

A manager’s guide to making NPT an Age-Inclusive workplace

What is Ageism?

Ageism is prejudice or discrimination of individuals based on their age, often arising from negative stereotypes around physical and mental capabilities of older adults (Hammett, 2024). Despite the Equality Act 2010 making it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of age, it is still pervasive in society which has detrimental effects on individuals and organisations (De Pressigny, 2024). Ageism remains a systemic problem within UK workplaces, with discriminatory attitudes and behaviours detrimentally affecting recruitment, retention and organisational culture (Jackson,2025).NPT has multi-generational workforce of 7000 staff, whereby over 55% of employees are over the age of 40 (NPT, 2024), it is essential for managers to understand the risks of age discrimination and take steps to prevent unfair treatment at every stage of the employee lifecycle (HR-Inform, 2024).

What does the data say?

The State of Ageing Report has revealed that 46% of adults over 50 had experienced ageism in the previous year (Centre for ageing better, 2025). One in three people over 50 believe their age has prevented them from being offered a job.Furthermore, with 1 in 5 employers believing that age discrimination occurs in their organisation (Age without Limits, 2026), NPT needs to take action to ensure our workplace does not fall fowl of these statistics

What can you do?

People management activities including recruitment, promotion and training present a heightened risk of age discrimination (HR-Inform, 2024). It is essential for NPT managers to identify potential ageism and take action to counter organisational and legal risks, to ensure fair, compliant practice. The table below outlines key risk areas for NPT, the potential impact and practical steps that you can take to demonstrate best practice and mitigate unlawful discrimination (ACAS, 2025).



Age is a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, requiring managers to take proactive steps to prevent age discrimination. Examples published by Age UK (2024) include:
Direct Discrimination - Occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of their age. For example, a manager not shortlisting or promoting an employee on the assumption that they are close to retirement so not a worthwhile investment.
Indirect Discrimination - Occurs when a policy or practice applies to all employees but disproportionately disadvantages people because of their age.For example, limiting training to recent graduates or requiring out of office hours training attendance. This can disadvantage those that have not studied recently or who may have caring responsibilities.
Harassment - Occurs when an individual is subjected to unwanted or derogatory behaviour or comments related to age. For example, Being the subjected to age related jokes suggesting an individual is ‘out of touch’ which can create a degrading and hostile working environment even if presented as workplace banter.
Victimisation - Occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because they have raised, supported or followed a discrimination complaint. For example, being deliberately excluded from development opportunities after formally reporting age related discrimination in the organisation.
Discrimination by association - Occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because they are associated with someone that has a protected characteristic. For example, being refused a promotion when caring for elderly relatives due to assumptions that they are less committed to work.

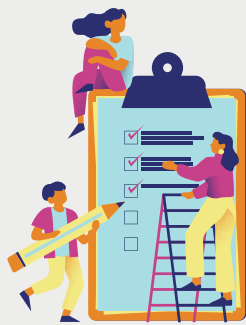
Why does this matter?

Age-discrimination exposes NPT to legal action, financial penalties, and reputational damage. In the UK, compensation payments for age discrimination rose 624%, with average awards totalling £103k in 2024 (Clempo, 2025). Further legislative tightening under the Employment Act 2025, increases risks of tribunal claims and scrutiny from Welsh Government and the Auditor General for Wales (2022) for discriminatory practices or non-compliance with Equality Impact Assessment requirements. Where managers discriminate on age, NPT can be held vicariously liable under the Equality Act 2010, exposing NPT to tribunal claims, financial penalties and regulatory scrutiny detailed in the Equality and Human Rights Annual Report (2025).Managers can also face disciplinary action for breaches and failed conduct standards. Managers must take action to ensure legal compliance and protect the organisation (Wawiye, 2025).

Recruitment

Recruitment decisions can present a heightened risk of age discrimination if selection is influenced by assumptions about age rather than skills. Bias can arise where candidates are perceived as “too young and inexperienced” or “too old and resistant to change”, or where age-stereotypes about digital capability are applied. Age-centred language in job adverts can further discourage applications from certain age groups.
Sheehy v Lymington and Pennington Town Council (2024), highlights this risk whereby a tribunal found that the Council had discriminated against an applicant by requiring 10 years’ experience, which disadvantaged candidates under the age of 31. The applicant was awarded £2,792 compensation. Such practices can lead to reputational damage, legal costs and a reduced talent pool at a time when competition for skills remains high.
To reduce risk, managers should use NPT’s updated shortlisting and interview scoring cards, ensuring applicants are assessed solely against essential skills and capabilities. Don’t forget to complete the unconscious bias training on Thinqi, alongside mandatory recruitment, selection and probation training delivered by the Talent Management Team to help support fair and lawful recruitment decisions.

Don’t forget: Age discrimination is often assumed to affect only older workers, with individuals over 50 screened out of recruitment based on assumptions about limited flexibility or digital skills (Wawiye, 2025). However, younger workers can also experience age discrimination, including being overlooked for roles due to a perceived lack of maturity, experience or authority (Lazarus, 2023). According to Steinhoff (2023), young people in Europe report higher levels of perceived ageism than other age groups. This is particularly relevant at NPT, where only 1% of the workforce is aged 21 or under (NPT, 2024), highlighting the need for fair and inclusive practices across all stages of working life.



Training and Development

Assumptions about career ambition and readiness for development can disadvantage employees at different life stages. Younger staff may be viewed as not yet ready for management responsibilities, while older workers may be assumed to lack interest in progression or development opportunities as managers consider a waste of opportunity giving it to someone considered “close to retirement”.
The case of *Sunderland v Superdry plc* (2022) demonstrates how such assumptions can amount to unlawful discrimination. Despite strong performance, an older employee was overlooked for promotion due to age-based perceptions about retention and ambition. The Employment Tribunal found direct age discrimination and constructive unfair dismissal, awarding compensation of over £96,000 (Menzies Law, 2022).
Unequal access to training and progression negatively impacts engagement, culture and retention, and can result in the loss of critical skills. Managers can address this by promoting NPT’s Ment2Be mentoring scheme, career coaching support from the Talent Management Team, and encouraging secondments across directorates. Providing operational time for learning also helps ensure development opportunities are truly available to all.

Performance Management

Performance management must be fair, consistent and evidence-based. Risk arises when performance expectations are linked to age, or when objectives are set or applied inconsistently between employees.
A case reported by the BBC shows how age-related comments about capability can result in discrimination claims. A PwC employee with 40 years’ service experienced unjustified criticism after a senior colleague questioned her digital skills and whether she wanted training “at her age”.Following a grievance, despite a strong performance record, she was subjected to unjustified performance criticisms by senior colleagues. The £150,000 settlement underscores the serious financial and reputational consequences of age-based assumptions in performance management.
NPT Managers should follow standard performance management procedures in line with policy, apply objectives consistently, and actively challenge age-related stereotypes to maintain trust and accountability.

Retirement

Retirement-related decisions also present legal risk where assumptions are made based on age rather than individual choice. This includes pressuring employees to reduce hours, suggesting phased retirement, or excluding older workers from new projects. In *Scott v Walker Morris LLP* (2025), the Employment Tribunal found that a mandatory retirement age of 60 constituted unlawful age discrimination resulting in payment of financial compensation.
NPT has no budget for financial claims so managers should embrace employee-led conversations about retirement, support flexible working and phased retirement where requested, and recognise the value of experience by supporting retirement returners. Succession planning boosts workforce stability and should not be a tool to remove aging workers from the organisation.

NPT Newsflash:

The Centre for Ageing Better, advises organisations to move beyond concern about age discrimination law and instead focus on unlocking the benefits of multigenerational teams by removing barriers to employing older workers. (Clempo, 2025). Addressing ageism requires a strategic and inclusive approach. To maximise impact and reduce risk, Neath Port Talbot Council has become the first Local Authority in Wales to sign the Age Friendly Employer Pledge (Centre for Ageing better, 2025), a nationwide programme led by the Centre for Ageing Better which reflects our commitment to creating a workplace where people aged 50 and over can thrive.
By signing the Age-Friendly Employer Pledge, NPT has committed to practical use of the CIPD Good Recruitment for Older Workers toolkit (2023) through:

- Inclusive recruitment for people of all ages, removing identifiable protected characteristics with redacted digital application processes (NPT, 2019)
- Supporting retention through updated flexible working policies (NPT,2024)
- Investing in development and training for staff aged 50+ with increasing work-based apprenticeships for existing staff (NPT 2025)

Remember - Preventing age discrimination is not optional: it is a legal obligation, management responsibility, and a public sector duty. Make a difference and think #TeamNPT

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Nurture talent at every stage
Promote fair and flexible practice
Tackle ageism