

Preventing Age Discrimination at Sofidel UK

A Practical Guide for Line Managers

Every decision you make as a manager shapes fairness, performance, and legal risk. Are your decisions free from age bias?

Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (GOV.UK, 2013). As managers at Sofidel, you must protect the company against unfair treatment based upon age when making decisions regarding hiring, training, promotion, assessment and dismissal of employees (GOV.UK, 2013). This includes ensuring the criteria used to support each of those decisions are objective and based on legitimate business reasons. Therefore, if you fail to achieve this, you will expose the company to potentially costly legal action including compensation payments, enforcement orders and reputational damage (Acas, 2025).

Rising Legal and Financial Risk

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In recent years, there has been a significant increase in age discrimination payouts, with the average award exceeding £100,000 in 2023 and 2024 (Clemo, 2025).

To help ensure that all decisions relating to employment of staff at Sofidel UK are both lawfully compliant and supported by evidence and objectively justified, you need to remove any ageism from your decision-making process. Failure to do so may result in significant financial cost and external scrutiny (ACAS, 2025).



A Risk in Multigenerational Workforces

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Sofidel UK employs individuals at various stages of their careers, from young workers and apprentices to older and more experienced employees (Sofidel, 2025). This could create a risk of age-related stereotyping, particularly where managers make assumptions about an employee's work ethic, ability, adaptability or career intentions. Stereotyping relating to age can negatively impact a manager's decision-making process which could result in legal and operational issues for Sofidel (Hulus and Michaelidou, 2025).

According to Clemo (2025), when managers rely on stereotypes about work ethic or ability, younger workers may be denied responsibility and older workers may be excluded from training or promotion opportunities. This can reduce engagement, damage retention and expose Sofidel to discrimination claims. For example, in *Homer v Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police [2012]*, a policy requirement disadvantaged an older employee, showing how apparently neutral workplace decisions can still create age discrimination risk.



A Business and Culture Issue

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Age bias does not only affect individuals, but it can also reduce retention, development opportunities, and knowledge transfer (Foran, 2022). Long-term success and operational continuity for Sofidel rely heavily upon maintaining some level of operational consistency, developing internal technical capabilities, and having a well-planned succession strategy (Sofidel, 2025). Therefore, establishing inclusive strategies for managing employees will help provide greater stability and long-term operational success (Wang & Shi, 2024).



Understanding Age Discrimination- Key responsibilities

To protect both Sofidel UK and its employees, managers must understand what unlawful age discrimination looks like in everyday workplace decisions.

Malos (2015), identifies Four key forms of discrimination:



Direct discrimination is treating someone less fairly than others simply because of their age, or perceived age.



Indirect discrimination is applying a particular procedure which adversely affects people or a specific age group, without having a valid reason for doing so.



Harassment is behaving in a manner which may cause another person to feel intimidated, hostile, or offended. This can include age-related jokes, banter or comments such as "too old", "too young", "past it", the baby of the team" or repeated references or retirement. Managers must challenge inappropriate comments immediately, set clear behavioural expectations and escalate repeated or serious concerns through the appropriate company procedure.



Victimisation is treating someone unfairly if they made or supported a claim regarding age discrimination.

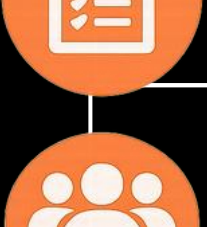
Sofidel UK has the potential to experience all of the above at various stages within the employment cycle. Specifically, in recruitment, performance evaluation and redundancies (Sofidel, 2025). Managers need to utilise objective criteria when making decisions and refrain from using age-related assumptions when evaluating employees' work. **Additionally, managers must make sure that decisions are fair, consistent and justifiable in accordance with guidelines issued by ACAS (Clemo, 2025).**

Ageism Risks in Sofidel’s Manufacturing Environment

Within Sofidel’s manufacturing operations, where shift work and technical systems are central to performance, age bias presents both strategic and legal risks that must be proactively managed to maintain a high-performing and inclusive workforce (Sofidel, 2024).

 1	Physical Demands and Assumptions	Physical demands exist within Sofidel’s production environment (Sofidel, 2025). Therefore, assumptions about declining capability may constitute direct discrimination (Malos, 2015). As managers, you must ensure that decisions relating to role allocation, adjustments, or performance are based on objective evidence rather than perceived physical limitations. Failure to do so may result in unlawful treatment and the underutilisation of experienced employees (EHRC,2020).
 2	Stereotypes of Younger Workers	At Sofidel UK, early-career employees and apprentices may be stereotyped as lazy or not committed to work. Such assumptions can influence decisions relating to performance, development, and responsibility. Therefore, you must base an individual’s assessment of job performance and potential on what they do rather than use generational labels. This creates a risk of disengagement and reduced development of future talent pipelines (Hulus and Michaelidou, 2025).
 3	Digital Transformation	As Sofidel continues to adopt new technologies, there is a risk of assuming older employees are either less adaptable or less digitally capable. This belief in age-related stereotypes concerning digital processes would lower employee’s confidence and thus reduce employee’s motivation to use new systems (Hampel and Kune, 2023; Foran, 2022). Therefore, you must ensure that all employees are provided with the same level of opportunity to take part in training programmes and allow them to utilise new systems effectively (Hampel and Kune, 2023).
 4	Shift Patterns and Indirect Discrimination	Sofidel has always operated using fixed shift patterns to help maintain continuity of operations (Sofidel, 2025). This may indirectly discriminate against certain age groups. Older workers often have increased responsibilities for care obligations (Malos, 2015). If a company policy adversely affects a particular age range, then you must be able to justify it as being a reasonable method for attaining a legitimate business aim as this may expose the organisation to indirect discrimination claims (Crossdale et al., 2023).
 5	Succession Planning and Development Bias	Assumptions that older workers are “coasting” or approaching retirement can result in unequal access to progression opportunities (Crowley, 2024). At Sofidel, this can have a negative impact on succession planning and may limit knowledge sharing. As managers, the way you create learning and development opportunities for your employees should be dependent on their individual performance and potential, rather than on what you assume their current career stage (Ingle, 2024). Evidence demonstrates that multigenerational teams improve decision-making, innovation and overall productivity. Creating an environment where age-inclusive practice takes place will enhance operational stability, knowledge transfer and ultimately the longevity of your workforce (Ingle, 2024).

Common Risk Areas for Managers

Area	Risk Example	What Managers Must DO
 Recruitment	Using age-coded language such as “recent graduate” or “young team”. Overlooking older applicants based on assumed salary costs or perceived “cultural fit”.	Focus on required skills and competencies rather than a candidate’s age or career experience. Use neutral language when describing the position(s) available. Document all selection processes with a formal scoring system to demonstrate that the hiring process is objective.
 Promotion and Development	The assumption that older employees “are coasting” toward retirement and therefore do not wish to be developed. Not giving apprentices or young staff equal opportunity to contribute.	Hold career development discussions regularly with all employees regardless of their age. Ensure there are opportunities for advancement based on an individual’s performance and potential.
 Training and Digital Skills	Excluding older workers from technology training based on assumptions they “resist change” or lack digital skills.	Provide all employees with equal access to training when new systems are being implemented. Provide support if needed. Do not assume an individual’s digital capabilities based solely on their age.
 Performance Management	sing comments like “you are too young to lead” or saying someone of a certain age is “slowing down”. Bringing up retirement when discussing someone’s capabilities.	Base appraisals on measurable performance outcomes. Only bring up retirement if the individual brings it up.
 Redundancy and Restructuring	Using “last in, first out” without objective justification. Targeting employees perceived to be “near retirement”.	Fairly apply skills-based evaluation that reflects your organisation’s future. Any service-based criteria should be able to be objectively shown as being needed or necessary. Document decision-making clearly.

Age Inclusion Checklist for Managers

You must apply the following checks in line with the Equality Act 2010 and ACAS and CIPD guidance.

- **Have I used age-neutral language?** Focus on skills and competencies.
- **Have I offered development fairly?** Ensure equal access to training and progression across all groups.
- **Have I avoided age-based assumptions?** Base decisions on performance and evidence.
- **Have I considered indirect discrimination?** Check whether policies disproportionately impact certain age groups and ensure justification.
- **Would this decision withstand external scrutiny?** All decisions must be objective, evidence-based, and defensible.



Age inclusion is a shared responsibility. As Sofidel managers, you play a critical role in making sure that the company continues to be fair, legal, sustainable, and inclusive of all age groups (ACAS, 2025; CIPD, 2024).

For further guidance, refer to Sofidel’s policies or contact Human Resources to ensure all decisions are fair, lawful and free from age-based assumptions.