



Attention All Managers

How do we value our workers well? How do we continue as an employer of choice?

Equality Act (2010) states ‘it is unlawful to discriminate against anyone with a protected characteristic’.

Hywel Dda University Healthboard believes there is value in every employee and wants to ensure that age discrimination does not play a part in the workforce.

Cebola et al. (2023) note that ageism occurs where one age group discriminates against other age groups, most commonly the old and young (also known as reverse ageism).

To consider the common pitfalls for managers in this area, this guide will enable you to consider all practices as advised by CIPD (2025), through the employee life cycle.



FIG. 1 SCHIFINO, 2024

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ATTRACTION & RECRUITMENT

Hywel Dda managers should consider the places where jobs are advertised and the language used to attract a diverse pool of ages (UK Government, 2023). This means using inclusive language using language that indicates a skills mix and phrases such as ‘familiarity with’ will attract a wider talent pool (He and Kang, 2026).

Consider not using phrases such as ‘will need X years’ experience in Y’ or ‘highly experienced’ within the person specification as this could give the impression HDUHB is not open to employing younger candidates. ACAS (2024) give excellent guidance on some of the ways a wide audience can be reached and language to avoid excluding certain groups.

UK Youth (2024) carried out some invaluable research to help understand the barriers young people find in the workplace noting 27% of those interviewed would like to see a more inclusive recruitment process. This is indirect age discrimination and can be equally levied against older groups when advertising with language about recent qualifications, insinuating someone suitable would most likely be younger as they would be newly qualified (ACAS 2024).

The risks that we face with discriminating in this way is clear from ‘Crompton v Eden Private Staff Ltd’ (2020), using language that causes harm even if it is not intended this way can result in a tribunal complain and do damage to the employee. We must also remember from the particulars of this case that even if an employee does not meet a standard required for the role, the language we use when interacting can have an impact on a claim for age discrimination, even if this is not reason for them being an unsuccessful candidate (CIPD, 2025).

We want the widest range of talent and diversity represented at HDUHB, utilising the advantages presented with age, experience and longevity, as well as embracing the new and youthful perspectives offered by our younger colleagues. Griffiths and Maclean (2026) highlight the challenges for young people in a recently commissioned study by Skills England, considering the reasons for 1 in 8 16–24-year-olds in the UK not being in employment or education and found often this is because their skills go unrecognised. HDUHB must consider the attributes of those coming into the organisation with well harnessed team working skills and communication expertise gained through ‘competitive sports, caring, volunteering and lived experience’ (Griffiths and Maclean, 2026) and not dismiss those without the formal learning certificates. This is where the importance of a good interview is key, don’t miss the questions that will unlock the valuable information needed to show the best candidates for the job.

Consider the importance of life experience as well as extra curricular activities to incorporate all the possible attributes from the candidate. As a rule, avoiding questions related to any of the protected characteristics will enable the fairest process for all HDUHB candidates (UK Government, 2024).



Fig. 2 St William’s Primary School (2023)



ONBOARDING

In more recent years the socialisation aspect of onboarding as well as the overlap with more formal induction processes has become more prevalent (Jeske and Olson, 2022). When managers are considering how best to integrate the new hires to the HDUHB workforce it is important to consider an inclusive environment and varied options for those of all ages and tastes.

ACAS (2023) recommends ensuring all employees have access to all policies, knowing where they are and how to use them. This will create a fair and inclusive environment from the start allowing for those who may have caring responsibilities or need flexible working arrangements to access what they need before they have to ask.

DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION



The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021) defines ageism as ‘stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination based on age’ noting that how we think, feel and act towards those of a certain age group all denote ageism. Often these feelings and actions are not conscious, and so unconscious bias (ACAS, 2025) can be prevalent in all areas of development of Hywel Dda employees.



It is important for managers to consider the ways this could impact on teams and individuals and put active steps in place to redress this balance. Some considerations for this could be;



INCLUSIVE SOCIALISING



It is important to consider social time as a team, as well as the social elements of the workplace including banter and jokes. ACAS (2025) recommend being aware of inappropriate language and creating a culture where people consider the impact of their words. It's important not to indirectly discriminate based on assumptions e.g. 'we will all go to the pub after work but we won't invite X because they won't want to go out late'. It is important that Managers do not dismiss offensive behaviour or language as banter when real harm can be done by using the wrong words and can create a culture that employees do not want to be part of (Marshall, 2019). HDUHB wants employees of all ages to feel welcomed into the organisation to confidently be part of every aspect of working life without fear of direct or indirect discrimination.



WHAT NEXT?



HDUHB wants to see every employee thrive and reach their full potential. As a manager you will have a real impact with Handy's role culture (1976) sitting as a central structure in your teams. If you want to access more in depth training on protected characteristics you can visit our intranet L&D page or look for up to date information via the ACAS website: <https://www.acas.org.uk/age-discrimination/preventing-age-discrimination>. **It is important for Hywel Dda to go beyond what is required in law, we are not only looking for compliance but to be leaders in our commitment to be accessible for all and an Employer of Choice.**

REVERSE MENTORING



Also known as reciprocal mentoring this is an opportunity for Gen Z employees to mentor their older colleagues and really see the benefits of intergenerational feedback and ideas (Robinson, 2025). This can be invaluable for staff to see the workplace through the eyes of staff at all levels and ages and improve workplace culture. This can create mutual respect and naturally addresses areas of challenge for each age group. Kobie (2022) notes how this process can 'unpick stereotypes' by offering junior and senior colleagues the chance to learn from one another. This was an idea first developed in 1999 when Jack Welch introduced the idea at General Electric to enable tech learning. Nowadays we know the generational gap can be as much about culture and diversity as it is about technology, this is an opportunity for all employees to develop not just in their role but also their capacity to understand and accommodate outside of their own norms and values (Collins, 2024).



CONSIDER AGE RELATED CONDITIONS

It is true to say sickness rates are at an all time high with Hywel Dda UHB currently (HDUHB, 2026) and as managers the pressure is on to follow the All Wales Managing Attendance Policy moving staff along the review prompts and holding trigger meetings. This brings with it a risk that age related conditions such as the menopause are not considered within reasonable adjustments and fair consideration of the All Wales Menopause Policy (HDUHB, 2026). It is important for managers to pay attention to fair and reasonable adjustments from; good ventilation, access to toilets and uniform flexibility to Mental Health and anxiety understanding. This is not just for female employees as male employees can be impacted by sleeplessness and low mood linked to symptoms experienced by a partner at home (ACAS, 2026).