

How to support Late Career
Healthcare Professionals

Toolkit for Managers and Leaders

Our workforce is and remains our biggest asset

As the pension age increases and more of us are working longer, it's important we try to understand and support the needs of later career professionals working within our teams.

There are a number of ways we can look to support our healthcare professionals working who are over 50. This can include:

- ✓ Practically
- ✓ Emotionally
- ✓ Physically

When people feel valued as individuals, we know this leads to a happier, healthier and more productive workforce - **Win Win!**



This toolkit aims to help you

- ✓ to begin to **consider** the age profile of your workforce
- ✓ **challenge** some of your own perceptions of older workers
- ✓ learn new ways to effectively **succession plan**, **retain** staff and **improve** your working environment



What is included?

1. What is succession planning and how do I do it?
2. Flexible Working for later career staff -
A supportive and confident change of thinking
3. What does providing a suitable working environment mean and how do I do it?
4. Culture and Leadership - Valuing late career staff as the **'golden nuggets'** of your team

Lets get started..



1. What is Succession Planning and How Do I Do it?

Here's how...

Succession Planning is when we recognise, prepare for and create future leaders who are able to take the position of previous ones when they leave our organisation or team.

So how can we make better use of our talent, spread knowledge and skills and plan for the future so that when experienced people leave or reduce hours, we don't feel panic and dread?

An illustration of a man with white hair, wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue suit and tie. He is walking and pointing his right hand towards the right side of the page.

Keep your eyes peeled
for future leaders

Look around your workforce and think about which leaders or experienced colleagues might leave in the next few years. Make a point of exploring their career wishes and aspirations with them, this could be as part of an appraisal or informal career conversation.

You can even complete an age profile risk assessment of your team in order to engage your manager in workforce planning for the future.



Download: [www.care4notts.org/
downloads/LCS-age-profiling-tool.xls](http://www.care4notts.org/downloads/LCS-age-profiling-tool.xls)

Start early

One of the most common problems is people not giving succession planning the time it deserves early enough. As managers and leaders we often miss the opportunity to plan for a smooth transition well enough in advance.

Start thinking about it as early as possible. Typically, 5 years ahead of an expected retirement point.

Ensure the passing on of knowledge and expertise!

Think about how senior professionals can pass on their skills and expertise, so it doesn't walk out the door when they do. If you're considering a clinical leader or senior manager's succession, could they work alongside their successor for 6-12 months, then continue part-time in a mentor-style capacity to support key decisions.



Experienced professionals can lead inductions, training and the welcomes for newer staff



Older experienced professionals can lead teaching sessions at handover



Older professionals could undertake service improvement projects as a way of leaving a footprint in their area



View: www.nuh.nhs.uk/late-career-development-the-legacy-mentor-programme

Generation to Generation



Have you ever considered reverse mentoring?

This is where the more experienced staff member is supernumerary to support a more junior colleague, instead of the traditional vice versa model. This allows for a more efficient passing on of knowledge and skills, with protected time for the more junior employee to truly learn the job in hand.

Develop your deputies

Don't assume succession is a simple matter of a deputy stepping up to a leadership position when a leader retires. Deputies can sometimes be more used to working in the wake of their leader, and haven't had enough opportunity to be challenged in the leadership role.

So invest in their learning, development and leadership training before that leader retires, and give them the opportunity to make key decisions, coached by their leader if necessary.

How can I make succession planning part of my every day?

Bright ideas...



Consider bitesize teaching sessions lead by late career staff. What about **15@15**? 15 minutes of teaching at 3 o'clock each day?



Invite your junior staff to senior operational and strategical meetings



On your next time out day, do a poll to find out if anyone would rather do earlys and lates? The more people prepared to do this, the more workable a rota can be. This allows a good period of time in the day for the passing on of knowledge and skills



Consider launching a shadowing month and encourage staff to shadow each other's roles for an hour across your team/area

Food for thought...



2. Flexible Working for Later Career Staff

A supportive and confident
change of thinking

Flexible working does benefit you and your team, we promise!

Late career professionals have identified that being able to work flexibly, often allowing for additional caring responsibilities, is **key** to ensuring they can remain in work.

Breaking down barriers, through our flexible working options can help prevent early exits and help create a true '**age friendly**' environment.

Be bold!



Flexible working doesn't always have to be formal or permanent. Peoples informal preferences can be equally as important. Make a note or use your online system or notice board to remember peoples preferences to ensure they feel listened to.

Offer it, you can always review it later if it isn't working, it's not the end of the world.

Flexible working and attitudes towards flexibility have rapidly become the **biggest reason staff leave the NHS** so we all need to learn how to approach this subject positively with teams.



Myth busting!

If I allow one person to work flexibly, it will open the floodgates...

Open the floodgates! People are drowning behind them. It's ok if you don't know the answers or solutions, HR, Peers and managers can all support and offer you advice. This is a team approach. Both party's need to think flexibly and creatively so don't be scared to work through the options to land on the best fit.

Flexible working is just for senior people or people with children

Consider all requests, For example someone may be undertaking a new hobby and would like Mondays off, this doesn't seem unreasonable and it's unlikely lots of other staff will want the same day, so see if you can make it work and have a try.

Remember! People are not 'just' part time. They are what makes the NHS, social care and its care partners work. They are everything we need them to be.

Shout loud and proud if you already have a flexible team. This will be a great recruitment tool for your area.



3. What Does Providing a Suitable Working Environment Mean and How Do I Do it?

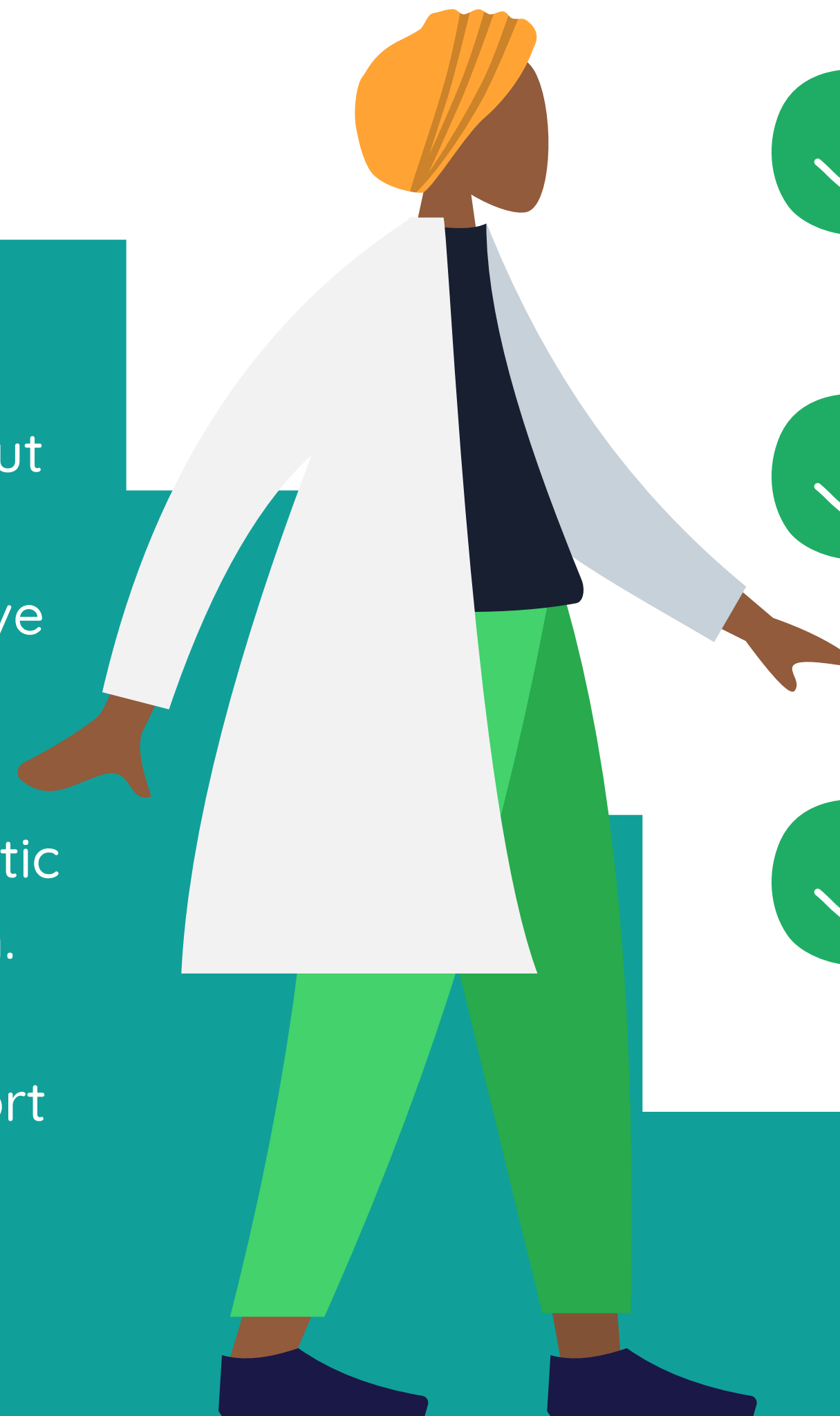
Tips!

Here's how...

Age equality does not necessarily imply identical treatment. It isn't about treating older workers the same as younger workers. Sometimes we have to treat people differently and as individuals to ensure fairness.

Age is the only protected characteristic that actively promotes this approach.

Providing affective late career support is an integral part of becoming an 'age-friendly' employer.



Give people time to attend pension and retirement workshops, long before they are due to retire.



Make sure you and your team know how to access occupational health and wellbeing to focus on preventative health and support people to work longer.



Do a risk assessment with your older worker that is bespoke and personal to them

Taking this further...



Consider doing a risk assessment within your clinical or non-clinical area, how fit for purpose is it for later career staff who may need extra toilet breaks, more frequent access to water and refreshments, adequate equipment to support physical aspects of role, break out spaces etc . You can develop/utilise a working group to ensure improvements, further bringing your team together.

Encourage colleagues to undertake a midlife MOT 😊 Gov.uk – yourpension.gov.uk/mid-life-mot offers a free online version for people in their 40's 50's and 60's, including a skills assessment and a free health check.

Think about job design for workers who may already be starting to experience signs of ill health. mobility, dexterity and stamina deteriorate far sooner than mental capacity but this can be compensated for, in most cases, by redesigning work processes and adequate support.



SHHH! Don't tell anyone but...



Shifts don't have to be 12 hours. Many older staff may opt to work shorter shifts that could support the working day.



Don't forget older staff when it comes to courses, funding and opportunities. Many staff will now be working into their mid 60's and beyond, they have years of career development and progression ahead of them.



Think about the impact of the menopause. Many people feel a significant range of symptoms for a number of years which may make the working environment harder. Many organisations have policies to support staff and managers. Remember, don't feel shy about talking to staff about the menopause. Signposting people to OH, staff physio and the wellbeing sessions your workplace offers could be hugely beneficial. Simple measures such as offering a window seat, access to cold water and washing facilities could enable someone to remain in work.



Caring responsibilities - Late career workers often have grandchildren and elderly parents that they are responsible for in addition to full time work commitments. These additional caring requirements are often not reflected in HR policy and require managers and leaders to adopt a **sympathetic common sense approach**.



4. Culture and Leadership

Valuing late career staff
as the golden nuggets
of your team

Here's how...

We know that ageist attitudes exist in society, and with an ageing workforce in healthcare it's important we set the right tone. The NHS alone makes up 10% of the economy, so if we can improve attitudes and experiences across healthcare, we change the landscape for older workers on a large scale, think about that!



Setting the tone...

Jokey comments about someone's age are not appropriate in the same way a jokey comment about someone's race or sexuality would not be. Remember to think about how we can all become better **allies** in amplifying the voice of all those with protected characteristics. This could be;

-  Endorsing the work of older healthcare professionals publically
-  Recommending older healthcare professionals for speaking or teaching opportunities
-  Discuss career goals and future opportunities
-  Speak positively and publicly about older workers
-  Read about becoming a better Ally here: www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/allyship

Tips!

Champion **visible respect & support** for ALL late career professionals



- ✓ Ensure **diversity** and **inclusion** are at the forefront of your mind, acknowledging that certain groups may face more barriers when preparing for later life
- ✓ Publish, print & promote the resources that can be found at the Late Career Hub in order to encourage greater understanding (you can add them to your real or virtual notice boards)
- ✓ Create a workplace **where everyone feels included**, by challenging ageist attitudes and encouraging learning & growth
- ✓ Have a think about where age discrimination could occur in your team or area, examples include, the recruitment process, flexible working requests and training opportunities... **Food for thought...**

Summary



Remembering how to value and support all our staff throughout their careers can feel overwhelming... the key to all of this is to remember the most important tool we have in our box is to **listen** and treat people as **individuals**.

If we can do that, we can't go far wrong!



Please explore the late Career Hub on the Care4Notts site: www.care4notts.org/late-career-hub



Late Career Support

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH NOTTINGHAM &
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ICS



For more information about how to support late career professionals please visit:

www.care4notts.org/late-career-hub

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