

Variations across organisation size and sector highlight the practical constraints shaping implementation: smaller employers, though often more flexible and agile, face financial and resourcing limits, while larger employers can adopt more structured and resource-intensive approaches directed toward age-specific initiatives.

Thus, the Pledge's key contribution lies in helping employers consolidate and extend what they are already doing. The Pledge provides structure and a framework for legitimate efforts that are explicitly age-focused, while boosting confidence and intentionality in considering the needs of older workers. Lower Pledge influence may reflect the fact that many commonly undertaken activities are already embedded before signing, whereas more technical or resource-heavy actions demand additional capacity, expertise or investment that not all employers may have or be able to prioritise. As a result, the Pledge most strongly shapes visible signalling and low-cost interventions rather than deeper organisational reforms.

5 What factors determine success?

This chapter examines the conditions that shape how effectively employers are able to implement the Pledge, drawing on perspectives from Leads, managers and employees. It summarises the barriers and challenges that organisations face as well as factors that are instrumental to successful implementation.

Key Messages

- The Pledge Team's expertise and support are central to employer engagement, with Leads valuing the credibility, responsiveness and practical guidance provided by Ageing Better and the Pledge Team.
- Employers engage most readily with light-touch, low-burden forms of support, especially newsletters, website guidance and welcome webinars, while more intensive or bespoke activities see lower uptake.
- Successful delivery depends on involving the right internal roles, particularly HR, EDI, recruitment, learning and development specialists, senior leaders and line managers, each of whom shapes different aspects of age-inclusive practice.
- Line managers play a pivotal role but often lack confidence in age-related conversations, especially around career development, health needs and retirement, highlighting a major capability gap.
- Frontline staff and worker networks act as important enablers, helping organisations identify issues, test ideas and maintain momentum on age-friendly practice.
- Structural and contextual factors, including organisational maturity, job design constraints, digital access, limited time and financial pressure, shape what employers can realistically implement and at what pace.
- Data capability varies significantly across employers, with most collecting only basic age-related HR data; more sophisticated analytics remain uncommon, limiting the ability to measure impact.
- A workforce culture that normalises listening, avoids assumptions about ageing, and encourages open dialogue strongly supports implementation, whereas intergenerational misunderstandings or perceived inequity can hinder progress.
- External peer learning and specialist health or pension providers complement internal capability, particularly for organisations with limited resources or expertise.
- Overall, successful implementation is strongest where organisational values, leadership, structures and everyday practices are already consistent with age inclusion, enabling the Pledge to build on existing strengths rather than create change from scratch.

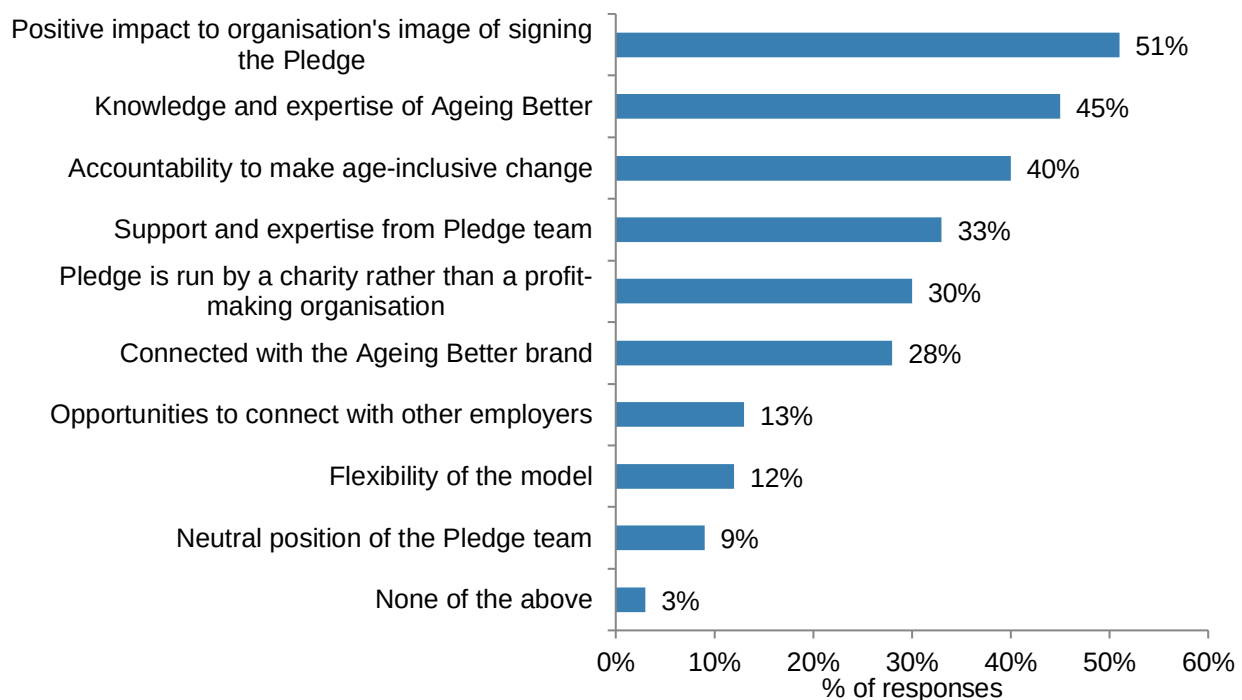
5.1 How does the Pledge support employers?

This section addresses the contribution of the Ageing Better and Pledge Teams to the scheme's success, and how Pledge Leads engage with and benefit from the support available to them, a key area of focus for the evaluation.

5.1.1 How is the Pledge team perceived and valued?

Views on the Age-friendly Employer Pledge and the Pledge Team, and the wider Ageing Better team were sought directly from the survey (Figure 5.1), where Leads were asked to indicate the potential benefits of the Pledge that they valued most (they selected up to three from a series of options). 'Knowledge and expertise of the Ageing Better team' (selected by 45%), and 'Support and expertise from the Pledge Team' featured in the four of the most commonly selected features of the Pledge. This underscores the central role of the individuals who deliver the Pledge as well as the established reputation of Ageing Better as an organisation, and the resultant trust employers place in the guidance provided.

Figure 5.1 Most valued features of the Pledge by Lead survey respondents



**Note that participants could select more than one option*

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

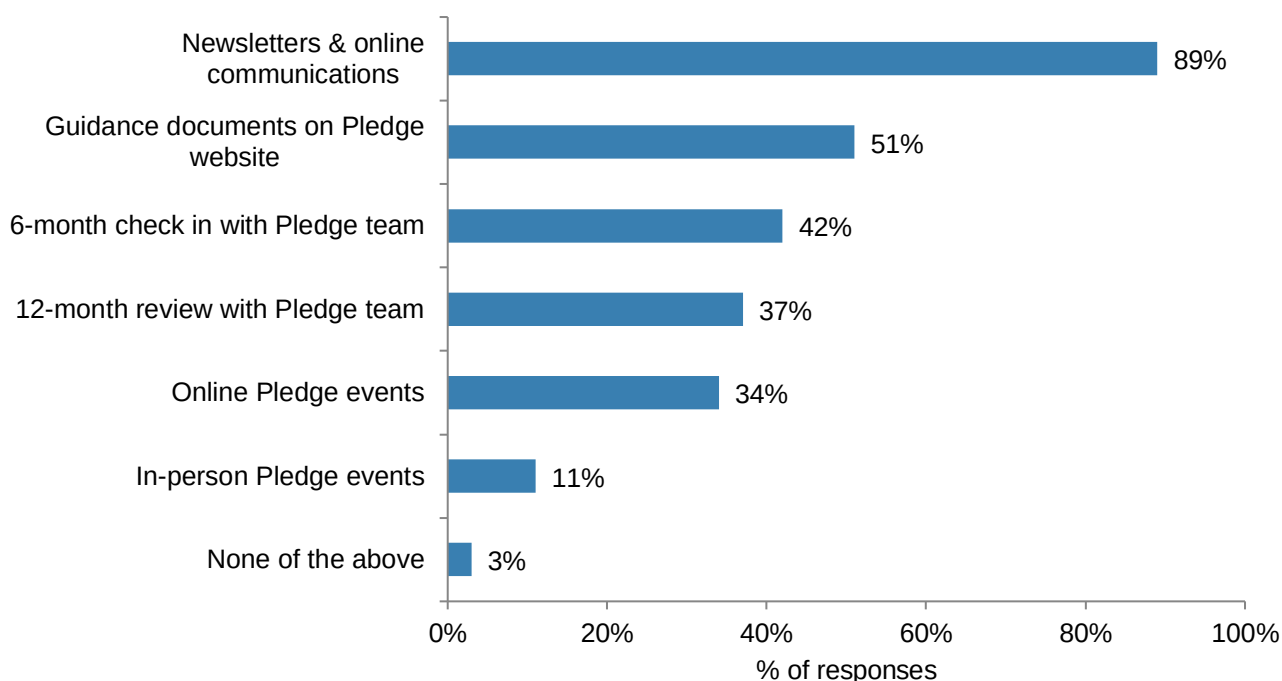
Subgroup comparison showed significant differences between employer types in this respect. Private sector employers were more likely to value the knowledge and expertise of Ageing Better (possibly because public sector organisations can access similar information elsewhere). Smaller organisations were more likely to appreciate the Pledge's

charitable status, perhaps because of an affinity for other mission-driven organisations among participating small charities. Employers with a lower proportion of older workers (0-50%) were more likely to value the connection with Ageing Better as an organisation, possibly because association with the brand visibly signals inclusion in contexts where older workers may feel in the minority.

5.1.2 How do Leads engage with the Pledge?

Pledge Leads were asked how they had engaged with various activities since signing the Pledge (Figure 5.2). Predictably, engagement was highest with activities requiring less resource commitment or less active participation, including newsletters, online content and guidance on the Pledge website.

Figure 5.2 How Leads have engaged with the Pledge



**Note that participants could select more than one option*

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

A small proportion had engaged with the Pledge Team at online events (34%), with a smaller proportion attending an in-person Pledge event (11%) reflecting the low occurrence of these. Importantly, among those who engaged in these activities, the majority of the Leads had found them helpful. Leads reported how valuable the annual conference had been for knowledge exchange and interacting with other Pledge employer peers.

The conference was really helpful. Getting together with like-minded people and thinking 'that's worked well for them, let's take that away and use it,' and vice versa, that's really helpful.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health and social care employer (b)

The Lead at a small equal opportunities charity described the regular peer call, facilitated by the Pledge team, as *'really helpful'*, noting the opportunity to share challenges and best practice with attendees from different organisations and sectors. Hearing the achievements of others was felt to inform next steps within their own organisation

[We want to meet with] other age-friendly employers and bounce off them and learn what they've done to help make their workforce more age-inclusive. I think it's good getting all that [more generic] information, but it'd be nice to know what other businesses are doing as well and how and what barriers they've experienced.

Senior Pledge Lead, small manufacturing employer

Because a lot of it is trial and error, isn't it? If there are success stories, it's good to know how they've done it and what it was that worked, so that we can see if it works for us as well.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (a)

Online events were preferred by some, mainly because travel could be a barrier. A Lead at a large health and social care organisation felt online events were accessible to a wider range of people. In-person opportunities, such as the conference, were valued too, though there was agreement that these most effective if held relatively infrequently and planned well in advance to encourage attendance (this suggests that the current annual arrangement is about right).

5.1.3 What forms of support are most helpful?

The survey for Leads was used to explore views on the helpfulness of various aspects of the Pledge offer (Figure 5.3). Regular communication via the monthly newsletter was seen as the most helpful, with almost all respondents agreeing that this was either 'very helpful' (42%) or 'somewhat helpful' (54%). High proportions found the welcome webinar to be either very helpful (39%) or somewhat helpful (40%). Lower ratings were provided for 'other Pledge webinars' possibly a reflection of the strength of first impressions of the scheme at the time of joining. Optional calls received relatively high rating.

There were relatively high levels of 'not applicable' answers for some items, likely reflecting lack of awareness of a particular resource or lack of uptake. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) did not provide views on 'other informal contact' and more than two thirds (69%) did not provide a view on the Connections event. Although the vast majority of respondents who did provide views on those items rated them positively, there was a tendency for them to be reported as 'somewhat helpful' rather than 'very helpful'.

The completion of annual returns had the highest proportion of 'not helpful' responses (8%) as well as a relatively low proportion responding that it was 'very helpful' (12%). This is notable but also not surprising as this activity (comprising completion of a yearly monitoring form) serves mainly to inform Ageing Better's oversight of the Pledge, with fewer direct advantages for employers.

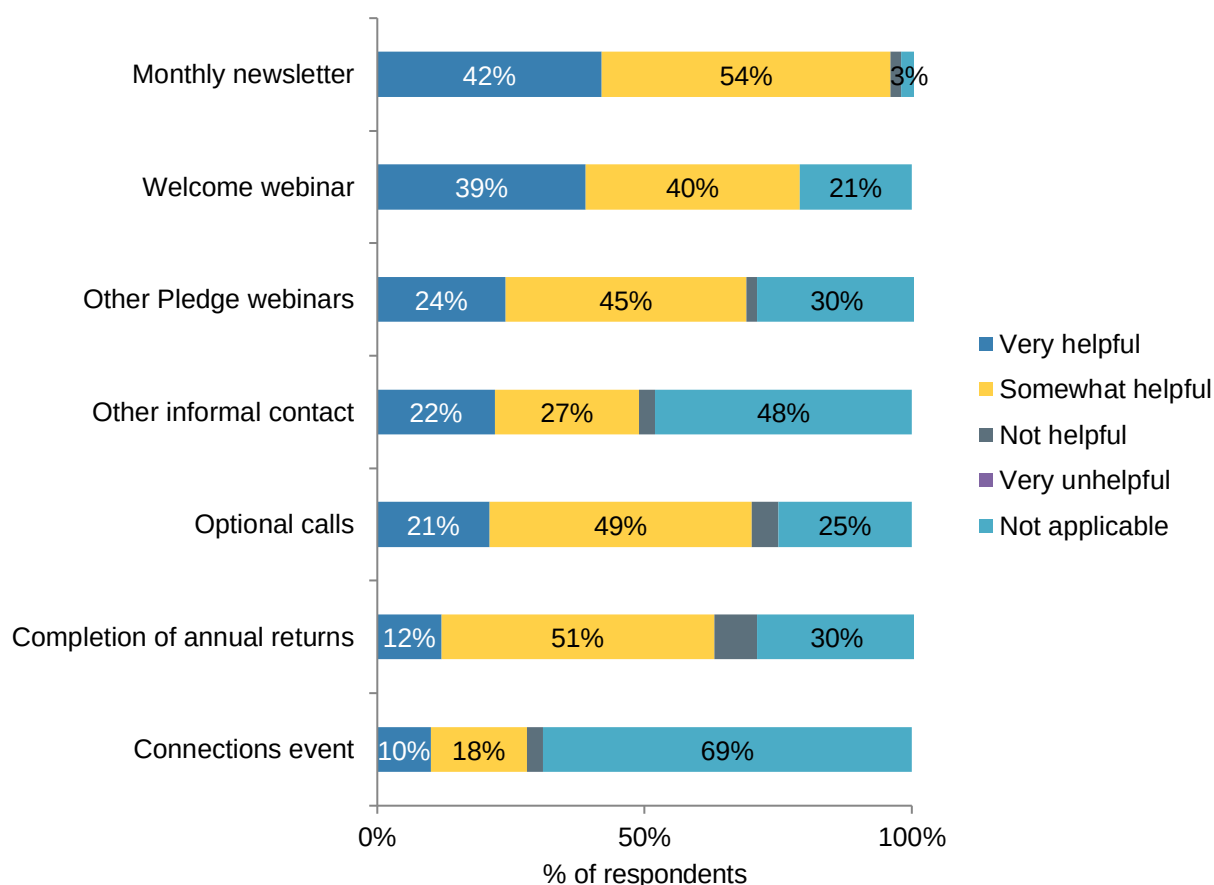
Taken together, these findings indicate that most Pledge Leads tend to find one-way ‘one size fits all’ forms of communication to be their preferred forms of support. However, interviews with Leads elicited appreciation of further aspects of the Pledge offer including bespoke support and the personalised approach offered by the Pledge Team, for example when seeking feedback on age-friendly policies during their development. A Lead working in social care remarked that the Pledge Team is “*there when I need them*”. Another Lead acknowledged a process of continual learning from regular contact with the team.

There's not a week that goes by that I don't learn something new.

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (a)

As reported in the previous chapter, interviews also evidenced that Pledge resources were instrumental to specific activities such as rewriting job adverts to use age-friendly language; and use of the image library to produce social media content. Other examples of deploying generic resources included using Ageing Better’s research to support funding applications.

Figure 5.3 Proportions of Leads reporting on helpfulness of Pledge team support



Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

Appetite for additional support and resources

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they were interested in various types of support that could be offered in the future (Figure 5.4). They responded to a number of

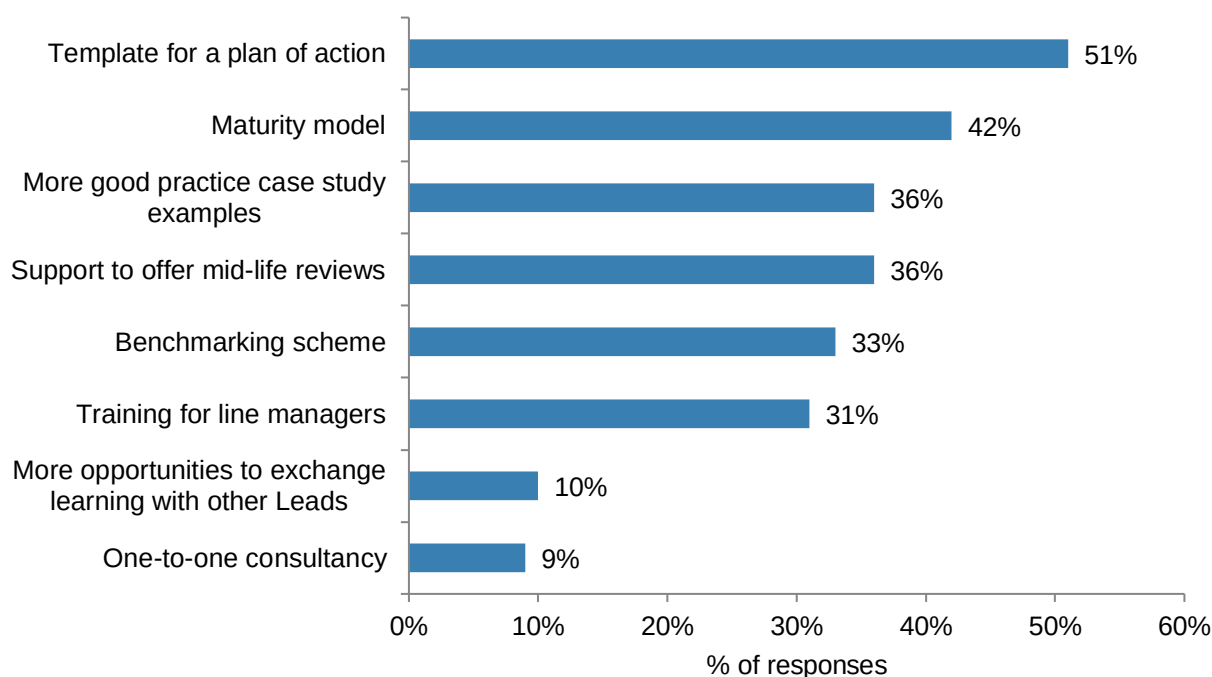
response options suggested by the Pledge team, specifically for the purpose of learning from the survey. The greatest level of interest was expressed in a template plan of action (by 51% of Leads) and a maturity model (by 42%) a development that has already actioned by the Pledge team. Notably, 33% showed interest in a benchmarking scheme, suggesting a general interest in frameworks to help plan, chart and compare progress.

Reflecting the interest shown in success stories outlined above, 36% wanted to see more case study examples of good practice, highlighting the value placed on relatable information demonstrating how others have operationalised guidance. (It is possible that not all Leads are aware of how to find existing case studies on the Pledge website although the data did not explicitly point to this as an issue).

There was also interest in items that clustered around support to undertake specific in-house activities to meet Pledge objectives, namely support to offer mid-life career reviews (selected by 36%) and training for line managers (31%). This points to an appetite to make changes in these areas, alongside possible barriers in accessing affordable, high-quality provision.

There was less interest in 'more opportunities to exchange learning with other Leads' (selected by only 10%) and in one-to-one consultancy (9%). This could reflect satisfaction with existing networking opportunities (such as Pledge peer support groups for hospitality and LAs) and the quality of guidance and personalised support currently offered by the Pledge team. This could reflect a lack of interest in these opportunities more broadly.

Figure 5.4 Interest from Leads in future support from the Pledge Team



**Note that participants could select more than one option*

Source: Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025

Key points

- Leads particularly valued the **knowledge and expertise** of both the Ageing Better team and the Pledge Team. **Engagement** with the Pledge Team's offer was **highest for low-intensity activities**, such as newsletters, online content and website guidance.
- Leads expressed a strong **appetite for more opportunities to connect with other employers**, share success stories, and learn from peer organisations.
- Many Leads **used Pledge resources for practical tasks** such as rewriting job adverts, reviewing policies, or accessing image libraries and research data.
- **Pledge resources were highly trusted**, though awareness was concentrated in the Lead role, with other functions (HR/EDI/recruitment) less familiar.
- Most respondents found the newsletters and welcome webinar helpful, indicating **strong value in passive, accessible forms of support**.
- Employers showed strong interest in additional tools, especially a **maturity model, action plans**, and guidance on next steps. There was also a strong appetite for **line manager training**.

5.2 Which staff roles matter most for successful implementation?

Reflecting the diverse nature of organisations more broadly, Pledge employers vary widely in their structures and ways of working. This complicates determining which actors are instrumental to success, who needs to be engaged to enable change and when as this tends to be organisation-specific and can depend on which areas of the Pledge have been prioritised.

5.2.1 HR generalists and specialists

It was apparent from many Leads that their interest in age-inclusion was often both personal and professional, contributing to high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for the role. Although engagement with Pledge resources was most typically led by the Pledge Lead; in some cases similar levels of engagement were also observed among specialist professionals working alongside them.

For instance, in a company operating in the sport and leisure sector, the people specialist reported using the Pledge website and newsletters as well as working closely with the Lead to deliver Pledge objectives more broadly.

We're on par. She is obviously overseeing this project. So I support her with that as much as I possibly can. We've got certain people priorities and objectives throughout the year. So, for instance, she oversees the recruitment and benefits, so she'll make sure that age-friendly support is in line with [the Pledge]. I will deal with the training aspects of it or well-being initiatives, so they crossover a lot.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

Interviews indicated that partnership working could lead to age-friendly outputs that were tailored to an organisation's existing practices and priorities. For example, in a large financial organisation, an HR specialist and the Lead co-developed an age-friendly toolkit covering personal finance, health and wellbeing.

Given their central role in recruitment, progression and career development, HR staff are key to shaping age-friendly practice. They understand how opportunities are presented and how to frame changes in ways that feel realistic and attractive to staff.

The difficulties are sometimes how we might sell opportunities to people and make things feel OK for them to change direction [within their career].

Learning and development specialist, local government (b)

Wellbeing roles were not widely reported across organisations, but where they existed they were reported to play a useful enabling role in Pledge implementation, particularly around health support and flexible working. HR professionals with remits in this area helped ensure appropriate adjustments and signposted employees to relevant services such as EAP provision.

They can support in terms of making suggestions that will help them at work, such as taking more breaks or [recommending] equipment.

HR specialist, large security company

Although these workplace health-related roles were less visible in the evaluation evidence, they may have untapped potential to support age-friendly practice more consistently across organisations.

5.2.2 Senior managers and leaders

Senior leadership can play an important role in modelling age-inclusive practice across organisations. Examples included senior team members in a large healthcare charity who displayed their flexible working hours in their email signatures to 'set the standard', and an experienced council member in local government who was strong advocate for age inclusion. In other settings, a diverse and supportive board of directors in a private financial company and the CEO of a small age-related charity, led visibly on age-inclusion, signalling that it was a strategic priority.

In another example, a department director whose service delivery relied predominantly on older workers was personally committed to driving age-positive change. A learning and development specialist reflected on why this individual engaged so readily with the aims of the Pledge.

The corporate director for adult Social Care is a champion for the age-friendly Pledge because she herself got promoted into that role quite late on in her career, so she's very much a champion for it.

Learning and development specialist, local government (b)

Effective leadership influence was felt to depend on structured feedback mechanisms up the management chain, ensuring that leaders are informed about frontline realities and people-management challenges. Regular managers' forums with senior attendance were cited as a practical mechanism for raising issues arising from day-to-day practice.

And when we have managers' meetings every month, all the managers attend with the directors... we talk about what we can do to help staff, and what the company can do to help us do our role better, and are there any issues, so it's well spoken about.

Manager (with older worker perspective), large health and social care employer (a)

This underlines the importance of forums that keep leadership input on age-friendly working, grounded in the day-to-day realities of business operations.

5.2.3 Line managers

Line managers who took part in the evaluation reported needing more support to handle intergenerational conversations and to manage staff from different age groups. Some lacked confidence discussing age-related topics, particularly around retirement or future career plans. One manager, for example, described feeling unsure about how to approach conversations about career development with older workers and noted that they had not received any training in this area, but would welcome it:

I think the biggest challenge for me is how to go about achieving that without looking like you're positively discriminating. I don't know quite how you start that sort of conversation.

Manager, local government (b)

Because managers are the first point of contact for many older workers, a lack of confidence can affect both the implementation of the Pledge and older workers' day-to-day experience. Managers also have first-hand insight into the operational barriers described below, so it is essential that they are fully involved in developing and delivering solutions. Some manager comments also signalled that they needed support to operationalise the ambition of creating equal opportunities for all.

5.2.4 Frontline workers, including older workers

Engagement of frontline workers was seen as an important driver of age-inclusive change. Where they existed, staff networks, teams and groups with an age focus provided a valuable source of insight and energy. Although these groups were not common across all employers and tended to be more prevalent in larger organisations, they could play a catalytic role. In one company, for example, an age network prompted internal discussion about women's mid-life reproductive health and led to participation in an external webinar.

Our Age Network continues to facilitate discussion around age inclusion and promoting an age-friendly culture, e.g., speaking on external webinars about women's health at 45+.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (b)

More broadly, employers emphasised that age-friendly activities were most effective when they genuinely reflected the needs and priorities of the workforce, older workers in particular. This depended on actively listening to employees, understanding their day-to-day realities, and grounding decisions in what people say they value.

These themes were echoed in accounts of how an engaged workforce can support Pledge implementation. Several employers described using employee networks, including generation-focused or general inclusion groups to sense-check messages, test wording and gather feedback on proposed policies. At a large financial organisation, for example, staff routinely consulted their Generation Network when developing age-related initiatives.

We have a group of people who have put their names forward to kind of help us with anything that we're doing around age, so providing feedback, so we have a group of people that we go to, to gather their feedback and thoughts.

HR specialist, large financial employer (a)

Other organisations created new structures to encourage engagement, such as a working group for staff aged 55+ within a large security organisation, which attracted high levels of participation and aimed to build mutual support. Similar groups for other demographics were planned as part of a future Inclusion Council.

Employers with a large older workforce often found this to be an enabler, as interest in age-inclusive activities tended to be strong. However, one Lead warned against celebrating older workers in ways that spotlight individuals or risk tokenism.

Overall, there was consensus that when frontline staff feel invited to contribute and when their insights are taken seriously, age-friendly practice becomes more relevant, better targeted and easier to embed.

5.2.5 External stakeholders

Employers cited peer influence (outside the Pledge network) as an important driver and enabler of age-friendly working: this was most evident in local government organisation employers and charities. This was shared by a recruitment specialist who was keen to learn from peers.

It's often really useful to talk to other councils that have good practice because it feels a bit more feasible. We're all struggling with the same challenges and, actually, what's possible within those constraints is always really useful to know.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

This observation highlights the wider influence of the Employer Pledge, with lessons from participation potentially feeding into sector-wide dialogue or inter-branch discussions

across distributed organisations. The benefits can be two-way, with information flowing both out of and towards those who are part of the Pledge network.

Pension fund providers were cited as other influential external sources that could facilitate age-friendly practice. Leads cited webinars and other sources of guidance offered about financial or retirement planning, which could complement in-house offers.

Health support services were another key external source of expertise for embedding Pledge principles, offering specialist advice and training on topics such as menopause or prostate cancer. Leads emphasised that, given the seriousness of these topics, it was important to bring in appropriate experts rather than attempt to deliver this information themselves. Smaller organisations were more likely to take up free opportunities, such as campaigns run by health charities that provide visiting speakers and resources.

These observations suggest that Pledge Leads may benefit from clearer signposting to low or no-cost external resources, such as peer networks, pension fund providers, and health support services that can help them embed age-friendly practices. These sources appear to complement internal capacity, particularly in organisations with limited specialist expertise.

Supporting Pledge Leads as ambassadors within their own organisation to encourage the use of resources could help to further disseminate the age-inclusive activities. A checklist showing which information is potentially relevant to which roles within an organisation may help with this.

Key points

- A wide range of internal professionals- including EDI, HR, recruitment, learning and development, communications, wellbeing and senior leadership - were involved in implementing age-inclusive activity across organisations.
- Leads often held complementary responsibilities that helped them connect relevant colleagues to Pledge actions. They were typically highly motivated and confident in taking forward age-inclusive changes.
- Effective implementation depended on Leads being able to identify and involve the right internal colleagues at the right time. Smaller organisations sometimes enabled Leads to connect with other staff on an ad hoc basis, while larger organisations required more coordination across teams.
- HR staff were key partners in embedding age-inclusive practice across organisational processes. Senior leaders and directors could also act as important champions for age-inclusion where they prioritised the agenda.
- Staff networks with an age focus helped raise workforce priorities and promote age-inclusive activities. These were more common in larger employers.
- External peers were a valued source of practical advice and shared learning, particularly among local authorities and charities.
- External specialists, such as pension providers or health organisations, offered expertise that complemented internal capability and supported age-inclusive delivery.

5.3 Structural factors

This section brings together system-level and contextual factors that can either constrain what employers can do, or create the conditions for age-friendly practice to take hold. These represent structural realities that set practical limits or open up opportunities for embedding age-inclusive approaches.

5.3.1 Organisational priorities and maturity of existing systems

The more developed an organisation was in its approach to age inclusion, the easier it was to integrate the Pledge's objectives into 'business as usual'. As highlighted in the previous section, it was common for many organisations to have implemented age-friendly activities prior to and/or independently of signing.

All that you do is underpinned by your D&I strategy and the idea that [employer] supports people of all ages. The Pledge weaves nicely into this, rather than serving as an 'add-on'.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health and social care employer (c)

Some Leads came from a different starting point; in some cases, the Pledge was felt to be a necessary step in giving age inclusion a profile it had lacked before.

[Signing up to the Pledge] has helped ensure age is actively considered in policy, process design, and strategic discussions, rather than being overlooked.

Senior Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (d)

In some organisations, age had been given less priority than other EDI areas such as gender and race. In those circumstances, committing to the Pledge required a clear shift in emphasis to raise the profile of age. A Lead from a social care organisation noted that, because their workforce was predominantly older, there was an assumption that age inclusion was already being addressed. As a result, it had tended to be deprioritised. The Lead at a small arts charity described age as 'unacceptably, the last acceptable form of discrimination'.

When you talk about the diversity of the workforce, you go instantly to gender, race, and sexual orientation, but you don't really think of age.

Pledge Lead, small manufacturing employer

In some cases, organisations' priorities around age-inclusion were shaped by both internal workforce demographics and external local population trends. For example, some employers with a predominantly older workforce were openly concerned about succession planning, as a significant number of older workers were expected to leave in the coming years. In contrast, an employer based in an area with an older demographic profile had placed a stronger focus on age-friendly recruitment processes, reflecting an awareness that many potential applicants in their local community were retired or semi-retired.

More broadly, these factors shaped the culture around age-inclusion, influencing whether age-friendly working was approached proactively, reactively, or embedded into everyday practice, with nuanced implications for how organisations implemented the Pledge in practice.

5.3.2 Environmental and role constraints

In some cases, the nature of employees' roles made hybrid working difficult to offer, even though older workers said it would improve their working lives. This was a particular challenge for Pledge employers operating in sectors such as retail, care and security, where being physically present in the workplace is essential. The Lead at a large security organisation noted that hybrid working was available to only around a fifth of the workforce, although there was strong interest among employees in exploring work–life-balance-friendly arrangements.

For similar reasons, requests for flexible working could not be offered, although managers participating in the evaluation were keen to offer this where possible.

As a smaller organisation, ultimately with limited flexibility, this has forced us to think more creatively, perhaps about how we encourage and look after an older workforce.

Pledge Lead, medium health and social care employer (d)

As noted in the previous chapter, HR professionals felt that non-specialists, such as line managers, can sometimes overlook flexible working options and perceive more constraints than actually exist.

Employers noted that the physical demands of some roles can deter applicants and make it harder for older workers to stay, underscoring the need for age-inclusive health support and role design. A strong example came from a large education provider that proactively reached out to experienced construction workers to offer part-time teaching opportunities alongside their day job. The example illustrates the value of “thinking outside the box”: reframing concerns about sustaining physically demanding work as an asset in another setting (teaching), enabling workers to balance on-site duties with a parallel role and encouraging applications from candidates who might otherwise opt out.

These findings show that the feasibility of age-friendly working is strongly shaped by the nature of the role. In sectors where physical presence or heavy manual work is unavoidable, employers have fewer flexibility levers to pull, which limit action in some Pledge areas, particularly around flexible working. However, creative role design (such as offering parallel, less physical opportunities) demonstrates that alternative approaches can broaden options and support retention even in constrained environments.

5.3.3 Acquisition of IT skills and access

Leads viewed that technology and digital communication could pose barriers to implementing the Pledge. In some cases, older workers had less access to workplace technology or fewer opportunities to build digital confidence, which meant they might be

less likely to see age-inclusive activity updates or opportunities. These issues were described as organisational and infrastructural rather than reflections of capability. A group of employees contributing to evaluation interviews wondered whether these issues had contributed to the Pledge being less visible to them (as potential beneficiaries).

Separately, there was also a risk that the pace of technological change could leave even highly experienced workers feeling that the skills built over a long career were becoming less relevant.

The speed at which [technology] moves and all the different things you can do, people can feel quite disempowered and de-skilled... if you're saying, oh, actually now we've got to do that now in this way, in this digital way. It can make people feel a bit left behind and that they're not perhaps skilled enough for the job when they come with an abundance of skills.

Senior Pledge Lead, local government (b)

There might be a concern about the ability of older workers to adapt to some of those [technology] changes versus younger workers.

Manager, large public administration employer

Leads described how some workers may experience a 'fear factor' around technology, often linked to low confidence or concern that gaps in digital skills could be interpreted as an inability to do their jobs. A senior employee shared concern about how to have conversations about this:

Sometimes there are skill gaps and knowledge gaps that you can see, but the person isn't always ready to recognise that, and that is about their identity, isn't it? You know, if they've been a long member of the organisation, it almost makes them feel as if they're not doing their job. And so for managers, it's about how you handle that.

Manager, small health and social care charity

To address this, a Lead in a local government organisation reported that they had implemented digital champions who could support staff wishing to improve these skills.

The messages for successful Pledge implementation are twofold. First, the choice of digital channels has a bearing on inclusion and can shape the reach of Pledge activities. Second, the pace of digital change can leave some older workers feeling deskilled, highlighting a need for organisations to support the acquisition and confident use of digital skills.

5.3.4 Access to resources

A lack of time to appropriately implement the Pledge was a barrier to employers. A few employers cited organisational changes as leading to a scarcity of time and attention for implementation. Despite this, they were keen to ensure that they kept the Pledge principles in mind as they went through this change process. Time was a particular challenge for implementing career development activities. These were viewed as labour-

intensive, especially the more formal processes that require documenting, resulting in not being actioned due to the time taken up by other work commitments.

Although not raised frequently, organisational structure could pose a barrier to Pledge implementation. High levels of bureaucracy often meant long lead-times for any changes, particularly in larger organisations where multiple teams or decision-makers needed to sign off age-inclusive activities. One local government organisation described how adapting their recruitment process was especially challenging because they routinely advertised around 70 roles at any one time, requiring a continuous-improvement approach rather than rapid change.

Financial pressures also limited implementation, with employers unable to fund all the age-friendly activities they wished to pursue. Health-related support, often requiring external expertise or specialist provision, was a particular area where limited budgets constrained what could be offered.

These barriers show that even committed employers struggle to implement age-friendly activities when time, bureaucracy and budgets are tight. This underlines the need for practical, low-burden approaches to age-inclusion or ‘easy wins’ that can be sustained even during periods of organisational pressure.

Key barriers

- Limited digital access and confidence makes it harder for some older workers to engage with Pledge-related updates and opportunities. Rapid technological change left some employees feeling de-skilled or left behind.
- Digital-only recruitment processes created access challenges for candidates with limited technology or support.
- There was a suggestion that generational differences occasionally make relationship-building or communication between age groups more difficult.
- Managers can lack confidence in having sensitive intergenerational conversations, especially around retirement or future plans.
- Some job roles were viewed as not suited to hybrid or flexible working, limiting options for older workers with caring or health needs.
- Physically demanding roles can create barriers for older workers and this was felt to affect both retention and recruitment.
- Workforce engagement was inconsistent, with age sometimes deprioritised compared to other EDI areas.
- Time and financial constraints limit the ability of some organisations, especially smaller ones, to implement planned activities.
- Bureaucratic structures in larger organisations can slow decision-making and make implementing changes more complex.

5.3.5 Collecting and using data effectively

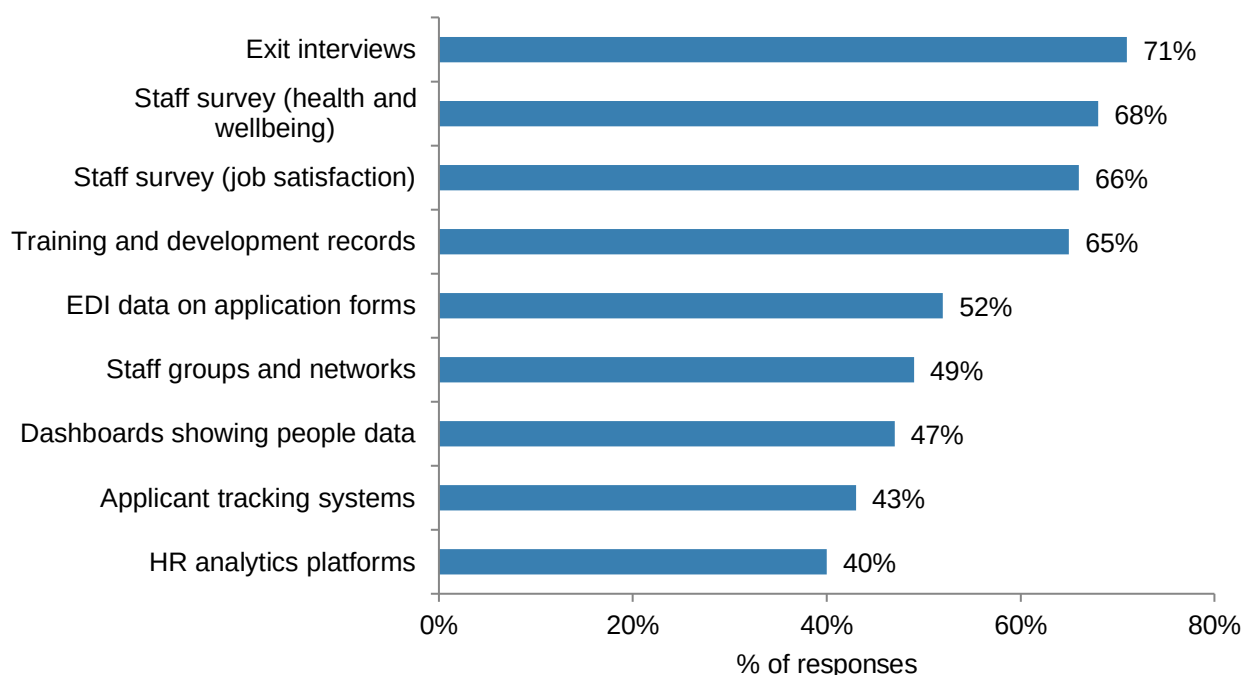
Analysing HR data by age group provides a clearer picture of the organisation’s baseline position and supports tracking progress over time.

General HR and EDI reporting

As reported in the previous chapter, almost all employers taking the survey (95%) reported that ‘**analysing workforce data by age**’ was an area they were taking action in. This area was addressed in more detail in a multiple choice survey questions requiring respondents to specify particular types of data collection their organisation engaged in to understand progress on age inclusion.

Figure 5.5 shows the data and feedback collection activities that Leads conduct to mark or measure their progress towards being age-inclusive. The most commonly reported HR data collection activities by Leads were exit interviews (71%), staff surveys (68% and 66% surveying health and wellbeing and job satisfaction, respectively) and training and development records. Comparisons between different groups of employers showed that staff surveys on job satisfaction were more commonly undertaken in the private sector, and among employers with fewer (0-50%) older workers. Maintaining training and development records was significantly more likely to take place in large organisations. Dashboards showing people data were less likely in micro or small organisations.

Figure 5.5 Proportions of Leads reporting data collection activities to measure progress towards being age-inclusive



Source: *Pledge Lead Evaluation Survey, 2025*

These patterns suggest that while many employers collect basic people data, the more systematic or resource-intensive approaches to understanding workforce experience tend to be concentrated in larger organisations, leaving smaller employers with a more limited evidence base for identifying and tracking age-related issues.

Leads who were interviewed typically reported that data had informed decisions about which age-inclusive activities to implement. Using data meant they could ensure the employee voice guided activities, rather than relying on assumptions.

I think it's important for us to use the data we have, and we have to understand what's wanted, what's needed, and what's important.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

Staff surveys were typically mentioned by Leads as a primary source of feedback, alongside internally generated evidence from equality impact assessments, which they used to inform decisions about age-inclusive practice. The Lead at a health and social care organisation reported that their EDI oversight group uses data to ensure decisions to implement new initiatives are evidence-based. A local government employer obtained staff feedback via employee representatives, reinforcing the value of using proxy voices to gather insights from staff, who may not engage directly with formal surveys or feedback processes.

Even with access to relatively sophisticated data systems, a local government employer reported gaps in their data, in this case with respect to future skills needs to drive recruitment and retention strategies.

We've definitely got gaps in terms of data and mapping out the skills we need for the future and what we've got in the organisation.

Recruitment specialist, local government (b)

This suggests that even well-resourced employers lack the forward-looking workforce data needed to plan effectively, highlighting that better age- and skills-focused insights are essential if organisations are to develop robust recruitment and retention strategies for the future.

Data collection on specific Pledge areas

The survey also examined data collection at a more granular level across the various Pledge areas. For brevity, the full set of findings is presented in Appendix 16. These findings showed that the majority of employers recorded **workforce age composition** (69%), meaning that a relatively high number, four in ten, did not. A smaller proportion monitored occurrences of and reports of age discrimination (18% and 22%, respectively), although it is possible that those who did had experienced this behaviour.

With respect to **recruitment**, outside data related to applications and hiring reported above, there was comparatively little activity. Only a minority of respondents (29%) collected data on **staff turnover** by age. Even fewer (25%) analysed **job application data** by age, and only 14% monitored the **age profile of shortlisted candidates**, although in interviews, there was an appreciation of the value of doing so.

We are improving [our recruitment processes] so we will be better able to report on all diversity data, including age, for example, so that we can see what conversion is from application to recruitment and whether age plays a factor in this.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health charity (b)

Around half recorded whether positions were **advertised as potentially part-time**, and 30% tracked whether they were **advertised as flexible**. Just under a quarter (24%) tracked **requests for flexible working**, and just over a quarter (26%) **monitored whether those requests were accepted**.

Small numbers of organisation reported collecting categories of data related to **career development** outside keeping records of development for individuals, as specified above. Formal monitoring of **apprenticeships by age, retirement planning, on-the-job/formal training** and career guidance uptake by age were each reported by fewer than under 10% of employers.

In relation to health **documentation of adjustments requested and implemented** occurred at more than half of organisations (56%) but other measures were rarely recorded. **Uptake of occupational health and age-related reviews** were recorded by 15% and 8% respectively, possibly reflecting the limited access to each in less well-resourced organisations.

Overall, the findings suggest that most organisations gather the kinds of age-related data typically embedded in standard HR and EDI processes, such as recruitment monitoring, staff surveys and training records. However, data collection beyond these core areas is uneven, especially where it requires more time, specialist systems or forward-planning capacity. This is unsurprising given that organisations prioritise data that is either business-critical or required for compliance, yet it leaves notable gaps in understanding how age shapes experiences across recruitment, progression, health and longer-term workforce planning.

5.4 Relational factors

The following factors relate to people and culture, centring on behaviour, attitudes and relationships. They concern interpersonal trust, understanding across age groups, and the cultural habits that enable age-friendly practice to become established.

5.4.1 Openness to listening to what employees want

There was acknowledgement across multiple professional groups of the importance of listening across all age groups, an approach that sets the scene for meeting diverse needs in line with Pledge objectives.

You need to acknowledge that for some people the [demand for] flexibility is around kids at school and for some people it's about physio appointments and in there's lots of different reasons for wanting to work flexibly, and if you're working intergenerationally then sometimes it's, you know, it might be caring for a baby, a

child or it could be caring for an older relative. So it's just acknowledging that for that, flexibility needs to be different for everybody.

Senior manager, small arts charity

An HR professional at a local government organisation provided a strong example of how an existing mindset on flexible working dovetails with Pledge objectives.

People in my team are staying because they're happy, because the work fits with their life, and I'm happy because the output of work for my team is really high. We're one of the highest delivering L&D teams, and we're doing a great job because people are trusted to do their hours and do what they need to do.

HR specialist, local government (b)

Essentially, when a mindset of listening is already present, it aligns naturally with Pledge objectives and creates conditions in which age-friendly practice can take root more easily.

5.4.2 Knowledge and understanding of ageing

Implementing age-friendly activities is easier when organisations already understand how needs can change with age and consciously avoid assumptions about older workers' ambitions or abilities. This mindset offers a head start and does not depend on a manager being aged 50 and over themselves; it rests on curiosity, respect and evidence.

I think that you subconsciously go into some of those conversations thinking 'oh, this person is in their 50s or 60s, they're probably not that interested now in thinking that much about developing their career, retraining for new skills or looking for promotions'. So I've really tried to avoid having that mindset... that wasn't active guidance that was given to me. That was more my own approach to how I should approach it.

Manager, large public administration employer

This awareness was apparent among employees engaged with Pledge implementation, but it is not possible to say if this is widespread within organisations. Understanding potential age-related challenges, such as decision making about future income, helps employers provide support that is relevant and helps to maintain strong relationships with staff.

Creating that awareness of the options that people have when they move into their 50s and 60s, because I think there is an assumption that people think, once he hits certain age, you're just thinking about retiring and, actually, not everybody is.

HR specialist, large financial employer (b)

Some organisations, such as care providers or age-related charities (both prevalent among Pledge employers), are more likely to have a naturally strong understanding of ageing.

Of course, we think about older people; it's what we do!

Senior Pledge Lead, small equal opportunities charity (b)

Conversely ageist attitudes among clients towards older workers could present a barrier to age-inclusive working. In one example a client organisation placed requirements on the age of a contract worker to 'fit' with their company image. The Lead explained that this was difficult to navigate and involved balancing the need to maintain the client relationship with supporting their current older workers and working towards their Pledge goals.

Understanding of ageing, and the importance of avoiding assumptions gives some employers a head start on the Pledge. But awareness across organisations is not likely to be universal, so training and guidance is needed to prevent age-inclusive practice resting on the behaviours of a few better-informed individuals. Supply chain influences can present a barrier to inclusive working where there may be commercial pressures .

5.4.3 Intergenerational working

In the vast majority of cases, age was not reported to be a source of division in workplaces, with employees of different age groups working well together. However, there were isolated reports among managers and older workers of **challenges in building connections between different age groups**. This could result in individuals feeling socially excluded.

I think there is a bit of a generational difference. I mean, he's lived a life already. So, even kind of trying to form those relationships and things with people in the team, trying to find things in common. I imagine without being aware of it, I've not really thought about it until now, and I don't know if he's aware of it, but I think maybe forming relationships within the team probably is a bit trickier in that sense.

Manager, medium health and social care employer (a)

Tension between age groups was described by one Lead as a barrier, where younger workers felt that older colleagues were being prioritised for support. This was not described as overt ageism and may reflect specific unmet needs among some younger workers. This suggests that Leads may benefit from advice on how to avoid perceptions of differential treatment when implementing age-friendly initiatives. It also highlights a potential training need for line managers, helping them to demonstrate that policies are applied consistently across their team and to minimise any perceptions of bias.

A manager at a large healthcare charity explained how mutual respect across ages and hierarchies shapes day-to-day interactions.

There's a respect between younger people and older people, and then people at all the different levels as well. So that's very helpful because obviously, then I feel like if you're managing someone older, hopefully they feel like they can come to you and share things and it feels like it's inclusive because that runs through all the different departments.

Manager, large health charity (b)

5.5 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the range of factors that shape how effectively employers are able to implement the Age-friendly Employer Pledge. The support and expertise of the Ageing Better and Pledge Teams play a central role, with Leads consistently reporting that trusted guidance, responsive communication and accessible resources help them to engage with the Pledge and translate its principles into practice. Participation is strongest when the support is light-touch, easy to access and low-burden, particularly through newsletters, online guidance and welcome webinars, while more intensive support tends to attract fewer employers.

Successful implementation also relies on the involvement of the right internal roles at the right time. HR, EDI, recruitment, learning and development specialists, senior leaders and line managers all contribute to different aspects of age-inclusive delivery. Line managers in particular shape everyday experiences of older workers, yet many lack confidence in having age-related conversations or navigating sensitive topics such as career development, health needs or retirement. Staff networks and frontline workers can also act as important enablers, helping employers identify emerging issues, sense-check activity and reinforce cultural change.

Alongside these relational and organisational enablers, employers face practical constraints that limit what they can achieve. Time pressures, limited financial resources, job-design constraints, digital access issues and organisational bureaucracy all influence the pace and feasibility of Pledge-related activity. Smaller organisations often have agility and close-knit cultures on their side but lack capacity or budget for more structured interventions. Larger organisations are more able to offer targeted or resource-intensive initiatives, though changes can take longer to move through layered decision-making processes. Data capability also varies significantly, with most employers collecting only basic age-related information, constraining their ability to monitor progress or measure impact.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that the Pledge is most effectively embedded where organisational values, leadership behaviours and existing systems already support age-inclusion. In these contexts, the Pledge provides a framework that builds confidence, encourages intentionality and helps employers co-ordinate and extend what they are already doing. Where systems are less mature or capacity is limited, the Pledge highlights gaps, raises awareness and clarifies areas where further support or capability-building would be beneficial. Across all employers, the combination of practical guidance, cultural alignment and a willingness to listen to and learn from employees and peers emerges as central to sustaining age-inclusive practice.

6 What are the impacts and outcomes for older workers?

This chapter examines the cultural, behavioural, and strategic outcomes that shape the lived experience of older workers, the primary beneficiaries of the age-friendly Pledge. In doing so, it also reflects how the behaviours of staff at different levels of seniority influence those experiences, recognising that day-to-day interactions with managers, leaders and other colleagues form a central part of what older workers encounter at work.

The findings presented here comprise insights from older workers, those who manage them, as well as Pledge Leads. Taken together, these perspectives provide meaningful insight into how activities across the Pledge areas are landing in workplaces, and the extent to which they have the potential to improve everyday working life for older workers.

Key Messages

- Older workers generally report strong cultural benefits in Pledged organisations, reporting feelings of being valued, listened to, and included, alongside positive intergenerational working relationships.
- Visible organisational signalling around age-inclusion increases confidence among older workers, encouraging them to raise concerns, challenge inappropriate behaviour, and discuss age-related needs without fear of stigma.
- Age-inclusive recruitment practice, particularly improved language, imagery and public commitments, are perceived by workers and HR staff as helping attract older applicants, although direct applicant insight is limited.
- Flexible working continues to be the most impactful and widely felt support, enabling older workers to balance caring responsibilities, health conditions and life changes while remaining in work.
- Phased and flexible retirement options are highly valued, supporting retention and allowing older workers to remain in employment longer while adjusting workloads to suit changing circumstances.
- Career development opportunities are generally experienced as open to all, with examples of older workers progressing, retraining and participating in apprenticeships; however, confidence and self-perception can influence uptake.
- Support for health needs is viewed as positive, inclusive and culturally normalised, aided by reasonable adjustments, open conversations about health, and increasing awareness around issues such as menopause.
- Managers play a central role in shaping older workers' experiences, with consistent evidence that supportive, flexible and proactive line management enhances wellbeing and enables longer working lives.
- Experiences remain uneven across roles and organisations, particularly where flexible working is harder to implement or where shift patterns are physically demanding.

- Findings should be interpreted cautiously, as participating employers and employees may not reflect the wider population of older workers across all Pledged organisations.

6.1 Outcomes and impacts in Pledge areas

The following sections examine each area of the Pledge in turn, drawing directly on workers' reflections to illustrate what age-friendly practice looks and feels like in practice. While it is not possible to attribute observed positive changes directly to the Pledge (employees tend to experience effects rather than the mechanisms of change) their accounts offer valuable evidence on how age-friendly practices are perceived and enacted.

6.1.1 Creating an age-friendly culture

On the whole, the older workers interviewed felt their employer had been successful in their efforts to be age-friendly and generally had positive views on intergenerational working within their organisation. Many shared positive experiences of working with younger colleagues, and the mutual opportunities for learning this could create.

Feeling valued and heard

Some older workers felt that their organisation's age-friendly culture had influenced them to stay with their current employer. An older worker in the health sector explained that the organisation's culture had been a major factor in keeping them with the company for 15 years, illustrating how an inclusive environment can support retention. At a local government organisation, older workers reported feeling positive about their employer, particularly because of the support offered to staff of all ages.

There was agreement among focus group peers, who all worked for a large public administration organisation, that there were high levels of trust in their employer and colleagues, and a strong sense of loyalty built over many years of service was evident.

[My employer] does feel like home to me, and I guess it's the culture that contributes to that.

Older worker, large public administration employer

Many employees contributing to focus groups were explicit about feeling valued at work. Older workers in a local government organisation referenced the Pledge as instrumental to this.

The Pledge supports different age demographics. I think it goes a long way in helping people work to their best ability and have a work-life balance, no matter what stage in their life they are.

Older worker, local government (b)

An older worker in the health sector described how important it was to feel heard, particularly by management. Also, those with long tenure noted that they had observed a positive shift in organisational culture over time:

Since the beginning of my career, I think it's become a bit more evident and open around the organisation's commitment to some of those diversity issues. So I think when I first came, it was a bit hidden. It wasn't as evident as it is now. I think it's a really strong culture to support people. [I see] age being irrelevant to people's skills, knowledge and recognising that people at various points in their careers bring strengths.

Older worker, local government (b)

Challenging ageism

Other employees had noticed a positive change in language use about age (but could not determine the influence of the Pledge in this) and had observed ageist stereotypes being challenged. An older worker at a large public administration organisation felt that internal communications had improved in tone, and the language that was used was now suitable for a wider audience.

I can think back to past years, where an opportunity would be put up on the message board as an opportunity for energetic, flexible, and all those words that may be perceived as having more alignment with a more youthful age group than they might have with an older age group.

Older worker, large public administration employer

It was evident from employees that the support of managers was particularly important. One older worker from a healthcare organisation explained that there is managerial support to challenge views and behaviours that are not inclusive.

I think they're doing a good job to make us all feel accepted and that we've all got a place, and they do try hard to remind us of that. They're very quick to work through [anything potentially non-inclusive behaviours] with the managers, with the person involved, to find out what the problem is and how they can change it or how they can make it better. So they don't just sit back and allow someone to feel isolated.

Older worker, large health and social care employer (a)

A Lead from a different healthcare organisation confirmed that there was increased willingness of older workers to signal when situations felt uncomfortable or potentially placed them at a disadvantage.

Thanks to people being aware of the Age Pledge, I have had staff approach me with concerns, where they feel their age-related needs have not been met or are potentially discriminatory, and I have taken appropriate action. I am not sure these people would have felt confident to raise these issues before.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health charity (b)

Consistent with this, Leads and HR professionals viewed that signalling age as an organisational priority gave older workers greater confidence to talk about their experiences, raise concerns and discuss their needs.

I believe [signing the Pledge] makes our staff and volunteer team more confident that we are open to all possibilities and to supporting their needs.

Senior Pledge Lead, small animal charity

These reflections suggest that when age is made a visible organisational priority, older workers are more willing to voice their experiences and needs. It seems reasonable to infer that these shifts in confidence to speak out are likely to contribute to better day-to-day working experiences for older staff.

6.1.2 Hiring age-positively

Attracting applicants

Because most employees had joined their organisations some time ago, they could not always remember what precisely had attracted them to the role. As a result, their views on how vacancies were advertised tended to be impressionistic, offering insight into how age-inclusion is perceived rather than first-person experiences.

Those interviewed felt that publicly displaying an organisation's commitment to the Pledge on job adverts was positive, as it reassured older applicants that their age would not count against them. One older worker noted that details in an application can often reveal a great deal about age, but that seeing a clear commitment to age-inclusion would make them more confident about applying.

I think from speaking to my friends who've been in similar situations where they've taken voluntary redundancy, a lot on your CV indicates your age, and they have been feeling that they're not even invited to interviews, and they feel it's probably their age.

Older worker, medium health and social care employer (d)

This was another area where Leads and HR professionals added a broader perspective, drawing on their oversight of recruitment systems. The Lead at a large sport and leisure organisation explained that they now take much more deliberate care over the language and imagery used in recruitment materials, drawing on Ageing Better resources to help attract older applicants. One Lead reported receiving applications from wider pools, helping to improve the diversity within the organisation.

Our age-inclusive recruitment practices have helped attract a diverse candidate pool, enriching team capability and experience.

Senior Pledge Lead, large health and social care employer (a)

Other HR staff viewed these types of changes as likely to influence older applicants' behaviour, although this was an inference from their perspective rather than via formal feedback mechanisms.

Recruitment process

As noted above, older worker participants tended to have been with their current employer for a significant time, potentially before any Pledge activities had been implemented.

Those who had been recruited more recently reported good experiences but were not able to say whether this was the result of the Pledge. Two employees at a large healthcare charity had been recruited in their 50s and were positive about the process, including one who had been making a career change. Another older worker at a local government organisation felt that their recruitment process had been fair and based around individuals' strengths, knowledge, skills and experience, but age-neutral.

An older worker at a large public administration organisation (who had joined more than ten years ago) had observed a rise in older returners, which they felt conveyed a strong signal about age-inclusive recruitment. Highlighting flexibility at the point of recruitment was also deemed to have helped to recruit older workers:

We've definitely got more people coming through the doors and people with the experience that we need who perhaps couldn't have done a full-time role.

Senior manager, small health and social care charity

To understand whether senior staff perceptions of more age-inclusive recruitment reflect the impact of recent age-friendly changes, further evidence is needed. A future employee or applicant survey would help clarify whether recruitment reforms are influencing older applicants' decisions and outcomes.

6.1.3 Being flexible about flexible working

Facilitating work-life balance

The majority of older workers interviewed were working flexibly, providing direct evidence of uptake. They described a wide range of reasons for needing this flexibility, including caring responsibilities for parents, adult children and grandchildren, alongside managing their own health and energy levels. Flexible working enabled them to remain in employment while balancing these competing demands. At a large public administration organisation, older workers were aware of carers' leave as an option, but felt that day-to-day flexible working provided greater practical support in managing their lives, and they reported feeling well supported by their managers in doing so.

It was clear that flexible working options, both in terms of hours and location, were more readily available in office-based roles. A minority of older workers noted that flexible working was not available in their roles due to the nature of the work, and some felt that not all possible options had been explored.

I also think that we need to have a look at whether we can change something to make it more attractive for everybody, especially as we grow older. We aren't as young as we once were, and instead of having two people covering the 24 hours,

maybe having three people covering the 24 hours. That can sometimes be more beneficial for people.

Older worker, large security company

However, on the whole, there was little attributable impact from the Pledge on employees working flexibly, as many had been working flexibly for several years. Employees observed that flexible working arrangements had first been introduced during the pandemic, and, having proved effective, were subsequently maintained by employers. The Lead at a small equal opportunities charity noted that, with the legal right to request flexible working now in place, such arrangements have become 'culturally the norm'. Employees also emphasised the importance of regularly reviewing flexible working so that it remains suited to individuals' circumstances and needs.

Crucially, some older workers reported that flexibility in working arrangements had enabled them to remain working, with those at a large healthcare charity sharing that it "enhances their role". Many older workers were keen to continue working but also wanted to maintain a balance between work and life outside of work. Flexible working arrangements helped them achieve this balance, and they felt satisfactorily supported by their employer to work in this way.

I think I'm at a stage where, although I'm still motivated and enjoy work and I want to be working, I'm also at a stage where money isn't quite as important to me as time, and I think this company and this role and how I'm working allows me the time that I'm after. And I think that fits very well with how I am at this point in my life.

Older worker, medium health and social care employer (c)

I think they appreciate that people who are even older than I may find that they'll come and sort of say I'm struggling a bit [with my working arrangement]... the company can look at that and sort of work with it. So very important that we don't make people feel isolated or old.

Older worker, large health and social care employer (a)

Older workers at a local government organisation described how working arrangements were tailored to the individual, with each request taking personal circumstances into account whilst remaining fair and equitable. A manager felt strongly that flexible working directly improved the quality of working life experienced by her team.

I've got people in my team who would reflect back to me that one of the reasons why they enjoy working in the team is that people treat them with humanity, when they have their own challenges in life and flex around that.

Older worker, local government (b)

Enabling phased and flexible retirement

Flexible retirement was discussed in the interviews, with older workers explaining that it made them feel supported and able to stay in work for longer. One older worker at a large healthcare charity said they would consider gradually retiring by reducing their hours

rather than stopping work altogether. A local government organisation employee had observed the positive impact of this approach on colleagues.

I think it is a good way of how we evidence that we support our workforce. It's valued by the people who are using it and receiving it.

Older worker, local government (b)

You don't feel rushed into making decisions about retirement.

Older worker, large health charity (b)

Employers observed that changing retirement preferences were shaping older workers' experiences, with many valuing the opportunity to reduce hours gradually rather than leave work altogether. Flexible retirement offered older workers a way to stay in employment while adjusting their workload to suit their circumstances, supporting both wellbeing and continued contribution to the organisation.

I've just noticed more flexible retirement in recent years, rather than just going for full retirement... So I think it's allowing people to slowly reduce their working life. Or the other opportunity is that they look at an alternative role, but still within their skill set, so that's been acceptable to us as well. Again, we're retaining that skill.

People specialist, large sport and leisure employer (a)

It is increasingly evident that employees are not 'retiring' as previously and are looking to extend their service, which is a positive for us in terms of knowledge retention and acquisition.

Senior Pledge Lead, large sport and leisure employer (a)

Flexible retirement was described as a well-established retention strategy in local government settings, where it has a proven track record of helping older workers remain in post for longer. As one manager explained:

What we're really good at in the council is when we find someone good at what they do, we are really interested in retaining them and I've seen that on both ends... with flexible retirement on offer, where you wind down your working hours rather than stopping... and that works for both parties so you don't lose them quite so soon and that's wonderful.

Manager, local government (b)

Taken together, these examples point to the value of flexible retirement for older workers' wellbeing and retention. However, these practices tended to be found in larger, better-resourced organisations, and may not reflect the wider experience of employers across the Pledge network.

6.1.4 Encouraging career development at all ages

Progressing or enriching careers

Older workers generally reported that development opportunities were available within their organisations, though it was not clear whether this was as a direct result of the Pledge. Most described career development as accessible to all staff, with some noting additional efforts to highlight opportunities relevant to later-career employees.

Development was closely linked to motivation to stay in work. One older worker in a large public administration organisation explained that opportunities for development significantly enhanced her enjoyment of the role and her desire to continue working. Older workers described engaging in varied activities (including apprenticeships, shadowing, career changes and formal study) and felt supported in doing so.

I feel seen and validated. I don't feel less than because I'm getting older or because I'm older than my colleagues, so that's really important.

Older worker, large health charity (b)

You see people who have developed their careers undertaking apprenticeships, undertaking learning opportunities, masters, stepping into arenas in an equitable way... age is not a barrier to undertaking these things.

Older worker, local government (b)

A senior manager felt that increasing numbers of older workers were progressing and being promoted at her organisation, viewing this as a sign of a more age-friendly organisational culture:

There's a good representation of people who are in a later stage in their career progressing and being promoted, which I think is really helpful for visibility as an organisation... In more recent promotion rounds, we've been seeing increasing numbers of people who have been in the grade longer getting promoted. So it's not necessarily age, although often again it correlates with age.

Manager, large public administration employer

Later-career options and avoiding assumptions about retirement timing

Across the organisations represented in focus groups, older workers did not report feeling pressured to retire. A local government organisation employee valued the freedom she felt she had to make decisions about retirement based on her own personal circumstances:

My exit will be determined by my family circumstances, not my organisation. I'm absolutely confident about that in [my employer].

Older worker, local government (b)

Several older workers emphasised that development opportunities continued to be offered regardless of proximity to retirement - a signal that they were viewed as individuals rather than as a demographic group:

That makes me say that the office is not looking at age, it's looking at individuals.

Older worker, large public administration employer

I think it's also about people in the company [more generally] having the opportunity for development... rather than age... there's no stopping people just because of age.

Older worker, medium health and social care employer (c)

Supporting confidence and addressing self-perceptions

A number of older workers highlighted the role of self-perception in shaping take-up of development opportunities. Some workers appeared to place self-imposed limits on their potential to progress, often linking this to an expectation of retiring soon. However, there were also examples of individuals whose thinking had shifted, becoming more open to development and progression.

My perception has always been historically that there was a barrier for older people getting opportunities. But I think I was more exercised by my age than anyone else was... there are opportunities to continue to contribute as one matures.

Older worker, local government (b)

Mentoring also supported progression late in working life; one older worker at a large private security company credited a mentor with boosting confidence and competence. Some managers had observed a positive shift in confidence among older workers they worked with, and there were examples of success among individuals who had previously assumed that opportunities were no longer open to them:

I think in her mind, she possibly thought she'd missed the boat... And I thought it was a really positive example of where there is no discrimination... the opportunities for you to get promoted definitely still exist if you want them, regardless of age.

Manager, large public administration employer

Some employees felt their interest in progression had declined closer to retirement, emphasising that later-career 'success' varies by individual preference and that remaining in a valued role is an equally valid outcome.

In general, these findings suggest that older workers felt supported to develop within the organisations involved in the 'high involvement' evaluation element. However, more evidence is needed to understand whether this reflects the impact of the Pledge or pre-existing organisational culture. The small sample size of employees also points to the need to consider a broader picture.

6.1.5 Ensuring everyone has the health support they need

A supportive and open approach to health

Across organisations, employees consistently felt that health support was available to them regardless of age. As with other areas, because many were unaware which initiatives were directly linked to the Pledge, they tended to describe the impact of health-related activities in a general sense.

Older workers highlighted the role of line managers in normalising health support and encouraging its use. Line managers themselves showed attitudes that were supportive and non-discriminatory.

Typically, absence isn't something that we see related to an older age. So obviously the stuff we are doing is helping people be well and be in work. I think a lot of that is around flexible working and phased return to work and reasonable adjustments that we can make.

Manager, large health charity (b)

Employees also described a broader cultural shift towards greater openness about health. Training, such as menopause awareness, helped people feel more able to share experiences and seek support when needed:

I think the culture has definitely changed... these wouldn't have happened 15 years ago... definitely I think it's a culture where all sorts of things are openly discussed and people's challenges in life.

Older worker, large public administration employer

Tailored support, reasonable adjustments and remaining in work

Older workers often spoke about the value of individualised support, particularly when returning after illness. Feeling understood, rather than judged, contributed to a sense of belonging:

It's having an understanding of you as a person rather than what you're responsible for at work.

Older worker, large public administration employer

Employees also emphasised that employers did not question their ability to continue working, even when they had significant health conditions:

[They are] sensitive to the needs of people... They do their best to try to help provide the support that you need, which is why I'm still here.

Older worker, large health and social care employer (a)

Reasonable adjustments, such as specialist equipment, adapted technology and adjusted duties, where reported, were widely appreciated. These made it easier for older workers

experiencing the effects of a long-term condition to remain in their roles and maintain productivity.

Flexible working as a core mechanism for health support

Flexible working emerged as one of the most critical enablers of health-related support. Older workers experiencing fluctuating symptoms or caring for someone with changing health needs felt reassured that their working patterns could adapt. As one manager described:

We are also actively supporting five people aged over 50 to manage serious chronic physical health challenges with flexible working arrangements.

Manager, medium health and social care employer (d)

Some older workers were also able to reduce stress through home-working when required, and spoke positively about the confidence this gave them to continue working longer term. They felt able to request changes without stigma and valued the responsiveness of managers in granting adjustments.

6.2 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter offer a rich picture of how age-friendly activities are experienced by older workers within Pledged organisations. Across the Pledge areas, older workers described workplaces where they generally feel valued, supported and included, and where intergenerational working relationships function well. These cultural conditions appear to strengthen loyalty, confidence and motivation to remain in work, even if employees are not always able to identify whether these shifts stem directly from the Pledge or from the wider organisational context.

The evidence suggests that visible signalling of age-inclusion, through communications, language, and senior-level commitment, helps older workers feel more comfortable to raise concerns and discuss their needs. In recruitment, employees' experiences were more impressionistic, as most had joined their organisations before age-inclusive changes were introduced. However, Leads and HR staff pointed to meaningful improvements in recruitment practice that they believed would help attract older applicants. While direct attribution to the Pledge is limited, these shifts are consistent with wider cultural change reported across organisations.

Flexible working emerged as the most consistently impactful intervention for older workers, enabling them to balance caring responsibilities, manage health conditions and maintain a sustainable work-life balance. Similarly, phased and flexible retirement arrangements were highly valued, particularly in larger and well-resourced organisations, where they played a significant role in supporting wellbeing and retaining experience. These forms of flexibility underpin many of the positive working experiences described.

Career development opportunities were generally viewed as accessible to all, with examples of older workers progressing, retraining and enriching their careers. However, confidence and self-perception were important: some older workers felt their own

expectations had limited their progression more than organisational barriers. Despite inclusive policies and intentions, experiences can still vary according to mindset, support and personal circumstances.

Older workers also described an increasingly open culture around health, supported by line managers who normalise conversations about wellbeing, implement reasonable adjustments and respond in ways that emphasise understanding rather than judgement. Flexible working again played a central role in supporting health, particularly for those managing long-term or fluctuating conditions.

Overall, while the sample is not representative of all older workers in Pledged organisations, the accounts suggest that many employers are creating conditions in which later-life employees can thrive. At the same time, the chapter highlights that these experiences can vary, particularly in roles with limited flexibility or physically demanding duties. Further evidence would help clarify the extent to which the Pledge is driving these improvements. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that the Pledge is already helping to shape more supportive, age-inclusive workplaces when embedded within wider organisational culture and practice.

7 Strategic added value

This chapter presents stakeholder perspectives on the Pledge and its strategic added value. Although these perspectives primarily reflect external stakeholder insight, several points chime clearly with employer observations from elsewhere in the evaluation: particularly how the good fit of Pledge can dovetail with existing initiatives and the value of a recognised framework to sharpen existing age-friendly strategy.

Stakeholders who contributed to this section included an EDI consultant, a labour market expert and a two senior applied policy researchers, who were able to cover business, government and research insights collectively.

Key Messages

- The Pledge strengthens the profile of age within EDI, offering a clear, credible framework that helps employers prioritise and structure age-inclusive action.
- It supports embedding age-friendliness into day-to-day people management, prompting organisations to apply an age lens to capability, development and technological confidence.
- The Pledge adds value for employers at all stages, from those seeking basic guidance to those refining mature age-inclusive strategies.
- Stakeholders highlighted its forward-looking relevance, particularly for preparing employers for rapid technological change and supporting effective intergenerational working.
- It encourages better diagnosis and sharing of good practice, helping employers reflect on workforce data gaps and spread learning across sectors.
- The Pledge has a good fit with national later-life work priorities, offering clarity in a crowded EDI landscape and contributing to wider momentum on age-inclusion.
- By surfacing the barriers and enablers to age-inclusive practice across different organisational contexts, the Pledge has potential to inform future policy thinking, particularly around ageing, technology, intersectionality and economic inactivity.
- The Pledge could also play a stronger role in brokering connections between employers, specialist organisations and public services by convening employers, specialist organisations and public services to supporting knowledge exchange, signposting to relevant support, and encouraging more joined-up approaches to age inclusion.

7.1 Business context

This section focusses on how the Pledge offers strategic added value for employers approaches to people management within, over and above the additive impact of individual activities to influence culture, systems and longer-term practice.

7.1.1 Strengthening the position of age within EDI

Stakeholders consistently viewed the Pledge as a tool that helps organisations give age a more prominent place within their wider EDI commitments. This is consistent with employer views that the Pledge provides a coherent structure for focusing or consolidating activity. Two of the four experts compared the Pledge to a formal organisational charter, offering clarity and signalling “what counts” as age-inclusive action.

My assumption of the Pledge is that it's really like a charter and organisations have to commit to a number of actions.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

This explicit commitment matters because age has traditionally lagged behind other protected characteristics. The Pledge's value lies in providing a practical mechanism for employers to act on this.

Because age hasn't been given the same profile as, you know, the big three, disability, race, and, you know, sex, gender. I think it's catching up with this in organisational policies.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

I think it's a really good thing it's there. There was a gap where employers were thinking more about age at work, but this is the next concrete step — something employers can actually get involved with and sign up to

Senior researcher, employer-facing think tank

A central message from stakeholders was that achieving one action cannot be treated as an endpoint. They emphasised the importance of encouraging employers to progress across multiple areas of the Pledge over time, reflecting a key stakeholder concern about avoiding “tick-box” or “one-and-done” approaches.

There was also scepticism about existing schemes perceived as providing superficial badges without shifting practice:

Some of these schemes, I'm thinking of like Disability Confident and others are recognising that they're deficient, they are being used as badges and there's not enough steam behind them.

Deputy director, national skills research institute

Stakeholders were clear that ongoing expectations and support are needed to raise the bar and encourage progress across all relevant areas.

7.1.2 Embedding age-friendliness in practice

Stakeholders also felt the Pledge is valuable in helping employers apply an age-friendly lens to existing policies and day-to-day people management, not as an add-on, but as part of core organisational functioning. This includes prompting managers to consider

workforce capability issues, learning and development, and technological confidence. The Pledge was also seen as useful in building workforce buy-in by reframing age as universal, rather than a niche concern:

Age is one of those protected characteristics that we all have.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

Age is a trickier inclusion issue because it's about people going through a life journey. Everyone's ageing, but to different degrees, and that makes it more complex and nuanced than some other areas.

Senior researcher, employer-facing think tank

Stakeholder perspectives also highlighted that the longer-term sustainability of the Pledge is likely to depend on how far age-friendly commitments become embedded within organisational systems and wider structures, rather than relying solely on ongoing central stewardship.

7.1.3 Adding value wherever organisations are on their age-friendly journey

Stakeholders highlighted that organisations engage with the Pledge from very different starting points, and this diversity should be reflected more explicitly. For some, the Pledge helps them organise scattered or ad-hoc activities into a coherent framework. For others, it enables them to fine-tune and align existing, well-developed age-inclusive infrastructures, such as work and wellbeing action plans, Age Champions, or structured retirement planning. Others still approach the Pledge seeking guidance, answers and practical direction, starting from a less developed baseline.

This reflects a wider strategic trade-off identified by stakeholders: the low barrier to entry that supports broad uptake also means organisations engage with the Pledge in different ways and at varying depths, reinforcing the importance of offering flexible routes for progression rather than a single standardised pathway.

The variation in level of engagement shows that the Pledge does not serve a single purpose; instead, it is adaptable and sits naturally alongside existing employer systems while also offering structure for those needing clearer support. Stakeholders described how it reinforces or refines activity already underway, without redirecting mature employers but helping ensure their approaches are compatible with national priorities.

7.1.4 Future-focused business issues

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of preparing employers for future workforce challenges, particularly those linked to rapid technological and digital change. This perspective aligns with employer concerns around capability, confidence and the need to prepare for the next generation of older workers.

Interviews highlighted the importance of positive intergenerational working, with younger workers sharing digital skills and older workers contributing experience and stability:

[Older workers] have all of that experience in the business... Gen Z are coming in, they're sharing all of their tech skills with the practical skills of [the older workers].

Labour market expert

Looking ahead, stakeholders stressed the need to anticipate what today's younger cohorts will require as they age in a faster-moving technological landscape:

So, what's the Centre for Ageing Better going to be doing in the future... How are they going to prepare them for... because things surely are going to move faster and faster?

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

This positions the Pledge as a tool that supports forward-looking practice, helping organisations consider how ageing, work, and technology will intersect in the years ahead.

Alongside this forward-looking role, stakeholders also reflected on the conditions needed to sustain momentum over time. The importance of Ageing Better's role in sustaining impact was raised.

The risk is what happens in the long run. If there isn't someone continuing to drive it forward, it could just fizzle out. Momentum doesn't sustain itself automatically.

Senior researcher, employer-facing think tank

7.1.5 Encouraging strategic data collection and sharing good practice

Stakeholders observed that many employers lack robust data on their workforce, limiting their ability to diagnose issues or identify disparities. The Pledge encourages reflection and better diagnosis, even where formal data remains limited.

Stakeholders also emphasised the Pledge's potential role in spreading and sharing good practice, especially between large and small employers:

And you've got those sort of stellar employers. How are they reaching out to small businesses in their area to share their learning?

Deputy director, national skills research institute

This combination of better diagnosis and wider sharing was seen as an area where the Pledge could become substantially more impactful.

7.2 Policy context

Another notable theme in stakeholder reflections was how the Pledge connects with national policy priorities and wider government aims around later-life work.

7.2.1 Fit with national priorities and building momentum

Stakeholders positioned the Pledge clearly within the wider ecosystem of government programmes on later-life work, such as 50+ Champions, midlife MOTs and other employer-facing initiatives. It was valued for adding coherence, not duplication, and for aligning employer practice with the broader direction of national policy.

Stakeholders noted that system-level change is hard to detect in real time, but that collective incremental action can build momentum:

If a whole load of organisations... collectively, even if they're all doing incremental stuff, that's going to be a critical mass of increment... something has to shift somewhere.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

Stakeholders also suggested the Pledge could play a stronger role in brokering connections with specialist organisations and experts.

I think sometimes pledges... haven't been active enough in being a coordinator... a sort of shop window...

Deputy director, national skills research institute

External stakeholders also noted that, despite growing employer participation, the Pledge is not yet widely recognised by workers or jobseekers, suggesting a gap between organisational commitment and broader visibility in the labour market.

Most people looking for jobs probably wouldn't have heard of the Pledge, but if they see it on recruitment material, it signals that this is an employer who's thought about age and is probably doing something positive.

Senior researcher, employer-facing think tank

7.2.2 Offering clarity in a crowded EDI landscape

A recurring theme was the sheer number of pledges and charters that employers encounter.

If there are so many, how is an organisation going to manage delivering all of these... Something might get compromised because of the... plethora of pledges.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

Within this crowded landscape, stakeholders felt the Pledge strikes a workable balance: sufficiently persuasive to raise visibility, sufficiently practical to avoid burdensome bureaucracy, and working with existing systems rather than competing with them.

Storytelling was highlighted as crucial for public-facing awareness:

How do we use storytelling... to embed it in the public mind that this is an issue?

EDI consultant, cross sector inclusion network

There was consensus regarding the importance of communicating age-inclusion in relatable, human terms rather than through policy statements alone.

Some stakeholders suggested that the Pledge's influence could be strengthened further by a more visible employer-led champion helping age-friendly practice cut through in a crowded EDI landscape and resonate more strongly across sectors.

It can be really powerful to have a named, known senior business leader associated with it. Someone who cuts through and makes people think, 'this matters'.

Senior researcher, employer-facing think tank

7.2.3 Informing future thinking

Stakeholders emphasised the Pledge's potential to contribute to forward-looking policy thinking, particularly around workforce ageing, technology, and labour-market change. They noted gaps in national evidence on outcomes, including retention and hiring, and highlighted the value of better intersectional data across gender, disability and cultural background.

Better intersectional data would be really helpful... Is there different impacts on women who are elderly? ... people with disabilities? Sure, there are.

EDI consultant, cross-sector inclusion network

They also raised the importance of system join-up, such as ensuring Jobcentre advisers know which employers have signed the Pledge and what this means in practice. This raises the prospect of Pledge activities reaching older people who are out of work and, over time, supporting wider efforts to reduce economic inactivity.

Stakeholder reflections also highlighted a balance to be struck between positioning the Pledge within regional or local economic frameworks to extend reach, while retaining an employer-led identity to avoid perceptions of politicisation or reduced trust.

7.3 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter show that the Pledge offers clear strategic added value at both organisational and system levels. Stakeholders emphasised that the Pledge strengthens the visibility of age within wider EDI work, providing a coherent framework that helps employers prioritise and structure age-inclusive action. In doing so, it supports organisations to embed age-friendliness in everyday people management rather than treat it as an add-on.

Importantly, the Pledge was viewed as valuable for employers at all stages of their age-inclusion journey. It helps those starting from a limited baseline to organise activity and gain practical direction, while offering more mature employers a mechanism to refine, co-ordinate and consolidate established approaches. Stakeholders also saw the Pledge as forward-looking, helping employers prepare for rapid technological change, support intergenerational working and consider what future cohorts of older workers will need.

The Pledge was also recognised for its contribution to better diagnosis and practice sharing. By encouraging employers to reflect on workforce data and identify gaps, it supports more informed decision-making, and offers a platform through which good practice-particularly from larger or more advanced employers-can be shared more widely.

At a policy level, stakeholders felt the Pledge coheres well with national priorities around later-life work, offering coherence within a crowded EDI landscape. Its emphasis on relatable communication and its potential to support system join-up were highlighted as areas of growing importance, particularly as government and employers look to tackle workforce ageing and economic inactivity.

Overall, stakeholder insights suggest that the Pledge is not simply an organisational tool but a mechanism that can support broader cultural and policy change. By providing clarity, structure and legitimacy, it helps employers strengthen age-inclusive practice now while positioning them to respond to the demographic and technological challenges of the future

8 Conclusions and implications

This chapter brings together the evaluation's overarching conclusions, summarising what the evidence shows about how employers sign up to the Pledge, how they implement age-inclusive practice in reality, and what early impacts are emerging for organisations and their older workers. The chapter is structured around the major components of the employer journey: awareness and motivations, implementation across each Pledge area, enablers and barriers, and emerging impacts, before synthesising the Pledge's wider strategic added value.

In doing so, it directly addresses the evaluation's three aims:

- (1) documenting and interpreting how the Pledge is being implemented across diverse employer contexts;
- (2) summarising the early changes and outcomes visible for employers, managers and older workers; and
- (3) identifying conditions, patterns and lessons that form a foundation for any longer-term evaluation of the Pledge and its development.

The conclusions and implications discussed offer a synthesised account of what the Pledge is achieving, where it is most influential, and where further support or refinement could strengthen its long-term impact.

8.1 Conclusions from signing and uptake of the Pledge

8.1.1 Awareness of the Pledge

Conclusion 1: Awareness of the Pledge is driven overwhelmingly by Ageing Better's own communication channels, supported by trusted peer networks.

- Employers most commonly learn about the Employer Pledge through Ageing Better's own communications, especially newsletters and related marketing, with peer-to-peer routes (colleagues, other company branches, sector contacts) also playing a significant role in spreading awareness.
- Traditional and mainstream media contribute little, and some discovery occurs incidentally via networking activities learning spaces (e.g., EDI webinars) or while searching for later-life resources.
- A combination of visible credibility (the trusted Ageing Better brand), visible validation from peers (seeing examples from other employers), and a clear action framework converts interest into sign-up.

Conclusion 2: The decision to sign up is rapid because the Pledge is easy to understand, easy to communicate internally, and aligns readily with organisation's mission.

- Awareness generated through Ageing Better communication or a sector peer tends to hasten sign-up, and the journey from first becoming aware about the Pledge to signing up is typically short. Any lag is typically to allow time for senior (director-level) agreement in principle, rather than board-level review of a formal business case.
- Organisations move quickly from awareness to sign-up because they can readily identify an internal champion, share materials internally (via HR/EDI), see high compatibility with their existing mission and values, and draw on a simple, actionable framework that senior leaders can approve with ease.
- This trust, peer validation and ease of access means the Pledge has a low barrier to entry. Employers perceive it as a credible, ready-made route to improve age inclusion.

8.1.2 Motivations for signing the Pledge

Conclusion 3: Employers sign the Pledge to make a visible, public commitment to being age-friendly.

- The strongest and most consistent external driver for organisations signing up to the Pledge is making a visible public commitment to being age-friendly or an age-inclusive employer. Leads appreciated the public relations benefits of signing the Pledge and the accountability it offers to employees and the wider public. They describe the Pledge “badge” as a recognisable sign of good practice that helps them communicate their age-inclusive mindset to partners, service users and local communities.
- This visibility is valued by both large organisations and smaller, mission-driven charities, who use the Pledge to provide a basis for constructive conversations about age and demonstrate credibility in this area.

Conclusion 4: Employers see the Pledge as strongly aligned with their existing mission and values, helping them formalise and reinforce age-inclusive practice already underway.

- Beyond reputational concerns, signing the Pledge has practical benefits of supporting talent attraction. Ongoing skills shortages have sharpened this recruitment interest, with Leads seeking ways to widen applicant pools and access experienced candidates. The Pledge signals to applicants aged 50 and over that their experience is being taken seriously. It also gives recruiters a clear narrative for campaigns and materials through, for example, revised advert language, age-neutral application process and/or use of inclusive imagery. Some employers are already tracking applicant data and observing where older candidates succeed in the recruitment funnel, though many smaller employers lack the capacity to monitor this consistently.
- A key internal facing driver that motivates employers to sign the Pledge is wanting to solidify their existing commitment and send a clear signal to their existing workforce that they are embedding age within day-to-day practice. Leads reported that it helps

move age from an implicit consideration to an explicit priority within EDI work, providing a focus to address age in policies, processes and culture.

Conclusion 5: Employers join the Pledge to access practical guidance and learning that helps them strengthen age-inclusive practice.

- Learning is another key driver for signing the Pledge. Leads are keen to learn in a general sense what it means to be an age-friendly employer but are also seeking specific practical guidance on the areas they pledge to take action on.
- For some other employers, workforce strategy was a motivator – retaining experienced staff, preparing for longer working lives, and supporting later-career development. Employers placed strong value on peer learning from other Pledge employers – seeing concrete examples from similar organisations, sharing ‘what worked,’ and seeing ideas adopted successfully by others encourages in-house implementation.
- Line managers, in particular, benefit from Pledge guidance and resources that increase their confidence in having sensitive conversations that respect individual needs, preferences and lifestyle choices rather than making assumptions about retirement.

8.1.3 Pledge areas of interest while signing up

Conclusion 6: Employers prioritise areas where cultural change is visible, achievable and reinforces existing inclusion efforts, like creating an age-friendly culture and flexible working.

- On creating an age-friendly culture, employers emphasised age-inclusive language, everyday awareness-raising, and visible signals through internal messaging and campaigns to “make age visible” across teams and to normalise discussion of age-related issues. Leads noted that as terminology and social norms evolve, staff benefit from regular reminders and practical prompts creating light-touch reinforcement rather than one-off large interventions.
- On flexible working, employers highlighted the role of flexibility in supporting older workers who have caring responsibilities, fluctuating health needs, or changing personal priorities. They described a range of approaches: reduced hours, home or hybrid working where feasible, and phased retirement, to help people stay in work while maintaining the work-life balance they want. Others reported structural constraints: service models, pension scheme incentives for early retirement, and operational demands can limit flexibility for particular roles.

Conclusion 7: Progress across the Pledge areas is interconnected, with action in one domain naturally enabling movement in others.

- Interviewees highlighted that work in one area often reinforces outcomes elsewhere for example strengthening flexibility also supports recruitment and retention, whilst achieving an age-friendly working culture can create the conditions for older workers to develop their careers.

Conclusion 8: Employers want practical, actionable guidance-especially where issues are sensitive, complex, or structurally constrained.

- Several organisations described their culture as already a strength but still wanted help to move further, indicating appetite for guidance that helps maintain momentum.
- Across the evaluation, employers described seeking guidance not only on discrete actions but on how to navigate sensitive and structurally constrained issues, such as later-career planning, implementing flexible working in operational settings, and supporting line managers to have age-related conversations confidently.
- Interviewees did not necessarily expect prescriptive solutions, but valued practical examples, shared learning, and reassurance about what good practice looks like in comparable organisations, a role they felt the Pledge was well placed to play.
- Hiring age-positively was often treated as a pragmatic entry point because practical actions are relatively simple to implement: employers can update advert language, imagery, and interview processes quickly. Beyond inclusive wording, Leads wanted practical resources to help ‘age-neutralise’ campaigns to remove barriers for experienced candidates. The value of the Pledge Team in bringing employers who face similar recruitment challenges together was underscored in interviews.

Conclusion 9: Later-career development and health support remain areas of aspiration rather than established practice, reflecting capability and confidence gaps.

- Career development at all ages was mentioned where organisations wanted clearer pathways as people work longer. Leads described two linked challenges here:
 - older staff may be less likely to opt into voluntary development compared with junior colleagues,
 - managers want to promote opportunities without sending unintended signals about focusing on retirement.

This signals a demand not for generic guidance on career conversations, but for practical support that helps managers approach later-career discussions with confidence, structure, and neutrality.

- Health support was less frequently selected as the top action area but viewed as essential for longer working lives. Employers want more open cultures around health, including menopause, and a mix of adjustments, phased returns, and flexibility to keep people well and in work. They also recognised limits to what workplaces can provide, and indicated interest in accessible guidance that helps managers discuss health with

confidence and signpost in an informed way (for example, existing tools such as Wellness Action Plans¹ or Health Adjustment Passports²).

8.2 Conclusions from implementation of the Pledge

8.2.1 Most commonly implemented or planned activities

Conclusion 11: Employers tend to take action in areas where existing systems already support change, rather than in the areas they initially prioritise at sign-up.

- More action was apparent in the areas of ‘Hiring age-positively’ and ‘Ensuring everyone has health support; with the least activity reported in ‘Encouraging career development at all ages’. These areas differ from those indicated as a priority by employers while signing the Pledge which were namely, ‘Creating an age-friendly culture’; and ‘Being flexible about flexible working’.
- This suggests that employers tend to pledge action in areas where they recognise gaps, but are able to implement activities where systems are already in place before signing, are less cost- and resource-intensive making implementation easier.

Conclusion 12: Cultural signalling actions through public commitments, explicit EDI integration, and mechanisms for hearing older workers, are the strongest and most consistent changes organisations implement.

- On creating an age-friendly culture, organisations most often took action in ‘making public commitments that signal seriousness to staff and stakeholders’; ‘naming age explicitly in EDI strategies and internal documents’ so that it has equal footing with other inclusion priorities; and putting practical mechanisms in place for listening to older workers’ experiences and challenging stereotypes in communications and meetings. Together, these actions help normalise age-inclusive expectations and create accountability.

Conclusion 13: Recruitment is an area where employers are making tangible, practical improvements that directly reduce age bias.

- On hiring age-positively, changes to recruitment behaviour were primarily evident in removing age-biased cues in adverts and processes, refreshing language and imagery, and clarifying that roles welcome experienced candidates. HR teams reported rewriting job descriptions, simplifying criteria that may disadvantage later-career applicants (for example, dated qualification requirements), and updating career pages and recruitment

¹ <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/lbahso3x/mind-wellness-action-plan-workplace.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport>

banners to show older employees. Several employers have standardised interview processes already in place to limit bias.

- Though action is highest where changes are simple to make, some organisations have adopted more proactive approaches like involving older employees at recruitment days and choosing event venues and formats that work for older candidates.

Conclusion 14: Flexible working is already deeply embedded across most organisations, largely due to legislative change and pandemic-driven shifts, so the Pledge tends to extend existing practice rather than introduce it.

- On being flexible about flexible working, employers report that flexibility is now embedded in many settings, with the Pledge helping organisations think more broadly about flexible working options. The most frequently adopted steps were those that are easy to operationalise: offering part-time roles where feasible; offering carers' leave; clear routes to request flexibility throughout the career; and explicit flagging of flexible working in job descriptions. These measures support retention and make it easier for people to stay well in work while managing health or caring responsibilities.
- Context is an important driver of behaviour. Smaller organisations tend to use informal, individually tailored arrangements, while larger organisations have a more structured consistent approach. Where job design is rigid (for example, on-site roles), some employers have explored alternatives like flexible rostering, associate roles, or job-share models but there were operational limits.
- Managers emphasised the need for HR support to navigate constraints fairly, while some HR professionals noted that managers often made rigid assumptions about job design which need challenging.

Conclusion 15: Career development for older workers remains the least developed area because it requires sensitive conversations, structured pathways, and manager confidence that many organisations do not yet have.

- On encouraging career development at all ages, where action was taken, the common activities were broad “for all” offers, offering accessible training, providing age-inclusive CPD, and supporting internal mobility. Examples of positive action included ‘internal-first’ recruitment policies, short placements to try out alternative roles, sideways moves that retain skills, and apprenticeships or secondments in later career.
- Organisations achieving success in this area cited clearer pathways, open conversations (such as “staying” interviews), and managers who proactively created opportunities rather than assuming less interest in development as retirement nears.
- Some employers acknowledged that later-career engagement can be lacking. Areas that can be hard to address are those that require sensitive framing: mid-life career reviews, manager training on later-career support and CPD, and retirement-planning guidance that does not imply an expectation to exit.

- On ensuring everyone has the health support they need, employers described growing openness in how health is discussed at work: Commonplace activities include clear absence and return-to-work processes, reasonable adjustments, and, in many organisations, menopause-related policies and learning. Flexible working remains a central mechanism for accommodating fluctuating conditions: adjusting hours, enabling appointments, or easing back through a phased return process. These activities were valued by older workers as enablers to help them to stay at work.

8.2.2 Activities Influenced by the Pledge

Conclusion 16: On creating age-friendly culture, the Pledge acts as a catalyst for visible cultural change

- Across organisations, the Pledge's strongest influence was on cultural activities that make age inclusion explicit internally and externally. Employers valued its impact on recruitment, retention and organisational accountability.
- Close to 90% of employers widely reported that the Pledge prompted them to publicly articulate their age-friendly aims and embed these commitments in internal communications.
- This signalling effect gave employers confidence and legitimacy to treat age as a core inclusion issue, helping age-friendly culture become more openly discussed and normalised.
- The Pledge encouraged organisations to revisit cultural foundations such as addressing stereotypes, improving language use, and promoting multigenerational working.
- Employers also adopted new practices, such as promoting positive imagery of older workers and creating employee resource groups, drawing directly on Ageing Better's resources. These influences show how the Pledge provides both the rationale and the practical tools to support cultural improvement.

Conclusion 17: On hiring positively, the Pledge boosts age-inclusive recruitment by prompting employers to reduce age bias

- The Pledge had a substantial effect on recruitment practices, especially those that shape the visibility of inclusiveness.
- Over 65% of actioning employers attributed their decisions to remove age-biased language and imagery from job adverts strongly to the Pledge as well as updating recruitment tools and career pages with more age-diverse imagery (59% and 61% of actioning employers respectively).
- It also prompted organisations to refresh application and interview processes to minimise age cues, signalling to older applicants that they were welcome and valued.

Conclusion 18: On being flexible about flexible working, the Pledge extends flexible-working practices in age-specific ways

- While many flexible-working arrangements pre-dated the Pledge, the scheme encouraged employers to think more intentionally about age-related needs, especially around later-career flexibility.
- For example, 63% of employers implementing or planning grandparents' leave linked this directly to the Pledge, even though it is not formally part of Pledge guidance, evidence that the Pledge stimulates wider reflection and innovation.
- The Pledge also influenced actions such as promoting flexible working specifically to people in their 50s and 60s (61% of actioning employers) and broadening opportunities to request flexibility across career stages (50%).

Conclusion 19: On career development for all, the Pledge prompts employers to consider later-career development more seriously

- Career development is the area where employers had taken the least action overall, but where the Pledge exerted some of its clearest influence.
- Activities requiring an explicitly age-aware lens, such as manager training on CPD for older workers (87%), mid-life career guidance (68%), and mid-life career reviews (68%) were among the most strongly shaped by the Pledge, despite being adopted by relatively few employers in total. This suggests the Pledge plays an important role in pushing organisations into less familiar, more specialised aspects of age inclusion.

Conclusion 20: On ensuring health support for those who need it, the Pledge encourages more targeted, age-specific health support interventions

- Although many health-related practices were already established, the Pledge influenced employers to adopt newer or more specialist measures, most notably health MOTs linked to age milestones, where half of actioning employers attributed the idea to the Pledge.
- It also shaped efforts to support early and sustained conversations about health (highlighted as a priority in the 'Get Britain Working' review³) between staff and managers (32% of actioning employers) and contributed to more open discussions around menopause and other age-related health concerns.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-britain-working-review-final-report/keep-britain-working-final-report>

- The Pledge therefore helps move organisations beyond general wellbeing support to more deliberate, age-informed approaches.

8.2.3 Value of the Pledge

Conclusion 21: The expertise, credibility and practical support offered by the Ageing Better and Pledge Teams are a core driver of employer engagement.

- Employers consistently recognised the value of the Ageing Better and Pledge Teams, placing particular emphasis on their expertise, guidance and credibility. This was viewed as central to helping organisations progress in age-inclusive practice, with many Leads identifying them as among the most important features of the Pledge offer.
- Some differences emerged across employer types: private-sector organisations tended to place greater value on the Teams' knowledge, while smaller organisations particularly appreciated that the initiative is delivered by a charity. Employers with fewer older workers noted that connection to Ageing Better helped them signal their commitment to inclusion in a visible way.

Conclusion 22: Employers prefer light-touch, easily accessible forms of support, but those who engage more deeply through events or peer learning benefit from richer knowledge exchange.

- Engagement patterns showed a strong preference for lighter-touch forms of support. Newsletters, website guidance and online content were the most commonly accessed resources, and nearly all Leads who used them found them helpful.
- Employers who consistently attended online or in-person events reported that these opportunities were highly useful for knowledge exchange and peer learning. There was strong appetite for further opportunities to connect with other Pledge employers and to hear about real-world success stories.
- Many Leads used the Teams' resources for practical tasks, such as rewriting job adverts, reviewing policies, or accessing images. This support was described as reliable, authoritative and responsive. Awareness outside the Lead role was more limited, with HR, EDI and recruitment colleagues expressing an interest in engaging more with available materials.

8.2.4 Key staff roles and teams involved with the Pledge

Conclusion 23: Successful implementation of the Pledge relies on a distributed network of internal champions, with HR and senior leaders playing the most decisive roles.

- Generalist HR roles were particularly influential in successful Pledge implementation, often supporting policy development, recruitment changes, and wellbeing initiatives.

- In some organisations, wellbeing roles or occupational health teams provided additional support through guidance on reasonable adjustments and access to relevant services.
- Individuals with strategic influence (such as CEOs, directors or department heads) could be important champions for age-inclusive change, particularly where they held strong personal commitment to the agenda.
- Staff networks also played a meaningful role, especially in larger organisations. These employee-led groups helped identify age-related concerns, share information about age-inclusive activities and contribute ideas for improving practice. Some networks were formed as a direct result of signing the Pledge and were supported by senior staff who helped facilitate their work.

Conclusion 24: Organisations depend on complementary external expertise to fill gaps in specialist knowledge, making peer learning and external partners essential enablers of progress.

- Employers often drew on external expertise to implement age-inclusive activities effectively, especially where topics required specialist knowledge that internal staff did not feel confident delivering themselves. Peer learning was particularly valued, especially among local authorities and charities, who emphasised the benefits of understanding what had worked in similar organisational settings.
- Other external support included pension fund providers offering webinars on financial or retirement planning, and health support services that delivered expert training on topics such as menopause or prostate cancer. Smaller organisations, in particular, made use of free resources and charity-run campaigns that provided visiting speakers and practical materials.

8.2.5 Barriers to successful implementation

Employers identified a range of barriers that can limit progress towards age-inclusive practice, many of which stem from structural, cultural or operational factors.

Conclusion 25: Digital access and confidence emerged as one of the most significant obstacles to age-inclusive practice.

- Older workers without regular access to workplace technology, or with lower digital confidence, could miss opportunities or updates about age-inclusive activities. Rapid technological change also contributed to feelings of being de-skilled or left behind, highlighting the need for responsive support and more inclusive communication methods. These challenges were evident in digital-only recruitment processes, which could disadvantage candidates with limited access to devices or support.

Conclusion 26: Organisational maturity strongly shapes implementation; line manager capability and less developed EDI systems can impede or deprioritise age inclusion

- Some employers described intergenerational tensions, and occasionally workers felt support was unevenly distributed, highlighting the importance of transparency around how policies are applied and how access to support is determined.
- Managers often lacked confidence in holding conversations about age, career plans or retirement, partly due to limited training or guidance. This created uncertainty about how to manage intergenerational teams fairly and constructively.
- Barriers also arose from the nature of work itself. In sectors where roles require on-site presence (e.g. care, security or education) options for hybrid or flexible working were limited, despite demand for this from workers. Physical job demands could also deter candidates or affect retention, although there was some evidence employers were beginning to explore alternative roles for staff in physically demanding jobs.
- Some organisations already had well-developed EDI or HR systems, making integration of age inclusion easier, whereas others were starting from a low baseline. In less mature systems, age was sometimes deprioritised relative to other EDI characteristics like gender, race or disability, which slowed implementation.
- Engaging the workforce more broadly was challenging. Long-standing staff were hesitant about changes, underlining the importance of constant communication and awareness-raising.
- Time and financial constraints, particularly acute in smaller organisations and charities, restricted the implementation of more resource-intensive activities. Larger organisations faced different constraints, with bureaucratic and slow decision-making and making recruitment or policy changes more complex.

8.2.6 Enabling factors for successful implementation

Successful implementation of age-inclusive activities depends on several interconnected factors that shape how employers understand and respond to the needs of their workforce.

Conclusion 27: Successful age-inclusive practice depends on how well employers listen to their workforce and integrate age into everyday organisational systems

- A central enabler was the extent to which organisations listened to employees and used their insights to shape decisions. This ensures that support feels relevant, accessible and applicable to diverse individual circumstances. This was further reinforced where organisations used data from surveys, feedback mechanisms or equality impact assessments to guide decisions, helping them prioritise actions that genuinely meet workforce needs.
- A strong organisational understanding of ageing was also important. For example, employers who recognised how health, circumstances and aspirations may shift over time were better placed to provide thoughtful, tailored support.
- Avoiding preconceived ideas and assumptions about older workers' motivations and aspirations enabled managers to build more constructive relationships and tailor

support appropriately. It fostered a culture where age was considered in day-to-day practice rather than treated as a specialist concern or niche issue.

Conclusion 28: Implementation is strengthened when organisations combine strong internal leadership and structures with external guidance and practical resources.

- Leadership commitment played a vital role. Senior figures who championed age inclusion, and modelled best practice helped to embed these principles into organisational culture. Visibility of the Pledge Lead also helped sustain momentum, particularly in organisations where competing priorities were present.
- Embedding age within organisational strategies, plans and communications helped ensure it was considered consistently, while targeted approaches allowed employers to respond to specific demographic or contextual needs.
- Larger organisations often benefited from established networks or employee groups, which supported awareness-raising, feedback and peer support. Smaller organisations, meanwhile, often found it easier to respond quickly and adaptively to individual needs.
- Finally, employers valued external guidance, templates, peer calls and practical resources provided through the Pledge. These helped build confidence, supported conversations about later-life issues and enabled staff to learn from others' experiences. Together, these factors created the conditions for more effective and sustainable age-inclusive practice.

8.3 Conclusions from impact of the Pledge

8.3.1 Impact on staff behaviour across levels

Conclusion 29: Age-inclusive progress is strongest when leadership, HR and frontline staff each play their part

- **Senior leaders** increasingly *modelled* age-inclusive behaviours, such as openly displaying flexible working patterns, which helped normalise age-friendly practice across teams.
- Senior leaders strengthened the way they listened and responded to workforce needs, using structured mechanisms, such as monthly manager–director forums, to surface age-related issues experienced by the frontline and integrate them into organisational decision-making.
- Their visible advocacy, including championing the Pledge and reinforcing its priorities through leadership forums, helped legitimise age inclusion as a strategic organisational issue.
- **Line managers** became more aware of the need to avoid assumptions about older workers' ambitions and were more open to discussing health, flexibility and development needs.

- However, many still lacked confidence in age-related conversations and in managing intergenerational dynamics with confidence. Many requested clearer guidance and training to manage age-diverse teams effectively.
- **HR and EDI staff** played a central role in shaping practical age-inclusive policies, using Pledge resources to update recruitment materials, strengthen internal messaging, and embed age into strategies.
- Their partnership with Pledge Leads helped translate high-level commitments into tailored organisational actions, particularly around recruitment, wellbeing, and career development.
- **Older workers** reported feeling more heard and supported, with growing confidence to raise age-related needs, challenge ageist language, and engage in health or wellbeing conversations.
- Age-focused networks and forums increased workforce participation, enabling employees to influence policies and contribute to more inclusive workplace cultures.

8.3.2 Impact on older workers across each Pledge area

Conclusion 30: Feeling valued and included in organisational culture keeps older workers engaged and retained.

Conclusion 31: Managerial behaviour is the key driver of whether age-friendly practice is felt in day-to-day work.

Conclusion 32: Flexibility in hours, health support and career pathways into retirement is critical for enabling older workers to stay in employment.

Evidence on impact for each Pledge area that support the above conclusions are summarised below:

Creating an age-friendly culture

- Older workers generally felt their organisations had fostered an age-friendly culture, supported by positive intergenerational relationships and opportunities for mutual learning.
- Some older workers noted that this culture had influenced their decision to stay, demonstrating how inclusive environments can support retention.
- Employees emphasised the importance of managerial support, particularly where managers actively challenge non-inclusive views and act quickly to address concerns.
- Many older workers explicitly described feeling valued at work, with some highlighting the Pledge as strengthening this sense of value.
- Participants also reported improvements in language use and the challenging of age-related stereotypes, and those with insight into older workers' experiences felt that signalling age as an organisational priority gave people greater confidence to raise concerns and discuss their needs.

Hiring age-positively

- Older workers who had been recruited more recently described their recruitment experiences as fair and positive, although they could not always identify whether this was directly linked to the Pledge.
- Some employers had started to track age-related recruitment data, including one identifying an over-representation of older applicants reaching the offer stage.
- A few employers observed an increase in applications from older candidates and a more diverse talent pool linked to age-inclusive recruitment practices.
- Publicly displaying commitment to the Pledge on job adverts reassured older applicants who were concerned that details in their CVs might signal their age.

Being flexible about flexible working

- Flexible working is widely established following the pandemic, but the Pledge prompts more targeted attention to older workers' needs, for example, encouraging employers to highlight flexibility in job adverts, support phased retirement, or offer role-specific adjustments.
- Older workers described flexibility as essential for balancing work with health needs, caring responsibilities and life outside work, enabling them to remain in employment. They also emphasised the need for ongoing review to ensure arrangements continued to meet individual needs.
- Flexible retirement options, such as reduced hours or gradual transitions, were seen as supportive and helped organisations retain skills and experience.
- Managers also described using tailored flexible working solutions to support older workers with health needs, helping them remain engaged, confident and able to contribute.

Encouraging career development at all ages

- Older workers generally felt that development opportunities were available to them, with many citing apprenticeships, shadowing and further study as meaningful routes for progression. These opportunities boosted motivation to remain in work, with several older workers describing feeling "seen" and supported regardless of age.
- Examples of career development for those aged 50 and over included older employees being promoted or taking secondments late in their careers, demonstrating that progression remained possible at all stages.
- Some initially assumed their age would limit opportunities, only to realise this was their own misconception rather than an organisational barrier.
- Employers noted that while development should be accessible to all, older workers may be less likely to seek it out, underlining the need for thoughtful and proactive encouragement.

Ensuring everyone has the health support they need

- Employees described a cultural shift toward more open discussions of health issues (including menopause) which helped normalise seeking support.
- Older workers felt that health support was available to all employees, with managers encouraging the use of relevant services and adjustments. Many older workers felt well supported when returning to work after illness, with individual approaches making them feel valued and cared for.
- Reasonable adjustments such as specialist equipment, flexible scheduling and the use of technology enabled older workers to continue working comfortably and safely.
- Flexible working played an important role in supporting health needs, with some older workers remaining in work for longer because tailored arrangements reduced stress and accommodated fluctuating conditions.

8.4 Conclusions from Strategic Added Value of the Pledge

Conclusion 33: Strengthens the strategic position of age within EDI priorities

- The Pledge creates Strategic Added Value (SAV) by elevating age as a recognised dimension of EDI. Stakeholders noted that age is beginning to 'catch up' with other protected characteristics, and the Pledge is seen much like as a charter that legitimises organisational attention to later-life issues.
- It provides clarity in a crowded EDI landscape by balancing visibility with practicality, avoiding burdensome bureaucracy while offering a clear framework that employers of all sizes can use.
- By making age an explicit organisational priority, the Pledge embeds age-friendliness within core people-management processes and encourages leaders and managers to consider workforce capability, learning and confidence (including tech adaptation) as part of routine practice.

Conclusion 34: Adds value to employers with different starting points across all stages of maturity

- A major source of SAV is the Pledge's adaptability across diverse organisations. For more mature employers, it consolidates and pulls together scattered activities, providing coherence and confirming that they are moving in the right direction. For less mature employers, the Pledge acts as a practical guide that helps them progress step-by-step without being overwhelmed.
- Stakeholders stressed that the Pledge supports cumulative, incremental progress rather than one-off action, helping organisations build cultural visibility, reinforce existing systems and keep age on the agenda.

- This makes the Pledge a flexible, low-bureaucracy mechanism capable of influencing both culture and practice regardless of organisational maturity.

Conclusion 35: Supports anticipating and navigating future-focused business and workforce challenges

The Pledge helps organisations prepare for future workforce challenges, particularly technological change and intergenerational working. Stakeholders highlighted the growing importance of navigating differences in digital confidence, ensuring older workers are not left behind, and valuing the complementary strengths of younger and older cohorts. The Pledge also primes employers to anticipate the needs of today's younger workers as they become the older workforce of tomorrow. More broadly, it connects employer practice to national trends such as longer working lives and evolving skills demands, strengthening organisational readiness for demographic shifts.

Stakeholders also suggested that the Pledge's long-term impact could be strengthened by more visible employer-led leadership, for example through named senior business champions who can help sustain momentum and signal the importance of age-inclusive practice across sectors.

Conclusion 36: Enhances data use, shared learning and wider policy alignment strengthening organisational capability

Another added-value contribution lies in prompting employers to reflect more systematically on workforce data, even where formal systems are limited. The Pledge encourages better diagnosis of needs and supports the sharing of good practice, with stakeholders emphasising the value of knowledge transfer from large to small employers (and vice versa). At a policy level, the Pledge is compatible with national priorities (e.g., 50+ Champions, mid-life MOTs and early intervention with health support) and helps bring coherence to an otherwise fragmented ecosystem of age-related initiatives. Stakeholders suggested the Pledge could go even further by brokering expert connections, developing a maturity model, enabling system join-up (e.g., with Jobcentre advisers) and contributing to national thinking on reducing economic inactivity among older people.

8.5 Lessons for future evaluation design and employer research

Working with employers on the Employer Pledge evaluation has highlighted several important lessons for how future evaluation approaches can be designed.

- **Use proportionate, low-burden evaluation tools** Because the Pledge is intentionally simple and low-burden, this evaluation aimed to take a proportionate approach. Therefore, expecting employers to track detailed progress or collect additional data is potentially at odds with the core design of the Pledge, even when employers are engaged and supportive. A key lesson, therefore, is that evaluation tools must be proportionate to what organisations can reasonably provide within their existing systems.

- **Blend factual questions with reflective prompts** - The survey design offers a helpful model for future work. Asking employers both what they've done and how the Pledge influenced them generates rich insight into activities, intentions, confidence and cultural shifts that may not yet appear in formal data. This approach allows evaluators to gather concrete examples of practice without placing unnecessary demands on respondents. Survey questions also captured the employer perceptions such as increased awareness, confidence or attention to age inclusion that may not yet show up in formal data but still indicate early signs of cultural change. A lesson is that evaluation tools should blend factual questions with reflective prompts, enabling organisations to articulate both action and intention.
- **Build flexibility into data-collection methods** - Another lesson relates to organisational capacity. Employers vary in how information is stored, who holds knowledge about activities, and how consistently data is recorded. Staff turnover, dispersed responsibilities, and competing priorities all shape the information employers can access. These are normal features of busy workplaces, not shortcomings. Future evaluation designs should therefore build in flexibility, allowing for partial information, offering alternative ways of responding, and avoiding assumptions that all organisations have centralised or consistent records.
- **Recognise that age-related metrics are limited or inconsistent** - Employers do not all systematically track age-related indicators like recruitment conversion by age, program uptake, age-specific retention and progression, and so on. Smaller organisations, in particular, reported limited capacity to monitor such outcomes. A key lesson is that without consistent age-related data from employers, evaluations can only report perceived benefits rather than verified impact.
- **Include perspectives from employees, not just Leads** - Measuring impacts on employees is also challenging, as many staff have limited awareness of the Pledge itself. Yet their perspective is essential. Capturing staff experiences directly and at scale (for example through an all-staff survey) can provide valuable insight into experiences on the ground and where further action may be needed to ensure equity across age groups.
- **Incorporate non-signatory organisations** - The study was limited to organisations that had already signed the Pledge, meaning little is known about the barriers to signing or reasons for non-participation. Exploratory work with non-signatories could strengthen future evaluations and would require building mechanisms for reaching harder-to-engage organisations to generate more representative insights and understanding barriers.

These considerations also have implications beyond evaluation. Many of the same points apply when thinking about any future changes to the Pledge itself. The balance between simplicity and evidence, the practical constraints employers face, and the importance of proportionate expectations all matter when revisiting design decisions. The conclusions and recommendations in this report should therefore be interpreted with these considerations in mind.

8.6 Implications for future development of the Pledge

The evaluation indicates that there are clear opportunities for Ageing Better to further develop and extend the Pledge so it continues to meet employers' needs while maintaining its low-burden design. Insights from participating organisations also highlight areas where additional structure, clearer guidance and more targeted support could strengthen implementation and deepen impact across diverse employer types. The following recommendations draw on a synthesis of evaluation evidence and stakeholder feedback on where further development and support would be most valuable.

Strengthen how the Pledge communicates the importance of age within EDI

- Build on the Pledge's role in **strengthening the position of age within wider EDI priorities**, helping employers treat countering ageism as a core dimension of inclusion rather than a marginal or optional issue.
- Continue to provide **clarity within a crowded EDI landscape**, ensuring the Pledge remains visible, practical and non-bureaucratic, distinguishing it from schemes that risk being used as 'badges' that can lack momentum.
- Use communications and guidance to help employers **embed age-friendliness more fully into organisational strategy and everyday practice**, reinforcing the Pledge's value as a continuous anchoring influence rather than a one-off commitment.
- Leads may require clearer guidance and practical support to **raise the Pledge's visibility and awareness with staff internally** (e.g., using internal communication templates or sample messages provided by the Pledge Team) as many employees remain unaware of their organisation's commitments and priorities.

Enhance practical tools, frameworks and next-step guidance

- Develop a **maturity model** informed by findings from the evaluation (including survey data) that helps employers benchmark progress and identify realistic next steps, responding to a strong demand for structured progression frameworks.
- Offer more **template resources**, building on interest in action plan templates and practical examples that help employers shift from commitment to implementation.

Provide **simple diagnostic tools and structured reflection prompts** to support strategic data collection and sense-making, especially for employers who currently lack robust age-related data. These could help organisations identify where age-related challenges are emerging (e.g. recruitment, progression, health), and prioritise realistic actions based on their context and capacity.

Support employers more comprehensively with future-focused workforce challenges

- Provide enhanced guidance that addresses **rapid technological change**, including digital confidence gaps that affect older workers; this was highlighted by stakeholders as future-critical.
- Expand resources (or signpost where available elsewhere) to help employers prepare for **demographic and workforce transitions**, such as longer working lives, evolving skill needs, and the ageing of current younger cohorts, including guidance that steers managers through conversations about these issues sensitively.
- Help employers **strengthen intergenerational working** by recognising that workers bring different strengths, including the greater digital exposure of younger cohorts and the experience and stability of older staff.

Strengthening peer learning, sharing of good practice and storytelling

- Expand existing opportunities for **sharing practical examples and case studies**, reflecting employer interest in seeing ‘what has worked elsewhere’ and in accessing relatable stories that illustrate age-inclusive practice.
- Facilitate **knowledge transfer between large and small employers**, as SAV evidence shows this enhances impact by spreading established practice into settings with fewer resources.
- Make greater use of **storytelling and human-centred communication**, which stakeholders identified as crucial to embedding age inclusion in the public mind and maintaining momentum.

Improving system coherence and brokering external connections

- Strengthen links between the Pledge and **national priorities**, ensuring read-across with programmes such as 50+ Champions and mid-life MOTs to increase coherence across the policy landscape.
- Broker **connections with specialist organisations** (e.g., health bodies, financial wellbeing providers), enabling employers to access credible advice and sources of training on issues beyond Ageing Better’s remit.
- Position the Pledge to support wider labour-market aims, including **reducing economic inactivity among older people**, which stakeholders noted as an area where the Pledge can contribute system value.

Helping employers build evidence and evaluate progress

- Provide clearer guidance on **how to collect and use age-related data**, particularly in recruitment, flexible working and career development, areas where tracking was limited.