

Anti-age discrimination policies are failing in the workplace, says case study of UK policy

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Anti-age discrimination policies are failing in the workplace, according to new research from the University of Sheffield.

The [case study of U.K. policy](#) revealed current anti-age discrimination policies are not being implemented as intended and therefore neglecting those they are supposed to help.

The study recommends change is urgently required to connect government strategies with employer action and highlights an essential need for a life-course focused strategy that acknowledges aging inequalities in the workplace.

The research into U.K. policy was carried out by Professor Alan Walker, Dr. Liam Foster and Dr. Rachel Crossdale from the University of Sheffield's Department of Sociological Studies, who led the Exclusion and Inequality in late Working life project (EIWO) in the U.K.—a large-scale, four country study focused on exclusion and [inequality](#) in late working life.

Findings from the research emphasizes older workers continue to be treated as a single standardized group and policies previously targeted at supporting older workers have been replaced or extended with policies for workers of all ages.

Dr. Rachel Crossdale said, "Unless there is change, older workers will continue to face inequality and exclusion within the workforce. As the population and workforce ages it is vital that organizations become healthier spaces for older workers to encourage extended working lives.

"For example, in the research we spoke to a woman, now in her 60s, working within the NHS who had to reduce to part-time hours because of back problems which, if addressed in the workplace at an early stage as opposed to being treated as part of the job, could have been managed or prevented."

The [policy](#) suggests that [poor health](#) in later life has a direct correlation

with lower academic attainment, low income, manual work and poorer working conditions. Therefore policies focused on tackling inequalities in older workers should be aimed at preventing work-related ill-health that starts as soon as an individual's working life begins.

Professor Walker is Co-Director of The Healthy Lifespan Institute, one of the University's flagship research centers that is focused on transforming the experience of aging to help everyone live healthy lives for longer.

Professor Walker said, "A life-course approach to improving equality for [older workers](#) would lead to [health benefits](#). Many [health problems](#) associated with older age (both physical and mental) can be prevented or better managed with the implementation of improved health management earlier in the life-course."

Dr. Rachel Crossdale added, "The introduction of 'returnerships' and increase in Midlife MOTs in the Chancellor's Budget acknowledges the need for targeted opportunities to encourage [older people](#) back into the workforce, however there is continued failure to recognize the cumulative longer-term inequalities that led to their exit in the first place."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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